

July 20, 2023

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Kansas Leopold Conservation Award Finalists Selected

Four finalists have been selected for the 2023 Kansas Leopold Conservation Award®.

Given in honor of renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, the prestigious award recognizes farmers, ranchers, forestland owners, and other landowners who inspire others with their dedication to land, water, and wildlife resources in their care.

[Sand County Foundation](#) and national sponsor [American Farmland Trust](#) present the Leopold Conservation Award to private landowners in 27 states for extraordinary achievement in voluntary conservation. In Kansas the award is presented annually by [Sand County Foundation](#), [American Farmland Trust](#), [Kansas Association of Conservation Districts](#) and [Ranchland Trust of Kansas](#).

The Kansas Leopold Conservation Award will be presented at the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts' 79th Annual Convention in Wichita in November. The award recipient will receive \$10,000 and a crystal award.

The finalists are:

- **Ray and Susan Flickner of Wichita.** The Flickner family farms in McPherson, Hodgeman, Dickinson and Norton counties. They installed sub-surface drip irrigation technology to become more efficient with water and nutrient applications on crops. They experiment with cover crops to improve water infiltration and suppress weeds. Their Flickner Innovation Farm is a collaboration of university, industry, and agency partners where new methods to improve soil health and conserve water are demonstrated.
- **Kevin Karr Family of Emporia.** The Karr family raises crops and hogs in Lyon County. To reduce soil erosion, Kevin began using no-till practices in the 1980s. He credits no-till with enhancing wildlife habitat and reducing his fuel use, while building better soil structure. Weeds are naturally suppressed by planting cover crops of rye, while beneficial insects are attracted to flowering cover crops. The combination of no-till and cover crops has bolstered the farm's resilience to drought.

- **Janus Farms of Cherryvale.** Dr. Phil Eastep has improved wildlife habitat and biodiversity on his Montgomery County farmland with prescribed burning, rotationally grazing beef cattle, and removing invasive species such as cedar and sumac. To prevent erosion and promote soil health he has planted more than 125,000 trees and constructed a riverbank stabilization project. He has hosted botanical and endangered wildlife studies at his farm, and established pollinator habitat of native flowering plants.
- **Glenn and Barbara Walker of Brookville.** The Walkers are improving soil health, wildlife habitat and water distribution on their properties in Ellsworth, Lincoln, Rice, Russell and Saline counties. By using rotational grazing to feed their beef cattle, they are also managing grassland to improve habitat for greater prairie chickens, turkeys and deer. Their investment in removing invasive red cedar trees improves water resources. Several of their properties are enrolled in the Kansas Walk-in Hunting program.

The first Kansas Leopold Conservation Award recipient was selected in 2015. The 2022 recipient was Michael Thompson of Almena.

The Leopold Conservation Award in Kansas is made possible thanks to the generous support of American Farmland Trust, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, Ranchland Trust of Kansas, Sand County Foundation, Farm Credit Associations of Kansas, ITC Great Plains, Evergy, Kansas Department of Agriculture (Division of Conservation), Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks, Kansas Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service of Kansas, Green Cover Seed, McDonald's, The Nature Conservancy, and a Kansas Leopold Conservation Award recipient.

In his influential 1949 book, *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage, which he called “an evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity.”

ACCOLADES

“Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is excited to recognize these outstanding landowners who are committed to conservation on their land,” said Dan Meyerhoff, KACD Executive Director. “We are proud to partner with Sand County Foundation and the Ranchland Trust of Kansas to give these families the recognition they deserve.”

“Ranchland Trust of Kansas is proud to be part of recognizing Kansas ranchers and farmers for their stewardship of their land,” said Barth Crouch, Ranchland Trust of Kansas Chairman. “All of the finalists are deserving of the award which is really recognition of their management efforts and sacrifice to bring their land to its highest potential.”

“These award finalists are examples of how Aldo Leopold’s land ethic is alive and well today. Their dedication to conservation shows how individuals can improve the health of the land while producing food and fiber,” said Kevin McAleese, Sand County Foundation President and CEO.

“As the national sponsor for Sand County Foundation’s Leopold Conservation Award, American Farmland Trust, celebrates the hard work and dedication of the Kansas award finalists,” said John Piotti, AFT President and CEO. “At AFT we believe that conservation in agriculture requires a focus on the land, the practices and the people and this award recognizes the integral role of all three.”

For more information, visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org.

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LEOPOLD CONSERVATION AWARD PROGRAM

The Leopold Conservation Award is a competitive award that recognizes landowner achievement in voluntary conservation. Sand County Foundation presents the award in California, Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Wisconsin, and in New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont). www.leopoldconservationaward.org

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

American Farmland Trust is the only national organization that takes a holistic approach to agriculture, focusing on the land itself, the agricultural practices used on that land, and the farmers and ranchers who do the work. AFT launched the conservation agriculture movement and continues to raise public awareness through its No Farms, No Food message. Since its founding in 1980, AFT has helped permanently protect over 6.5 million acres of agricultural lands, advanced environmentally sound farming practices on millions of additional acres and supported thousands of farm families. www.farmland.org

KANSAS ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts is a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit, incorporated organization composed of members from the conservation districts located throughout Kansas’ 105 counties. Through partnerships with federal, state, and local entities, the Kansas Association of Conservation Districts has brought together groups that share the common goal of wise and efficient conservation practices that protect Kansas’ natural resources. The Kansas Association of Conservation Districts promotes and supports the establishment of programs dedicated to conservation and the organized development of Kansas land, water, and related resources. www.kacdnet.org

RANCHLAND TRUST OF KANSAS

The Ranchland Trust of Kansas is a private, non-profit organization founded by members of the Kansas Livestock Association in 2003. The organization was created to provide assistance to ranchers and landowners who desire to conserve their land with conservation easements. Guided by their mission to preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes, the Ranchland Trust of Kansas values a commitment to conservation, respect for private landownership, integrity, organizational excellence and collaboration with those who share their values. The Ranchland Trust of Kansas remains an affiliate of the Kansas Livestock Association. www.ranchlandtrustofkansas.org

SAND COUNTY FOUNDATION

Sand County Foundation inspires and empowers a growing number of private landowners to ethically manage natural resources in their care, so future generations have clean and abundant water, healthy soil to support agriculture and forestry, plentiful habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation. www.sandcountyfoundation.org