

Prairie Picnic Returns To Moxley Ranch

by **Samantha Weishaar**, Associate Director

Ranchland Trust of Kansas (RTK) is happy to announce that Moxley Ranch has been chosen to host the Prairie Picnic luncheon and auction on Saturday, June 14, prior to the Symphony in the Flint Hills. Moxley Ranch is north of the Symphony site approximately 13 miles.

Tom and Ginny Moxley, owners of Moxley Ranch, hosted the very first RTK Prairie Picnic, formerly known as the Pre-Symphony in the Flint Hills, 17 years ago, to the day, on June 14, 2008. At the time, Mike Beam was the executive director of RTK and also a member of the Symphony in the Flint Hills Board of Directors. This is how the event was born. Mike was appointed secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture by Governor Laura Kelly in January 2019, and he is still a strong supporter of both the Symphony in the Flint Hills and RTK.

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Tribute to the Hoy Family

Lunch will be served by Oakley Creek catering who are known in a 100-mile radius as the “king of the meat and potatoes.” They have catered many RTK and KLA events across eastern Kansas. Knowing that we are big fans of BEEF, Penny at Oakley Creek sold us on their pulled chicken. Don’t panic, we will still offer their tender BBQ brisket as well. You won’t want to miss out on their famous apple and cherry crisp and homemade ice cream.

The program will consist of a recognition and memorial presentation of the Hoy family. (See page 10 to read a tribute to the Hoy family.) Tom Moxley will also share the Moxley Ranch story. Dawn Hovey, RTK Executive Director, will kick off the summer match campaign which will run through July 31. Andrew Sylvester will lead the live auction featuring many great items that will be previewed on the RTK website and social media leading up to the event. An optional barn tour will be offered as guests arrive. The Prairie Picnic will conclude with an optional wildflower tour.

Tickets to the Prairie Picnic are \$50 per person. Children 12 and under are free to attend. The event will sell out at 150 guests. Please RSVP to samantha@kla.org to reserve a seat.

The Moxleys are very generous for hosting RTK. Tom was accommodating and eager to be a part of this special day. “Every day is a great day to celebrate the amazing Flint Hills! It’s an even better day when we do it with friends,” Moxley said.

The Prairie Picnic is sponsored by Porter Cattle Company, Stifel, Frontier Farm Credit, KDA Division of Conservation, Sundgren Realty, Varney & Associates, Carolyn Gresser, Mike Beam, Tony Caputo and LewJene Schneider.

Thank you, Tom and Ginny, for hosting the Prairie Picnic. We are happy to be back!



“The Moxley Ranch is a beautiful place. Right off a postcard. I remember the first Pre-Symphony at Moxley Ranch. Our friends from Wichita were so impressed. We shared a delightful lunch with RTK supporters before heading to the Symphony. It was the beginning of a wonderful tradition in the Flint Hills.”
- LewJene Schneider, picnic sponsor and past RTK board member



Dear Friends of Kansas Land

by Dawn Hovey, Executive Director



As the seasons shift and the landscape changes from brown to green, we're reminded of nature's quiet strength—and the importance of preserving these vital places for current and future generations.

Thanks to your steadfast support, we continue to protect the Kansas lands we love and strengthen the roots of conservation in our communities.

I'm thrilled to share that we've recently welcomed a new team member who will play a key role in this work. Jessica Wilkes has joined us as our new conservation coordinator, bringing with her a deep passion for land stewardship and a wealth of experience in natural resources from both engagement on the land and the necessary work that follows from behind the desk. Her expertise and energy will help us expand our outreach, deepen relationships with landowners, and ensure the long-term protection of Kansas' working landscapes.

Please learn more about her on page five of this newsletter.

We've had an exciting and impactful start to 2025! With the support of top-quality professional staff, a fully committed board of directors and the financial and moral support of our amazing donors, I am pleased to say we are becoming a stronger and more versatile organization by the day.

Every acre we protect, every landowner we meet, and every community we get the opportunity to connect with, happens because of your belief in the power of voluntary land conservation. Take a moment to get outside, take a breath of fresh air (after burning season in the Flint Hills), listen to the birds, watch the adorable baby cattle prancing around their mothers, and enjoy what working lands conservation gives each of us.

Thank you, as always, for your dedication to Ranchland Trust of Kansas.

**you
can
HELP**

- DONATIONS: One-time donations or giving monthly – every bit helps!
- PLANNED GIVING: Give from your IRA. Visit our website to learn more.
- LEGACY ESTATE GIFT: A bequest costs you nothing today, but impacts tomorrow.
- DONATE AN EASEMENT: Conserve your land and offer to pay all transaction costs.
- AUCTION ITEMS: Donate auction items or experiences to an upcoming RTK fundraiser.
- SHOP: Sign up for Dillons Community Rewards. See our website for details.
- SPONSOR: Sponsor an event in 2025.
- PLAY: Play in the RTK golf tournament on August 1.

RTK is Proud to Welcome Two New Board Members

by Samantha Weishaar, Associate Director

Longtime agricultural broadcaster Kelly Lenz was raised on a grain and livestock farm near Carroll, Iowa. Kelly developed a passion for agriculture early on, working alongside his two brothers baling hay, raising hogs, and milking cows. That work ethic carried into a successful broadcasting career, beginning after he earned scholarships to attend the Brown Institute in Minneapolis, where he studied radio and television.

In 1978, Lenz joined WIBW Radio and TV in Topeka. A year later, he became director of the WIBW farm staff, dedicating his career to covering Kansas agriculture. In 2016, his impact was recognized with induction into the Kansas Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame.

He said, “I loved the work, especially the personal relationships I made with Kansas farmers and ranchers. I soon discovered that Kansas ag producers have a strong conservation ethic. They really care about their animals and the land.”



“My respect and admiration for beef producers led me to the work being done by RTK. It’s the ranchers who are key to preserving native grasses, including a cowboy culture filled with wonderful people.”

He met his wife Mary in 1979 when she was the realtor who sold him his home. They married in 1996 and have enjoyed traveling over the years. Wherever they go, they seek out areas of farming or ranching. Kelly said, “On a return trip home from Yellowstone, we were welcomed by the most beautiful scene on our whole trip, the Flint Hills under blue skies following a rainstorm, complete with a gorgeous rainbow. It was breathtaking!”

RTK is honored to have Lenz’s recognizable voice and vision on its board.

He said, “No other group exemplifies the important conservation effort better than the work being done by RTK.”

For Glenn Walker, conservation isn’t a trend, it’s a lifelong calling. He is a friend, donor, and most importantly, a land steward. Glenn brings not just decades of experience in education and leadership, but a deep connection to the Kansas land and people.

Glenn grew up on the Gregory Ranch in northeast Ellsworth County. He began his education in a one-room schoolhouse, Mulberry Rural, and went on to earn degrees from McPherson College, Fort Hays State University, and the University of Kansas. While his academic credentials are impressive, his heart never strayed far from the land that raised him.



“My early interest in conservation came from my love for the wildlife I saw every day—jackrabbits, squirrels, quail, prairie chickens, pheasants. Wildlife intrigued me. I just wanted to learn more and see them prosper. I found joy being around them.”

That appreciation soon evolved into a desire to protect the land itself. Watching floodwaters carry away valuable topsoil lit a spark in him. “We started planting buffers along creeks long before it was popular. I knew the land needed protecting,” he said.

Glenn and his wife Barbara acquired some land near Brookville in the 1970s, which is where they still reside today. They have worked with purpose, not just to maintain their land, but to improve it. “I worked in education for 36 years and have been cutting cedar trees ever since,” Glenn said.

Their conservation journey led them to place acreage under easement in 2005, first through the GRP program, and later through RTK, where Glenn found a natural fit. Today, Glenn hopes his role on the RTK board will help expand the protected acreage across Kansas.

Glenn and Barbara like to travel around the world. He also enjoys fishing and mentoring young people.

RTK is proud to welcome this outstanding individual to the board.

RTK Welcomes Conservation Coordinator Jessica Wilkes

by Samantha Weishaar, Associate Director

RTK has hired Jessica (Jessy) Wilkes as conservation coordinator. She lives in Manhattan and has called Kansas home for 19 years.

She always has believed in the power of the land and the people who care for it. Now, as conservation coordinator, she brings years of experience and a deep-rooted passion for Kansas' working landscapes to her new role.

Jessy will expand RTK's ability to assist landowners. She will be responsible for the management and implementation of all aspects of RTK's conservation easement acquisition and stewardship program.

"I'm excited to be part of something bigger — a growing movement where stewardship, education, and community come together to leave a real, lasting legacy. This isn't just about conserving land, it's about securing the future of Kansas ranching," Jessy said.

She earned a master of science in horticulture and natural resources from Kansas State University and a bachelor of social welfare from the University of Kansas. Her most recent role has been working with 22 service centers in 24 counties to serve agriculture producers in achieving their individual conservation goals Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

"What drives me is the opportunity to make a real, tangible difference. I'm passionate about helping landowners make informed, long-term decisions that honor their values. Their land stewardship decisions provide benefits for us all, and I am honored to work with them," she said.

She has demonstrated success in building relationships, time management, organizational skills, and communication. She brings energy, a collaborative spirit, and commitment to stewardship.

She is passionate about education and outreach, and excited to dive into her new role.

She said, "I am most looking forward to meeting the people who support RTK's mission. I love that I can contribute in many ways to RTK. I cannot wait to begin!"

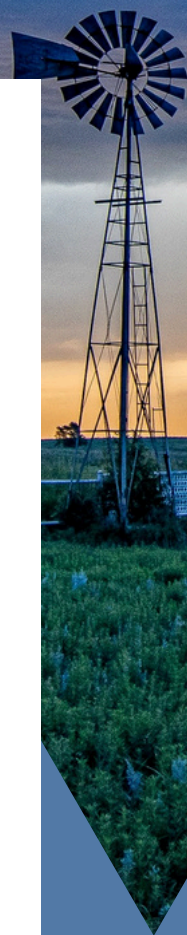
Jessy is a member of the Friends of Konza Prairie board. When she's not working, you might find her birding during spring migration, tending to her 30+ houseplants, or cooking with local ingredients from the Manhattan farmers market and the K-State meat sale. She likes to go on walks or hikes with her Siberian Husky, Juno.

She is ready to hit the ground running. RTK is in good hands as it continues to protect Kansas' ranching heritage for generations to come.



Jessica Wilkes
Conservation Coordinator

Jessy joined RTK on April 29. Help us welcome her into her new role. She would love to hear from you. Please reach out to jessica@kla.org.



DONOR RECOGNITION

*Thank
You*

Below is a list of individuals, foundations and companies that provided financial gifts to RTK from January 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025. We have made every effort to be accurate with this listing. If there is an error, please accept our apologies and contact Samantha Weishaar at (785) 273-5115 or samantha@kla.org.

Thanks to our many event sponsors, event participants, auction donors and auction buyers in 2024 who already have been recognized.

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If you would like to give a contribution in memory or in honor of someone, please note their name at the time of the donation.

Land Management on the Kansas Prairie

by Samantha Weishaar, Associate Director



During the months of March and April, you may have noticed plumes of smoke stretching across the Kansas sky. When you see this each spring, don't be alarmed. It's not a wildfire; it's a prescribed burn, a land management tradition that's as vital today as ever.

Native Americans were the first to use prescribed fire, as it attracted buffalo to the new grass for easier hunting. Today, ranchers use controlled burns to draw cattle to the new growth for nourishment.

Controlled burns are intentional fires set under carefully monitored conditions. The goal? To maintain the health of the tallgrass prairie, one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. Fire helps return nutrients to the soil and stimulate new plant growth all while supporting the livelihoods of Kansas ranchers. Without these prescribed burns, the prairie could lose its most precious resource.

Spring burning is also one of the most effective methods of controlling invasive species like the eastern red cedar. This tree is very destructive

to the tallgrass prairie as it takes in most of the rainfall, draws countless gallons of water annually from streams and reduces soil fertility. In addition, this evergreen also destroys the regional habitat necessary for grassland birds to thrive.

Landowners must burn under appropriate conditions and timing depends on weather, wind, and moisture. Then they must coordinate with local fire departments and follow strict guidelines to keep everything safe and under control.

The benefits of burning for agriculture and the environment are significant. Although spring burning is a part of this rich history, it's not done just to maintain a tradition. It's a proven tool used to preserve the tallgrass ecosystem. That means good things for ranchers, cattle and wildlife.

So, if you see flames along the horizon, take a minute to enjoy the view of conservation in action, and remember: it's not just fire, it's the future of the prairie, going up in smoke so it can rise again.



Photo by Bruce L. Hogle

Save The Date for Upcoming 2025 Events

May 1 - Sept. 4 | Photography Contest

May 22 | Coffee Hour
Frontier Farm Credit, Manhattan

June 1 - July 31 | Summer Match

June 2 | Leopold Award Application Due
Application information available online

June 14 | Prairie Picnic Luncheon & Auction
Moxley Ranch, Council Grove

August 1 | Golf Tournament
Western Hills, Topeka

November 19-21 | KLA Convention and
RTK Live Auction Fundraiser
Manhattan

*More dates coming soon for additional events,
small gatherings and tours.*

Q&A WITH RTK

What do conservation easements allow?

Conservation easements still authorize management and stewardship practices and continuation of farming and ranching activities. RTK's purpose is to hold conservation easements for private landowners so they can continue their farming and ranching operations and conserve land for future generations.

What do conservation easements restrict?

Conservation easements usually restrict development such as a sub-division for residential or commercial purposes, construction of non-agricultural buildings and surface mining.



*In loving memory of
Josh and Jim Hoy*

Photo by Mark Feiden



Photo by Mark Feiden

A Legacy of Stewardship and Love: Honoring the Hoy Family

by Samantha Weishaar, Associate Director

In the tallgrass prairie nestled deep in the heart of the Flint Hills, the Hoy family's land tells a story. Not just of ranching, but of legacy, love, and appreciation for the cowboy culture. This year, we mourn the loss of two pillars of that legacy: Jim Hoy and his son, Josh Hoy. They had an enduring bond with the land and with one another.



Jim Hoy photo by Mark Feiden

Josh passed away suddenly from a heart attack. This was a loss that shook not only his family, but also the ranching and conservation communities. That night, his father Jim passed away in his sleep after learning of his son's death - a meaningful reflection of their bond.

Jim Hoy was a distinguished author, professor, and historian who devoted his life to preserving and sharing the stories of the

Kansas Flint Hills. He authored over a dozen books and articles, capturing the spirit of the region he loved so dearly. Jim was also a working cowboy and a true Kansan whose quiet dignity and deep connection to the land made him so well-respected. He often joined his son Josh, daughter-in-law Gwen and granddaughter Josie on their Flying W Ranch in Chase County, riding horses and cowboying well into his 80s. He is, quite possibly, the only man to ever earn a PhD and win a rodeo on the same day.

Josh and Gwen's ranching practices focused on sustainability, conservation, and the health of the prairie ecosystem. For their leadership in land stewardship, they were honored with the prestigious Kansas Leopold Conservation Award.



Josh Hoy photo by Crystal Socha

In 2007, Jim and Cathy Hoy granted RTK its first conservation easement, which protects 655 acres of prairie in Butler County. This conservation agreement was a fitting milestone for RTK, as the Hoy family's passion for conservation and stewardship has set the tone for everything RTK stands for and works towards with other landowners.

The conservation easement includes the original Hoy homestead, settled in the 1870s,

and ensures that this remarkable piece of the tallgrass prairie will remain as a working ranch. It was a promise to future generations that it would forever be protected, as a place where cattle graze and meadowlarks sing.

This land holds the legacy of a family whose love for Kansas, for ranching, and for conservation has left a lasting mark on the land and the hearts of all who knew them. The prairie remembers. And so will we.

Leaving a legacy of land stewardship.



Crystal Soda
PHOTOGRAPHY



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OUR MISSION

To preserve Kansas' ranching heritage and open spaces for future generations through the conservation of working landscapes.

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Photo by Lesa Brose

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Kelsy Sproul

Kindergarten
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Congratulations, Kelsy!
Kelsy is Raymond Sproul's wife and
Bill Sproul's daughter-in-law. Both
are past board members of RTK.