

H2info

CHENEY LAKE WATERSHED, INC

Citizens Working for Clean Water

Fall 2010

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The editor is Chloe Wilson
Cheney Lake Watershed, Inc.
18 E. 7th Avenue
So. Hutchinson, KS 67505
(620) 665-0231

Staff

Lisa French - Project Coordinator
Chloe Wilson— Office Coordinator
Howard Miller— Public Relations Coordinator

Citizen's Management Committee

Sig Collins -Partridge
(620)567-2435
Roland Elpers -Mount Hope
(620)465-3322
Allan Grilliot -Castleton
(620)459-6476
Brad Johnson -Stafford
(620)234-5690
Brent Oatney -Partridge
(620)567-2490
Nathan Stillwell -Arlington
(620)538-3833
Derek Zongker -Plevna
(620)486-2457

Cheney Lake Wildlife Area

By Howard Miller

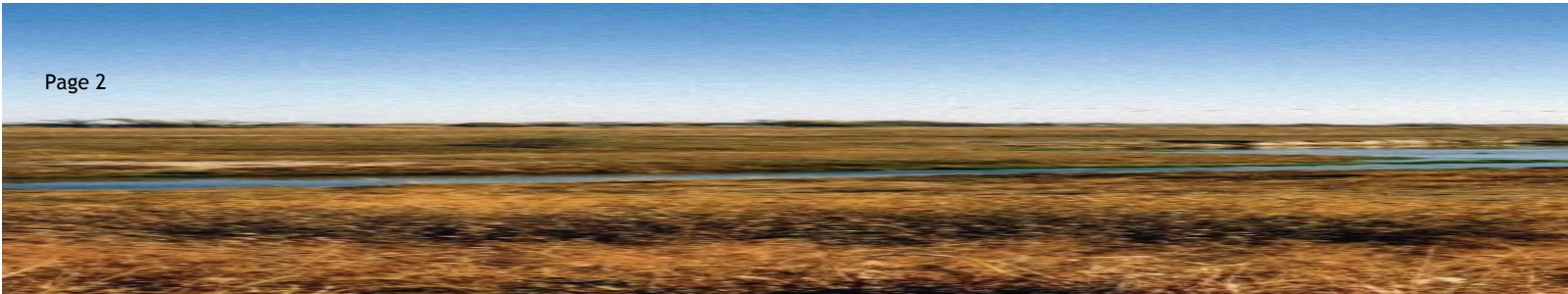
Have you ever wondered how the Kansas Department of Wildlife & Parks (KDWP) manages the wildlife area around Cheney Lake? It's not an easy task and not everyone agrees on how it should be done. Stuart Schrag, Public Lands Manager for KDWP, has the job of preserving wildlife habitat and at the same time maintaining public access. Of the over 5,000 acres of wildlife area almost 2,000 of those are cropland areas and around 3,000 are in prairie grassland or riparian woodlands. Stuart says one of his big expenses is having a contractor maintain the 22 miles of roads that run through the wildlife area. People expect to be able to drive through the wildlife area and up to the lake to fish but in some cases that creates issues with erosion. Stuart prefers that people stay on the maintained roads because if they drive off in a new direction others follow their path and soon a new road has been "established". In that case Stuart and his crew must use precious time and resources barricading the road to keep traffic on legitimate roads.

The cropland area is a valuable food source for wildlife. Stuart contracts with 5 farmers who farm the cropland. Most of the cropland is on marginal soils with low production potential. Damage from wildlife and people also contribute to the low production numbers. The farmers must leave 10% of certain crops as a wildlife food source. Farmers rent the land on a cash rent basis with a 5 year contract which can be extended once for an additional 5 years before being rebid. Farmers must follow a crop rotation agreed on by them and KDWP. Terry Krehbiel farms over 700 acres of the KDWP cropland. Terry says that not only is the soil marginal but it frequently floods which can take part of the crop. Another issue Terry faces is people deciding it is ok to drive across his crops to get to where they want to go rather than stay on the road. Trash that people leave behind, like the small propane bottles that floated up onto the fields after a flood this summer, cause Terry problems when he farms. Terry has learned not to leave round bales in the field because they get used for target practice. Terry says that Stuart has been good to work with and has given him as much flexibility as possible on crop rotations. The cropland and grass area provide another important benefit to the lake; they act as a buffer to residential development and help protect water quality in the lake.

Shoreline erosion is another big issue around Cheney Lake. The flatness of the terrain around the lake allows huge waves that constantly beat on the shore and erode it, especially on the North shore area. The question becomes how much money you want to spend stabilizing the shoreline and how much of the shoreline



Terry Krehbiel explains the challenges of farming KDWP cropland to CMC members.



Get a Handle on the Toad-Stranglers

By Lisa French

Toad-strangler, gully-washer, trash-mover, sod-soaker. The past two or three years have brought timely and above-average rainfall for parts of the Cheney watershed but that isn't the whole story. Heavy rains of prolonged duration have resulted in severe erosion damage to many crop fields. And erosion in the field translates to sediment in Cheney Reservoir.

Whenever the rainfall exceeds the amount of water that can infiltrate into the soil, runoff begins. When a crop field has some slope, it is a short time before the flow of water begins to concentrate. That concentrated flow of water can cut or erode a gully, carrying away tons of soil. Every year, thousands of tons of topsoil are lost through gully erosion. We estimate that about half of the soil erosion in Cheney Watershed can be attributed to gully erosion. Within a conventionally tilled field, these gullies are smoothed and refilled after each rain but they are even more susceptible to washing with the next rain. In a no-till field, the gully may continue to grow until an area can no longer be farmed since there is no process to smooth or fill the gully.

A good solution for gully erosion is a grassed waterway. Waterways designed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are site-specific with variations depending on the amount of drainage, the slope of the field, and the desire to either move or slow the water. Vegetation in the waterway can be varied as well. Stiff, upright grasses will slow the water and provide filtering action. Shorter, finer grasses will stabilize the soil but allow water to move with less filtering.

There are several opportunities for funding new waterways. The Continuous Sign-up Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP) provides an annual rental payment on the waterway acres with incentive payments and bonuses that may nearly cover the cost of construction. The grass may be grazed in the winter with a reduction in the rental payment.

Waterways can also be funded through EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) or through state cost share programs with no restrictions on grazing or haying and no annual rental payment. Additional cost share from the City of Wichita will help cover most or all of the cost of construction in the Cheney Lake watershed. Contact your local NRCS office or the watershed office (620-665-0231) to get started planning for a new waterway.

...continued from p 1 needs to be stabilized. Shoreline stabilization as well as other issues are budget driven. On a recent tour for the Citizens Management Committee and Reno Conservation District board members, Stuart showed us some of the damage that occurs with flooding events. In one case, a handicapped fishing ramp became of little use to those using wheelchairs because high water has shifted the rocks supporting the ramp causing it to have about a 4" offset in the concrete ramp. Stuart says he has to fix the ramp and address the remaining maintenance items while keeping within his budget.

Controlling trees and other invasive species such as Sericea Lespedeza would use up their entire budget allocated by KDWP to Cheney Lake if all the control needed was done each year. Stuart addresses the invasive species one area at a time to remain within his budget. He says he understands if farmers get frustrated that KDWP doesn't control all the noxious weeds like the farmers must on lands they farm for KDWP but he does what he can with the funds available to him.

Here is my challenge to you next time you go to a lake or any other public recreational area. Have a good time, but drive and recreate only in the designated areas. Pick up after yourself and leave the area clean for those that come after you to enjoy. Don't pour or dump anything into the water you would not want to drink; because at some point you may drink the water. By being a responsible user we can help those like Stuart to maintain our public recreation areas as a place for all to enjoy.



Stuart Schrag shows damaged ramp to CMC in August.

Our Mission:

To provide water quality education and funding for cost effective clean water projects that improve the North Fork Ninnescah Watershed which feeds Cheney Lake.

A Great Opportunity for Grass

By Lisa French

Do you have a small field that’s hard to farm? Or a field adjoining existing pasture? Are you interested in converting some crop acres to grass for haying or grazing? Watershed landowners east of Highway 14 have a good opportunity to cover their costs and collect an incentive payment for planting grass.

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) now makes flat payments for conservation practices based on a percentage of the estimated state-wide cost. Between supplemental cost share from the City of Wichita and EQIP payments we are finding that most producers will be reimbursed for 100% of their out-of-pocket costs and their labor and equipment use for grass plantings.

In addition, the City of Wichita has agreed make a one-time payment of \$100/acre for cropland that is planted to permanent forage. The landowner must agree to maintain the grass for 10 years and develop a management plan for haying or grazing. There is currently no limit to the number acres a producer can enroll. The incentive payment is intended to help compensate for loss of income during the time the grass is established (2-3 years). Acres that are under a CRP contract are not eligible.



After the grass is established, the watershed can also help find cost share for perimeter fence and watering systems.

Here are a couple of examples of payments that have been made in the watershed in 2010.

Land owner A planted 17.5 acres to native grass. His out-of-pocket cost for seeding the area was \$1,798.18. His flat payment from EQIP was \$2,031.93. He received the one-time incentive payment from the City of Wichita for \$1,750. This area was adjacent to an existing pasture and was often wet and difficult to farm.

Land owner B planted 71 acres to native grass. The area adjoins a native pasture and is distant from the remaining farming operation. The out-of-pocket cost for seeding was \$4,208.72. The EQIP flat payment was \$5,085.99. The one-time incentive payment from Wichita was \$7,100.

Contact the Watershed office at 620-665-0231 for more information.

Pratt County Conservation District (620) 672-2503
Kingman County Conservation District (620) 532-5731
Reno County Conservation District (620) 669-8161
Stafford County Conservation District (620) 549-3480

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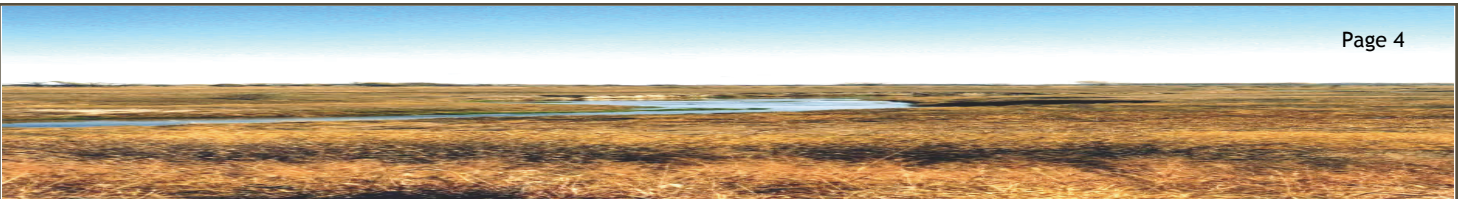
Reno County Conservation District
The Water Quality Project Office
18 E. 7th Avenue
South Hutchinson, KS 67505-1034



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Recent NRCS Personnel Changes

Jeremiah Schutz, Soil Technician, left in August to take a District Conservationist position in Nebraska.

Ryan Boggs began as the new Soil Technician in Reno County on October 25th. He grew up in Hiawatha, Kansas and has lived in Reno County for about 8 years.

Adam Elliott, Soil Conservationist, has accepted a position as District Conservationist in Ashland, KS. His last day in the Reno County office was November 19th.

Ben Allen will begin as the new Soil Conservationist on December 6th. He grew up in Mississippi. Ben has worked as a Soil Conservationist in North Dakota for 1.5 years.

Cheney Lake Watershed Office Update

We have officially joined the 21st Century. A new telephone system was installed November 8th. We now have voicemail! Our direct # remains the same, 620-665-0231, but extensions have changed.

- Lisa French.....ext 1335
- Howard Miller.....ext 1338
- Chloe Wilson.....ext 1341

