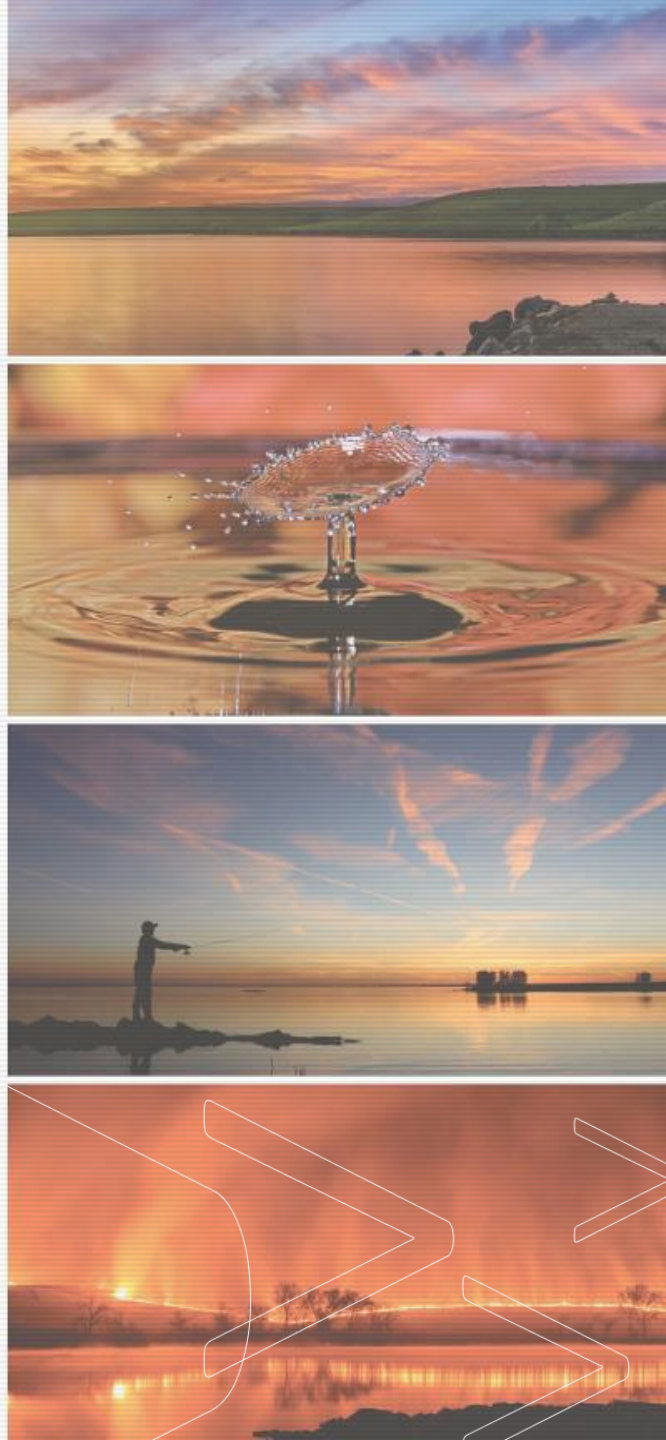
Matthew Hough, Ducks Unlimited Inc.

Matthew Smith, Playa Lakes Joint Venture

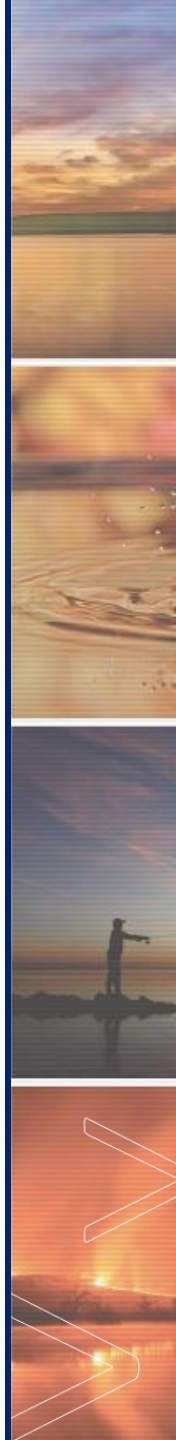
Restoring Playas - What's It Looks Like and Who Can Help?



Governor's Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas

Overview

- Playas – Restoration Program Opportunities
  - Farm Bill Programs
  - Other Partner Programs
  - Outreach



Background on Ducks Unlimited

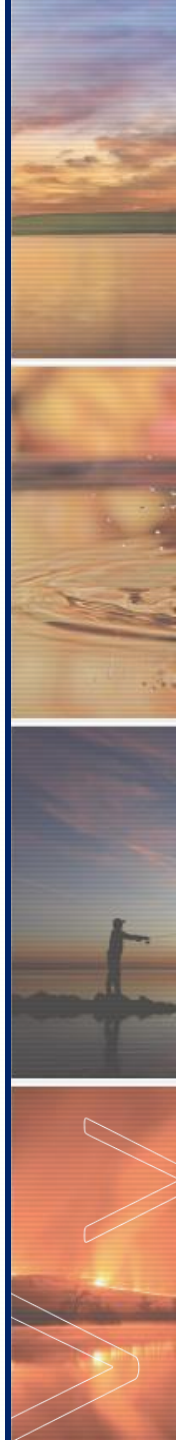
- 501c3 Nonprofit – est. 1937
- Banquet System
- Conservation
  - Partnerships
  - Competitive Grants – need matching contribution
  - Mission - *Ducks Unlimited conserves, restores, and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.*

Funding & Partnerships

- Various grant sources
- Partnership with various agencies and landowners
- Matching contribution
- Can be in-kind contribution
- Piggy-back with other partner programs (Farm Bill, KDWPT, etc.)
- Cost share $ depends on project type and location

Restoration & Enhancement Techniques

- Hydrologic Restoration
- Sediment removal
- Grassland Buffers
- Grazing infrastructure
- Protection (short-term to permanent)



CRP
Conservation Reserve Program

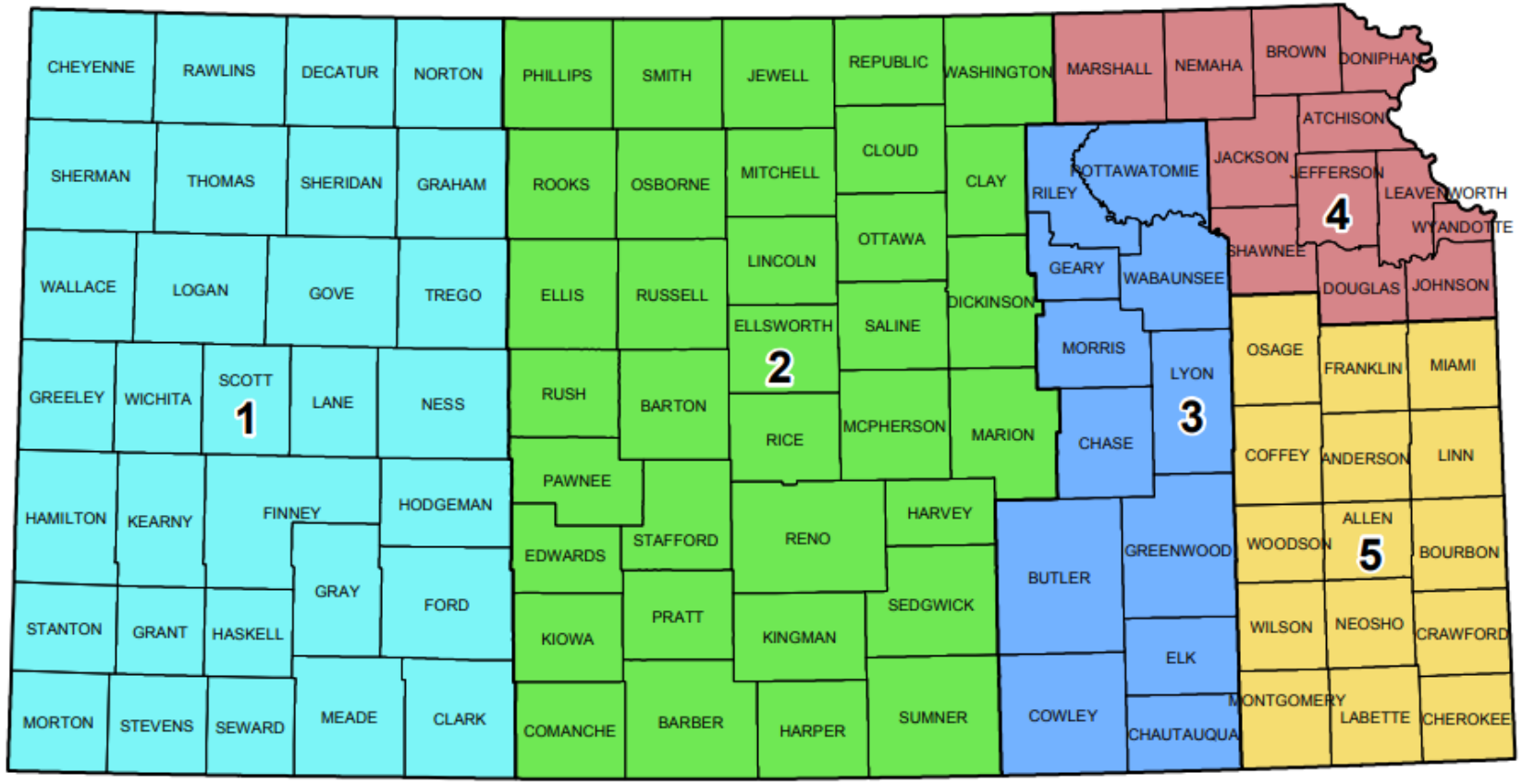
- 10-15 year program with annual payments
- 38B SAFE (continuous) - >10,000 acres completed
  - Reverse auction
  - Looking for additional acres now
- 23A (continuous)
  - Soil rental rates
- General CRP

ACEP-WRE
Wetland Reserve Easement

- 30 year to permanent conservation easement
- Includes full restoration
- Pays GARC rate on cropland & restoration costs
  - Reduced for 30 yr

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Fiscal Year 2019 - Kansas
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program-
Wetland Reserve Easements
Geographic Area Rate Caps*



Maximum Payment Rate for each Area**

Area 1 = $2,325/Acre
Area 2 = $1,751/Acre
Area 3 = $1,750/Acre
Area 4 = $3,190/Acre
Area 5 = $1,929/Acre

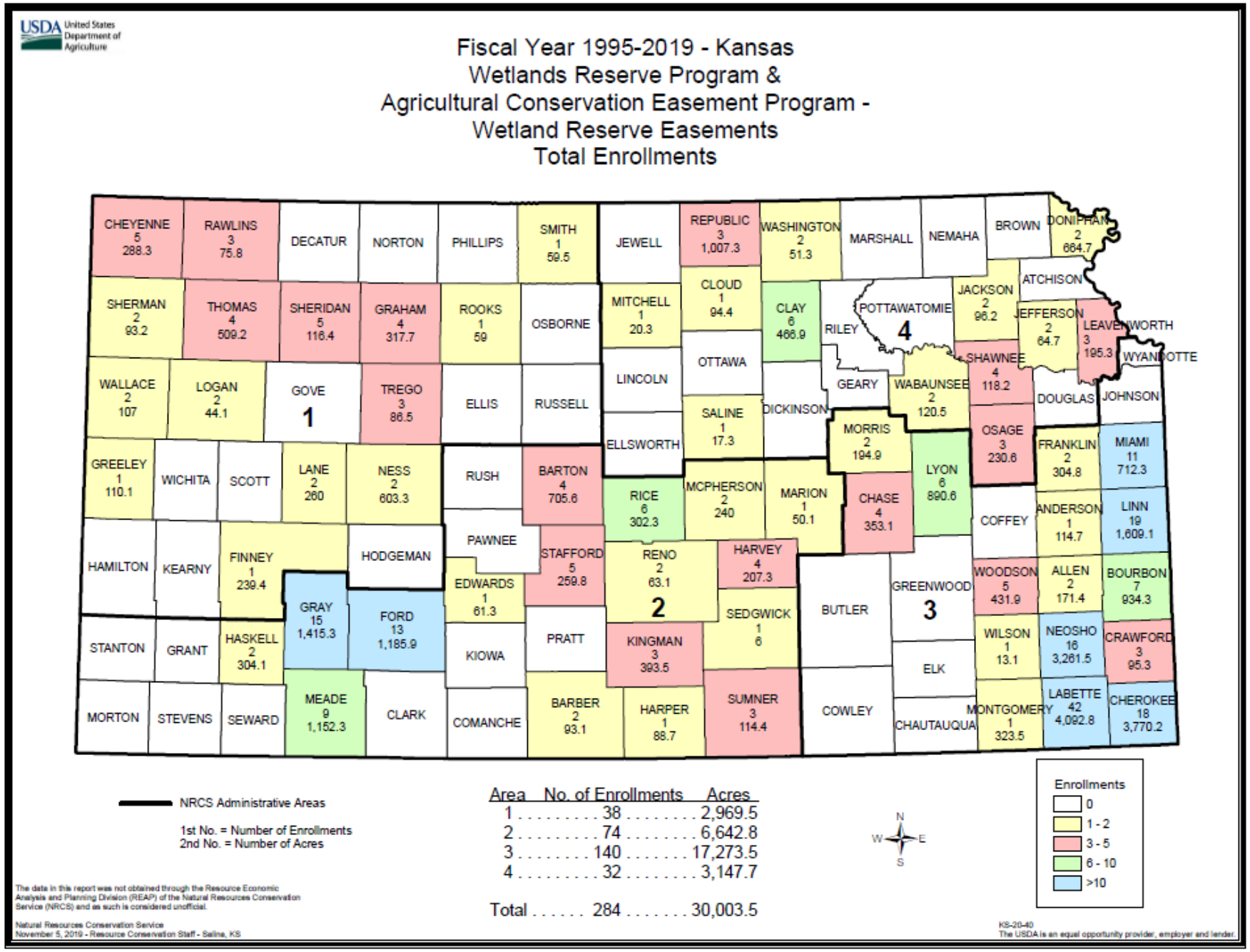
N
W E
S

* The GARC rate listed is for a permanent easement. For a 30 year easement the rate is 75% of the listed value.

** The dollar amount is predominately based on cropland land use. All other land uses would require an individual appraisal.

Natural Resources Conservation Service
August 10, 2018 - Resource Conservation Staff - Salina, KS

KS-18-31
The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



Additional Statistics

- Overall 75 WRE/WRP playas
- FY19
  - 13 easements
  - 1,220 acres
  - 6 are playas
  - 467 acres
- Overall Kansas WRE
  - 3rd in nation for WRE enrollment
  - 6th overall in FY19

ACEP-ALE
Agricultural Land Easements

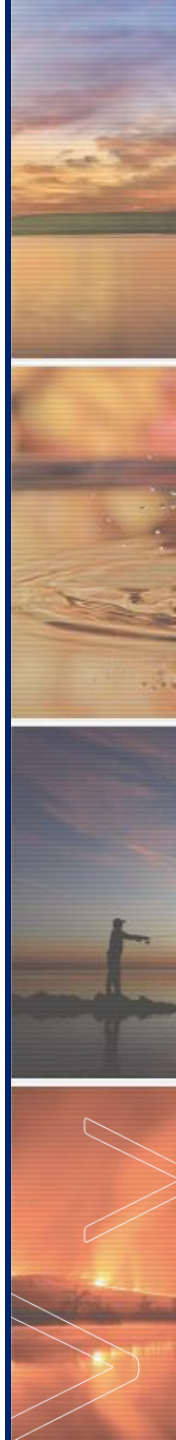
- *protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. Land protected by agricultural land easements provides additional public benefits, including environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat and protection of open space.*
- Pays ~ 75% of easement value
- Something we are exploring
  - Updated Farm Bill rules

EQIP
Environmental Quality Incentive Program

- Wildlife EQIP (possibly irrigation programs as well)
- Cost share program
- Include practices such as…
  - Hydrologic restoration
  - Buffer restoration
  - Grazing infrastructure
  - Pivot upgrades and other water-use efficiency
- Limited interest in playa region thus far
  - No payments (CRP, WRE)

CSP
Conservation Stewardship Program

- *- offers an opportunity for ag produces to enhance enhance wildlife habitat while adopting conservation activities that can reduce energy use, improve soil health, and improve water quality.*
- Identifies ways to increase a landowners whole operation
- Provides incentives for conservation efforts
- Limited interest in the playa region thus far



RCPP
egional Conservation Partnership Program

- Partner grant program under NRCS
- Separate funding mechanism from other programs
- Requires 1:1 leverage
- DU has an active RCPP for playa WREs

Technical Assistance

- Engineering and wetland design
- Vegetation management plans
- Wildlife habitat improvement ideas
- Program navigation
- Permitting

DU Easements & Acquisitions

- Permanent easement program to protect wetlands and associated uplands
- PF and TNC have similar program opportunities
- Based on appraised value
- None to date but some interested parties
  - One mitigation easement in the works
  - Potential for ACEP- ALE partnership
- DU also has an acquisition and land donation program
  - Interest from WRE owners and those wanting to increase access.

Cost-share

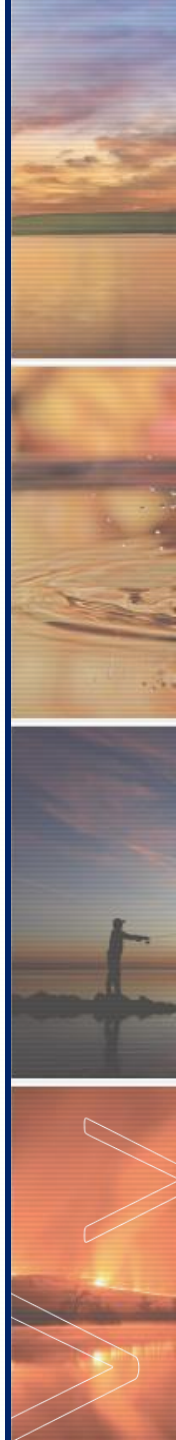
- Can piggy back on other programs
- Have spent ~$200K in last 2 years on over 5,000 acres and more to come!
  - Pit fills
  - Grass planting
  - Fence
  - Livestock water
  - Tree cutting
  - Invasive control and vegetation management
  - Wetland-friendly pivot upgrades (VRI and tracks)
  - Culvert install/replacement
  - Sediment, terrace, and road removals

Other Partners & Programs

- KDWPT – more to come…
- Department of Agriculture - Department of Conservation
  - Cost-share and outreach support
- Pheasants Forever – corners program, easements, and cost-share
- Conservation Districts – cost-share
- Several other local supporters and sponsors have assisted with this work

Outreach

- Cold Calls
- Word of Mouth
- Direct Mailers
- Websites, Email, and Social Media
- School Presentations (colleges and elementary - high school)
- Workshops
  - “Minis”



Workshops

OCTOBER 1, 2019 BY JESSICA MOUNTS

4th Annual Playa Lake Field Tour & Workshop

Playa Lake – western Kansas.

Playa Lake Field Tour

Tuesday January 14, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Haskell, Seward and Meade counties.

Playa Lake Workshop

Wednesday, January 15, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Garden City, KS – Finnup Conservation Center

- https://kaws.org/4th-annual-playa-lake-field-tour-workshop/

Matt Smith slides

- …