



Kansas Land Trust

Stewardship Notes

KLT project focuses on Kaw Corridor

One of the priority projects of the Kansas Land Trust this year is known as the Kaw Conservation Corridor Project. The Kaw Corridor Project is an effort to identify and preserve lands of ecological, historic, scenic, agricultural and recreational significance in the lower Kansas (Kaw) River Valley.

The Kaw Corridor is home to more than half the population of Kansas. In the past decade, this land has come under intense development pressure as population in several counties has increased at nearly twice the national average. The Kansas Land Trust offers communities and landowners in the Kaw Corridor an opportunity to preserve and protect lands that are essential to the high quality of life we enjoy in this region. As a land trust, KLT uses a variety of long-term land protection mechanisms, but primarily accepts conservation easements from willing landowners. Donations of easements or land to the Kansas Land Trust may offer tax benefits to landowners.

Where is the Kaw Corridor?

The Kaw River meanders through the counties of the project: Douglas, Jefferson, Johnson, Leavenworth, Shawnee, and Wyandotte. These counties are home to most of Kansas' large urban areas, including Kansas City, Kansas, the cities of Johnson County, Lawrence, and Topeka. It is a land of diverse ecosystems, including fertile farmland, native tallgrass prairie, species-rich wetlands, and well-established forests.

Rapid Urbanization

According to the 2000 Census, the U.S. population grew 13.1% from 1990 to 2000. For the same period, the population of Kansas grew 8.5%. The six counties in the Kaw Corridor in-



photo by Craig Thompson

Canoeing the Kansas River is one of the many recreational opportunities enjoyed by residents of the Kaw Corridor.

creased 12.5% overall. Johnson County grew 27% and Douglas County 22%, far exceeding the national and state growth rates. The effect of this rapid population growth has been ever-increasing development of farmland and other open spaces for housing, highways, and commercial spaces. Many landowners may feel pressured to sell rural land for development, without encouragement to preserve some land for open space and natural habitat. Too often, owners sell without even realizing that conservation measures can offer them significant financial benefits in the form of reduced taxes.

How KLT Can Help

Through the Kaw Conservation Corridor Project, the Kansas Land Trust is working to educate landowners, community leaders, lawyers, bankers and real estate professionals about the options that exist for preserving land. KLT is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization based in Lawrence, Kansas, with expertise in land conservation. KLT was founded in 1990 by citizens interested in long-term stewardship of natural and cultural resources. KLT accepts conservation easements, which are voluntary restrictions placed on land by willing landowners to ensure preservation of the land into the future. For more information on conservation easements, visit the website www.klt.org or phone or write for additional printed materials.

Land Worth Saving

The Kaw Corridor contains valuable natural resources that merit conservation. This is a unique place, an area of mixed ecosystems, where the hardwood forests of the East give way to the Great Plains ecosystem. This patchwork of landscapes provides habitat for a rich diversity of species, both plant and animal. Also, the Kansas River is the only public river in eastern Kansas. It is managed by the state and supplies water to most of the growing communities in the valley. The most important features of the corridor include:

- Tallgrass prairie: In the 1870s, more than 95% of eastern Kansas was covered by tallgrass prairie. Today, about 1% remains, and most of those remnant prairies are on upland sites with great views, so they are especially threatened by development. Hundreds of species of plants and animals de-

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Mission Statement: "The Kansas Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that protects and preserves lands of ecological, scenic, historic, agricultural, or recreational significance in Kansas." As a land trust, the organization uses a variety of long-term land protection mechanisms but primarily accepts conservation easements from willing landowners. Conservation easements are legal agreements by which landowners voluntarily restrict the type and amount of use permitted on their property. The Kansas Land Trust (KLT) is tax-exempt as described in Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations of easements or land to KLT for conservation purposes may have potential tax benefits for donors. KLT is funded by individual contributors, private foundations, corporations, and government agencies.

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OUTLOOK

Funding for conservation

by RoxAnne Miller
KLT Executive Director

KLT has received increasing numbers of donated conservation easements since its inception in 1990. Not all landowners will consider the donation of a conservation easement. To preserve some of our most critical, threatened lands, we need stronger incentives to compensate landowners to voluntarily protect their land. KLT is participating in several initiatives for purchasing conservation easements at the local, state and federal level. We are thrilled to participate in these efforts. They offer yet another avenue for us to fulfill our mission. Kansas has been behind the curve in funding conservation of our most significant lands. It is our hope that in the next couple of years there will be regular funding for these preservation methods in Kansas.

At the local level, I am chairing a committee appointed by the Douglas County Commission. Called ECO2, the committee represents a dual purpose: ecological protection and economic development. The committee is working with the Douglas County community to prepare and build support for a plan for open space preservation and business park development. The goal is to work together to sus-

tain a community we all want to live in, and ultimately provide public funding for this dual-purpose program.



I am also working with officials from the governor's office, the Kansas Department of Revenue, Mike Hayden, Secretary of the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks and Tom Sloan, Kansas Representative for the 45th District. This group intends to work over the summer to prepare legislation to introduce at the next legislative session. The goal is to develop funding for a state conservation easement purchase program. Stay tuned for more on this.

KLT is also involved with a coalition of conservation organizations, interested governmental officials, conservation-related entities and Senator Sam Brownback to develop additional federal funding to promote conservation easements on Kansas native grasslands. The goal of this group is to preserve significant parcels of land in the Flint Hills, the only remaining expanse of tallgrass prairie in North America. I look forward to giving you updates from time to time on these efforts.

Kaw corridor...

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pend on the prairie for their survival.

- **Farmland:** The Kansas River and its tributaries provide many acres of prime farmland, ranking among the best in the world. Kaw Valley farms are highly productive, growing grains, hay, dairy, fruits and vegetables.

- **Riparian areas and wetlands:** Mature forests and intermittent shallow wetlands adjacent to the river provide shelter for hundreds of species of resident and migrating animals. The entire length of the Kansas River has been designated critical habitat for our national symbol, the bald eagle.

- **Woodlands:** In an 1878 survey, the Kaw Valley floodplain was heavily forested and up to 1.5 miles wide. Today riparian and upland woodlands comprise only 3% of the total Kansas landscape.

- **Historic sites:** The history of Kansas statehood led inexorably to the Civil War. Early battles between free state and slave state philosophies occurred in the Kaw Corridor, including the Battle of Black Jack near

Baldwin, Quantrill's Raid in Lawrence, and the legislative gatherings in Lecompton, Prairie Village and Kansas City.

- **Recreation:** Residents and tourists have begun to discover the recreational opportunities of the Kansas river. Extensive possibilities exist on the river for canoeing, and along the river for hiking and bicycling. Over the past 10 years, KLT and other organizations have held river festivals and offered canoeing and other educational experiences on the river, but access for recreation is not fully developed.

Quality of Life

For most residents of the Kaw Corridor, the natural world brings tremendous enjoyment: the brilliant green of wheat fields in late winter; huge flocks of migrating snow geese in spring; colorful wildflowers amid waving grass in summer; and the glowing colors of the prairie in autumn - these all contribute immeasurably to the serenity and beauty of our lives. We owe it to ourselves and our children's children to protect these places of beauty.

Come to a prairie walk with KLT!

Two events are scheduled for Manhattan and Lawrence

Flint Hills Wildflower Walk Riley County 10:30 a.m. Saturday, May 22

Come and enjoy the great outdoors with the Kansas Land Trust. KLT will be holding a Flint Hills Wildflower Walk at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday May 22 on land that KLT is seeking to preserve through a conservation easement. The 205 acres of tallgrass prairie is 10 miles northwest of Manhattan. Kelly Kindscher, KLT vice-president and plant ecologist, will lead this joint outing for Kansas Land Trust and Kansas Wildflower Society members. Showy plants we may see include: Blue False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*), Cobaea Beardtongue (*Penstemon cobaea*), and Prairie Turnip (*Psoralea esculenta*).



KLT is seeking donations to purchase a conservation easement for this property through the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Natural Resources Conservation Service Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program. This is an opportunity to see what your donation will protect. Refreshments will be served after the walk.

Directions from Manhattan, Kansas: From the stoplight at the intersection of Kimball and Tuttle Creek Blvd., drive north on Hwy 24 - 177 (also called Tuttle Creek Blvd.) 9.7 miles. The highway heads north and then swings west/northwest. Do not

turn across Tuttle Creek Dam. Take a right onto the paved road marked Blue River Hills Rd. (Riley County Rd. 895 S). The intersection is also marked with Park Service signs pointing to

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SENSES OF PLACE

DORNWOOD NATURE TRAIL, MID-APRIL, MID-MORNING

by Elizabeth Schultz



In Michigan, where I grew up, spring seemed fleeting, a brief respite following the long days of winter and before the bright heat of summer. Suddenly the trees were all in full leaf, with buds vanished before they had been seen. By contrast, in Kansas, spring lingers longer: it unwinds like a Chinese scroll, with sequences of colors and fragrances, textures and sounds appearing in leisurely order. Yet, from the time of that first Kansas spring more than thirty years ago when I began to understand that spring was one opening following another, I continue to be surprised by this process of blooming. It is possible, however, as the scroll is unwinding, to hover for a while over a single picture, to make its specific details memorable, before allowing the intricacy and the multiplicity and the simultaneity of this process to become overwhelming.

For a morning we had the illusion of halting spring as we paused to look attentively along the Dornwood trail in southeastern Topeka. We knew that once a dairy had been situated here, with a large homestead, substantial barn, and out buildings, and at the trailhead a cluster of narcissus, a mature lilac bush, three stately pear trees, wild plum and stunted apple trees—in a profusion of blossoms—sketched the homestead's outline, signifying the care taken by the dairyman and his family to surround their home and work place with loveliness. Behind the ruined barn, its careful stone work now stained by graffiti and weather, we entered the layered woods and proceeded through a diverse terrain of ridge and meadow, pond and meandering creek. The intense urgency of life in branches creaking, birds chattering, buds swelling seemed distilled here despite the drone of I-70 traffic in the background.

The hardwoods—chinquapin, bur, and red oak, hackberry, walnut—stretched out above us, their limbs largely naked from winter's harsh denuding, but with the frizz and fuzz of pale green catkins softening them. Vines—wild grape, poison ivy, bittersweet, moon seed, euonymus—tangled with these limbs and with each other, transforming the woods into a complex dream catcher. Tightly packaged leaves, ready to burst their winter wrappings, tipped the twigs of young hickory trees. But dominating the middle story was the dense green of gooseberry and buckbrush bushes, Ohio buckeyes with their flat palmate leaves and upright torches of yellow flowers, and the pervasive and invasive honeysuckle which challenged these dark vines and con-

fused their wild design. Through this middle story drifted the fuchsia haze of redbuds, ubiquitous in town and countryside, the distinguishing feature of Kansas spring, yet like dreams escaped from the net and soon to vanish from our picture. Only momentarily were they suspended this morning, in these woods.

Surrounded by larger patterns of trees and bushes, at first we missed the small flowers spotting the woods' loamy ground—the white blossoms of garlic mustard, Dutchman's breeches, and fawn lily; the lavender of violet and phlox. We found the Dutchman's breeches, looking more like small moths than pantaloons, clustered everywhere once we started looking, while the delicate lilies with their dappled leaves were located primarily on the upper creek bank, seeking a different soil, a different slant of sun. Only at this moment in the year would these particular plants congregate together and display their finery of leaf and bloom, not for our pleasure, but for their own survival. Our task was only to try to be fully conscious of their intricate specificities. Deeper in the woods, birdsong multiplied. Initially, we heard only a *chick-a-dee-dee-dee*ing crossed by a tufted titmouse's *peter peter peter*. These sounds became complicated by occasional cardinal whistle and downy woodpecker hammer. Before long, however, we were eavesdropping on Carolina wrens in conversation, echoing each other from different parts of the woods, and a yellow-rumped warbler's solo, so clear it encapsulated and simplified time. But the Cooper's hawk, hunkering over her nest high in a hackberry tree, waited, unruffled and silent.

Leaving the Dornwood trail, we saluted three ancestral trees—a bur oak on the edge of a brome field, a sycamore tilted over the creek, and an American elm on the homestead's edge. Gathering shade and space into their branches, each towered over the woods. Their immense trunks, the bark creviced and scaled, testified to their long engagement with seasons. Yet the gnarled and ancient branches of each sprouted an exuberance of fluffy seeds and leaves. Where the sycamore's white branches met its trunk a clump of plants nestled tenderly, a small ecosystem, its seeds wind-blown from woods and meadows or carried up by birds and squirrels. Only at this moment was the greenery of these plants visible to us, before the great tree would obscure them with its broad leaves of summer.

KLT plans educational seminars on easements for attorneys

The Kansas Land Trust is sponsoring several educational seminars about conservation easements for attorneys and other professionals with an interest in legal aspects of conservation easements. Here is the schedule:

May 19, 2004 (Wednesday) in Wichita, KS; 1:00 – 4:00 Law of Conservation Easements sponsored by Lorman Education Services, as part of an all day CLE seminar, "Law of Easements". Location: Wichita Marriott Hotel, 9100 Corporate Hills Drive. This CLE seminar has a registration fee of \$289, CLE credit available.

June 4, 2004 (Friday) in Overland Park, KS; 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Location: Johnson County Central Resource Library, 9875 W. 87th

Street, Overland Park, KS 66212. No registration fee, 3 CLE credits available.

June 11, 2004 (Friday) in Lawrence, KS; 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Location: University of Kansas School of Law, 1535 W. 15th Street, Lawrence, KS 66045. No registration fee, 3 CLE credits available.

June 18, 2004 (Friday) in Topeka, KS; 12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Location: Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library, 1515 SW 10th Avenue, Topeka, KS 66604-1374. No registration fee, 3 CLE credits available.



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Wildflower walks...

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Stockdale Recreation Area. Drive north 1.6 miles down a winding paved blacktop road, around a curving low water creek crossing area, and up to a stop sign at a T-intersection. Turn left onto Stockdale Park Rd. (Riley County Rd. 396 E). After approximately 100 feet, turn back right onto Blue River Hills Rd. (Riley County Rd. 895 S) and proceed uphill about 0.4 miles. Turn left into pasture gate and park.

Akin Prairie Wildflower Walk 1 p.m. Sunday, June 6

The Kansas Land Trust will hold its popular annual Wildflower Walk at 1 p.m. on Saturday, June 6. The walk will take place on the Akin Prairie, in Douglas County east of Lawrence. This wonderful 16 acre tract of native prairie has been protected as a memorial to Tom Akin's wife, Dorothy and her love of colorful prairie wildflowers. Kelly Kindscher, author of *Edible Wild Plants of the Prairie* and *Medicinal Plants of the Prairie* will lead the walk. The walk will provide a wonderful chance to identify prairie grasses and wildflowers and to hear about the interesting lore surrounding some of our native plants. Refreshments will be served after the walk.

Directions to Akin Prairie: from K-10 east of Lawrence, turn south on Douglas County 1057. Go two miles, then turn west on 1150 Road, and go approximately .4 mile. Look for KLT signs. A gate to the prairie is on the south side of 1150 Road; Park along the side of the road.



Kelly Kindscher, KLT vice president and plant ecologist, is shown at last year's Akin Prairie Wildflower Walk. Kelly will lead prairie walks near Manhattan and Lawrence this year. Both events are free and open to the public. Walkers are advised to wear sturdy shoes, insect repellent, sunscreen and a hat.