

Conservation easement purchase announced by Kansas Land Trust

The Kansas Land Trust has purchased the first conservation easement in Kansas to be funded in part by state dollars. The easement will preserve 500 acres of tallgrass prairie in the Flint Hills.

A signing ceremony and dedication was held Sept. 16 at the RK Cattle Company in Morris County.

KLT was able to purchase the conservation easement using funding from the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) along with funding from the State of Kansas. While KLT has previously drawn on these federal funds to purchase conservation easements on farms and ranches, this is the first time for Kansas to use matching state funding. The State Conservation Commission provided the 25 percent matching funds and the landowners donated 25 percent of the easement value, which was needed in order to gain the final 50 percent from the FRPP funds, the program administered by USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service. The landowners also contributed stewardship funds to KLT that fund the land trust's administrative work, annual monitoring costs, and permanent enforcement of the easement.

The FRPP offers a great opportunity to use federal dollars to protect impor-

tant Kansas lands and compensate willing landowners for valuable development rights. Under this voluntary program, landowners retain their rights to use the property for agriculture.

On this occasion, KLT, NRCS and SCC recognized the landowners, Kent and Rose Bacon, for their generosity and foresight in permanently protecting and preserving 500 acres of undisturbed tallgrass prairie of the Flint Hills.

The prairie includes grass-covered highlands with a creek and riparian woodlands in the lowland. Kent and Rose Bacon have lived on the property for about 15 years. They acquired the property in 1991 and officially became Flint Hills' cattle ranchers when the RK Cattle Company was born.

The Bacons want to ensure that their land will be preserved as undeveloped rangeland in perpetuity. While they have had a strong sense of respect and appreciation for the land itself, a deepening understanding of the uniqueness of the Kansas tallgrass prairie led to an even stronger sense of this land for which they carry responsibility. Kent and Rose believe the real value of their land is in its present form. They see the conservation easement as leaving a legacy for future generations.

Visit grassandgrain.com for hundreds of upcoming sales from across the country!