

Little Arkansas River WRAPS

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Field Days are Fun for Everyone!



hand how the self-driven rig applies water to crops. Running alongside the irrigation system were several Weedbots from Greenfield Robotics. Other technologies (Arable Systems, Phytex, Autonomous Pivot, VandWater, and Aquaspy) were present to discuss how each technology has been put to use on the Flickner Innovation Farm, and how to incorporate each technology into whole-farm management.

Specialists from Kansas State University were also present. The Flickner Innovation Farm invited visitors into a soil pit for an “in-depth” look at how management strategies, like cover crops and no-till, affect the farm’s soil health. Specialists were also on hand to discuss the Testing Ag Performance Systems (KSU-TAPS). This is an interactive farm management competition where competitors make real-time decisions about every aspect of farm management in order to win prizes for profitability, efficiency, and yield.

The Field Tour held on August 9th near Burrton, KS brought out nearly 40 local attendees. The first stop was at the Marc Boese field, where extending the grazing season, cover crop mixes, and their positive effects on soil health and controlling wind erosion were discussed. The second stop was at the John McCurry Farm where experiences with livestock perennial forages, including Bermuda and Jose Tall wheat grasses were shared. Annual forages such as No-till rye and crabgrass were also discussed. Jaymelynn Farney, K-State’s Beef Systems Extension, was present at both field tour stops and stated that “When using these annual forages [sudans, millets, etc.], be aware of toxicities. Nitrates are a big one with haying these grass species. Just because the forage is big and tall doesn’t mean it is safe to feed to cattle. A \$15 test costs minimal as compared to losing even one pregnancy”. Other topics at both stops included fertilization and production strategies, tire tanks and alternative watering systems, utilizing crop residue, and forages in integrated grazing systems.

The Little Arkansas River Watershed hosted two fun-filled educational events this summer! The first was a Demonstration Day at the Flickner Innovation Farm on August 1st. The second event was a Field Tour, held on August 9th.

The Flickner Innovation Farm welcomed more than 75 visitors to the Demonstration Day, many of whom were producers. Other participants included extension, commodity groups, agency representatives, and industry. The day was supported in partnership with K-State Research and Extension, the City of Wichita, Mid-Kansas Cooperative (MKC), and the Kansas Water Office. Participants were able to get up close to a 360 RAIN irrigation system – one of only two operating in Kansas – and to see first-



Thank you Flickner Innovation Farm, Marc Boese, and McCurry Farms for hosting these field events and sharing your knowledge! Your continued dedication to our watershed is appreciated.

Harvesting Knowledge: Little Ark's Productive Producers



In this issue, we are high lighting the work of the **Mueller Family Farm**. Chuck and his sons, David and Jesse, along with the help of their wives, farm roughly 1,100 acres in Harvey County, just north of Halstead along the Little Arkansas River. The farm has been operating since Chuck's grand-father moved there in 1930. Chuck and his father started a partnership in 1990 and now a 4th generation of Muellers are part of the operation!

The Mueller Family Farm primarily produces corn, soybeans, and Kernza, a perennial wheat. The Mueller's utilize and advocate for no-till and cover crop best management practices (BMPs). They are currently 100% no-till producers and tend to use rye as their cover crop but have also been known to use turnips, clover, vegetable and flower packet mixes. The family often

uses a drone for herbicide spot-applications in their crop-fields. They are also limited livestock producers with a few dairy cows, as well as seasonal chickens and pigs. The family stopped running their commercial dairy back in 2018.

The Mueller's had so many exciting things to share when asked what their aspirations were for the future. They want to continue to strive to build and improve soil health and cut costs while focusing on drought resistance, water retention, and absorption. Father-like-son, both Chuck and his sons want to see that their farm is viable in the future for their children and any future generations, should they choose to continue in their footsteps. They want to control their inputs in a responsible way and are interested in new and unique ways to conserve those inputs, rather it be the seed itself, fertilizers, herbicide, or water.

When asked what advice they would like to share with fellow producers in the Little Arkansas River Watershed, Chuck said "sell the plow". The Mueller's made it clear that they think education is important. They feel "if you aren't trying new things on your farm for yourself, you are leaving knowledge on the table". They encourage fellow producers to use the resources that are out there and to at least try something new for yourself before making a decision on how to manage your operation.

Many thanks to the Mueller Family for your continued dedication to improving agriculture and protecting our water resources in the Little Arkansas River Watershed!

Upcoming Events

- **Stakeholder Leadership Meeting** for the Little Arkansas Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS).
When and Where: October 17, 2024 at 7:00 AM at the Opera Block Venue, 101 S. Christian Ave., Moundridge, KS.
All are invited, breakfast and coffee are provided.
- **January 2025 – Little Arkansas WRAPS Winter Meeting** – Please be on the lookout for details in December!

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