

Little Arkansas River WRAPS

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Little Ark Producer Co-Hosts the Wichita Water Tour with Senator Marshall



The Wichita Water Tour with Senator Marshall and EPA Region 7 took place on August 26th. The tour began at the City of Wichita's (CoW) Aquifer Storage & Recovery (ASR) facility located NW of Wichita. The event began with roundtable discussions high-lighting Wichita Water projects, and then the group of roughly 25 moved to the "Tour" portion of the day. They toured the ASR facility, stopped along the Little Arkansas River at a water intake site, and then moved to our watershed's very own Frank Harper's livestock operation. Senator Marshall asked several questions throughout the event and seemed genuinely interested in area water issues and agriculture. He also seemed impressed with the programs the City and our watershed are offering to improve water quality and quantity so that drinking water is accessible to CoW residents and smaller communities in the area. Programs discussed include:

The ASR project, which diverts water from the Little Arkansas River when the river flows are high, treats it to drinking water standards, and then injects the processed water into the Equus Beds aquifer. By doing this, the City accumulates recharge credits with the Kansas Department of Agriculture allowing it to withdraw this additional water from the Equus Beds aquifer when needed. The ability to establish and utilize these credits is critical to ensuring the City can meet the demand during an extended drought.

The CoW Water Reuse and Recycling Plan is embarking on a new recycled water study to explore more opportunities to capture and transport 50% of wastewater that's currently discharged to the Arkansas River. The captured water would be treated and then used industrially in its early stages, but the plan is for it to eventually become another source of drinking water.

The Environmental Finance Center at Wichita State University provides technical assistance to Kansas communities. This technical assistance advances critical infrastructure projects for Drinking Water, Wastewater and Stormwater. These projects support economic development, reliability, and public safety. The EFC has served 42 communities, impacting nearly 139,000 Kansans. Among those communities is Bentley and Garden Plain. Representative from both communities attended the field tour and gave personal testimonials to the EFC's role in getting them strategic water plans and funding sources secured.

Next up was Mr. Frank Harper, a Little Arkansas River Watershed resident and SLT member. Frank was kind enough to host the group and spoke about the benefits of the EPA and KDHE funded WRAPS program in our watershed. Frank said that "programs that provide incentives and encouragement to make on-farm management changes are important in making real strides in the conservation and protection of our water." Frank also touched on the importance of communication in the ag community. He said "we are together today to share perspectives on atrazine and various agriculture related topics. We need to have these strong discussions because it comes down to working together to arrive at a solution for water quality and conservation issues. We need to understand one another's [government, city, research, science, producer, etc.] needs." The group ended their day with a brief tour of Harper's livestock facilities where he shared the conservation practices that he has adopted to do his part in improving water quality. Frank said, "he wants to be a good neighbor", and everyone present knew he wasn't just talking about those neighbors in close proximity to his farm. He is innovative and planning for the future and doing his part to improve waters flowing from his portion of the watershed.



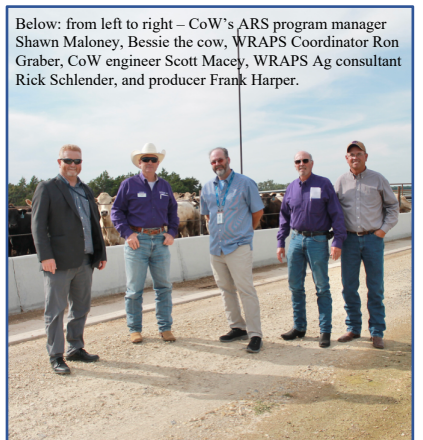
Senator Marshall visits the intake site along the Little Arkansas River near Sedgwick.



Little Ark producer, Frank Harper, shares his livestock operation with the group.



Below: from left to right – CoW's ASR program manager Shawn Maloney, Bessie the cow, WRAPS Coordinator Ron Graber, CoW engineer Scott Macey, WRAPS Ag consultant Rick Schlender, and producer Frank Harper.



Harvesting Knowledge: Little Ark's Productive Producers



In this issue, we are high lighting the work of **Mr. Marc Boese**. Marc grew up in Hutchinson and helped on his grandfather's farm every summer in northern Stafford County. While attending college in Hutchinson, he worked for a farmer and found himself enjoying it so he started farming independently. Marc purchased his first piece of farm ground in 1992 and moved to Burrton in 1997. Marc said, "behind every farmer, there is a good farm wife". His *good farm wife* is Paula who grew up on a ranch in the Flint Hills. Together they have raised three children, Wyatt, Macy, and Brody. Wyatt and Brody are following in dad's footsteps and the three share a growing cow/calf operation. In addition, Wyatt has goats, and Brody is getting into the sheep business.

Presently Marc has over 1,500 acres that he farms and additional acres in grass. He recognizes the importance of soil and water conservation. He says wind erosion is more prevalent than erosion from runoff in his area, so he likes to keep something on the ground. He began to no-till in 1996 and he uses cover crops to: protect the soils from erosion, hold moisture, and provide natural weed control. Marc still uses some of his grandfather's farming methods that he learned years ago. One example is that he puts his fields in fallow every other year for 10-11 months. He typically does 2 years of a row crop and then wheat.

Mr. Boese has been signed up in the Little Arkansas River WRAPS atrazine and sediment programs in the past and says the programs are helpful in providing funding to offset costs while trying new practices. He also noted the connections he has made while attending Little Arkansas WRAPS sponsored events. Marc says you may know local producers and neighbors by face and name, but these events offered him the means to get to know them on a more personal and professional level. These events have improved communication and knowledge sharing, as well as built relationships between local farmers.

Marc was asked if he had any advice to share with fellow producers and he said, "don't be afraid to ride out the first 2-3 years of getting a new management practice established." He shared his experience with no-till and the "yield drag" he noticed at first. He learned how to tweak the practice to increase yield. This is where WRAPS funds are beneficial. You receive incentive money to try the practice for a few years to offset any potential loss, that way you can stick with it until you do reap all the benefits the new practice has to offer. Marc noted that trying cover crops can take time as well, but "they [cover crops] will provide you with a cleaner field because of the weed control and if managed properly, cover crops are great at retaining moisture for the crop". Marc then said, "Get better every day in management. Management is the key to success". He also finds that his independent crop consultant is invaluable to his operation, providing him with an extra set of eyes.

When asked what his aspirations were for the future, Boese said "to be sustainable, try to expand the cattle operation to offset farm income, expand his irrigated acres and to better utilize his dryland acres". He wishes to help both his sons continue in agriculture and to build his 1st generation farm into a 2nd generation farm. **Thank you to Marc Boese and family for being stewards for conservation and water quality in our watershed.**

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