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‘Be the Vision’ Recipients Honored

The fifth annual Governor’s Water Conference was held November 14-15, 2016 at the Hilton Garden Inn & Conference Center in Manhattan, Kansas.

This year’s ‘Be the Vision’ award recipients were honored for taking extraordinary measures to conserve, reuse or adopt better practices to help ensure the future of our state’s water resources. This year’s recipients were David Royer with Delaware WRAPS Streambank Stabilization, the city of Garden City represented by Fred Jones, Tom Willis-T&O Water Technology Farm and Spirit AeroSystems.

“There are many individuals, cities and industries taking extraordinary measures to conserve, reuse or adopt better practices to help ensure the future of our state’s water resources,” said Tracy Streeter, director of the Kansas Water Office. “Be the Vision’ recognizes these Kansans for demonstrating the strategies included in the Vision, who believe in doing more and leading by example.”

Streambank stabilization is vital to solving sedimentation issues and David Royer’s sites were top priority within the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) projects to be constructed along the Delaware River. David’s advocacy has led many others to utilize the WRAPS program as well to reduce sediment and nutrients going into the lake and reservoir.

“I had already replaced a levee twice based on the river moving and as the river moved, my property line continued to move. Each year more and more of my farm ground was ending up in Perry Lake,” Royer said. “These are relatively low investments for what you get back and I am glad to be an advocate for how successful these projects are. Simply put, they work.”

David now serves on the Delaware River WRAPS Stakeholder Leadership Team, making a big impact in the watershed by hosting many watershed, legislative and forestry tours on his property and helping others to implement these practices on their farms located above the reservoirs.

As important as streambank projects are in the east, Water Technology Farms are a Vision action item that plays a key role in the Ogallala region demonstrating more can be done with less water.

“Throughout the public input process of the *Kansas Water Vision*, producers shared due to the diversity of the state, strategies and tools would not produce the same results everywhere,” said Streeter. “The team believed demonstration farms featuring the latest developed technology for water conservation was the best way to test the tools in each region that had different soil types and water conditions.”

Three Water Technology Farms were created in 2016: ILS/WaterPACK- south of Larned, Duane Roth/Garden City Company-west of Garden City and T&O Farms, LLC in Finney County. The first and largest to be developed for the

2016 growing season was T & O Farms owned by Tom Willis. To realize the full potential of coupling water saving strategies, Tom chose his farm to also be a Water Conservation Area which allows additional reduction in water withdrawals while maintaining economic value through water right technology.

“I want to prove the concept that we can conserve water and still achieve profitable yields using the technologies we are pioneering on my farm. I was able to shut my water off before others because of the technologies being used,” Willis said. “Secondly I have a son who is returning home to farm after serving our country. Hopefully, these technologies will help extend the life of the aquifer so he and others of his generation can continue to irrigate and farm profitably in southwest Kansas for years to come.”

Another recipient over the Ogallala who is working to address water issues through locally driven solutions is the city of Garden City under the direction of Water Resource Manager Fred Jones. In terms of water management, the Vision worked to create a platform of flexibility and resource availability for local water management. Under the direction of Jones the city has taken the local management of their resource to the next level in terms of water conservation and additional sources of supply as well as residential water use reduction strategies.

“We have worked with community partners to encourage water reuse for agricultural and industrial purposes and in 2015, the City of Garden City committed to use treated effluent from the Dairy Farmers of America milk drying plant currently under construction in Garden City,” Jones said. “The City expects to receive nearly one million gallons of treated effluent water daily that is removed from the milk at the plant. We are actively developing a water reuse master plan to implement a reuse strategy that will benefit the community by identifying opportunities to offset potable water consumption through municipal and industrial use partnerships.”

In addition Garden City is also working to educate citizens about water use through Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and statistical analysis. They will provide reports to customers that will inform them of their water consumption history and compare their consumption to peer properties. The information will provide estimates of water and money saved via water conservation tips.

Also honored at the Conference was Spirit AeroSystems for their collaboration with the City of Wichita to build a three-mile dedicated pipeline connecting the company’s manufacturing operations to a city water treatment facility. It will allow Spirit to purchase recycled water directly from the city to help the company run its factory more efficiently and help the community achieve its water conservation goals for long-term stability, without raising rates for other water customers.

“The new pipeline will allow Spirit to decrease its potable water usage by 70 percent as the company purchases up to 500 million gallons of recycled water each year from the city,” said Sam Marnick, Spirit AeroSystems executive vice president and chief administration officer. “Prior to this project, Spirit recycled about two million gallons of water per day using its internal reverse osmosis system but we wanted to do even more. Thanks to the partnership with Wichita Mayor Jeff Longwell and the city, the new pipeline will allow Spirit to use on average more than three million gallons of recycled water each day.”

There were more than 550 attendees at the conference last week. The first day highlighted the *Kansas Water Vision* implementation to date, focused on the value of water and action items needed to help solve Kansas’ complex water issues. Speakers were featured from all over the nation and day two highlighted the latest policy and research developments of water issues in Kansas.

To view the entire agenda of the conference visit: www.kwo.org.

The Governor’s Conference on the Future of Water in Kansas is hosted by the KWO, K-State /Kansas Water Resource Institute and the Kansas Geological Survey/KU. Major sponsors for the event include Black & Veatch, Burns & McDonnell and Great Lakes Dredge & Dock.

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As the state’s water office, KWO conducts water planning, policy coordination and water marketing as well as facilitates public input throughout the state.

The agency prepares the KANSAS WATER PLAN, a plan for water resources development, management and conservation. KWO also reviews all water laws and makes recommendations to the Governor and Legislature for needed legislation.