



Prairie Wetlands Chapter

Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams

Making the Most of Wetlands and Riparian Areas

Prairie Wetlands Chapter Purpose:

The Chapter serves as a clearinghouse for wetlands and riparian areas information and activities, promotes educational opportunities with a variety of targeted audiences, and facilitates project implementation for wetland and riparian area projects within the participating counties.



KAWS Mission: To ensure the future of wetlands, streams, and their adjacent riparian areas as an integral part of our Kansas heritage and landscape.

KAWS Vision: A public that is well informed and involved in activities that foster the protection, enhancement, and establishment of wetlands and riparian areas in Kansas.

The **Prairie Wetlands Chapter** of the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams organized in June 2001 to meet increasing needs for quality informational and educational materials stressing the importance of the function and values of these areas, to demonstrate how they can be enhanced, restored, and protected; and to encourage closer cooperation between landowners, agencies, municipalities, developers and others that impact these valuable natural resources. **The Chapter** covers **Cheyenne, Decatur, Logan, Rawlins, Sheridan, Sherman, Thomas, and Wallace** counties. The group is an affiliate of KAWS and supports its mission and vision.

The Challenge:

The loss of valuable wetland and riparian areas contributes directly to impairment of the stream, rivers and water bodies in the area. Playa wetlands are frequent in this area and many have been farmed for decades. The unique characteristics of these important wetlands have been altered through sedimentation, draining, and removal of native vegetation. Although an arid climate, the rolling topography of the area accentuates soil erosion from cropland and other land uses when high-intensity events occur. Soil erosion along streams and rivers is aggravated altering stream channels, flows, and important hydrologic characteristics. Water quality is degraded through increased sedimentation, fecal coliform, and increased nutrient and pesticide loads. Upstream flooding is more frequent without these natural buffers in place to hold and release runoff water more slowly.

Making the Most of Wetlands and Riparian Areas—Prairie Wetlands

Wildlife habitat has been negatively impacted by the reduction and often the elimination of wetlands through draining, dredging and filling for crop production. Additionally, riparian areas have been pushed out to allow farming to bank side or livestock winter or calve in these areas concentrating manure and aggravating soil erosion. This impacts fisheries as well as increasing water temperatures, by removing the shading effect of the trees and shrubs, thus altering the aquatic plant, invertebrate, and vertebrate communities in permanent streams.

The Chapter supports a voluntary, educational approach that relies on open communications between members. The group embraces the KAWS philosophy of building local capacity to get projects “on the ground.”

Who is Involved:

The Prairie Wetlands Chapter of KAWS is providing oversight and support to help get quality wetland and riparian area projects on the ground. Currently, our partner/members include:

Cheyenne County Conservation District	Sheridan County Conservation District
Decatur County Conservation District	Sherman County Conservation District
Logan County Conservation District	Thomas County Conservation District
Rawlins County Conservation District	Wallace County Conservation District
Northwest Area K-State Extension	K-State Extension
Army Corps of Engineers, Kansas City District	Western Prairie RC&D
Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks	Kansas Forest Service
Kansas Department of Agriculture	Pheasants Forever
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Kansas Water Office
Kansas Dept. of Health and Environment	US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Environmental Protection Agency	State Conservation Commission
Kansas Rural Center	Farm Service Agency
Kansas Department of Agriculture	Individual landowners
Streamlink	Quail Unlimited
KS Assoc. for Cons. and Env. Education	National Wild Turkey Federation

How Can You Get Involved:

If you are interested in promoting wetland and riparian area enhancement, restoration or protection in this area, you can:

- Contact the Prairie Wetlands Chapter through the Western Prairie RC&D for information and upcoming activities/meeting details
- Discuss your organization’s involvement with your leadership and offer the potential benefits from joining the Alliance - synergy, project technical support, project financial support, and the opportunity to help lead the community you live and work in to maximize the benefits wetlands and riparian areas offer
- Provide information to the Alliance on wetland and riparian area projects you are interested in seeing put on the ground
- Offer your support—technically, financially, or “in-kind” to help the Alliance succeed.
- Membership is free and open to anyone interested.



For More Information:

Contact the Western Prairie RC&D at 785.462.2602, fax 785.462.8764, or mail to 350 S. Range Ste. 13, Colby, KS 67701-2901.

For more information on KAWS, contact Tim Christian, KAWS State coordinator, at (620) 241-6921, or (620) 245.9618 (fax), e-mail tdchristian@cox.net or mail to Box 236, McPherson, KS 67460.