



News Release

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1st Annual Conservation Easement Summit and Panel Discussion

Oakley, KS - The Kansas Natural Resource Coalition, (KNRC) comprised of most of the western 1/3 of Kansas County Commissions, is sponsoring a first-of-its-kind conference at the Buffalo Bill Cultural Center in Oakley on April 8th & 9th. The Conference purpose is to discover facts, facilitate public dialogue, and generate awareness of Conservation Easement programs, benefits, restrictions and ramifications.

KNRC's objective for the Conservation Easement Conference is to promote understanding and discussion of this important and timely topic, particularly in light of several substantial federal funding earmarks for conservation easement programs, mitigation, wetlands acquisition and species preservation on private lands.

The 2014 Farm Bill established the Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and earmarked \$2.025 Billion for the acquisition of permanent Conservation Easements. KNRC President Shawn Tasset said, "*It is very important for all citizens to understand Conservation Easements' effects in both the short and long term, not only for private property owners and Ag producers but our local and state governments, as well.*"

Additionally, in recent years, Conservation Easements have increased in use with promotion as a way to protect wildlife, provide tax exemptions and inhibit land and mineral development - with an eye toward permanent preservation.

Those opposed to Conservation Easements are concerned about the imposed management restrictions, arbitrary contractual language, property devaluations, erosion of local tax base, and close relationships between multinational environmental groups, federal agencies and land trusts.

KNRC has included presentations from nationally recognized attorneys, academic professionals and an association president, who collectively have decades of experience in Conservation Easement Law, Litigation, Land Policy and regional issues.

Big 1st District Congressman Tim Huelskamp is on tap to give the keynote address.

The Conference is rounded out with a question and answer panel discussion, moderated by KNRC Executive Director Jim Carlson, between conference presenters, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist Gaye Benfer, Council to Assistant Secretary of the Army Stanley Rasmussen, staff from a regional land trust and a Conservation Easement Policy activist.

For more information on the conference, KNRC can be reached at (620) 214-9913.

The Kansas Natural Resource Coalition (KNRC) is an association of counties who maintain collective and participatory involvement in administrative government on behalf of its citizenry. The Coalition serves as a conduit between local, state and federal governments to promote balanced, necessary and effective administrative policymaking through the mechanism of government-to-government coordination. Our mission is to monitor, analyze, understand, communicate, and participate in those initiatives that materially affect the natural or human systems governed by individual member counties.