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NEWS RELEASE –

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**Streambank Stabilization Meeting Focuses on  
Technical and Financial Assistance  
By Connie Pantle, Kansas Rural Center**

*Whiting, Kansas*—Landowners and producers from the Delaware River watershed gathered in Whiting on July 9 for a stream stabilization workshop. The workshop was organized by the Delaware River Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) group and Kansas Alliance of Wetlands and Streams (KAWS).

John Bond with KAWS, said the meeting was held to gain the attention of landowners and producers along the Delaware River due to the amount of erosion occurring along the river and sediment ending up downstream. “The WRAPS group has identified the Delaware River as a high priority for reduction in sedimentation to Perry Reservoir. The workshop focused on landowners directly adjacent to river who were identified through aerial assessment as having a potential problem site,” he said.

Bond said the workshop was scheduled to help those landowners along the river learn about why these sites were potential problems and supply solutions to help alleviate them.

Ideally, Bond said the expected outcome of the meeting was “to find landowners that are interested in repairing problems on their land and then assisting them technically and financially.” Through existing funding, the WRAPS group hopes to assist with five or six streambank stabilization sites to use as demonstration sites to show to other landowners in the area, he said.

Marlene Bosworth, Delaware WRAPS coordinator, said the landowners and producers in the Delaware River watershed “provide valuable insights we hope we can use when stabilization projects are designed.” “These guys see the river everyday, know its history and the impact it has on their own personal operations as well as the surrounding area,” she said.

According to Bosworth, “understanding the dynamics of river flows, floods and erosion is critical to understanding how to work with the river and the forces of water.” Therefore, Phil Balch a stream specialist with Wildhorse Riverworks, Inc., a private consulting firm, was on hand “to provide technical advice on why the problems were occurring, what could be done to alleviate them, and provide examples of existing areas with similar problems and how they were addressed,” according to Bond.

Balch explained the natural patterns of a river and the evolution of a stream or river channel over time. Bosworth said that if landowners understand stream morphology and their role in riverbank stability, the amount severe erosion on the Delaware River could be reduced.

While there are many technical and engineered designs and devices for stabilizing stream banks, Balch highly suggests planting willow tree stakes. “This is an affordable and cost-effective method for addressing streambank erosion,” Balch said. Balch recommends using small willow tree stakes or saplings and placing 70 to 80 percent of the sapling underground. He said this deep planting allows the new tree to develop a root system to sustain itself later in life.

Bond said Jeff Neel of Blue Earth LLC completed the aerial assessment and was at the meeting to describe the methods used to assess the watershed, the areas identified and why those areas were identified. Neel explained that in his assessment of the Delaware River, he looked at the main stem of the river and 130 feet on each side using aerial photographs.

In particular, he explained he looked for streambank erosion (indicated by bare, steep banks) and animal feeding sites near the river. He highlighted areas in need of restoration, protection and management. Neel's assessment of the Delaware identified 53 sites in need of stabilization; 245 acres of riparian area in need of restoration, and 354 acres in need of protection to prevent degradation.

Also included in the assessment was a ground-truthing session with the Delaware River WRAPS stakeholder leadership team. The ground-truthing session allowed the team to verify some of Neel's findings from the aerial assessment or dismiss the need for restoration in certain areas. Further discussion with local farmers will also verify potential sites or remove them from consideration.

Bob Atchison, Rural Forestry Program Coordinator for the Kansas Forest Service, said there is an importance in protecting riparian forests in Kansas and specifically the Delaware watershed—which is estimated to be just 10 percent riparian forested. Riparian forests benefit water quality by filtering runoff and reducing erosion.

In addition to the impact on water quality, he said the benefits associated with woodlands include recreation from hunting; logging, and wildlife. “The biological diversity that these areas provide is very important,” he said. Many species of wildlife rely on riparian forests for habitat. Atchison explained that there were 4.4 million acres of forest in Kansas in the mid 1800's compared to just over two million acres now.

Robert Reschke, riparian and wetland coordinator for the State Conservation Commission (SCC), explained to the group many of the programs available to address riparian and streambank concerns, both technically and financially.

“How are we going to pay for these things we know we need to do?” Reschke said. He said there is a pool of money through Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and State Conservation Commission (SCC) for streambank stabilization projects. Reschke also referred to continuous sign-up Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices that a landowner would be paid an incentive for including filter strips (CP-21) and riparian buffers (CP-22). In addition, Atchison mentioned funding through the practice bottomland timber establishment on wetlands (CP-31).

Trees actually armor the banks against the erosive forces of water and are not a detriment that should be removed and disposed of, according to Bosworth. “You need natural defense mechanisms in place, and should protect them—which is a change in attitude and beliefs. In places where these natural defenses have been removed, we now have to go in and put a combination of practices back into place at great public expense,” she said.

Bosworth said the goal of the meeting was to illustrate to area landowners and producers what resources are available to assist them in making good decisions and implementing best practices on their farms. “I hope they all left with a better understanding of how streambank erosion occurs and how they have a great deal of control over stopping it on their own farms, even without a big project going in on their land. I hope they also left with a feeling of confidence in what WRAPS is doing,” Bosworth said.

To learn more about the Delaware River WRAPS, please see the website at [www.delawariverwatershed.org](http://www.delawariverwatershed.org) or contact Marlene Bosworth at 785-284-0080.