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### **Proper Management of Riparian Areas Provides Multiple Functions**

*Eskridge, Kansas* – About 33 landowners and ranchers attended the riparian workshop organized by the Flint Hills RC&D and Wabaunsee County Extension, on March 25 to learn how to better manage ponds, creeks and woodlands. Themes for the evening included introducing basic concepts of riparian areas and stream hydrology, forestry management, rangeland riparian management, streambank stabilization, and funding opportunities for rangeland improvement.

Paul Ingle with the Flint Hills RC&D kicked off the evening explaining the WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy) process and riparian areas. A riparian area is defined as the distinct ecosystem located around free and unbound water. Ingle stressed that riparian areas, “Are not wastelands!” They have multiple functions including removal of pollutants, trapping of sediment and moisture, stabilization of banks and reducing the energy of streams, along with provide wildlife habitat.

Ryan Neis, watershed forester with the Lake Region RC&D and the Ecotone Forestry Program, explained the importance of trees in riparian areas, forestry management practices, and reforestation strategies. Carol Blocksome, Kansas State University, followed this discussion with rangeland riparian area management. Blocksome overviewed how different topography and management practices affect how cattle influence riparian areas. She stressed the importance of good rangeland management for positively impacting riparian areas. “Good management can make about any system work,” Blocksome said.

Removing cattle entirely from riparian areas is not always the best solution, Rather, Blocksome suggested, manage riparian areas as special paddocks (when possible) by incorporating flash grazing where animals are only in the riparian areas for short periods of time. Also, Blocksome suggested maximizing what is attractive about the uplands (high quality pasture, alternative water, and mineral feeding) to minimize livestock from “camping” in the riparian areas.

Workshop attendees also learned of services available for managing riparian areas. Brandon Wilson with Osage County FSA introduced various CRP options including the newly available Marginal Pastureland program which pays livestock owners to fence out riparian areas and provide an alternative water source along with the addition of an annual per acre incentive payment. This is the first CRP program that does not require a cropping history.

Other services include the Kansas Rural Center’s Clean Water Farms project, the local WRAPS programs, and local Conservation Districts. Contact your local Conservation District office, or Paul Ingle of the Flint Hills RC&D at 785-640-2645 or KRC at 785-873-3431 for more information.

The workshop was made possible through funding and efforts by Wabaunsee County Extension, Wabaunsee County Conservation District, Flint Hills RC&D, Kansas Rural Center, Melvern Lake WRAPS, Pomona Lake WRAPS, USDA-NRCS, Kansas Alliance for Wetlands & Streams, Flint Hill’s Bank of Eskridge, Flint Hill’s Insurance, Wabaunsee County Farm Bureau, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment/ U.S. EPA Nonpoint Source Funds. -30-