

Our Mission:

To provide water quality education and funding for cost effective clean water projects that improve the North Fork Ninnescah Watershed which feeds Cheney Lake.

H2info

CHENEY LAKE WATERSHED, INC.

WINTER 2008

Life on the River

By Howard Miller

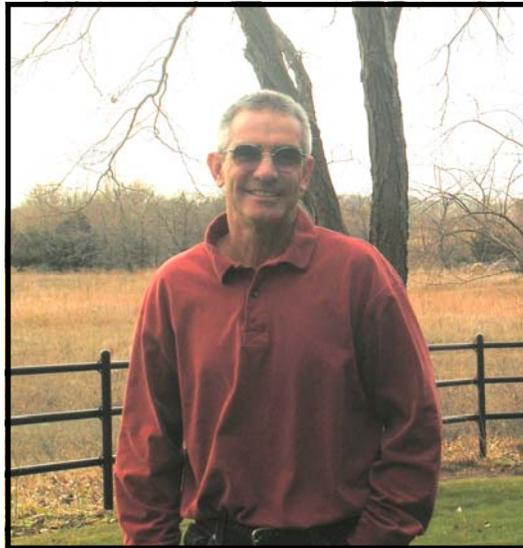
Mark Rogers remembers spending many carefree days playing in the North Fork Ninnescah River near Castleton. Mark and his cousins enjoyed fun in the water of the river from Castleton to Highway 17 along pastures the Rogers family grazed with their livestock. Mark attended Castleton Grade School in Castleton, a school that no longer exists. Today, in their retirement, Mark and his wife, Kathie, live along the banks of the North Fork Ninnescah in a home they built in 1976. Mark says they chose the spot because it was a nice raised mounded area above the river. They soon discovered that years before, Native Americans had also chosen the same spot to camp along the river. As they began to prepare the site for their house they found numerous arrowheads that indicated the earlier residents had been there. For a few years after the house was built Mark says they kept discovering new arrowheads being uncovered on their driveway. When

asked if he has seen changes in the river since Cheney Lake was built he replied the main thing he has noticed is an increase in the number of species of fish. One flood that stands out in Mark's mind is the flood of 1979

rainfall as part of a network of volunteers across the Watershed that record precipitation on a daily basis. In 1990 one storm stands out from all the others. The tornados that eventually reached Hesston began as they destroyed

Mark's boyhood home. Mark says the ice storms and the damage they have done are another group of storms that are out of the ordinary.

Mark and Kathie are enjoying their retirement and the break from the daily commute to Wichita where Mark is retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Kathie from the Department of Labor. Their house situated above the Ninnescah River gives them a good view to observe the changes occurring in the River. Retirement has afforded Mark some time to reflect on memories of his late father, Paul Rogers, left with him. Mark remembers his father telling how in the 30's he pumped water out of the Ninnescah River to irrigate an alfalfa field. And how he buried steel barrels with the ends removed close to the river and used the underflow to water his livestock. An-



Mark Rogers

when the river was high enough to float livestock and bales across Highway 17. Since the introduction of CRP grass acres he has observed that the floods are less flashy and the flow remains high for a longer period of time following the rainfall. Kathie has been an observer for the National Weather Service for over 20 years and now also records

rainfall as part of a network of volunteers across the Watershed that record precipitation on a daily basis. In 1990 one storm stands out from all the others. The tornados that eventually reached Hesston began as they destroyed Mark's boyhood home. Mark says the ice storms and the damage they have done are another group of storms that are out of the ordinary. Mark and Kathie are enjoying their retirement and the break from the daily commute to Wichita where Mark is retired from the Department of Veterans Affairs and Kathie from the Department of Labor. Their house situated above the Ninnescah River gives them a good view to observe the changes occurring in the River. Retirement has afforded Mark some time to reflect on memories of his late father, Paul Rogers, left with him. Mark remembers his father telling how in the 30's he pumped water out of the Ninnescah River to irrigate an alfalfa field. And how he buried steel barrels with the ends removed close to the river and used the underflow to water his livestock. An-

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Current cost share opportunities

By Lisa French

“Winter is always a good time to begin planning for conservation work.”

EQIP and WHIP - The cut-off date for EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentive Program) and WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program) applications is January 9, 2009. One of the most promising options under EQIP is an incentive payment for conversion to no-till farming. Eligible producers may receive up to \$40/acre in return for a three year agreement.

• **WRP** - The cut-off date for WRP (Wetland Reserve Program) applications is December 15, 2008. Eligible producers receive annual payments in return for long term contracts to protect and restore wetlands.

• **CRP Fence** - The City of Wichita will pay 50% of the cost to install up to 2 miles of perimeter fence on expired CRP contracts within the Che-

ney Lake watershed. Producers who are interested may contact the Watershed office (665-0231) at any time to complete an application. Cost share funding is based on either actual cost or county average cost whichever is less. The producer must agree to develop a grazing plan and maintain the system for 10 years. Additional cost share is available to develop watering systems on these acres.

• **Livestock and Streams** - The Watershed office is taking applications for projects related to livestock and streams. Projects that reduce the time that livestock spend along a stream would be eligible. These might include the addition of new watering points, cross-fencing, and the redesign or relocation of winter feeding areas. Staff from the watershed office and NRCS will work with you to make

changes that make your life easier as well as protect water quality.

• **Priority Area Incentives** - Farmers in parts of the watershed generally downstream of the point where Highway 17 crosses the Ninnescah are eligible for a \$200/acre incentive payment when signing up for most Continuous CRP practices such as buffer strips and waterways. This area is also eligible for cost share to convert crop acres to permanent forages with assistance on seeding and fence costs.

Start Planning Now - Winter is always a good time to begin planning for conservation work. Having the plan in place helps you take advantage of cost share opportunities as they arise.

Contact the Cheney Lake Watershed office for more information 620-665-0231.

Life on the River

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other memory Mark hastens to share is of the lush little bluestem meadow that once grew and was baled for hay by the Rogers family. Today that meadow is a patch of sandburs and assorted weeds covered by several feet of sand dumped by a flood in the mid-70's. Mark says he enjoys living on the

river and watching the changes as the river aligns and then realigns itself over time. Some things, he says, you really find hard to explain, like why the river claims a row of trees on one bank and allows new trees to grow on the opposite bank. Mark beams with pride as he talks about the land, several miles above Cheney Lake, that

his family has managed for generations. Mark and his family, farming and ranching along the North Fork Ninnescah River, certainly have a heritage to be proud of for many more generations.

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All Reno County Conservation District programs and services are provided to anyone regardless of race, sex, color, national origin, ancestry, age or physical or mental handicap.

River Friendly Farm Assessment

Watershed farmers are invited to complete the River Friendly Farm Assessment for your farm with the help of staff from the Kansas Rural Center. This environmental self-assessment is a series of questions regarding current conditions of rangeland, cropland and other aspects of the farm. The completed assessment is used by you and your family to develop an action plan that protects or improves water quality on the farm.

Those who complete the assessment are eligible for a \$250 incentive payment. This winter would be a good time to review your farm operation and earn a little cash in the bargain. Call the watershed office for more information at 620-665-0231.

Recent NRCS Personnel Changes -Melissa Reeves

RENO COUNTY - Lance Ohnmacht, Soil Technician, recently was promoted and moved to the area office. Jerrod Kneisel, Soil Conservationist, left in July to take the Supervisory District Conservationist position in Medicine Lodge. Adam Elliott began as the new Reno Soil Conservationist on November 10th. Adam was employed with the State Conservation Commission in Jewell Co for almost 4 years prior to being hired by NRCS. Adam's wife is from Arlington and they have two little girls.

KINGMAN COUNTY - Bob Carlson retired in 2003 as District Conservationist and now has come back under the ACES program as a Conservation Specialist. Glynn Hensley started as a technician hired by the State Conservation Commission in September. Jackie Stasa has been working for the district as District Clerk since October, 2007.