



Lebsack at the largest natural spring in Kansas
© Alan Pollom/TNC

Mourning Wayne Lebsack

The Nature Conservancy is mourning the loss of founding Kansas trustee, Wayne Lebsack, who passed away earlier this year at the age of 93.

Wayne was the driving force behind establishing a Kansas chapter of TNC in the 1980s and was a highly respected board member for 30 years. I am honored to have known and worked with him.

We are grateful for Wayne's vision, leadership and passion for the natural world. He will be missed, but we know that his legacy of conservation will live on his children and grandchildren and in the organization he helped build.

Rob Manes, State Director

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Theo Michaels checks the condition of plants placed at Anderson County Prairies three weeks prior. © Laura Rose Clawson/TNC

Preserves host multi-university research project

Five Kansas universities. Twenty-two principal investigators. Three Nature Conservancy preserves. They all come together in a research project funded by the National Science Foundation to investigate micro-organisms in Kansas' native prairies. Titled *Microbiomes of Aquatic, Plant and Soil Systems Across Kansas*, it's a complex endeavor. Researcher and doctoral student Theo Michaels provided a simplified explanation: "Organic matter. It matters."

Led by researchers from the University of Kansas, staff and students from Kansas State University, Wichita State University, Fort Hays State University and Haskell Indian Nations University are also collaborating on the project. The Conservancy's Konza Prairie Biological Station, Anderson County Prairies and Smoky Valley Ranch will host research, in addition to many other sites throughout the state.

Michaels recently asked volunteers to assist at Anderson County Prairies with transplanting soil monoliths—vertical slices of soil ranging in size from a few inches to more than 1.5 cubic meters. She will study these transplants in hope of improving restoration efforts by looking at the soil. "It's not just getting more plants, it's how do we restore a whole ecosystem?" For her, the numerous partnerships aren't a complication but one of the best possible outcomes. "I feel very attached to these things," she says pointing to the small metal tags numbering the monoliths. "I want other people to utilize them, to study them."



Barry Mayhew, left, and Chuck Rice, right (photos courtesy Mayhew and Kansas State University)

Investment executive and Nobel Prize-winning scientist join Kansas board of trustees

When asked for pictures to accompany their biographies, Barry Mayhew and Chuck Rice both selected shots that featured soybean fields. Not surprising, considering that Kansas ranks 10th in soybean production among U.S. states.* In addition to farming, these new trustees for The Nature Conservancy bring expertise in financial investment and climate change.

Barry Mayhew is a retired financial services executive with a lifelong interest in Kansas. During a 22-year career at American Century Investments, he grew the intermediary sales organization into a multi-billion dollar business. He grew up working the land on a farm in south-central Kansas with his father and brothers, and he has always had an affinity for the sweeping vistas and green pastures of the Flint Hills.

“Serving on the Conservancy board affords me the opportunity to reconnect with my farming and ranching background and invest in the future at the same time,” says Mayhew. “It is the most effective way I can think of to make a positive difference in preserving the natural treasures of this state.”

Dr. Charles W. Rice, distinguished professor of agronomy at Kansas State University, specializes in the relationship between soil microbiology and climate change. His research program is designed to improve and protect the environment. He is also co-winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

“The Nature Conservancy has a unique role of protecting natural resources while maintaining economic viability in communities. The prairies in Kansas are especially important both as a natural resource and to the economy of Kansas. I would like to help be part of that role,” says Rice.

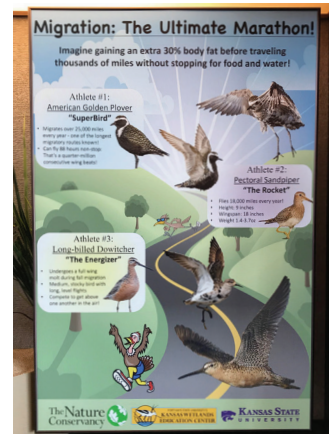
*In 2016, according to the Kansas Soybean Commission

NATURE KANSAS

K-State Class Designs New Educational Displays

“What we do here, in Kansas, matters to the people and birds in South America,” Dr. Ted T. Cable advised his students. “How will you provoke action, a new way of thinking?” he challenged.

The class of seven from Kansas State University had made the trip to Cheyenne Bottoms preserve and wildlife area to prepare for their work designing new educational displays about shorebirds for the Kansas Wetlands Education Center. All were pursuing degrees in park management and conservation, and this was an opportunity to combine class work with real-life experience.



Student display © Curtis Wolf

Cable is an award-winning professor and author of 15 books about heritage interpretation, travel and birds. It was the idea of Robert Penner, TNC avian programs manager, to bring in Cable and his students.

“I was looking for help to tell the story of shorebirds,” said Penner. “Preserving Cheyenne Bottoms is vital to these migrating birds, but they spend most of their time somewhere else in the world. These new displays are one way to spread the word during the times they can’t be seen by visitors.”