



A Kansas park ranger takes a water sample during blue-green algae training at Milford Lake. Photo © Marvin Boyer/US Army Corps of Engineers

Fighting Toxic Algae in Kansas

Regional partnership to improve water quality

Milford Lake, north of Junction City, is an important lake for Kansans, providing drinking water for 1/3 of the state's population. Each year, thousands of people use the area for boating, fishing, hiking and other recreation.

The bad news: Problems related to water quality in the Milford Lake watershed are getting more frequent, leading to shutdowns of the state's largest man-made lake every summer since 2011.

The good news: There are lots of ways to help improve the situation at Milford.

One of the biggest threats is harmful algae blooms. When excess nutrients and fertilizers from surrounding agricultural land are washed into the watershed, it feeds naturally occurring algae downstream. At times, the algae can form a dense mass called a bloom,

and these blooms are toxic to people, pets, livestock and wildlife.

Now, through a voluntary program, agricultural producers are making changes to help control nutrient pollution and erosion. The upgrades improve the health of the land and water quality both at home and downstream.

"Nutrient enrichment is a major issue plaguing Kansas streams," says Heidi Mehl, Healthy Streams for Kansas manager at The Nature Conservancy. "Here in the Milford Lake watershed, we have a way to address the issue while supporting farmers and all those who rely on the recreation economy in the area."

The Nature Conservancy is just one partner in the Milford Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership



Program, a vast collaboration of public, private and non-partner organizations all working alongside farmers and landowners to take action on water quality.

Kansas agricultural producers in the Milford Lake watershed can receive up to 90 percent cost-share to put a combination of best-management practices into action. If you're located in Clay, Cloud, Dickinson, Geary, Jewell, Mitchell, Republic, Riley or Washington counties, the next sign-up deadline will be in fall 2019. Learn more at milfordwatershed.org.



(left) Chaston, Sarah, Kyle, Stacy and Asher Hoeme, photo courtesy Sand County Foundation; (right) Mary Ice, photo courtesy Mary Ice

Western Kansas farmer and educator join Kansas board of trustees

Stacy Hoeme and his son, Chaston, operate a 10,000-acre cattle ranch along the Smoky Hill River and farm another 10,000 acres in Scott County. For more than 40 years, the Hoeme family has been on the cutting edge of conservation practices that help their farm’s profitability, soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat. The diverse collection of plants on their pastures supports some of the largest known populations and densities of the lesser prairie-chicken. In 2018, the Hoeme Family Farm and Ranch was selected as the Kansas Leopold Conservation Award winner.

A native Kansan and graduate of Kansas State University, Mary Ice spent much of her adult life living in Illinois and Texas. Home, however, was always Kansas because of the people and places that have meant so much to her. Mary has used her background in education to serve in volunteer and leadership roles in every community where the Ices have lived. Mary currently serves on a variety of advisory boards at K-State and is a member of the Symphony in the Flint Hills board of directors. The Ice family is proud to own ranch land in the Kansas Flint Hills and feels fortunate to have the opportunity to steward such a special place for future generations.

As trustees for The Nature Conservancy, Hoeme and Ice join a diverse group of local volunteer leaders who guide our conservation work in Kansas. View the complete list of trustees at [nature.org/contactkansas](https://www.nature.org/contactkansas).

NATURE KANSAS

Advocacy Day

On June 12, staff and trustees from Kansas met with lawmakers in Washington, D.C. to ask them to support policies that advance conservation, invest in nature and support action on climate change. We met with every Congressional member from Kansas or their staff and will continue to work with them throughout the year to encourage support for strong, science-based federal environmental policy.



With Representative Sharice Davids. © TNC



With Representative Steve Watkins. © TNC



With Representative Roger Marshall. © TNC