

# NATURE

**KANSAS**

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Terrace Lane Farm is evenly split between the production of crops, like wheat and soybeans, and cattle ranching. Wheat © K-State Research & Extension, Cattle © Richard Hamilton Smith

## Introducing Terrace Lane Farm

Our vision for a cutting-edge demonstration and research farm

Agriculture is the world's largest industry, employing more than a billion people worldwide and generating more than \$2.4 trillion globally. Not only are farmers and ranchers a collective economic engine, but they also produce the food, fuel and fiber needed to sustain humankind. They are stewards of the land and remain among the greatest allies for conservation.

At the same time, agriculture's footprint on the planet is significant. Here in Kansas, crops and pastureland account for 87.5% of all land in the state. This extensive coverage has profound impacts on habitat, biodiversity and water resources. But the incredible scale of agriculture in Kansas also provides great opportunities to increase sustainable agriculture practices.

The Nature Conservancy is proud to announce the acquisition of Terrace

Lane Farm, a 1,008-acre farm in Dickinson County, Kansas, that we will operate as a demonstration farm to share best practices for soil health, water quality and agricultural resiliency. A portion of the farm will also be used to research new strategies in regenerative farming and ranching.

With both cultivated crops and ranching, Terrace Lane Farm will be a place to experiment and learn what conservation agriculture practices are most effective in Kansas. Relying on TNC's scientific roots, we will closely monitor the impacts to ensure we are achieving the results of increased soil carbon, reduced water pollution and flourishing wildlife populations. The lessons we learn at Terrace Lane Farm will help other farms, too.

"The ultimate goal is to share our results with others so that these practices can be

adopted at the incredible scale needed," says Heidi Mehl, director of water and agriculture programs. "Farmers and ranchers listen most to their neighbors and peers when considering changes to their operations, so we will invite them to Terrace Lane Farm to see things like cover crops and buffer strips in action and learn from each other."

TNC is developing a management plan for the farm and has assembled an advisory committee that includes Kansas farmers and ranchers, scientists and trustees. TNC's global managing director for food and freshwater systems, Michael Doane, will also serve on the committee. Terrace Lane Farm will not be open to the public, but field days and other outreach activities are planned. Watch for more information in the coming year.

### SUPPORT OUR WORK

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Kelly Blandford © Nick Krug

## Q&A: Kelly Blandford

### Meet our Associate Director of Policy & Philanthropy

**Hi Kelly! Tell us about your new role in conservation policy for The Nature Conservancy.** Some readers may know that I've been on TNC's staff as associate director of philanthropy since 2016. I love working with the dedicated donors and supporters who make TNC's work possible, but I'm excited to now spend half of my time helping Kansas lawmakers make informed decisions about climate action and other policies that bring both environmental and economic benefits.

**What is conservation policy? Can you give us an example?** TNC is best known for our on-the-ground efforts to protect land and water, but influencing state and federal policies is another important tool in the conservation toolbox. We advocate for science-based, nonpartisan policy solutions that work for both people and nature. I'm most excited about a bill that was introduced in the Kansas legislature earlier this year. House Bill 2320 would authorize the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) Act. C-PACE is a financing tool that makes it easier and less expensive for people to add clean energy upgrades as well as energy and water efficiency technologies to their commercial and agricultural properties. All of Kansas's neighbors—Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma—have enabled C-PACE. I hope that the bill passes next year so Kansas can join them in offering this financing tool and implementing more clean air, energy and water projects.

**How did you get involved in this work?** I've always been a nature lover, exploring national parks and wild places with my parents since I was little. I started volunteering for The Nature Conservancy while working toward a biology degree at the University of Kansas. I then earned a master's degree in environmental economics and policy from Duke University and felt I could make the biggest impact in the policy arena. Before coming to TNC full-time in 2016, I was an environmental scientist and project manager for a consulting firm in Washington D.C. where I supported federal contracts for water policy. I think we all have a responsibility to speak up for nature by conserving and protecting our environment. There are so many ways to help.

## NATURE KANSAS

### Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve Puts on a Flowery Show

TNC's Chris Helzer captured what he called a "primrose party on the prairie" this summer at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve in Chase County. Located in the heart of the Flint Hills, this TNC preserve is also the only National Park Service site dedicated to the tallgrass prairie. Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is open to visitors 24 hours a day, all year round. Learn how to visit this and other places TNC protects in Kansas at [nature.org/kspreserves](https://nature.org/kspreserves).



Top to bottom: Missouri evening primrose, showy evening primrose, ground plum, prairie penstemon © Chris Helzer/TNC