Adapting to Change Seminar – Pittsburg, Kansas

Wednesday, December 8

Becky Cooper - Scribe

The class assembled in the lobby of the Kansas Technology Center on the campus of Pittsburg State University. We were warmly greeted by Dr. Bruce Dallman the Dean of the College of Technology. After giving us a brief introduction about the building (> 6 acres under roof) and the student body (700 – 1500 students in engineering technology and material technology) he acted as our tour guide.

There are five programs of study within the college of technology including; automotive, engineering, construction management and construction engineering technologies, graphics and imaging, and technology and workforce learning. We were able to briefly visit each different program area within the college. Our first stop was the technology education program of study which prepares teachers for both elementary and high school levels. Their motto is “dream it, scheme it, build it.” Several of our class members recognized how critical the skill sets taught in this program would be to

reach President Obama's future education goals of having all high school students either college or career ready.

Another program of great interest to the class was plastics engineering. This program dealt with both thermoset and thermoplastics. Thermosets are those materials that are non-reversible to their original structures such as composite materials used in the aircraft industry. Thermoplastics are those that after heating can be returned to their original ingredients and can be recycled. Thermoplastics can be created by blow mold, extrusion, or injection molding and are found in many common everyday applications such as oil bottles, gas cans, etc…

The foundry has been nationally recognized for their investment casting process. The University holds a seminar on this technology yearly with international participation. In the investment casting process they can pour mixtures up to and including stainless steel. This method is used commercially to create knee and hip replacements.

The automotive technology program has 360-370 students. These students can choose between either gasoline or diesel and heavy equipment options. It was great to see students building dune buggies from scratch to apply many of the concepts they learned in class. Students in the diesel and heavy equipment option obviously have tremendous career opportunities with several companies most specifically CAT.

The next session highlighted the High Plains Aquifer in Kansas. Our speaker, Brownie Wilson from the Geohydrology section of the Kansas Geological Survey at the University of Kansas provided an interesting and informative lesson about the Aquifers of Kansas. After describing the KGS and its various sections a brief explanation of water rights in Kansas ensued. Basically, the water in Kansas is owned by the people of Kansas. To use water requires a right and those rights follow the first in time, first in right principal. Also in Kansas, water is a real property right which means it can be bought, sold and taxed.

The three underground systems that make up the High Plains Aquifer are the Ogallala, Great Bend Prairie and Equus Beds. Irrigation is the largest user of water in Kansas and that is groundwater based. The amount of water pumped is directly related to the water table height. In general, the water table across the High Plains Aquifer is most shallow in the west and progressively gets deeper towards the east. This depth is measured as saturated thickness which is the difference between the land surface elevation and the bedrock.

Mr. Wilson left us with some key thoughts about water in Kansas:

1. Kansas water usage is very dynamic.

2. The High Plains Aquifer is the principal water supply in Western and Southern Kansas.

3. Ground water decline rates in the Ogallala have been slowing over the long term.

4. It is highly unlikely that we will completely run out of water.

5. We must adapt as water supplies change.

A reception was hosted by area alumni upon return to the hotel. Caterer Jim Mengarelli, who also serves as Crawford County 4-H Youth Extension Agent, provided Italian appetizers to underscore the heritage of the area and their history with the mining industry in Southwest Kansas.

The evening concluded with a presentation by Diana Endicott a Class IV graduate. Diana shared with us how she and her husband have found a niche market in the Kansas City metropolitan area for their locally grown products. They started this process by growing green house tomatoes and expanded to include both a cow/calf operation and a meat processing plant. Through use of excellent marketing, Diana and her sister have collaborated with a number of producers to create a marketing coop for products including produce, meat, dairy, bakery and grocery. Products are marketed primarily through Balls Food Stores and the coop has also set up market basket programs with private companies to take their excess capacity.

Diana was very open about the process that they use to market their products and patiently answered our many questions. Questions from the class focused on price, definition of locally grown and a continued requirement to utilize existing commodity/commercial resources for products or animals that don't meet program requirements.

In closing, Diana suggested that class members interested in further leadership growth consider applying to be a Kellogg Fellow. The niche marketing message was underscored by the exceptional dinner. The steaks, bread and pies were all donated by Diana Endicott.

Adapting to Change

Thurs., Dec. 9

Scribe- Adrian R. Coberly

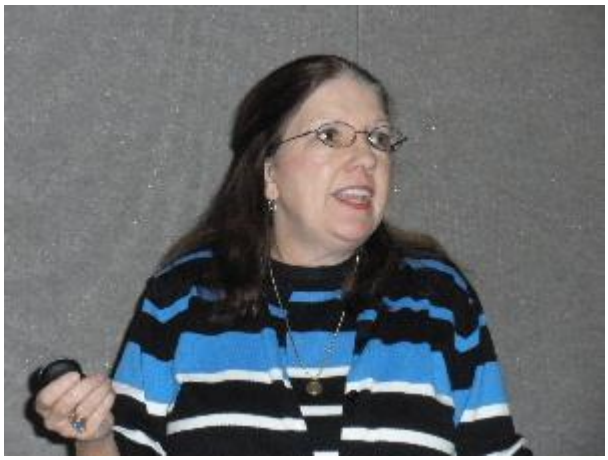
Thursday Morning the class departed the Lamplighter Inn in a school bus for a first hand look at SE KS mining and land reclamation and were joined by our guide for the day Mr. Scott Williams. Mr. Williams is the Supervisory District Conservationist for the NRCS covering Cherokee, Crawford and Labette counties.

As the class toured through the countryside the history of mining in the area (mostly coal) was explained as well as the after effects the area is currently dealing with. This includes pollution of ground water and subsidence issues as well as the pubic debt incurred in the reclamation of many of these sites.

About an hour into our tour the class was able to view “Big Brutus,” the Worlds second largest electric shovel, used in the strip mining in the area from 1962 to 1974. It is now a tourist attraction as well as a Regional Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark.

Shortly after taking in Brutus, Mr. Williams invited the class to accompany him onto a Coal Gob field. Gob, deposited onto a half section of ground surrounded by levies, is the remnants of processed coal mixed with rain water. Mr. Williams pointed out the Gob we were standing on had actually leaked out of its levied reservoir and was now moving into a secondary containment area. The surrounding levies are now quite old and starting to deteriorate allowing the Gob to escape containment, causing concern for future contamination of nearby water sources. Mr. Williams also pointed out that the Gob we were standing on was 80% water and that hydraulic pressure was keeping us afloat. At this point Class X member Mitchell Hall asked it be noted that he indeed can walk on water.

After a great lunch sponsored by Class IX graduate Kirby Brunk and his family, the class settled in for a Point - CounterPoint discussion on the Environment with four separate speakers, the first of which was Mr. Craig Volland representing the Sierra Club. Mr. Volland is the Ag and CAFO Committee Chairman of the KS Chapter of the Sierra Club and was gracious enough to speak to the class about his organizations views, as well as his own findings, on Confined Animal Feeding Operations and their perceived environmental fallout. A spirited discussion ensued.



Mrs. Chris Wilson, President of the American AgriWomen spoke to the class next about the Benefits of Fertilizers, Ag-Chemicals and Bio-Technology. Mrs. Wilson spoke at length about the advances and efficiencies of today's agricultural inputs and their benefits to farmers and society at large. Technology has brought Ag a long way and Ag continues to strive to use technology to be even better stewards of the land while also continuing to produce the kind of results needed to ensure an ever expanding population the safe and plentiful food source it has come to expect.

Mr. Terry Nelson of Long Island, KS (and current KARL board member) was next to address the class. Mr. Nelson spoke at length about his experience as owner of Husky Hogs and specifically about the obstacles he encountered in the establishment of the hog operation in Norton County. The focus of his presentation was, of course, the environmental impact of the establishment and operation of the business and how he and his team were able to work with the community and regulatory agencies to mitigate environmental concerns, both real and imagined. Now Husky Hogs is a proud and successful business and an asset to the local community.

Our final speaker of the day, Mr. Karl Brooks, is the current EPA Regional Administrator for Region 7. After giving the class some background information as to his roll as supervisor of agency operations in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, Mr. Brooks engaged the class by opening the floor to questions and discussion of affairs pertaining to the EPA. Many of the producers in the class used this opportunity to air concerns ranging from point source water pollution to the burning of native grass in the Flint Hills. A frank but educational discussion followed with the class coming away with a much better sense of the details and reasons behind many of the current EPA policies.

Dinner that evening was enjoyed at Pichler's Chicken Annie's, a longtime local favorite that serves arguably the best fried chicken in SE Kansas. Dinner sponsors joining the class included KARL board member Dewayne Rosson, Emily Zwahlen a Class IX graduate and Dave Jones, along with their spouses.

After dinner, KARL graduates John and Carolynn Burns were kind enough to open their home to the class and host “A very KARL Christmas.” Gifts were exchanged, carols were sung (badly), and merriment was made. This was a terrific way to end a terrific day and the class is grateful to the Burns’ for their assistance and the generosity shown to us the entire week.

Friday, December 10, 2010

Scribe – Amos Alstrom

Class began as most Friday's, bright eyed and bushy tailed. What a way to start out with our first speaker of the day, Dr. Dirk Barker. Dr. Barker brought some heavy credentials to the program with a B.A. in History, M.A. in History, and a PhD.

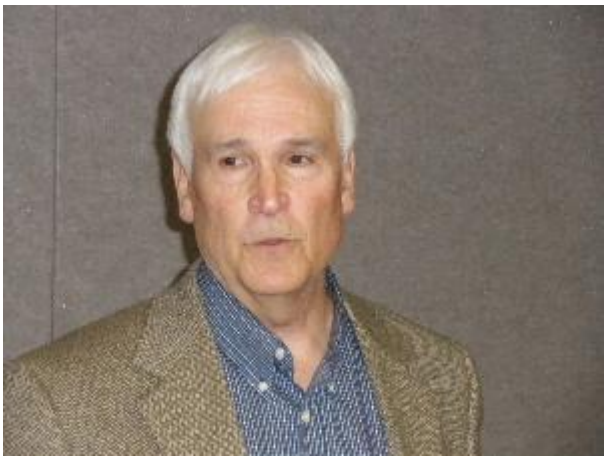
Dr. Dirk Barker is an investigator for the Citizens for Creature Protection. a.k.a. animal rights activist. Dr. Barkers opening position/point "Extreme positions have to be wrong" was followed by the following points: we all have some extreme views and a fact "moral truth is often an extreme point of view". Dr. Barker then went directly into his view/ mission of the animal rights movement as such: abolition of animal use, abolition of animal agriculture and complete extinction of sport hunting. Glad their was not a pen that dropped, 'cause you would not have heard it over the heavy breathing, tongue biting and teeth clenching. Dr. Barker was defiantly getting to so some class members and he knew it.

Dr. Barker's views are in summary as such: animal right and human rights are the same; they are equal. An ideal world is a vegan world. Any use of an animal is abuse. It is not necessary to eat animals. Animals eat animals-we have a choice animals do not.

Dr. Barker stated that it is an evolution that will occur to end all abuse of animals and the animal rights movement is winning as they have started with the fast food industry and with animal welfare protocols. He stated that "there is no compromise, they will win"!

Overall the class handled the situation very well and were actually commended by Dr. Barker as he noted his extreme views often do not set well with a group of individuals made up of producers and support industry providers that rely on a positive, growing industry.

Several questions were asked throughout the program and during the alloted Q&A period. As the chair helped us summarize after the presentation and Dr. Barker's departure, emotions do not need to play a role in debate with an opposing view that is not willing to compromise. Just stick with facts and science. The problem is, the general public is being appealed to through mass media by the emotional side only. The compromise is to be positive and proactive in the promotion of the animal agricultural industry and wildlife hunting debate. Do not wait to be on the defense but support organizations that are proactively promoting the modern agricultural industry to the public.



The second speaker of the morning was Dr. Jerry Jaax, Associate Vice President for research compliance at Kansas State University. Dr. Jaax received his DVM in 1972 from Kansas State University at which time he entered the U.S. Army

Veterinary Corps and spend more that two decades working with research associated with chemical, biological and infections diseases.

Dr. Jaax address the class with the starting point that in 1969 the US Surgeon General stated that “it was time to close the book on infectious diseases”; meaning that we thought that with all of the vaccines, hygiene programs, nutrition programs and life cycle education we had everything under control. How ironic that we were hearing this while our leader was absent in a battle with Malaria following the advance tour to our international desintation.

The opening point was followed by and history on biological warfare, state sponsored terrorism and how it has evolved into an ever-present bioterrorism threat which is most likely not state sponsored. Dr. Jaax then discussed the challenges of dealing with bioterrorism and what are the most likely threats to the US and agriculture as an industry.

The dark side of biotechnology was discussed; specifically noting some of the viral diseases that have been and can be produced in the correct setting.

The balance of the talk was centered on the NBAF facility and the level of security that the facility will entail, as well as the economic impact to Manhattan and the surrounding communities.

Several question were asked throughout the program and during the Q&A allotment. WOW what an eye opener, from a passionate speaker.

The seminar ended with the shortened standard allotment of time on the mic of the lessons learned from the seminar or as we like to call it, the WOW moments etc. The class departed Pittsburg with wishes of a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

"With Leadership Comes Responsibility"