



Science! Robert Lee Elementary School 4th grade students traveled to the Science Spectrum in Lubbock to explore the science exhibits and to watch a movie in the IMAX theater. They enjoyed the hands-on lights, sounds, and movement activities.

Agriculture fertile ground for college graduates

With an expected 57,900 high-skilled job openings annually in the U.S., agriculture is a field of opportunities that reaches far beyond the farm gate.

“Agriculture is a growing industry, but there aren’t enough graduates to fill those positions,” John Ross Copeland, Coke County Farm Bureau president, said.

A report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows there are only about 35,400 graduates to fill those jobs, leaving 22,500 vacant.

As college students graduate this spring and look for career opportunities, John Ross encourages them to take a close look at agriculture.

“One of those jobs could belong to a college graduate, especially with the wide variety of careers available,” John Ross Copeland said. “Diversity drives agriculture. There are veterinarians, culinary experts, communicators, engineers, teachers and more.”

The list of careers goes on to include food safety professionals, economists and mechanics, John Ross noted. It also includes farmers, ranchers and dairymen. Farm and ranch products contribute about \$100 billion in economic activity for the state, and one in seven jobs in the state is related to agriculture.

“Working in agriculture is rewarding, yet challenging,” John Ross Copeland said. “It generates jobs and activity throughout the Texas and U.S. economies, and a strong economy makes for a dependable state and nation.”

Texas Wildlife Assoc. scholarships available

The Texas Wildlife Association Foundation (TWAF) and the San Antonio Livestock Exposition, Inc. (SALE) have joined forces to offer San Antonio Livestock Exposition, Inc. Scholarships. Scholarships in the amount of \$10,000 will be awarded to incoming freshmen at all Texas universities and colleges.

The scholarship application is available on the Texas Wildlife Association website, <http://www.texas-wildlife.org>. Applications must be postmarked by July 31st.

Winners will be announced by August 15th.

“As our population has grown, the strain on our natural resources has grown proportionately,” said TWAF Trustee Charles Davidson. “Our future depends on our ability to manage our natural resources wisely, balancing the needs of man and nature. It just makes sense to identify our future leaders and support them while they are getting their educations. We all will benefit from their expertise in the years to come.”

This is the twelfth year that TWAF and SALE have teamed up to offer scholarships to future natural resource stewards. To date, \$500,000 has been awarded through this scholarship program.

Selection Criteria:

- Participation in activities, internships, and experience related to the field of natural resource conservation in high school and/or college.
- Honors, awards, and leadership skills
- Degree plan option and academic achievements
- Answers to four essay questions
- Recommendations

Students receiving a San Antonio Livestock Exposition, Inc. Scholarship through the Texas Wildlife Association Foundation, Inc. must comply with the following guidelines:

- Must be a citizen of the United States and provide proof of citizenship.
- Must be a Texas high school graduate enrolling in a Texas college within 1 year of high school graduation.
- Must attend an accredited Texas college or university; no online degree programs.
- Must maintain a minimum GPA of 2.5 per semester on a 4.0 scale each semester (not cumulative) of each academic year to remain eligible.

- Must take a minimum of 12 hours per semester. Only one (1) online 3 – 4 hour course, taken at the college or university in which recipient is enrolled full time, will be funded per semester. The online course must be a curriculum requirement. Any additional online courses will not count towards the minimum 12 hours per semester and will not be funded.

For more information contact Kassi Scheffer at kscheffer@texas-wildlife.org

USDA resumes continuous CRP enrollment

As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will resume accepting applications for the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

Eligible farmers, ranchers and private landowners can sign up at their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office between June 4 and August 17.

“The Conservation Reserve Program is an important component of the suite of voluntary conservation programs USDA makes available to agricultural producers, benefiting both the land and wildlife. On the road, I often hear firsthand how popular CRP is for our recreational sector—hunters, fishermen, conservationists and bird watchers,” U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue said. “CRP also is a powerful tool to encourage agricultural producers to set aside unproductive, marginal lands that should not be farmed to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and boost soil health.”

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP

continuous signup, excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands.

This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases.

CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

2018 CRP signup

For this year’s signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others. Visit <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/crp-continuous-enrollment/index>.

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, but a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Farmers and ranchers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

CRP grasslands

FSA established new ranking criteria for CRP grasslands. To guarantee all CRP grasslands

offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Farmers and ranchers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

About CRP

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance.

Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays farmers and ranchers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

Signed into law by President Reagan in 1985, CRP is one of the largest private-lands conservation programs in the United States. Thanks to voluntary participation by farmers, ranchers and private landowners, CRP has improved water quality, reduced soil erosion and increased habitat for endangered and threatened species.

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Farmers, ranchers and landowners wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center.

To locate your local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov>. More information on CRP can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov/crp.

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Larry M Gilbert, AAMS®
Financial Advisor
122 N 8th St
Ballinger, TX 76821
325-365-2505

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