*University of Kansas Field Station and Ecological Reserves*

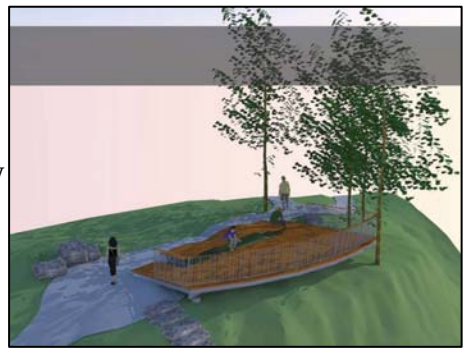
*Fall/Winter 2008*

# *News and Notes*

Environment Friendly Newsletter! If you would like to receive our newsletters electronically, please email: bclemens@ku.edu

## Construction on Overlook Begins

Students at the University of Kansas School of Architecture have begun the construction of an overlook to be placed at the edge of the Rockefeller Native Prairie. The concrete for the overlook has been poured and the steel frame welded. The only work left is the construction of the wood portion of the overlook. The lumber was generously donated by Westar Energy for this project. When asked how the students came up with the final design, Professor Nils Gore said, “It is hard to wrap 17 minds around one idea.” He went on to explain the process: each student developed a design, and then the group looked for commonalities among the designs. The best ideas were combined and refined in a cyclical process, focusing on the principles and purpose of each design and the commonalities between the multiple designs. The students developed two designs and presented them to Richard and Susan Himes, whose donation is funding the overlook. They suggested combining the designs, and the final plan was developed. The overlook is projected to be finished by early to mid-December.



(Above) Computer image of projected overlook.
(Below) Students work at the overlook site.

## Westar Energy Green Team Partners with KSR to Complete McColl Bridge

The Westar Energy Green Team, with help from KSR staff, completed construction in September on a bridge over an intermittent stream on the McColl Nature Reserve. The bridge is an essential component of a new nature/walking trail to be constructed in 2009. The materials used were donated by Westar Energy.

In September the Westar Energy Green Team and KSR staff work to complete the bridge

The Westar Energy Green Team is an employee-led volunteer group composed of active and retired Westar Energy employees and their family members, working to conserve and improve the Kansas environment. Focused primarily on wildlife habitat improvement and environmental education (especially for youths), the Green Team has partnered with students, individuals, conservation agencies, and private groups to preserve and enhance the environment. The Green Team also works to protect and reintroduce sensitive plant and animal species in Kansas. The Green Team conducts a variety of projects including outdoor classroom instruction for schools, planting tens of thousands of trees, restoring prairies, creating and restoring wetlands, and building trails, bridges, boat ramps, and wildlife viewing features. The Green Team completes more than 50 projects each year.

# KSR Installs New Weather Station

Garry Schaefer, NRCS Climate Monitoring Leader (Portland, OR) shows Tom Lowe, Kansas Water Office, sensors on the new station.

What started as an opportunity through the KU National Science Foundation project to install a new weather station at the Nelson Environmental Study Area has grown to become a multi-agency endeavor that now includes state and federal agencies. An agreement was made with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) to install and maintain the station as part of their Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN). Data from the station, such as temperature readings and rainfall amounts, will be publicly available through their website, making it convenient for researchers at the field station. Because the state is in the process of expanding the network of automated weather stations across Kansas (Mesonet), the Kansas Water Office and State Climatologist joined the effort and, in the near future, will add communications equipment to the station to also allow data to be transmitted and stored in the Kansas Weather Data Library at K-State.

NRCS soil scientists explain soil profile and monitoring to KBS staff and students while Mary Knapp, State Climatologist and NRCS Personnel, examined data logger and communications equipment.

## A Note from the Director

The University of Kansas Field Station and Ecological Reserves continues to make improvements that will enrich public education and recreation experiences. The completion of the Kaw Valley Overlook and the walking/nature trail that leads to it are major improvements that will provide a handicapped-accessible trail and platform from which to view the Kansas River valley as well as the Rockefeller Native Prairie, a vital feature of KSR. The new bridge on the McColl Nature Reserve allows the construction of another walking trail through a number of research demonstrations and experimental areas. Restroom facilities are now available at the head of the Fitch Nature Trail.

While facilities continue to be constructed, research of regional and national importance progresses at KSR. The new weather station will allow researchers access to data that can be used for a variety of studies ranging from local climate effects on animal or plant species to forecasting national ecological change.

We would like to thank all donors and sponsors that made these projects possible. Without this collaborative effort none of these new features and enhancements would be possible.

Edward A. Martinko, Director

For additional information, please contact Scott Campbell, Kansas Biological Survey, 2101 Constant Ave., Lawrence, KS swcamp@ku.edu, 785-864-1502

# Boy Scout Troop 53 Blazes Trail

On Sunday, December 7, 2008, Boy Scouts from Troop 53 of Lawrence began construction of a new hiking trail located on the McColl Nature Reserve. When completed, this trail will be open for public use and enjoyment. This is one of many new trails that are planned at the Field Station, in support of the goal of expanding public awareness and education about the natural habitats and ecosystems that are being preserved. Pictured below is an image of the many hiking/nature trails, current and projected, at the Field Station. The trail emphasized is the newest trail constructed by Troop 53. The Troop used this project as a community service opportunity to expand public education and recreation at the Field Station.