

KOCH FOUNDATION GIVES \$500,000 TO CHEYENNE BOTTOMS



Ducks fly over the water at Cheyenne Bottoms under a rising sun. The wildlife area near Great Bend received a \$500,000 grant Wednesday from the Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation. Travis Heying/File photo

Wetlands on display



Courtesy illustration

The grant will furnish the 2,000-square-foot Koch Wetlands Exhibit, which will feature a timeline of the history of the wetlands in Kansas, maps and other educational materials.

BY MICHAEL PEARCE
The Wichita Eagle

The Fred C. and Mary R. Koch Foundation announced a \$500,000 grant Wednesday for the Kansas Wetlands Education Center at the Cheyenne Bottoms Wildlife Area near Great Bend.

“It was just a natural fit for us,” said Susan Addington, Koch Foundation grants manager. “It encompasses two of our major focuses: the environment and education. It will help people get a connection with one of Kansas’ greatest treasures.”

The grant will furnish the

2,000-square-foot Koch Wetlands Exhibit, which will feature a timeline depicting the history of the wetlands in Kansas, life-size silhouettes of important wetlands animals, maps and other educational materials.

Scheduled to open April 24, the 11,246-square-foot building will serve as a center for wetlands research and a place where the public can experience and learn more about the importance of wetlands.

Cheyenne Bottoms has been rated as one of the most important wetlands systems in the world.



Michael Pearce/File photos

TOP LEFT: Two yearling whitetail bucks at Cheyenne Bottoms. TOP RIGHT: A blue-winged teal at Cheyenne Bottoms. The area, rated as one of the most important wetlands systems in the world, is an important stopover for millions of migrating birds.

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Popular with birders, Cheyenne Bottoms is annually visited by several endangered species, including whooping cranes.

Sportsmen often enjoy some of the best duck and goose hunting in the country.

Addington said the goal of the

exhibits is to educate visitors of all ages and all interests in nature.

The wetlands center is a cooperative effort.

The Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks is responsible for the land and the money for the building.

Fort Hays State University will operate and staff the

building through its Sternberg Museum of Natural History. Several local cities and the Nature Conservancy are also involved.

Mike Hayden, Wildlife and Parks secretary, said the foundation's gift is greatly appreciated.

"One of the key elements we were missing were some exhibits and none of (the partners) had the wherewithal to provide

them," he said. "We're very, very thankful. It's also extremely timely since we're getting ready to open."

The Koch Foundation was started in 1953 and supports non-profit groups that benefit the arts, education, environmental stewardship and at-risk kids.

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