

BAKER UNIVERSITY NEWS RELEASE

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Baker begins restoring, expanding Wetlands

Baldwin City, Kan. — Baker University has begun restoring and expanding the Baker Wetlands at a 142-acre site west of Louisiana Street between 31st and the Wakarusa River. The work is part of the mitigation package for extending the South Lawrence Trafficway but does not signal the start of the highway's construction.

The restoration project is being funded by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) using the remainder of a \$1.5 million federal appropriation received in 2005. The funds were intended to stimulate continued development of the South Lawrence Trafficway but they are not sufficient to start construction of the new highway. No funds have been identified to build the highway and there is no schedule for construction.

KDOT recently provided Baker University funds to cover equipment costs, construction of trails, a boardwalk and signage and a manager's salary to begin the restoration project. Baker has received \$415,000 of the \$975,000 in funding to complete Phase I of the wetlands restoration project.

"We are grateful for the opportunity to restore the land since our original wetlands were such a success," said Roger Boyd, the university's director of natural areas. "We are pleased to have the confidence of KDOT and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to move forward with this project. By allowing more acres to be planted, Baker will have the opportunity to nurture and preserve the natural areas for decades to come. The university has the knowledge and understanding of the area and the availability of seeds at the current Baker Wetlands to be restored at the new site."

Mark Wellendorf, a 2008 Baker graduate who majored in wildlife biology, will coordinate the restoration project as refuge manager under the supervision of Boyd. Intense monitoring of the project will be conducted the first three years.

Baker has owned and managed 573 acres of wetlands south of 31st between Louisiana Street and Haskell Avenue since 1968.

"More than 40 years ago, Baker began restoring the area to the rich biodiversity found today," Baker President Pat Long said. "The university is committed to maintaining the wetlands while constructing educational, research and recreational offerings that will benefit Northeast Kansas. The project reflects a longstanding commitment to build a truly sustainable site."

The wetlands restoration is part of a university-wide resource conservation initiative. The campus has improved recycling efforts in the past year and recently opened a new residence hall with the latest in energy efficient construction.

"We embrace the principles of environmental sustainability," Long said.

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Baker University is committed to assuring student learning, and developing confident, competent and responsible contributors to society.