

## Knopf featured at Kansas State University film event

By Lucas Shivers

A Montana rancher, a Kansas farmer and a Louisiana fisherman work to feed the world while stewarding our land and water. Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman, an award-winning documentary, tells the inspiring story of these heartland heroes.

More than 100 people gathered for the first of four 'Movies on the Grass' at Kansas State University this fall, offering films portraying current issues in an informal setting. The free film series, in its fourteenth year, showed Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman on Sept. 9 sponsored by Students for Environmental Action at the Leadership Studies building, due to the K-State Hale Library fire.

"There was a particular affinity to Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman due to the local connection," said Gerry Snyder, event coordinator with the K-State Office of Mediated Education.

The film includes Kansan Justin Knopf, a fifth-generation farmer seeking to rebuild the fertility, biodiversity and resilience of his soil. Knopf applies the latest advances in microbial soil science, no-till and crop rotation strategies for controlling pests, building soil quality and fighting erosion.

"I farm alongside my dad, brother, wife and three kids," Knopf said. "We have an emphasis on stewardship as a family value to natural resources and continual improve-

ment. We have room for improving our production, environment and economic standpoints, but we have a lot improvement also happening."

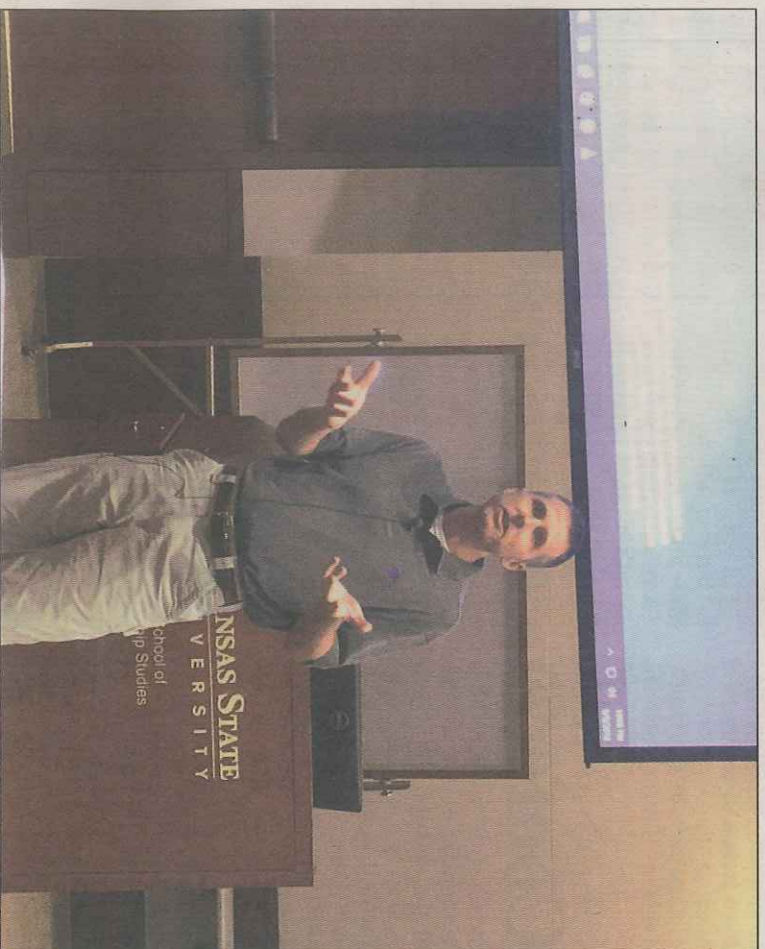
The Knopf family farms 4,500 acres in central Kansas near Salina, producing wheat, soy, sorghum and alfalfa. Knopf's 'big ag' commitment to conservation with no-till systems.

### Behind the Scenes

The story all started at a conference. "More than a dozen years ago, I was at a conference in the wintertime," Knopf said. "As part of our farming system, we think a lot about carbon. We're always trying to put more carbon in our soils."

After one session,

A shift in weather patterns that began in early August brought welcome rain to drought-stricken Kansas, but even with the precipitation, the northeast part of the state is still parched. "Ponds are still low.



More than 100 people gathered for the Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman movie on Sept. 9. The film includes Kansan Justin Knopf, a fifth-generation farmer who spoke at the event.

Knopf talked with the presenter and eventually was invited on a committee with the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF).

"They put together a group of a dozen farmers to bounce ideas and collaborate," Knopf said. "A few years later, we hosted some of them on our farm and talked about our approach

to buy into, that to take care of the environment you have to farm at a scale like my grandfather would have farmed on. I think that's not quite accurate," Knopf said. "As I think about the farmers in our community and probably agriculture as a whole in much of the Midwest, I would argue that many of the larger scale farms are the ones on the cutting edge of environmentalism."

Knopf said his experience working with environmentalists has been positive. "They wanted to listen and find what we're working on to find common values to make real, lasting and impactful progress," he said.

### Book

The connections led to a call from Miriam Horn, an author who worked with the EDF, based in New York City. "She spent time on a farm in California as a child," Knopf said. "Re-

to improve the landscape," Knopf said. "She saw the same values as farm families and those connected to the EDF. Miriam wanted to build a bridge. The bottom line is helping to build connections which is desperately needed." Families like Knopf's livelihood depend on the natural resources they work with on a daily basis. "It can be difficult to find examples of humility and listening to find other perspectives," he said. "Miriam set out to present the deep-seeded American value of conservation in

to improve the landscape," Knopf said. "She saw the same values as farm families and those connected to the EDF. Miriam wanted to build a bridge. The bottom line is helping to build connections which is desperately needed." Families like Knopf's livelihood depend on the natural resources they work with on a daily basis.

"It can be difficult to find examples of humility and listening to find other perspectives," he said. "Miriam set out to present the deep-seeded American value of conservation in

to improve the landscape," Knopf said. "She saw the same values as farm families and those connected to the EDF. Miriam wanted to build a bridge. The bottom line is helping to build connections which is desperately needed." Families like Knopf's livelihood depend on the natural resources they work with on a daily basis.

"It can be difficult to find examples of humility and listening to find other perspectives," he said. "Miriam set out to present the deep-seeded American value of conservation in

to improve the landscape," Knopf said. "She saw the same values as farm families and those connected to the EDF. Miriam wanted to build a bridge. The bottom line is helping to build connections which is desperately needed." Families like Knopf's livelihood depend on the natural resources they work with on a daily basis.

"It can be difficult to find examples of humility and listening to find other perspectives," he said. "Miriam set out to present the deep-seeded American value of conservation in

both blue and red states. It looks different for different folks but she wanted to tell that story of shared values."

She wanted to come out during wheat harvest, the most hectic time. She sat in the combine cab for 12 hours a day for the next three days.

"It was the most exhausting I've ever been during wheat harvest," Knopf said. "She made about four more visits and lots of phone calls to answer more challenging questions. It made me think critically. She was genuinely interested in telling an accurate story in our

both blue and red states. It looks different for different folks but she wanted to tell that story of shared values."

### Movie

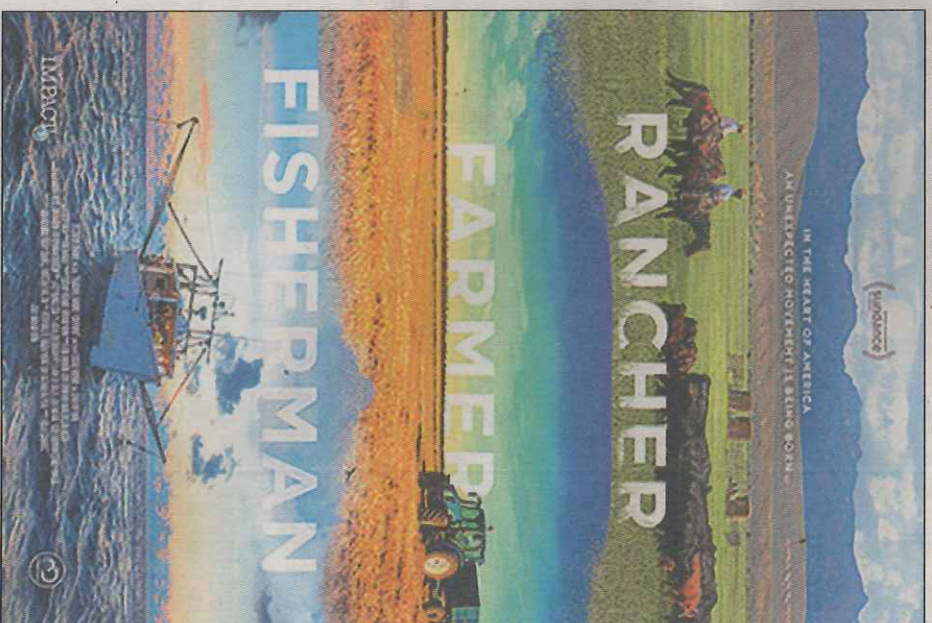
As Miriam finished final edits on Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman, one of her colleagues was in the film business who said she had the backdrop of a fantastic documentary.

"She called me and told me, 'I have great news! I have a friend who wants to make a documentary from the book,'" Knopf said. "I told her I was not about movies, cameras and all. I agreed to help her find another farmer to be in the film. She didn't like it."

The more Knopf thought about it, the more he got to thinking about some negative social media perceptions but here was an opportunity to share a Kansas story genuinely to

the west except a sliver along the border with Colorado, is just opposite the typical scenario. Knapp said. Semi-arid western Kansas usually tends to be drier than eastern Kansas. Average annual precipitation in Garden City is

the west except a sliver along the border with Colorado, is just opposite the typical scenario. Knapp said. Semi-arid western Kansas usually tends to be drier than eastern Kansas. Average annual precipitation in Garden City is



## Late summer rain eased drought in parts of Kansas, but northeast counties still dry

19.15 inches, while in Topeka it is 36.46. As of Sept. 15, Garden City has received 19.46 inches, while Topeka has received just 18.39 inches. To help track and record precipitation, wind speeds, soil moisture and

other climatological data, Kansas Mesonet, a network of weather stations across the state, has added new stations in Chase (Ellendale) and Republic (Belleville) counties and more will come online soon, according to Chip Redmond, K-State assistant scientist and Kansas Mesonet man-

"The real hope was for a film that could promote conversation, dialogue and relationship in places just like this around the country," Knopf said. As a K-State alumni,

"There are special magical places important for all of us," Knopf said. "This project tells the story of where we can find real, impactful change. For those of us in agriculture, we must listen to others and not discount the wisdom and experiences of both sides."

Overall, he was grateful for the opportunity and seeks to bring others into the work of no-till. "In order to make change, it takes all sides working together," Knopf said. "We have to focus on compromise and moderation. This is a story of hope."

other climatological data, Kansas Mesonet, a network of weather stations across the state, has added new stations in Chase (Ellendale) and Republic (Belleville) counties and more will come online soon, according to Chip Redmond, K-State assistant scientist and Kansas Mesonet man-