

fault of inanimate technology. It is the fault of human beings who created that technology and enabled its consequences.

Parallel with my writing last week and unbeknownst to me, my friend-via-Twitter Lenny Wells wrote a beautiful essay on the adoption of new technology. He is a bit older than me, but we both spent our formative years amidst the technological revolution of the 1980s and 1990s, experiencing life before and after the advent of the internet. Lenny points out the inherent conflict of technology—innovations like indoor plumbing and widespread electricity are good, while Amazon.com has become both necessary and destructive. I would encourage you to read his entire essay, which is linked on my website.

I'll close with a question that Lenny asks: "how do we maintain a balance between both worlds—the old and new—and still live a rich and fulfilling life?"

The Luddites essentially asked that very question, but they were trampled by the Industrial Revolution. Our rural communities have been similarly trampled for decades with limited sign of relief. Our society seems bent on adopting every new technology that promises less work and cheaper goods, regardless of the consequences. Lest this obsession stamp out our small towns altogether, rural America must consider Lenny's question. We must similarly balance the old and new to build a rich and fulfilling life.

How do we do that? Wendell Berry's rules are a good place to start.

James Decker is the Mayor of Stamford, Texas and the creator of the West of 98 website and the Rural Church and State and West of 98 podcasts. Contact James and subscribe to these essays at westof98.substack.com and subscribe to him wherever podcasts are found.

**Texas NRCS announces EQIP sign up dates for 2024**

The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas announced fiscal year (FY) 2024 financial assistance opportunities for farmers, ranchers and landowners through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

While NRCS accepts conservation program applications year-round, interested producers should apply by Nov. 8, 2023 to be considered for FY2024 funding.

Texas NRCS will use the ACT NOW process for some EQIP funding pools. Through ACT NOW, NRCS can immediately approve and obligate a ranked application when an eligible application meets or exceeds a determined minimum ranking score.

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest landowners



**Homecoming Court!** Blackwell CISD recently held their annual homecoming festivities. Students named to the homecoming court included the following: Shelby Rasco and Jesus Gonzalez, with mascots Emery Fay and William Lederle (above photo); Talia Campos and Kayson Cummings, with mascots Brixxlynn Bland and Evan Barnett (top right photo); and Kiley Cummings and Karter Cummings, with mascots Marlie Gunn and Kase Monroe.

to address natural resource concerns.

NRCS works one-on-one with producers to develop a conservation plan that outlines conservation practices and activities to help solve on-farm resource issues. Producers implement practices and activities in their conservation plan that can lead to cleaner water and air, healthier soil and better wildlife habitat, all while improving their agricultural operations.

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)-EQIP will offer core conservation practices that directly improve soil carbon, reduce nitrogen losses or that reduce, capture, avoid or sequester carbon dioxide, methane or nitrous oxide emissions associated with agricultural production.

EQIP-Conservation Incentive Contracts (CIC) expands resource benefits for Texas farmers and ranchers through

incentive conservation practices such as wildlife management, cover crops, nutrient management, conservation crop rotations and prescribed grazing. EQIP-CIC also allows producers to target priority resource concerns on their property by offering incentive payments for a five-year contract without needing to enroll the entire operation into the program. EQIP-CIC is designed to be a stepping-stone between EQIP and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), to help producers improve their level of conservation and earn benefits of longer-term conservation enhancements.

Landowners can also choose to apply for financial assistance to get help installing the conservation practices outlined in their voluntary conservation plan through any one of the programs mentioned above.

Through farm bill programs,



NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to help producers and landowners make conservation improvements on their land that benefit natural resources, build resiliency and contribute to the nation's broader effort to combat the impacts of climate change.

(Continued on next page)

**Edward Jones**

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