



Grassland Reserve Program Helps Nature Center Grow

By: Steve Chick, Nebraska State Conservationist & Joanna Pope, Public Affairs Specialist

The first USDA Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) easement to preserve native prairie became a reality recently according to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist Dennis Schroeder, in Lincoln. It is adjacent to Pioneers Park west of Lincoln. The Grassland Reserve Program easement has become a part of the Park increasing its size by 228 acres.

According to Pioneers Park Nature Center Director Nancy Furman, the addition of the GRP property is a real bonus for the city of Lincoln and all users of Pioneers Park.

“Our initial 40 acres has grown to 668 through a series of donations and partnerships. This most recent expansion would not have been possible without the cooperation of all of the partners involved. By working together, so much has been accomplished. This is truly a remarkable resource for the citizens of Lincoln,” Furman said.

At the actual time of filing the easement Lincoln Parks and Recreation Foundation was the owner of the land - having purchased it from the Martin family. The Foundation eventually sold it to the City of Lincoln. This easement was a partnership effort of the individual landowner, the foundation, city government and NRCS - all working towards a common goal of preserving this prairie land. A sign at the site shows this partnership to the public.

As with all NRCS programs, the landowner was the biggest partner. “Without the dedication of the Martin Family to see that this area remained in a natural state, the project would not have happened, and the land would have been prime for developers to use,” said Schroeder.

With the easement in place, the land will be managed as a tall grass prairie grassland system utilizing prescribed fire and buffalo to manage the vegetation. And, with the City of Lincoln purchasing the property for the Pioneers Park Nature Center, there will be many opportunities for the public to become more educated about the natural habitat of this ecosystem. There should be additional outdoor classroom opportunities for area schools



NRCS

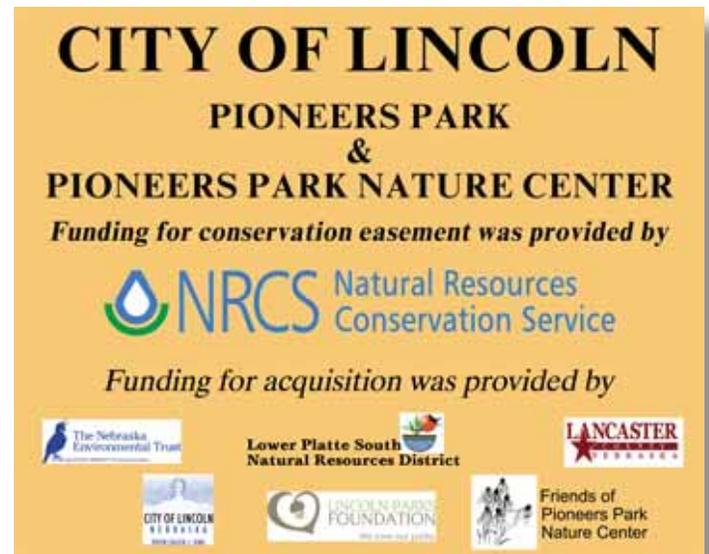
Through the Grassland Reserve Program and a partnership effort, Pioneers Park Nature Center west of Lincoln now has 228 additional acres of native prairie.

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**- Nancy Furman,
Pioneers Park Nature
Center Director**

to also take advantage of this resource. With the easement, the City agrees to implement an NRCS-approved grazing plan to maintain the viability and vigor of the grassland.

The Grassland Reserve Program is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property. The program will protect vulnerable grasslands from conversion to cropland, development or other uses and conserve valuable grasslands by helping maintain viable ranching operations, and in the case of Pioneers Park, help share the value of native prairie with the general public. ♦



Pioneers Park

The sign placed at the Pioneers Park Nature Center shows the partnership effort involved in preserving the prairie through the Grassland Reserve Program.

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