

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

Nebraska Northwest Landscape Restoration

2017–2019



Project site, Pine Ridge Ranger District

Located in the northwest part of the state, the Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands is home to prairies, ponderosa pine forests, and many spring-fed rivers. This diverse landscape—composed of six designated biologically unique landscapes—serves as a critical part of the Central waterfowl flyway. This is also a working landscape with agriculture, rangeland, and the communities that support these industries. However, the lack of regular low-intensity fire has let a hazardous amount of woody fuels accumulate in the grasslands and forests. In addition, it has allowed for the encroachment of eastern red cedar into riparian areas. This Joint Chiefs' project implemented a suite of conservation practices to help restore the prairies, forests, and riparian areas. Education and outreach was another important piece of the project. In particular, the USFS provided multiple opportunities for private landowners to observe professionally implemented burns and get familiar with the equipment.

PROJECT IMPACT:
40,000 acres

USFS, NRCS, and partners have conducted prescribed burns or mechanically removed cedar on approximately 40,000 acres in the Sandhills grasslands.

USFS & NRCS JCLRP funds awarded 2017–2019: \$2,981,129
Total USDA and partner project funds: \$3,348,792

PROJECT RESULTS



Cottonwood seedling in riparian habitat on Pine Ridge Ranger District



Hazardous fuels treatments: fire risk to communities was mitigated through prescribed burns and removing eastern red cedar on public and private lands.



Riparian enhancement: removing encroaching conifers, repairing fences, stabilizing roads, and planting native vegetation on nearly 400 acres.



Community education: teaching opportunities for local students and ranchers on grassland ecology.

USDA's Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to improve the health of forests where public forests and grasslands connect to privately owned lands. Through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, the two USDA agencies are restoring landscapes by reducing wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protecting water quality and enhancing wildlife habitat.

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NORTHWEST LANDSCAPE RESTORATION



Pile burning during winter at Bessey Ranger District

Nebraska Northwest Landscape Restoration Partnership Project

This Joint Chiefs' project brought together many partners, including the Nebraska Forest Service. Working together with the USDA Forest Service and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service helped to significantly expand hazardous fuels cooperation and treatment on 12,090 forested and habitat acres and 8 miles of road and stream improvements. This project also helped reduce wildfire threats on the landscape and in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) areas. Additionally, it reduced invasive eastern red cedar (ERC) to reclaim sandhills grazing acres and improve rangeland conditions.

"This Joint Chiefs' project allowed us to capitalize on the successes of several programs, tying together projects completed on private, state and federal lands," said John Erixon, Nebraska State Forester. "Having this tool allows us to increase the scope and scale of projects to achieve a landscape scale impact with reduced costs and greater efficiency."

The project area covers two distinct landscapes that span over 150 miles: The Pine Ridge ponderosa pine escarpment in northwest Nebraska, and the sandhills on the Bessey Ranger District in west-central Nebraska.

Areas were improved with prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, native replanting, and road improvements on public and private lands. Community benefits of the project include enhanced community safety, strengthened community relationships, bolstered local and state economies, and improved recreational opportunities.

This award has been a catalyst for change on the landscape, and the funds contributed have helped to accomplish thousands of acres of habitat improvement. This work would not have been possible without the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership.

For more information, please visit nrcs.usda.gov/JointChiefsReports



Restored grassland, previously covered by eastern red cedar, at Bessey Ranger District

Key Partners

Nebraska State Forest Service
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
National Wild Turkey Federation
The Nature Conservancy
Sandhills Task Force
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture

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