

NEBRASKA GREAT PLAINS GRASSLAND INITIATIVE

Transitioning from productive grassland to woody plant dominance is the greatest threat facing grasslands in the Great Plains.

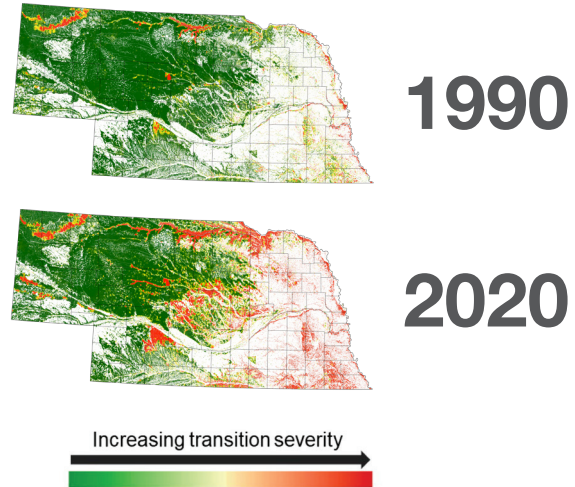
Nebraska represents the leading edge of woody plant expansion into our most intact grassland regions. For example, the Sandhills of Nebraska is the most intact prairie region in the world and is facing widespread pressure from woody encroachment for the first time. As valued grazing lands, these working grasslands are the backbone of the U.S. beef industry, but more than 419,000 tons of range production was lost in Nebraska to woody encroachment in 2019.

Nearly eight million acres of Nebraska's most intact grasslands are estimated to be at risk to future woody encroachment. Ranchers have new funding opportunities to help address woody plant encroachment on targeted rangelands through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Woody plant encroachment puts pressure on working rangelands by decreasing livestock production and increasing wildfire risk as well as harming grassland biodiversity and increasing threats to animals living in this biome.

New scientific tools now provide unprecedented opportunities to track woody encroachment and develop strategic approaches to combat it. The

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Ongoing, real-world findings from research in Nebraska are not only raising awareness of woody encroachment but also serving as the scientific foundation for rangeland conservation across the Great Plains.

When combined with landowner expertise, Nebraska ranchers and the NRCS can defend intact grasslands, reduce vulnerability to future encroachment, and cut long-term maintenance costs.

WOODY ENCROACHMENT CONSEQUENCES IN NEBRASKA

- Land is taken out of agricultural production
- Livestock production decreases up to 75%
- Decreased grazing-based revenue for Nebraska Public Schools
- Collapses in grassland biodiversity
- Increased risk of threatened or endangered species

Learn more at:
<http://cedarliteracy.unl.edu/>

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United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

GET INVOLVED

USDA-NRCS is adopting a new approach to addressing this widespread threat through the Nebraska Great Plains Grassland Initiative (GPGI).

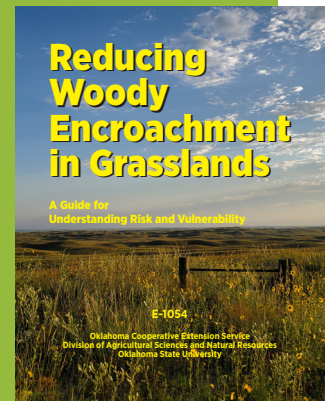
The GPGI makes ranchers in targeted rangelands eligible to receive Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding related to addressing woody plant encroachment. This EQIP Initiative provides an opportunity for producers to reduce the vulnerability of Nebraska's core grasslands from woody encroachment.

Treatment strategies will rely on an integrated pest management conservation system plan to manage woody species encroachment on identified planned land units (PLUs) within the core grassland areas.

Connect with USDA employees from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to help with your business needs. Find your local USDA Service Center at <https://www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator>.

NEW SCIENCE GUIDE DETAILS BETTER APPROACH FOR ADDRESSING WOODY ENCROACHMENT

A new guide, produced through a partnership between public university extension programs in the Great Plains, the USDA-NRCS's Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW), the USDA-NRCS's Central National Technology Support Center (CNTSC), and various other conservation partners, provides the first-ever framework for addressing woody encroachment, now recognized as one of the top two drivers of grassland loss in the Great Plains. Learn more at <https://wlfw.rangelands.app/great-plains/woodland-expansion/>.



WORKING LANDS FOR WILDLIFE

The initiative is part of the NRCS Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) framework calling to conserve the last remaining iconic grassland regions in the Great Plains biome. WLFW is the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) premier approach for conserving America's working lands to benefit people, wildlife and rural communities. WLFW uses win-win solutions to target voluntary, incentive-based conservation that improves agricultural productivity and wildlife habitat on working lands.

A 'Call to Action' has emerged in the Great Plains to scale up conservation on private lands and meet sustainability targets that benefit both agriculture and wildlife. This initiative features an action-based framework for 2021-2025 focused on addressing the two most severe and large-scale threats to the Great Plains biome: woodland expansion and land use conversion.

Learn more at: <https://wlfw.rangelands.app/great-plains>

