

# NEBRASKA STAC MEETING MINUTES

December 1, 2022

1:00 – 4:30 p.m.

100 Centennial Mall N. RM 397A

Lincoln, NE 68508

[TEAMS RECODING LINK](#)

**ATTENDEES:** Brad Soncksen, Robert Lawson, Tami Nordman, Conor Ward, Jami Thoene, Carla McCullough, Neil Dominy, Shawn McVey, Burdette Piening, Eric Zach, Al Juhnke, Greg Whitmore, Nick Streff, Larry Hudkins, Kent Zimmerman, Elbert Traylor; VIA TEAMS: Charles Bailey, Phillip Dobesh, Ryan Lodge, Jeffrey Nichols, Mary Reece, Eric Smith, Tammy Timms, Britt Weiser, Adam Smith, Bill Armbrust, Buffalo Bruce, Chittaranjan Ray, Curt Becker, Dan Ruterbories, David Potter, Alexa Davis, Karl Elmshaeuser, Steve Fairbairn, George Cunningham, Ed Hubbs, Jacy Schafer, Jennifer Swanson, Kalee Olson, Kelsi Wherman, Kyle Hauschild, Kara Cooney, Matt Smith, Jason McCauley, Megan McGuffey, Isabella Peterson, Rich Walters, Craig Romary, Chandler Schmidt, Rachael Whitehari, Will Inselman, John Brogan, Tyler Goeschel, Shawna Orth, Bryce Puck, James Huntwork, Jana Inwerson-Laws, Lavaine Moore, Patrick Lechner, Jeff Nichols, Ryan Lodge, Doug Wagner, Matt Smith; VIA PHONE: Mike McDonald



**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:** *Robert Lawson - NRCS State Conservationist*

- Went over the Agenda
- Still on Continuing Resolution through December 16, 2022
- *Moving full steam with Program signups*



**CONSERVATION PROGRAMS UPDATE:** *Brad Soncksen - NRCS ASTC-Programs*

- **FY23 CSP REVIEW**
  - Active Contracts
  - Allocations
  - Applications & Contracts
  - Fund Pools
    - Better distribution of contracts across the state
- **FY23 ACEP REVIEW**
  - WRE, ALE, ALE-GSS, & WREP Applications
  - NOVEMBER 18, 2022, Application DEADLINE.
  - However, we do take applications all year round.

- EWPP-FPE
  - Applications
    - 21
      - Acres
        - 5,590
  - Estimated Requested Funding
    - \$20,313,085.00
  - 13 have cancelled or found ineligible
  - Offers Accepted
    - 8
      - Acres
        - 1,225
  - Estimated Funding Needed
    - \$4,428,440.00
  - Legal Boundary Surveys underway
    - 5 completed
- Applications taken year-round.
- FY23 application cut-off November 18, 2022.
- This is for WRE, WRE-WREP, ALE and ALE-GSS.
- Will use appraisals again in FY2023 to determine acquisition costs.

○ **EQIP CONTRACT REVIEW – November 2022**

- Active Contracts
  - Acres
  - Obligated funds
- Planned & Applied Practices & Obligations from 2014-2028
- FY23 FUND POOLS
  - Mandatory Distributions
  - Statewide Fund Pools
- Wildfire Practices
- Source Water Protection
  - The FY20-23 Source Water Protection Areas
  - Reviewed FY23 Practices
  - Source Water Protection & Water Quality Sub-Committee
    - December Meeting being held next week.
- EQIP CIC FY23
  - Goal
  - Outcome
  - Priority Resource Concern
  - Incentive Practices

- FY23 EQUIP Allocations
  - FA Initial Allocation
    - \$23,957,000.00
- Timelines
  - November 18, 2022, was application deadline
  - February 21, 2023 –Applications Ranked
  - April 1, 2023 –Contracts obligated
  - Statewide Wildfire Initiative
    - May 31, 2023, application cutoff
    - ACT Now
  - NWQI –additional application cutoffs TBD
    - ACT Now
  - Tribal Initiative –additional application cutoff TBD
  - GPGI -additional application cutoff TBD
- **Inflation Reduction Act –Request for Information (RFI)**
  - NRCS is asking for public input through a Federal Register request for information on implementation of more than \$19 billion provided by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).
  - USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will use the investments provided through IRA-funded conservation programs
  - The Inflation Reduction Act provided unprecedented funding levels for several of the existing programs that NRCS implements.
  - The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years, totaling these additional amounts: \$8.45 billion.
    - \$3.25 billion –Conservation Stewardship Program
    - \$4.95 billion –Regional Conservation Partnership Program
    - \$1.4 billion –Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
    - \$1 billion –Conservation Technical Assistance
  - NRCS is looking for feedback on:
    - How to best maximize benefits for climate mitigation, including targeting practices and programs that provide quantifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.
    - How to maximize, target, monitor, and quantify improvements to soil carbon, reductions in nitrogen losses, and the reduction, capture, avoidance, or sequestration of carbon dioxide, methane or nitrous oxide emissions associated with agricultural production; and
    - How to further streamline and improve program delivery to increase efficiencies and expand program access for producers, especially underserved producers.
  - Public comments should be submitted through this [Federal Register notice](#) by Dec. 21, 2022. If you have questions, [contactNRCS.IRA.Input@usda.gov](mailto:contactNRCS.IRA.Input@usda.gov).

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket ID: NRCS-2022-0015. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
  - Urban Ag Sub-Committee
  - SWP-WQ Sub-Committee
  - FY23 Local Work Group Meetings
    - February/March 2023
- 

**Q: Who is eligible for the Tribal Initiative plan?**

**A:** Well, that's a great question, Albert, and we will be sitting down to try to get that figured out. That's where the confusion was before. We're going to get that figured out and it may be a combination of those.

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**NE NRCS GREAT PLAINS GRASSLAND INITIATIVE (GPGI) UPDATE:** Jeff Nichols - NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist

- This is not just an EQIP Fund pool.
- Explained where GPGI started & came about.
  - 4 States in the Midwest
    - South Dakota
    - Nebraska
    - Kansas
    - Oklahoma
- Addressing Woody Encroachment on Grasslands
  - Landowner Driven
  - Science Informed
  - Agency Supported
- A priority for Nebraska NRCS
  - Keeping Large Expanses of Grasslands Intact
    - Manage to Avoid
      - Manage vulnerability of Grasslands
- The NRCS GPGI Cadre
  - To lead a more intentional effort on woody encroachment
  - Foster collaboration with partners
  - Inform, promote, motivate, guide, and facilitate landowner awareness and action
  - Increase capacity for the prescribed burning practice (338) in Nebraska
- GIS TOOLS AVAILABLE
  - Early Warning Maps
  - Risk Maps



- Identify intact grasslands cores and cooperate with partners to deliver technical assistance and program assistance to those landowners.
  - PROMOTION AND AWARENESS
    - Partner mailings
    - Landowner Meetings
    - Piggyback on other meetings that landowners attend
    - Landowner groups or individual spokesman
    - Local news releases and radio or TV spots
    - Incentive program availability
  - EQIP
    - FY23 Application cutoff was 11/18/22
    - Possibly a second cutoff if needed in Feb. 2023
    - Primary Practices for Payment
      - Prescribed burn (338)
      - Prescribed Grazing (528)
      - Brush Management (314)
      - Pest Management (595)
- 

**Q:** Can a producer re-enroll after a GPCI contract is expired for the monitoring aspect?

**A:** Ideally, we'd like to include it right in the initial contract, but if they did some of those other practices previous and they just wanted to enroll in the pest management practice and get that per acre payment to monitor, they would be able to do that at about any time, but it whether or not we're going to allow them to piggyback, you know one three-year period of the pest management practice and then turn around and reenroll it for another three-year period. We'll just have to see what the funding levels are and what the interest levels are there, but we'll cross that bridge when we get to it and we're just kind of in the second year of this. So, we'll see how that comes together.

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## **NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION GRANT UPDATE** - Eric Zach, NE Game & Parks

- Strategic Implementation of Habitat Restoration in the Central Great Plains
  - Maintain resilient ranching communities and improve habitat for at-risk species through voluntary, incentive-based conservation of grasslands, wetlands, and streams.
  - Advance the objectives of the Nebraska Great Plains Grassland Initiative
    - Same objectives and project area
    - Increase project funding
    - Address capacity bottlenecks
    - Focus on woody encroachment
    - Wetland and stream restoration

- \$4 million grant
  - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
    - Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill
- GOALS
  - Remove Eastern redcedar on 60,000+ ac.
  - Conduct prescribed burns on 25,000+ ac.
  - Restore 600+ ac. of wetlands
  - Restore 3+ miles of streams
- PARTNERS
  - Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
    - Project \$'s and administration of the grant
  - Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition
    - Grassland Coordinator
  - Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever
    - Project \$'s
  - The Nature Conservancy
    - Prescribed Fire Coordination
  - Sandhills Task Force
    - Project Coordinator and Project \$'s
  - Santee Sioux Nation
    - Biologist – Northern Prairies Land Trust
  - Rainwater Basin Joint Venture



**FSA REVIEW & Grasslands CRP State Priority Zones:** Jana Ingwerson-Laws - FSA  
Programs Specialist

- **FY 2022 CRP Results**
  - General CRP Signup 58
  - Continuous CRP Signup 57
  - Continuous SU57 CLEAR30
  - Continuous CREP SU57
  - Continuous Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) SU57
  - Continuous HELI SU57
  - Continuous Migratory Bird SAFE SU57
  - Grassland CRP Signup 204
    - Spike in interest
    - Highest number of contracts in the program
- What's ahead for CRP in Fiscal Year 23
  - Continuous SU59 began 10/1/22
  - General CRP SU60 upcoming
    - 8-week signup

- Grassland CRP SU205
  - 6–8-week signup
- Soil Rental Rates (SRR)
  - Soil Rental Rate Process
- FY23 CRP Changes
  - **Erosion Tools Changed from 2022 to 2023**
    - **FSA is updating the tools used to estimate water and wind erosion for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**
  - **RUSLE → RUSLE2**
    - **What is RUSLE2?**
      - **RUSLE2 = Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation, version 2**
        - Tool to estimate water erosion
        - Updated version of RUSLE, which FSA currently uses
        - Used by NRCS since early 2000s
        - More accurate method of erosion estimation
          - Uses site-specific data
          - Captures daily interaction between weather, soil, and tillage parameters
  - **WEQ → WEPS**
    - **WEPS = Wind Erosion Prediction System**
      - Tool to estimate wind erosion
      - Updated alternative to WEQ (Wind Erosion Equation), which FSA currently uses
      - Used by NRCS since 2010
      - More accurate method of erosion estimation
        - Uses updated climate data
        - Simulates daily effect of precipitation, wind, soil properties, and farming operations
  - These changes were implemented for FY2023 CRP signups beginning October 1, 2022
  - **Will erosion estimates change?**
    - **Shifting to RUSLE2/WEPS will result in different erodibility indices (EIs)**
      - Changes will vary by region
      - On average, water EI values will decrease, and wind EI values will increase

- These changes will more accurately reflect erosion risks to identify the most environmentally sensitive land.
- **How will policies change?**
  - RUSLE2/WEPS will be used to calculate scores for the following Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) factors:
    - N2c (water quality)
    - N3 (erosion)
    - N5a (air quality)
  - The EBI will continue to be used in the same way; the only change is the technology used to calculate some aspects of it
- Update on Upland Wildlife SAFE CP38-4D
  - Explained the difference between PREVIOUS & CURRENT
    - Previous SAFE: May 2008 through 2020
    - CURRENT SAFE: October 2023
  - Outreach & Promotional
- ECP Update
  - Review ECP Practices
  - Review Current Counties approved for FY22
  - NEW counties for approval in FY23
    - **Cherry: Wildfire 10/2/2022**
    - **Thomas: Wildfire 10/2/2022**
    - **Nuckolls: Wildfire 10/23/2022**

**Q: Lancaster County (?)**

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## **URBAN AG SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE** - Jamie Thoene, Outreach Coordinator, NRCS

- Objectives
- First sub-committee meeting was held on August 26, 2022
  - Micro practices list created
- Second Meeting being held December 16, 2022
- New Chairperson
  - Megan McGuffey with Community Crops
- Micro Practice List-Ecological Sciences
  - 32 Small-Scale Farm and Urban Practices / 56 Scenarios
- Micro Practice List-Engineering
  - 32 Small-Scale Farm and Urban Practices / 56 Scenarios

- Create and promote Urban Ag Program Information for partners
  - UNL Faculty, Extension, Rural Prosperity, OMA-GRO, SECC, NECC, NRD's, Farm to School, NE Department of Agriculture Education, Pheasants Forever, Local Schools and Ag Educators, Non-profits, City and County Zoning, FSA, RMA, RD, TNC, NDEE, NSAS, Community Crops, City Sprouts, Tribal Communities, CFRA, and more.
  - RAISING NEBRASKA AT THE NEBRASKA STATE FAIR.
- Internal Objectives
- NE Urban Agriculture and Conservation Council (NUACC)
- Urban Ag and Innovation Production

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Q: New Farmers must go to FSA, which those offices are way busy right now. Are they being reimbursed for the extra workload? Statistics will show we are gaining farmers here in NE. Might need to push in WA for more money to help them.

A: We are hoping to be able to facilitate & make that process a lot smoother for them.

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### **NEBRASKA WAVES & GROUNDWATER NITRATE UPDATE** - Carla McCullough, Extension Educator-Water Science, UNL

- What is NE Waves?
  - Nebraska
  - Watershed
  - Aquifer
  - Virtual
  - Educational
  - System
  - The main idea behind the project is that there is a need for more basic and timely watershed education, aimed at information they need to make important decisions about water and natural resources.
- NRD – Watershed Decision Makers
  - Lots of very important decisions about water and natural resources are being made at Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts where boards are locally elected.
  - Engaging NRD boards
    - Boiling down topics to bite-sized modules, helps to lay the basic framework. It helps to start conversations and generate questions, possible solutions. We work with multiple agencies to make sure the 'bite-size' is still accurate.

- Engaging Decision Makers
  - Virtual educational system is a tool, but actual relationships matter. We engage with NRDs at the annual fall conference, legislative conference, spring water conference. I've been engaging with the NRD I & E staff to help amplify our educational materials.
- Social Media:
  - Nebraska WAVES
    - YouTube
    - Twitter
- We've been reaching out to more groups like today, Husker Harvest Days, Conservation Nebraska, and VESPR. There is a need for this type of material for a broader audience. High school and grade school teachers at Husker Harvest Days are hungry for this type of information for example. On the other end of the age spectrum, some NRD board members are not on social media and would still want in-person conversations.

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Q: Are you using these in the NWQI areas by chance or is that something that would see effective with NRCS's help.

A: Not currently, but it is a great idea.

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## **NRCS STRATEGIC PLAN** - *Robert Lawson, State Conservationist, NRCS*

- Introduction
  - 5yr plan – 2023-2027
- Mission
- Vision
- Goals
  - Support
    - Objectives & Strategies
      - Improve surface & Groundwater quality & quantity
      - Improve grassland health & productivity to reduce limitation to livestock production
      - Improve soil health
      - Enhance Habitat for terrestrial & aquatic species
  - Attract, engage & Retain
    - Objectives & Strategies
      - Expand & diversify NRCS recruiting pipeline
      - Hire Qualified, diverse candidates
      - Inspire & support our employees to accomplish Agency mission

- Implement an HR support structure for NE NRCS
- Maximize employee retention
- Build & Utilize
  - Objectives & Strategies
    - Ensure technical assistance delivery is relevant
    - Enhance customer service delivery & support system
    - Optimize technical & financial assistance implementation
- Engage
  - Objectives & Strategies
    - Build & maintain relationships with key partner/producer organizations based on mutually beneficial outcomes
    - Implement seamless delivery of NRCS & partner funding sources
    - Continue advocating for responsible management of our natural resources
- Next Steps
  - You will be provided this draft PowerPoint
  - **SEND FEEDBACK BY DECEMBER 15, 2022:**
    - **Tami Nordman @ tami.nordman@usda.gov**

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## PARTNER UPDATES:

- **NDEE Agency Update**
  - Personnel Changes
    - New Appointees
      - Dan Ross – Water Planning Section
      - Laure Johnson – Administrator of the Drinking Water & Groundwater Division
      - Dane Pauley – Supervisor of the 404/401 Section
    - Laura Nagengast hired as Source Water Protection Extension Educator (UNL/NEE Partnership)
  - Program Updates
    - Tri-Annual review of Title 117 – Surface Water Quality Standards is ongoing (Complete mid 2023?)
    - Public notice of the 2022 Integrated Report is expected soon.
    - Working on assumption of 404 program & initiated hiring staff.
    - Relaunching the NE Wellhead Protection Network in 2023.
  - Grant Programs
    - Notice of interest forms for new Section 319 projects due Jan. 2, 2023 (+May & September)

- Source Water Protection Grant: RFP will come out in Spring 2023.
  - Applications due Summer 2023
- Monitoring
  - Basin Rotation monitoring in White-Hat, North Platte, & South Platte basins in 2023.
  - Wrapping up a study of neonicotinoids, herbicides, and anions in groundwater (500 wells).
  - Conducting a pilot study of neonicotinoids in ambient waters, sediment, benthic macroinvertebrates.
- Projects of Interest
  - Cover Crop Inter-Seeder Demonstration (Highway Project)
  - Know-Your-Well Program
  - Statewide Arboretum Project
- Other Activities
  - NDEE/NRD Kaizen process

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○ **NASS Update**

- Surveys sent out every 5 yrs.
  - Postcards mailed out last week
  - Questionnaires are being sent out on December 13, 2022

○ **Larry with Nebraska Cattlemen's Association**

- Pete has announced his retirement
- Concern from our members is the upcoming CRP contracts & the reseeding requirements this year have been causing a lot of concern. Lack of availability of the wildfires/exotic flowers. With the price of corn, will people re-up their CRP contracts?
  - Who makes that decision in the CRP mix & reseeding?
    - A: Will follow up at the next State Tech meeting.

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○ **Kent**

- NE Natural Resources Commission
  - Currently has 3 positions open
    - Represent Public Power District
    - Agri-Business
    - Groundwater Irrigation

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○ **Rick Rasby – Nebraska Extension**

- Drought
  - High input cost
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## WRAP UP AND REVIEW OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- Encourage you to participate in
  - Thanks for coming.
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### FUTURE Meetings:

- ❖ MARCH 2, 2023 (Location TBD)
- ❖ JUNE 8, 2023
- ❖ SEPTEMBER 7, 2023
- ❖ DECEMBER 7, 2023



United States Department of Agriculture

# Conservation Programs

*FY2023 Programs Update  
CSP, ACEP, EQIP*



**Brad Soncksen, ASTC/Programs**

[brad.soncksen@usda.gov](mailto:brad.soncksen@usda.gov)

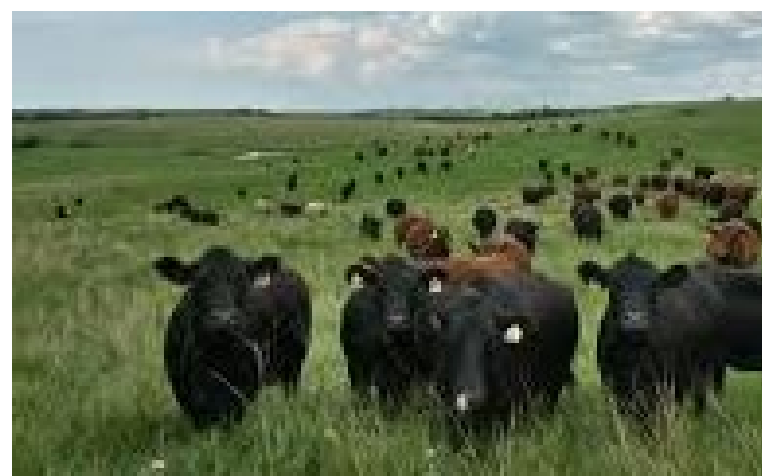
[www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov)

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



United States Department of Agriculture

# Conservation Stewardship Program



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

# Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

- Total Active CSP Contracts – December 2023
  - Contracts = 1,626
  - Contract Acres = 2,482,993
  - Obligated funds = \$108,600,000

# Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

- FY2023 Allocations

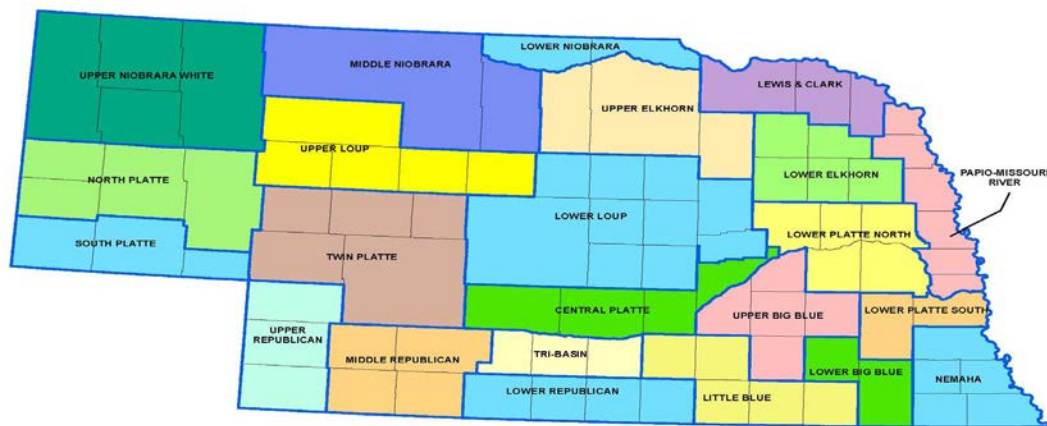
- CSP Classic = \$11.8 Million
- CSP Organic = \$200,000
- CSP Renewal = \$10.9 Million
- CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative = \$48,225

- FY2023 Applications

- Classic = 830
- Renewal = 381
- GCI = 46

# Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

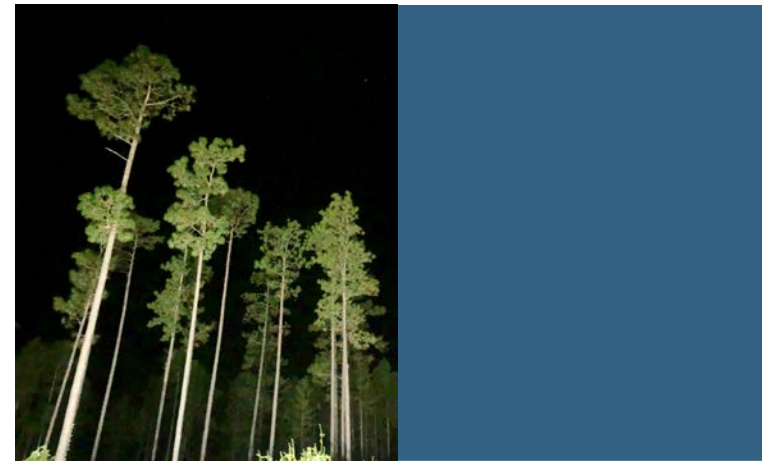
- FY2023 CSP Fund Pools
  - 23 fund pools aligned with DC administrative boundaries
  - Results:
    - Better distribution of contracts across the state







United States Department of Agriculture



## Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

# FY2023 ACEP - Nebraska

- Applications received
  - WRE Eligible Applications = 20 on 2,375 Acres
  - WREP Eligible Application = 6 on 487 Acres
  - ALE Applications = 1 on 1,070 Acres
  - ALE GSS Applications = 2 on 7,823 Acres



# FY2023 ACEP - Nebraska

## Fiscal Year Allocation of Funds

- ACEP-WRE - \$2 Million
- ACEP-WRE-WREP - TBD
- ACEP-ALE - \$652,477
- ACEP-WRE/WRP Stewardship Funds - \$554,631
  - These funds are for maintenance and repairs of existing WRE and WRP easements.

# FY2023 ACEP-WRE - Nebraska

Moving forward on:

1 WRE Applications for 166 Acres

- \$478,400 estimated acquisition costs.
- \$50,296 estimated restoration costs.

# FY2023 ACEP-WRE - Nebraska

Moving forward on:

1 WRE-WREP Applications for 77 Acres

- \$266,050 estimated acquisition costs.
- \$47,500 estimated restoration costs.

# FY2023 ACEP-FPE - Nebraska

## Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE)

- Applications = 21, Acres = 5,590
- Estimated Requested funding: \$20,313,085
- 13 have cancelled or found ineligible
- Offers accepted = 8, Acres = 1,225
- Estimated Funding needed: \$4,428,440
- Legal Boundary Surveys underway, 5 completed

# FY2023 ACEP-ALE - Nebraska

- Moving forward on:

- 1 ALE GSS Application on 3,350 acres

- Estimated \$564,000 federal share

- Drafting deed language

- Appraisal scheduled

- 1 ALE GSS Application on 5,959 acres

- Estimated \$1,376,550 federal share

- Closing expected Jan-Feb

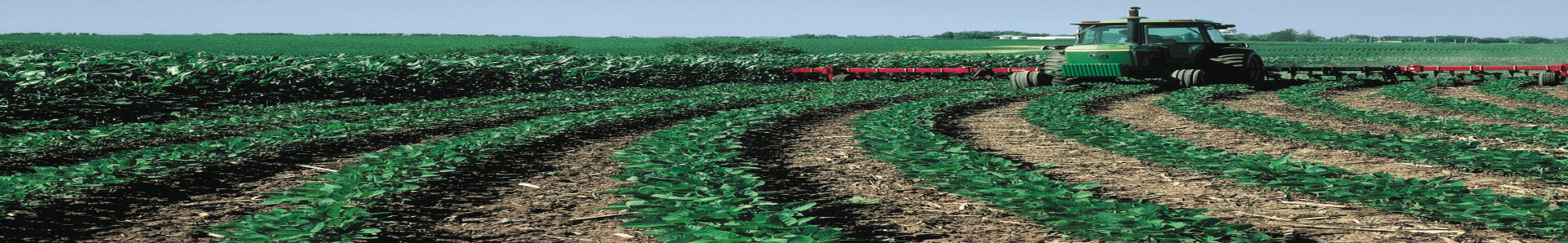
# FY2023 ACEP - Nebraska

- Applications taken year-round.
- FY23 application cut-off November 18, 2022.
- This is for WRE, WRE-WREP, ALE and ALE-GSS.
- Will use appraisals again in FY2023 to determine acquisition costs.



United States Department of Agriculture

# Environmental Quality Incentives Program





# Environmental Quality Incentives Program - Nebraska

- Total Active EQIP Contracts – November 2022
  - Total Active Contracts = 2,442
  - Total Contract Acres = 1.1 million
  - Obligated funds = \$80.3 million



# Planned and Applied 2014 – 2028 Top 25 Practices – Obligations

Practice	Count	Amount	Obligations
Cover Crop	4632	640679.4	\$ 23,395,338.46
Livestock Pipeline	1930	10061025.4	\$ 15,445,573.18
Sprinkler System	383	31549.5	\$ 13,313,867.15
Conservation Crop Rotation	2262	88927.1	\$ 11,782,863.61
Terrace	1474	8128520.2	\$ 10,216,479.68
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	235	12831.4	\$ 9,778,032.65
Brush Management	2234	107764.2	\$ 9,748,693.33
Watering Facility	3308	37651.5	\$ 9,523,631.68
Pumping Plant	1719	1833.5	\$ 9,041,159.01
Fence	2029	7219837.5	\$ 8,854,276.17
Irrigation Water Management	4171	599997.4	\$ 8,227,341.77
Underground Outlet	1101	1856950.7	\$ 6,705,788.06
Water Well	1223	3062	\$ 4,958,182.01
Waste Storage Facility	57	62	\$ 3,824,389.78
Nutrient Management	626	173242.6	\$ 3,557,348.03
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	87	9647.2	\$ 3,001,929.05
Irrigation Pipeline	461	523604.9	\$ 2,764,352.22
Prescribed Grazing	593	125043	\$ 2,748,983.70
Pasture and Hay Planting	302	21482.5	\$ 2,144,798.28
Forest Stand Improvement	184	3739.8	\$ 1,772,369.40
Grassed Waterway	269	1028.2	\$ 1,396,931.67
Prescribed Burning	443	97327.8	\$ 1,273,119.06
Mulching	551	38040.8	\$ 1,265,119.62

# Planned and Applied 2014 – 2028 Top 25 Practices – Count

Practice	Count	Amount	Obligations
Cover Crop	4632	640679.4	\$ 23,395,338.46
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Terrace	1474	8128520.2	\$ 10,216,479.68
Water Well	1223	3062	\$ 4,958,182.01
Underground Outlet	1101	1856950.7	\$ 6,705,788.06
Critical Area Planting	789	1940.5	\$ 405,208.40
Nutrient Management	626	173242.6	\$ 3,557,348.03
Prescribed Grazing	593	125043	\$ 2,748,983.70
Structure for Water Control	584	823	\$ 767,670.68
Mulching	551	38040.8	\$ 1,265,119.62
Irrigation Pipeline	461	523604.9	\$ 2,764,352.22
Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation	455	1792363.8	\$ 502,637.02
Prescribed Burning	443	97327.8	\$ 1,273,119.06
Sprinkler System	383	31549.5	\$ 13,313,867.15
Pasture and Hay Planting	302	21482.5	\$ 2,144,798.28
Grassed Waterway	269	1028.2	\$ 1,396,931.67
Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	265	49444.7	\$ 584,149.89



# EQIP Fund Pools FY2023

# 2023 Mandatory Distribution

- Source Water Protection = 10%
- Wildlife Initiative = 10%
- Historically Underserved = 10%
- EQIP-CIC = 5%
- Livestock = 50%

## FY2023 Wildlife Practices

### ○ Count towards 10% wildlife requirement

- 327 - Conservation Cover
- 390 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- 391 - Riparian Forest Buffer
- 395 – Stream Habitat Improvement and Management
- 396 – Aquatic Organism Passage
- 420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting
- 422 – Hedgerow Planting
- 472 – Access Control
- 580 – Streambank and Shoreline Protection
- 644 – Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 646 – Shallow Water Development and Mgt
- 647 – Early Successional Habitat Development and Mgt
- 649 – Structures for Wildlife
- 657 – Wetland Restoration
- 658 – Wetland Creation
- 659 - Wetland Enhancement



United States Department of Agriculture

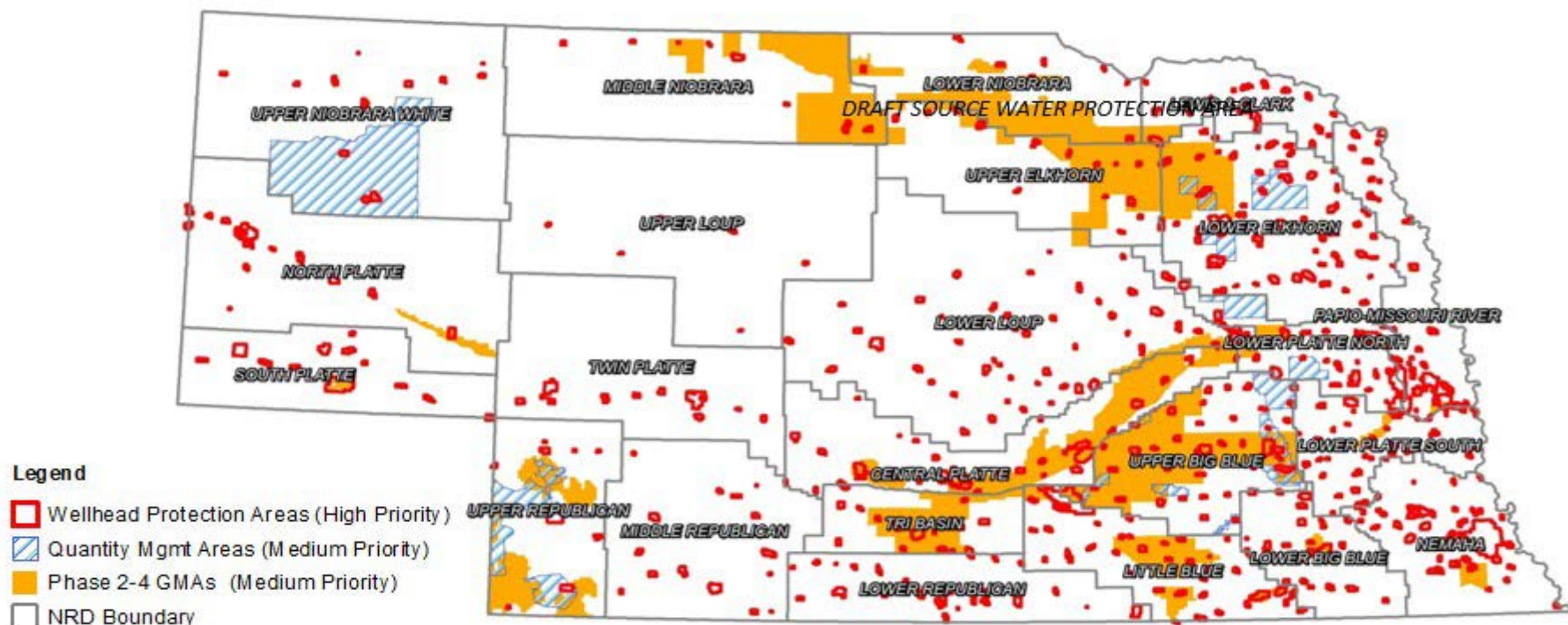


# Source Water Protection

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION  
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



# FY20 – FY23 Source Water Protection



The Phase 2-4 and Quantity Management Areas that intersect a Wellhead Protection Area are medium priority.

Total Medium & High Priority Areas: 8,006,050 acres

## FY2023 Source Water Protection Practices (Wp)

- Conservation Cover
- Conservation Crop Rotation
- Contour Buffer Strips
- Cover Crop
- Critical Area Planting
- Well Decommissioning
- Groundwater Testing
- Field Border
- Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Filter Strip
- Grassed Waterway
- Irrigation Pipeline
- Irrigation System, Micro irrigation
- Sprinkler System
- Irrigation Water Management
- Pasture and Hay Planting
- Range Planting
- Nutrient Management
- Pest Management
- Vegetated Treatment Area
- Constructed Wetland
- Wetland Restoration
- Wetland Enhancement





United States Department of Agriculture



# EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts

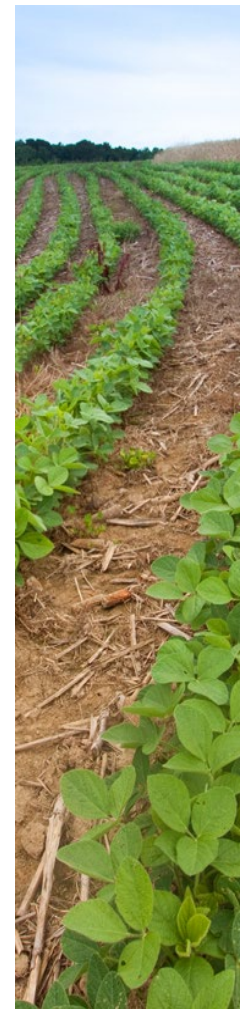
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# EQIP CIC – Nebraska FY2023

- **Goal:** Help producers address priority resource concerns on part of their operation as a “steppingstone” to achieving sustainable stewardship on their entire operation
- **Outcomes:**
  - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
  - Enhance carbon sequestration
  - Due to positive experiences under EQIP CIC, some participants go on to pursue further conservation benefits on their entire operation through applying for CSP
- **Land Use:** Crop, Pasture, Range, Forest
- **Priority Resource Concern:** “Soil Quality Limitations”, “Degraded Plant condition”, “Water Quality and Quantity”





# EQIP CIC – Nebraska FY2023 Incentive Practices

- 328 – Conservation Crop Rotation
- 329 – Residue and Tillage Management, No Till
- 338 - Prescribed Burning
- 340 – Cover Crop
- 449 - Irrigation Water Management
- 511 – Forage Harvest Management
- 528 – Prescribed Grazing
- 590 – Nutrient Management
- 595 – Pest Management Conservation System
- 645 – Upland Wildlife Habitat Management
- 647 – Early Successional Habitat Development and Management
- 808 – Soil Carbon Amendment
- 216- Soil Health Testing

# FY2023 STATEWIDE FUND POOLS

- NE Great Plains Grassland Initiative
- Working Lands for Wildlife – Sandhills
- Working Lands for Wildlife - Quail
- Urban and Small-Scale Agriculture (formerly High Tunnel)
- Organic
- Energy
- Conservation Activity Plans
- Animal Feeding Operations
- Tribal
- Disaster

## FY2023 EQIP Allocations

### FA Initial Allocation = \$23,957,000

- Urban and Small-Scale Agriculture (formerly High Tunnel) = \$500,000
- Wildlife Initiative (10%) = \$896,000 (10% includes WIN, GPGL and Quail WLFW initiative)
- Great Plains Grassland Initiative = \$1,200,000
- Quail WLFW Initiative = \$300,000
- Historically Underserved (10%) = \$2,396,000
- Reserve = \$600,000
- AFO's = \$1,000,000
- Conservation Activity Plans = \$200,000
- Organic = \$100,000
- Tribal = \$100,000
- Sandhills Working Lands for Wildlife (WLFW) = \$100,000

## FY2023 EQIP Allocations

### FA Initial Allocation (Estimate) = \$24,000,000

- Disaster = \$1,500,000
- Source Water Protection (10%) = \$2,396,000
- EQIP-CIC (5%) = \$1,200,000
- Inefficient Energy = \$25,000

**Balance left to distribute to Local Fund Pools = \$9,994,000**

### **National Initiatives Allocations (NOTE: Included in FA initial allocation total)**

- Joint Chiefs = \$0 (NOTE: UNW, MN, UL, NRD's – No request for FY23)
- Water Smart = \$250,000
  - URNRD = \$250,000
  - MRNRD = \$0 (Project expired 9/30/22, No request for FY23)
- NWQI = \$1,200,000
  - Bazile Creek (LCNRD, LENRD, UENRD) = \$800,000
  - Big Sandy (LBNRD) = \$200,000
  - Turkey Creek (LBBNRD) = \$200,000

## Environmental Quality Incentives Program - Nebraska

### • Time Lines

- November 18, 2022 was application deadline
- February 21, 2023 – Applications Ranked
- April 1, 2023 – Contracts obligated
- Statewide Wildfire Initiative
  - May 31, 2023 application cutoff
  - ACT Now
- NWQI – additional application cutoffs TBD
  - ACT Now
- Tribal Initiative – additional application cutoff TBD
- GPGI - additional application cutoff TBD

# Inflation Reduction Act – Request for Information (RFI)

- NRCS is asking for public input through a Federal Register request for information on implementation of more than \$19 billion provided by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).
- USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will use the investments provided through IRA-funded conservation programs
- The Inflation Reduction Act provided unprecedented funding levels for several of the existing programs that NRCS implements.
- The increased funding levels begin in fiscal year 2023 and rapidly build over four years, totaling these additional amounts:
  - \$8.45 billion – Environmental Quality Incentives Program
  - \$3.25 billion – Conservation Stewardship Program
  - \$4.95 billion – Regional Conservation Partnership Program
  - \$1.4 billion – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
  - \$1 billion – Conservation Technical Assistance



# Inflation Reduction Act – Request for Information (RFI)

In particular, NRCS is looking for feedback on:

- How to best maximize benefits for climate mitigation, including targeting practices and programs that provide quantifiable reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
- How to maximize, target, monitor, and quantify improvements to soil carbon, reductions in nitrogen losses, and the reduction, capture, avoidance, or sequestration of carbon dioxide, methane or nitrous oxide emissions associated with agricultural production; and
- How to further streamline and improve program delivery to increase efficiencies and expand program access for producers, especially underserved producers.

Public comments should be submitted through this [Federal Register notice](#) by Dec. 21, 2022. If you have questions, contact [NRCS.IRA.Input@usda.gov](mailto:NRCS.IRA.Input@usda.gov).

*Federal eRulemaking Portal:* Go to <http://www.regulations.gov> and search for Docket ID: NRCS-2022-0015. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.



United States Department of Agriculture



# STAC Urban Ag Subcommittee

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Conservation  
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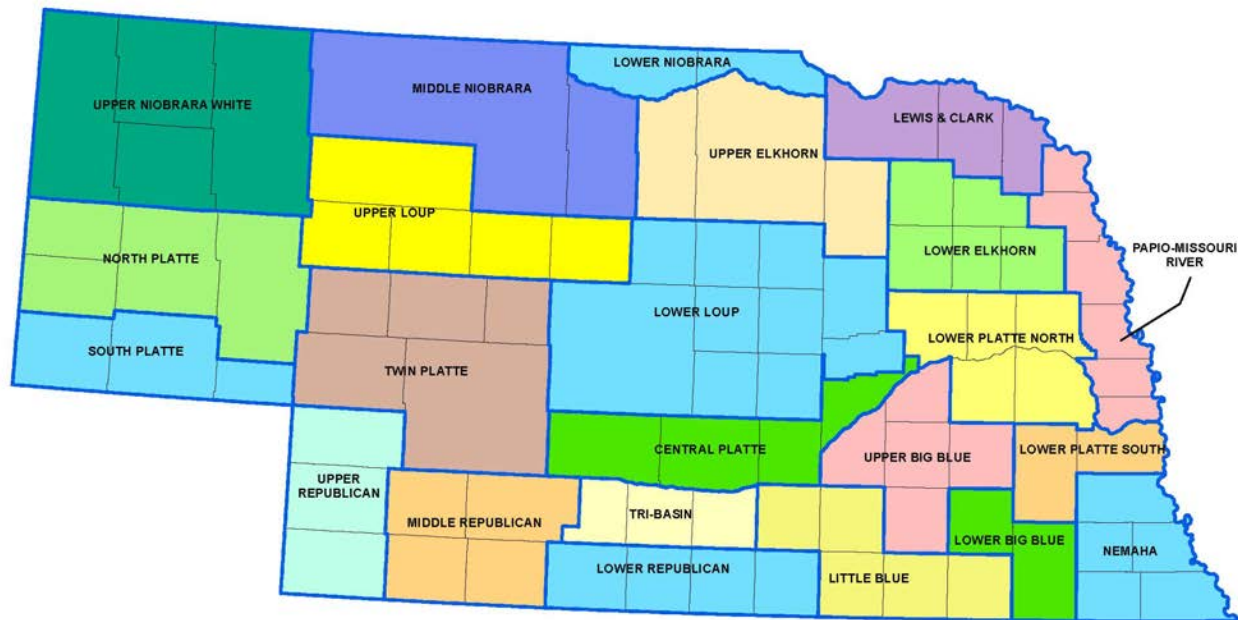


# STAC SWP-WQ Subcommittee

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Conservation  
Service

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# FY2023 LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS



# LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS

- Meetings completed in February/March 2023
- *LOCAL WORK GROUP AGENDA ITEMS:*
  - Priority Resource Concerns
  - Fund Pools - Ranking Tools – Screening Tools
  - Practice Payment Schedule
  - Local issues





QUESTIONS?



# NEBRASKA - GREAT PLAINS GRASSLAND INITIATIVE (GPGI)

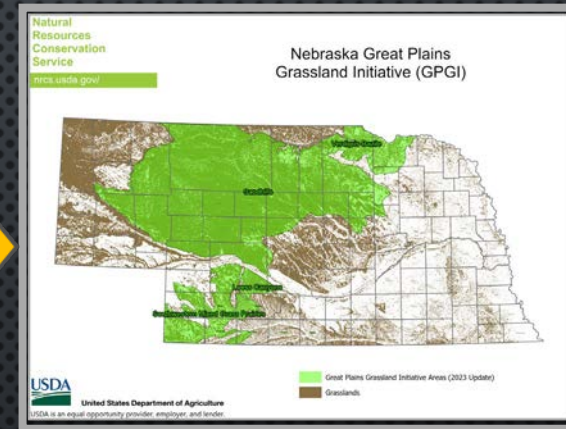
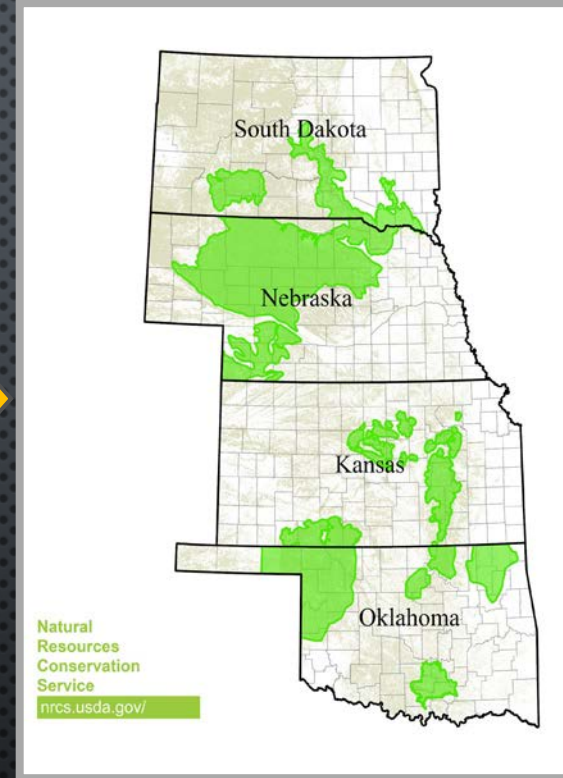
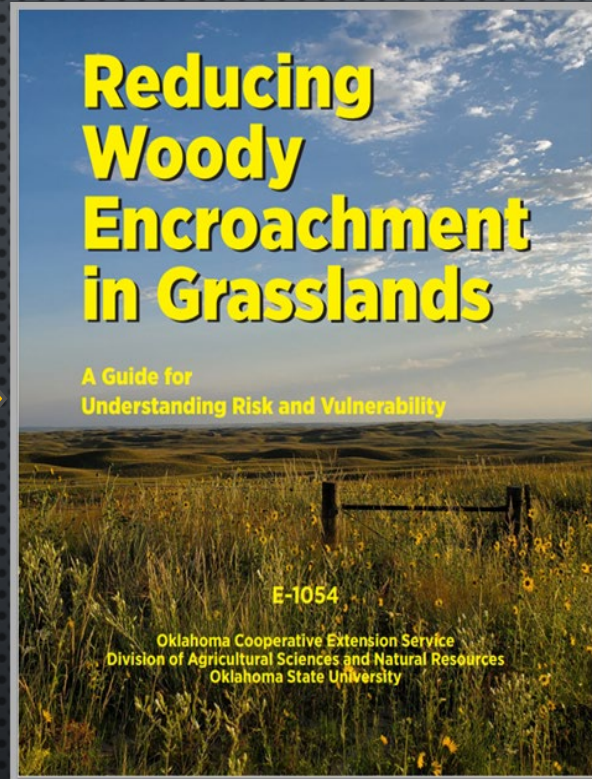
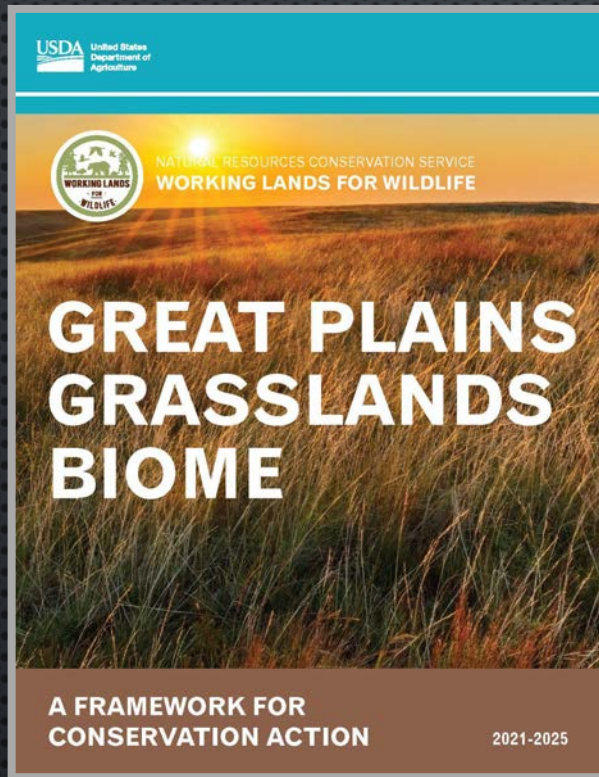
- ADDRESSING WOODY ENCROACHMENT ON GRASSLANDS
  - LANDOWNER DRIVEN
  - SCIENCE INFORMED
  - AGENCY SUPPORTED
- A PRIORITY FOR NEBRASKA NRCS



Jeff Nichols  
State Range Management Specialist  
USDA – NRCS  
(308) 534-2360 Ext. 3707  
[jeffrey.nichols@usda.gov](mailto:jeffrey.nichols@usda.gov)



# GREAT PLAINS GRASSLAND INITIATIVE (GPGI)



## INITIATIVE PARTNERS:





# NEBRASKA GREAT PLAINS GRASSLAND INITIATIVE

(KEEPING LARGE EXPANSES OF GRASSLANDS INTACT)

MANAGE THIS

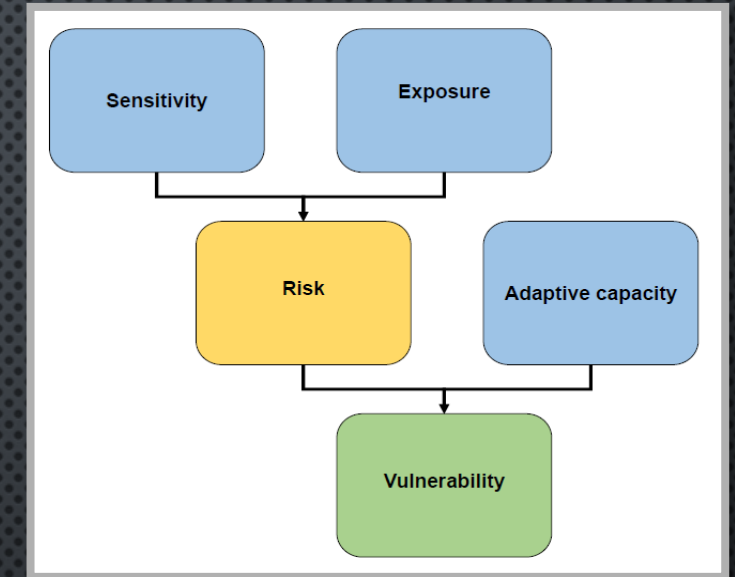
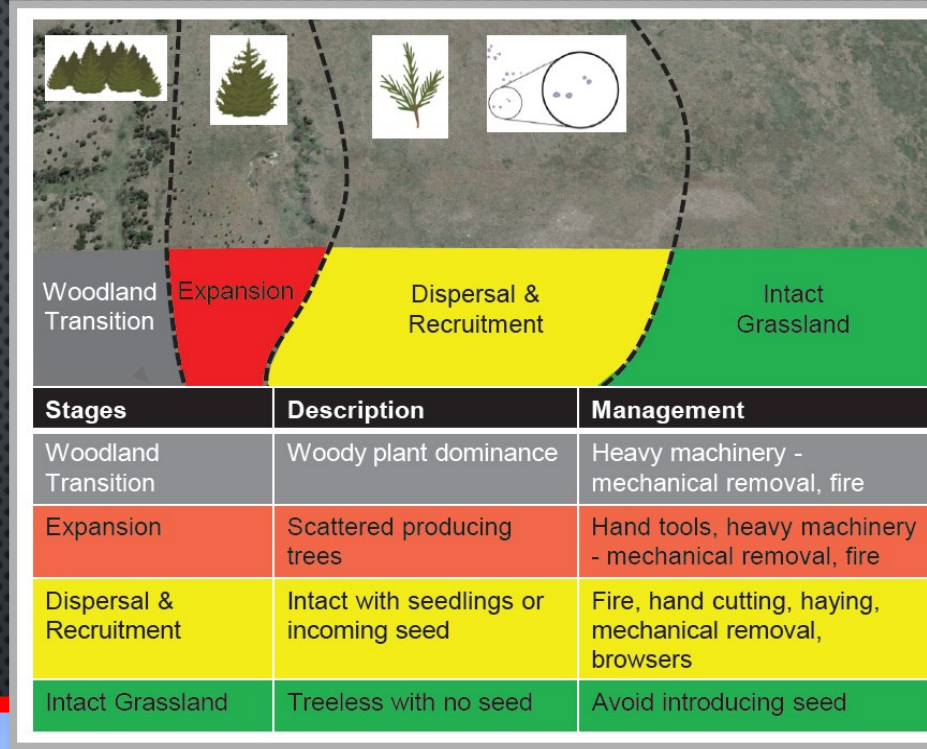
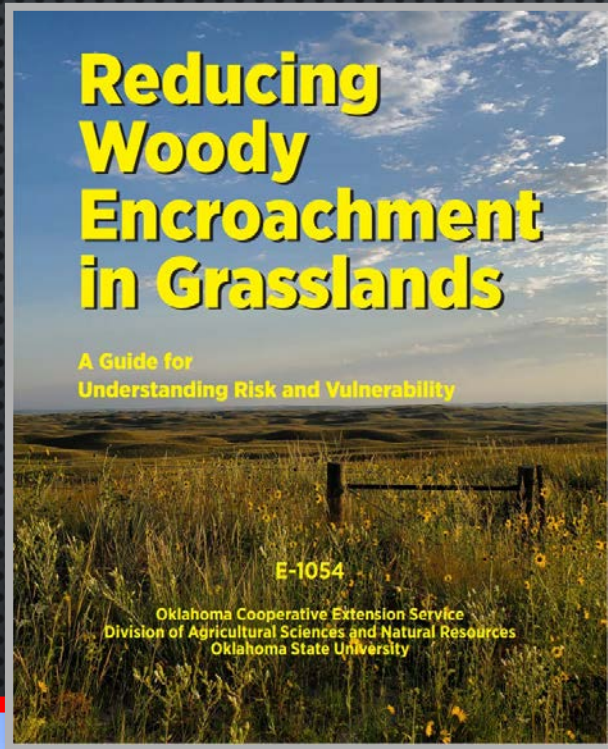


AVOID THIS





# MANAGING THE VULNERABILITY OF GRASSLANDS





# THE NRCS GPGI CADRE

- TO LEAD A MORE INTENTIONAL EFFORT ON WOODY ENCROACHMENT
- FOSTER COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS
- INFORM, PROMOTE, MOTIVATE, GUIDE AND FACILITATE LANDOWNER AWARENESS AND ACTION
- INCREASE CAPACITY FOR THE PRESCRIBED BURNING PRACTICE (338) IN NEBRASKA



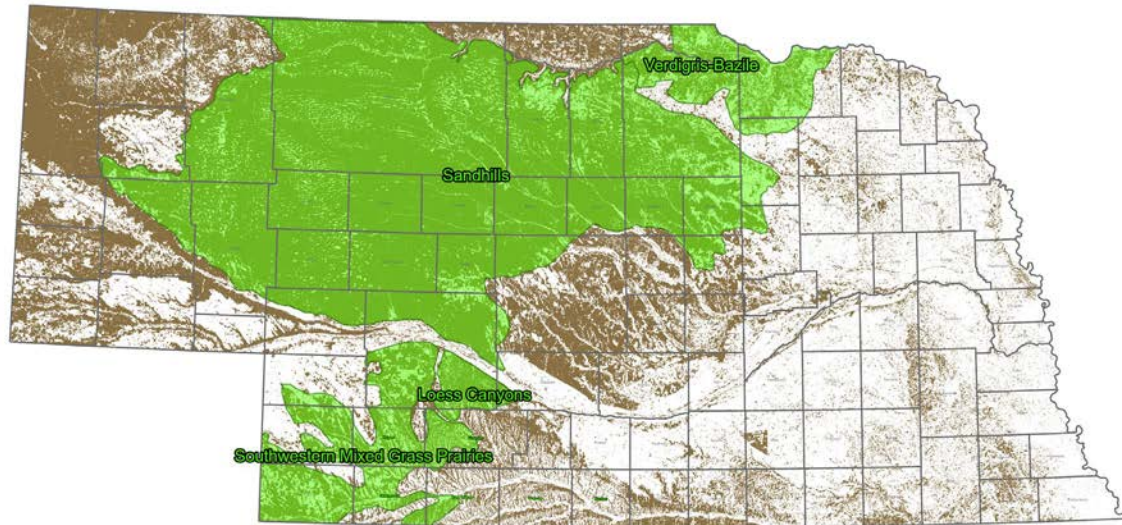


# NEBRASKA NRCS GPGI CADRE

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## Nebraska Great Plains Grassland Initiative (GPGI)



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

■ Great Plains Grassland Initiative Areas (2023 Update)  
■ Grasslands

## GPGI Cadre NRCS Employees

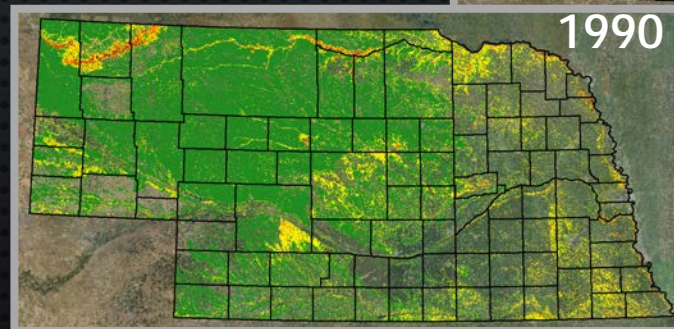
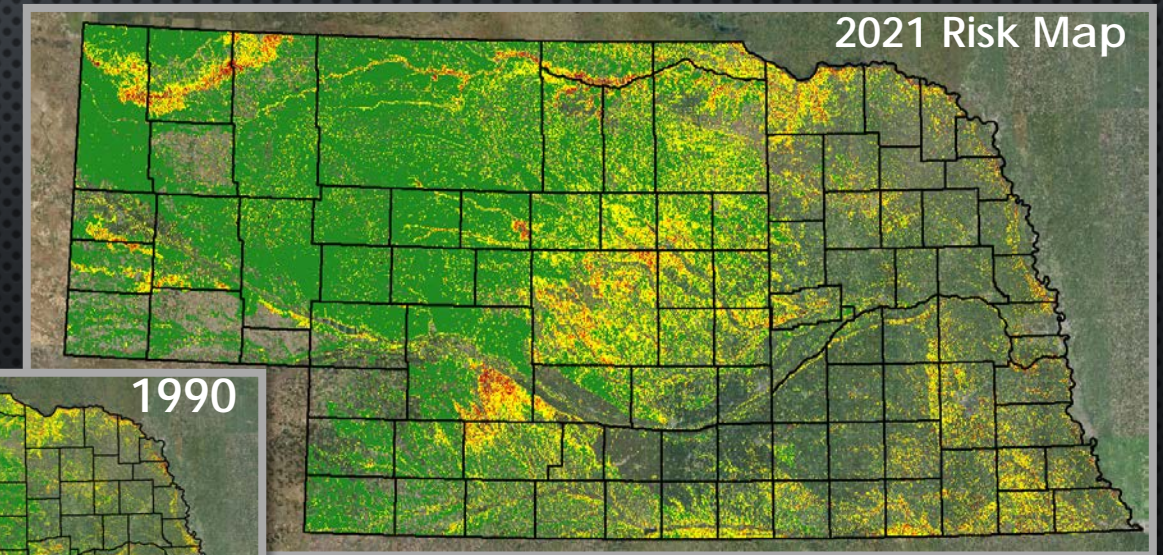
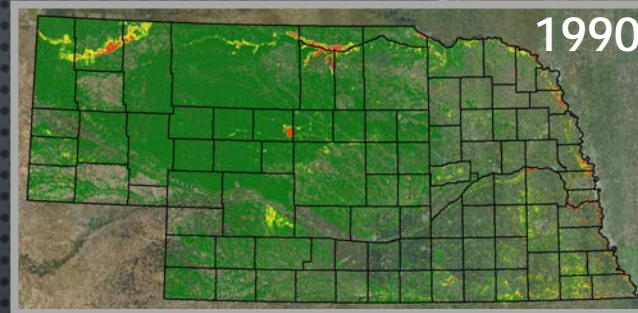
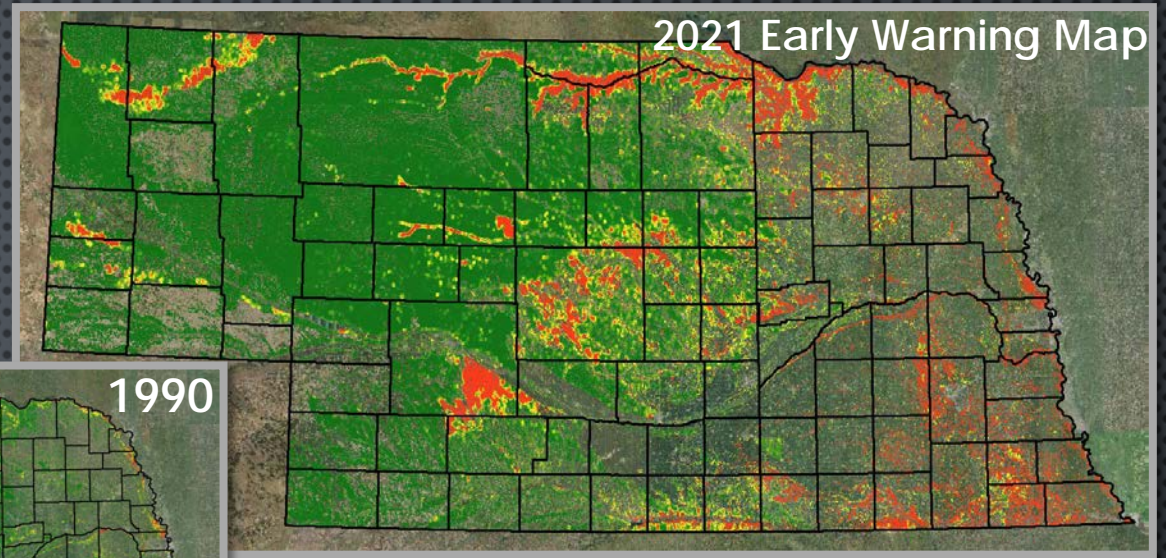
as of 10/18/22

	Position	Field Office	Supervising District Conservationist (DC)
Asche, Sherry	RC	Spalding	Bauer, Bryce
Browelei, Bob	SC	Thedford	Lousias, Christine
Espinosa, James	RMS	North Platte	Eakins, Carol
Gydesen, Grant	SC	Ord	Bauer, Bryce
Houser, Amy	SC	Curtis	Kennedy, Jason
King, Kristy	RC	North Platte	Eakins, Carol
Kirchmann, Kelsey	RMS	Broken Bow	Bauer, Bryce
Kirwin, Wyatt	RMS	Imperial	Keep, Andrew
Lancaster, Casey	RMS	Valentine	Lousias, Christine
Laible, Evan	SCT	Norfolk	Sutherland, Robin
McMillan, Lisa	RMS	Broken Bow	Bauer, Bryce
Millikan, Travis	SC	Bridgeport	Jordening, Georgette
Munter, Jon	SCT	Bloomfield	Poppe, Rebekah
Peterson, Brandon	DC	O'Neill	James Huntwork
Poppe, Rebekah	DC	Hartington	Wagner, Doug
Schaeffer, Julianna	RMS	Thedford	Lousias, Christine
Tilley, Abigale	RMS	Broken Bow	Bauer, Bryce
Weissling, Justin	RMS	North Platte	Eakins, Carol
Winkler, Michael	SC	McCook	Kennedy, Jason



# GIS TOOLS AVAILABLE

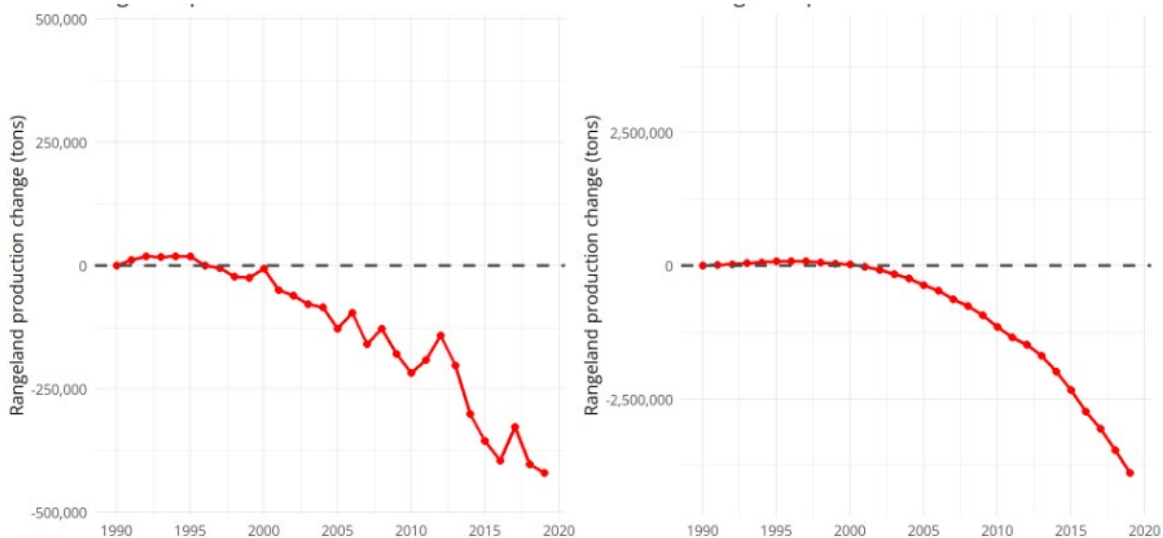
- EARLY WARNING MAPS
- RISK MAPS
- IDENTIFY INTACT GRASSLAND CORES AND COOPERATE WITH PARTNERS TO DELIVER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND PROGRAM ASSISTANCE TO THOSE LANDOWNERS





# Nebraska

## Rangeland Production Lost to Tree Encroachment



### Rangeland Production and Tree Cover Summary

Rangeland production in 2019	23,908,316 tons
Rangeland production losses in 2019	419,328 tons (1.72%)
Cumulative rangeland production losses since 1990	3,881,756 tons
Tree cover in 2019	758,181 acres
Tree cover change since 1990	+402,521 acres
Tree cover percent in 2019	3.11%

## Other Tools

Production lost to tree encroachment in 2019

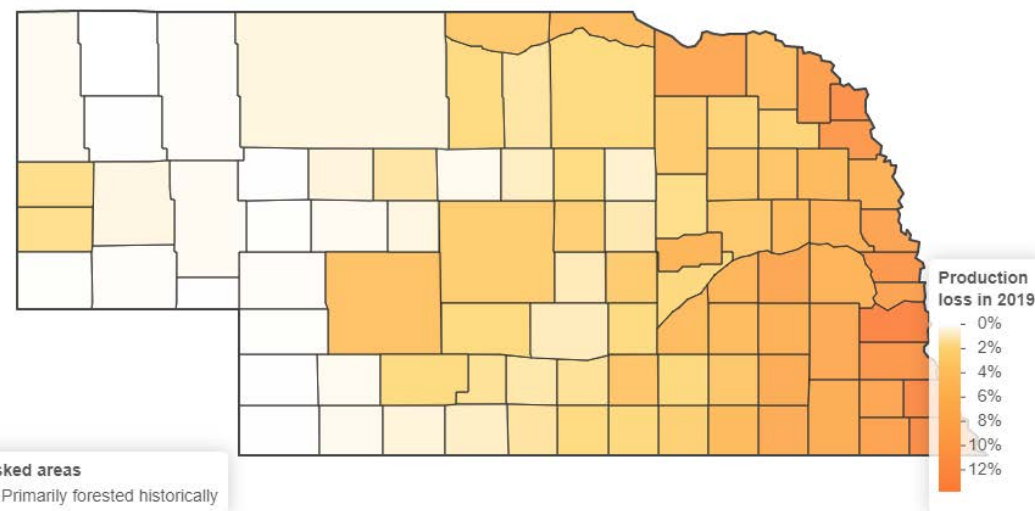
419,328 tons

Cumulative production lost to tree encroachment (1990-2019)

3,881,756 tons

### Rangeland Production Losses Map

Click any county on the map below to access its report.



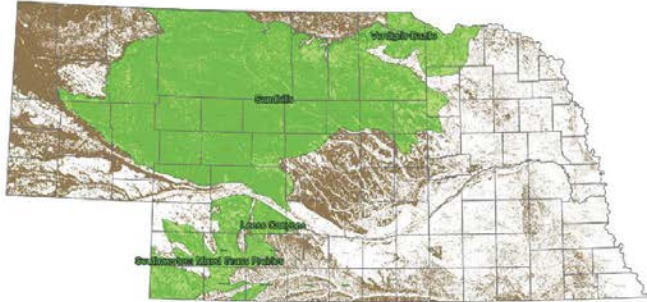
The map above depicts percent production loss in 2019 relative to what would have been achievable had tree cover not changed since 1990. Counties that appear red have had the most production losses in the state as a result of tree cover increases.



# PROMOTION AND AWARENESS

- PARTNER MAILINGS – POSTCARDS AND FLIERS
- LANDOWNER MEETINGS
- PIGGYBACK ON OTHER MEETINGS THAT LANDOWNERS ATTEND
- LANDOWNER GROUPS OR INDIVIDUAL SPOKESMAN
- LOCAL NEWS RELEASES AND RADIO OR TV SPOTS
- INCENTIVE PROGRAM AVAILABILITY

## RANCHER DRIVEN, SCIENCE INFORMED, AGENCY SUPPORTED



Green: Plains Grassland Initiative Areas (2023 Update)  
Brown: Grasslands

Producers in targeted rangelands are eligible to receive Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding related to addressing woody plant encroachment. Application information is available at your local USDA Service Center.

### INITIATIVE PARTNERS:



## NEBRASKA LOST MORE THAN 419,000 TONS OF RANGE PRODUCTION TO WOODY ENCROACHMENT IN 2019



NEBRASKA GREAT PLAINS GRASSLAND INITIATIVE



# ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)

- FY 2023 APPLICATION CUTOFF WAS 11/18/2022
- POSSIBLY A SECOND CUTOFF IF NEEDED IN FEB. OF 2023

Allocated 1.2 Million for FY 2023 toward GPGI from existing Wildlife Initiative fund pool

Favor applications that are anchored to intact grasslands or established cores – multi landowner

Favor applications that are working with partner organizations



# EQIP Practices for GPGI

## PRIMARY PRACTICES FOR PAYMENT

### Prescribed Burning (338)

- Not required, but encouraged through workload prioritization tool

### Prescribed Grazing (528) - Deferment to build fine fuel

### Brush Management (314)

- Various levels of payment available

### Pest Management (595)

- PAMS approach (Prevent – Avoidance – Monitor – Suppress)
- Per Acre Payment for 3 years (payment limitation = \$10K/year)
- Removal of all seed producing trees with some exceptions





United States  
Department of  
Agriculture



# State Technical Committee Updates December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Farm  
Service  
Agency

[fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov)

# FY2022 CRP Results

## General Signup 58

- **768** Contracts
- **50,043.45** Acres
  - 40,345.86 Re-enrolling CRP Acres
- Top 3 Counties (by acreage)
  - Morrill 4,694.26 acres
  - Holt 3,436.99 acres
  - Kimball 3,064.82 acres

# FY2022 CRP Results

## Continuous SU57

- **473** Contracts
- **3,545.16** Acres
  - 2,110.50 Re-enrolling CRP Acres

## Continuous SU57 CLEAR30

- **4** Contracts
- **19.63** Acres

# FY2022 CRP Results

## Continuous CREP SU57

- **32** Contracts
- **1,941.35** Acres
  - 643.15 Re-enrolling CRP Acres

## Continuous Farmable Wetlands Program (FWP) SU57

- **12** Contracts
- **101.51** Acres
  - 94.77 Re-enrolling CRP Acres

# FY2022 CRP Results

## Continuous HELI SU57

- **82** Contracts
- **3,161.41** Acres
  - 2,674.38 Re-enrolling CRP Acres

## Continuous Migratory Bird SAFE SU57

- **18** Contracts
- **802.51** Acres

# FY2022 CRP Results

## Grassland CRP SU204

- **950** Contracts
- **347,489.96** Acres
  - 5,025.79 Re-enrolling CRP Acres
- Top 3 Counties (by acreage)
  - Holt 48,815.32 acres
  - Morrill 35,535.66 acres
  - Dawes-North Sioux 33,567.26 acres



# What's ahead for CRP in FY2023?

## Continuous SU59 began 10/1/2022

- **7/31/2023** – deadline for producers with re-enrolling land or combination of new and re-enrolling land to submit an offer

## General CRP SU60 upcoming

- Will be 8-week signup

## Grassland CRP SU205

- 6–8-week signup

# What's ahead for CRP in FY2023?

## Soil Rental Rates

- **Annual payment rates are intended to compensate participant for foregone returns to production**
- **Maximum annual payment rates**
  - Weighted average of SRRs for 3 predominant soils
  - $SRR = \text{County-ave SRR} \times \text{Soil Productivity Factor (SPF)}$
- **County-average SRR is based primarily on Annual NASS Cash Rents Survey**
  - CRP Technical Support funding
  - August release date
  - 42k survey respondents
- **Soil productivity factor based on NRCS-developed NCCPI**

# What's ahead for CRP in FY2023?

## Soil Rental Rate (SRR) Process

- **NASS survey released**
- **Provisional county-average SRRs posted**
- **Alternative rate requests (438 this year)**
  - Received
  - Reviewed expert panel
  - Final decisions by DAFP pending
- **Multiplied by SPF and posted in time for General SU**

# FY2023 CRP Changes

## Erosion Tools Changed from 2022 to 2023

- **FSA is updating the tools used to estimate water and wind erosion for the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)**
  - RUSLE → RUSLE2
  - WEQ → WEPS
  - These changes were implemented for FY2023 CRP signups beginning October 1, 2022

# FY2023 CRP Changes

## What is RUSLE2?

**RUSLE2 = Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation, version 2**

- Tool to estimate water erosion
- Updated version of RUSLE, which FSA currently uses
- Used by NRCS since early 2000s
- More accurate method of erosion estimation
  - Uses site-specific data
  - Captures daily interaction between weather, soil, and tillage parameters

# FY2023 CRP Changes

## **WEPS = Wind Erosion Prediction System**

- Tool to estimate wind erosion
- Updated alternative to WEQ (Wind Erosion Equation), which FSA currently uses
- Used by NRCS since 2010
- More accurate method of erosion estimation
  - Uses updated climate data
  - Simulates daily effect of precipitation, wind, soil properties, and farming operations

# FY2023 CRP Changes

## Will erosion estimates change?

### Shifting to RUSLE2/WEPS will result in different erodibility indices (EIs)

- Changes will vary by region
- On average, water EI values will decrease, and wind EI values will increase
- These changes will more accurately reflect erosion risks to identify the most environmentally sensitive land



# FY2023 CRP Changes

## How will policies change?

- RUSLE2/WEPS will be used to calculate scores for the following Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) factors:
  - N2c (water quality)
  - N3 (erosion)
  - N5a (air quality)
- The EBI will continue to be used in the same way; the only change is the technology used to calculate some aspects of it



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Agriculture

# Two Producer Factsheets

USDA Farm Service Agency  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## FSA Erosion Prediction Tools Transitioning from RUSLE/WEQ to RUSLE2/WEPS

### Frequently Asked Questions

October 2022

#### What is changing?

For Fiscal Year 2023 signups of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will use updated models to estimate potential soil erosion by wind and water, which is used to rank CRP offers from agricultural producers and landowners. The updated models are more site specific, align with those of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and provide a more accurate estimate on natural resource benefits, improving the scientific accuracy of CRP.

#### What is RUSLE2/WEPS?

The new models, Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation version 2, or better known as RUSLE2, and Wind Erosion Prediction System (WEPS), replaced RUSLE and WEQ for CRP ranking and eligibility purposes. RUSLE2 is a widely used process-based model that estimates rates of soil erosion caused by rainfall and associated surface runoff. RUSLE2 uses climate data from 1960-1990. RUSLE2

estimates soil erosion using average rainfall and expands on the hybrid model structure and mathematical integration that was used previously by RUSLE.

Development of WEPS began in the mid-2000s with input from multiple Federal agencies. NRCS adopted WEPS in 2010 as their official wind erosion tool. WEPS uses climate data from 1974-2013. WEPS is a process-based model that simulates the daily time step effect of precipitation, wind, soil properties, and farming operations on wind erosion.

#### Will estimated erosion rates increase?

Because of their greater level of sophistication, RUSLE2 and WEPS may generate noticeably different erosion results than RUSLE and WEQ. Factors include improved climate data and treatment of soils with high sand content. Differences will vary by region. Generally, the new models suggest a tendency toward lower potential for water erosion and higher potential for wind erosion.

#### How will policies change?

FSA will use the new tools for the General Signup, Continuous Signup, and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). For the General Signup, the new models will be used for Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) factors for N2c, N3, and N5a, which focus on water quality, erosion, and air quality. For the Continuous Signup, the new models will be used for Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI).

#### For more information

Producers and partners can learn more by contacting the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#).

USDA Farm Service Agency  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## Alternatives to Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI)

### FSA Conservation Program Options

FSA has changed the way that land is assessed for soil erosion. The latest technology is being used for erosion estimates to ensure that the most environmentally sensitive land is being enrolled in our programs. With the upgrade in technology, producers may find that some offers may not be what they expected. Erodibility Index (EI) scores for some offers, may change and that could affect the EI cutoff of 20 or higher for Highly Erodible Land Initiative (HELI) eligibility to be considered for this non-competitive offer process.

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) offers that are not eligible for HELI may still have opportunities for participating in other Conservation Reserve Programs (CRP) which include:

- CRP —General Signup
- CRP —Continuous Signup including such programs as Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Farmable Wetland Program (FWP), and State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement Program (SAFE)

### General CRP

CRP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and landowners to remove environmentally sensitive farmland from production and convert it to conservation cover. General signup offers must meet one of three land eligibility criteria—EI of 8 or greater, located in a state

or national conservation priority area, or is expiring CRP. Offers are ranked using the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI) to determine acceptance for enrollment in CRP. HELI because it is a non-competitive offer process requires a higher EI of 20 versus a General CRP EI of 8.

The dates for the Fiscal Year 2023 General CRP enrollment period have not yet been announced. Accepted contracts for this enrollment period will become effective October 1, 2023.

### Other Continuous CRP Opportunities

If the land does not meet the EI criteria for HELI under continuous signup, there are other continuous signup options available such as CREP, FWP and SAFE. Each program may have specific conservation practices or state requirements. Producers may submit offers at any time for Continuous CRP. Offers for continuous enrollment must meet additional eligibility requirements but are not subject to competition, such as with General CRP.

Offers for Continuous CRP are not subject to competitive ranking during specific periods like General CRP. If the land is not currently enrolled in CRP, the producer may choose to defer the effective start date of the new CRP contract for up to six months after the offer is approved. If the land is currently in CRP in a contract that expires on September 30, then the effective start date of the new Continuous CRP contract is October 1.

### For More Information

For more information about these and other FSA conservation programs, visit [fsa.usda.gov](#) or contact your local FSA office. Some programs mentioned above may have State-specific guidance and should be discussed with your local office. To find your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-locator](#).



[fsa.usda.gov/](#)

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OCTOBER 2022

Service  
Agency

[fsa.usda.gov](#)

## Update on Upland Wildlife SAFE CP38-4D

**SAFE** = State Acres for Wildlife  
Enhancement

**June 2022** – presented the updated Upland  
Wildlife SAFE to State Tech

**June 23, 2022** – FSA, NRCS, NGPC, and  
PF submitted a new SAFE proposal to the  
Deputy Administrator for Farm Programs

**September 29, 2022** – DAFP approved  
Nebraska's Upland Wildlife SAFE proposal.

# Upland Wildlife SAFE – CP38-4D

	Previous SAFE	Current SAFE
<b>Dates</b>	May 2008 through 2020	October 2023-
<b>Name</b>	Greater Prairie Chickens in Tallgrass Prairie SAFE  Upland Game Bird SAFE	Upland Wildlife SAFE
<b>Minimum Acres per Tract</b>	G.P.C. = 40 acres U.G.B. = 5 acres	5 acres/tract
<b>Maximum Acres per Tract</b>	160 acres	No maximum

# Update on Upland Wildlife SAFE CP38-4D

## Outreach

- Promotion through USDA county newsletters
- Fact Sheet being developed
- Other promo materials will be produced
  - Social media posts, magazine, radio spots
- Focused mailings promoting SAFE
- County maps depicting SRR

# Emergency Conservation Program Update

## What is ECP?

ECP is a cost share program that provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland damaged by **natural disasters**.

ECP does not compensate participants for damage to non-farmland or buildings, but does assist with restoring the productive agricultural capacity to damaged land

# ECP Practices

**EC1 – Removing Debris From Farmland**

**EC2 – Grading, Shaping, Releveling, or Similar Measures**

**EC3 – Replacing or Repairing Permanent Fences**

**EC4 – Restoring Conservation Structures and Other Installations**

**EC6 – Drought Emergency Measures**

**EC7 – Other Emergency Conservation Measures**

**EC8 – Field Windbreaks and Farmstead Shelterbelts Emergency Measures**



# Current Counties Approved for ECP in FY2022

- **Gosper: Wildfire on April 7, 2022**
- **Furnas: Wildfire on April 7, 2022 & April 22, 2022**
- **Frontier: Wildfire on April 22, 2022**
- **Red Willow: Wildfire on April 22, 2022**
- **Perkins: Wildfire on April 22, 2022**
- **Brown: Wildfire on April 22, 2022**
- **Blaine: Wildfire on April 22, 2022**
- **Rock: Wildfire on April 22, 2022**
- **Thurston: March 30, 2022, through April 23, 2022**
- **Scottsbluff: July 30, 2022**

# Current Counties Approved for ECP in FY2023

- **Cherry: Wildfire 10/2/2022**
- **Thomas: Wildfire 10/2/2022**
- **Nuckolls: Wildfire 10/23/2022**



## **Strategic Implementation of Habitat Restoration in the Central Great Plains**



- Maintain resilient ranching communities and improve habitat for at-risk species through voluntary, incentive-based conservation of grasslands, wetlands, and streams.
- Advance the objectives of the Nebraska Great Plains Grassland Initiative
  - Same objectives and project area
  - Increase project funding
  - Address capacity bottlenecks
  - Focus on woody encroachment
  - Wetland and stream restoration
- \$4 million grant
  - National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
    - Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill



# Goals

- Remove Eastern redcedar on 60,000+ ac.
- Conduct prescribed burns on 25,000+ ac.
- Restore 600+ ac. of wetlands
- Restore 3+ miles of streams





# Partners

- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
  - Project \$'s and administration of the grant
- Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition
  - Grassland Coordinator
- Pheasants Forever/Quail Forever
  - Project \$'s
- The Nature Conservancy
  - Prescribed Fire Coordination
- Sandhills Task Force
  - Project Coordinator and Project \$'s
- Santee Sioux Nation
  - Biologist – Northern Prairies Land Trust
- Rainwater Basin Joint Venture



## Eric Zach, Ag Program Manager

402-471-5449, [Eric.Zach@Nebraska.gov](mailto:Eric.Zach@Nebraska.gov)

## **NDEE Agency Update**

### **Personnel Changes**

- Dan Ross appointed supervisor of the Water Planning Section.
- Laura Johnson appointed administrator of the Drinking Water and Groundwater Division.
- Dane Pauley appointed supervisor of the 404/401 Section.
- Laura Nagengast hired as Source Water Protection Extension Educator. (UNL/NEE partnership)

### **Program Updates**

- Tri-annual review of Title 117 – Surface Water Quality Standards is ongoing. (Complete mid 2023?)
- Public notice of the 2022 Integrated Report is expected soon.
- Working on assumption of 404 program and initiated hiring staff.
- Relaunching the Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network in 2023.

### **Grant Programs**

- Notice of Interest forms for new Section 319 projects are due January 3, 2023. (+ May & September)
- Source Water Protection Grant: RFP will come out in spring 2023. Applications due summer 2023.

### **Monitoring**

- Basin rotation monitoring in White-Hat, North Platte and South Platte basins in 2023.
- Wrapping up a study of noenicitinoids, herbicides, and anions in groundwater (500 wells).
- Conducting a pilot study of noenicitinoids in ambient waters, sediment, benthic macroinvertebrates.

### **Projects of Interest**

- Cover Crop Inter-seeder Demonstration (Highboy Project)
  - NDEE/UNL/NRD collaboration.
  - Targets priority 9-element watershed in southeast Nebraska.
  - Demonstration and assessment of technology targeting agricultural service providers.
  - Plans for 2023-2027 still in development.
- Know-Your-Well Program
  - Hosted by Papio-Missouri NRD.
  - Collaboration among 16 NRD and UNL Water Center.
  - School-sponsored monitoring of private wells.
- Statewide Arboretum Project
  - Installation and promotion of urban runoff BMPs.
  - Targets communities in priority 9-element watersheds.

### **Other Activities**

- NDEE/NRD Kaizen process





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# Nebraska NRCS Draft Strategic Plan Review

December 1, 2022 – State Technical Committee

Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service

[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://nrcs.usda.gov/)

# Nebraska NRCS Strategic Plan Introduction



Working with outside consultant to help facilitate drafting a strategic plan.

It's a 5-year plan - FY2023-2027.

It reflects a “living” plan. As a result, we are taking steps to develop strategic business plans to guide day-to-day operations and priorities.

In the final document, we will list prospective tactics to accomplish the strategies.

Leadership Team has been working together since May on the plan. I held an all NRCS Employee Call to discuss the plan in October and received employee feedback which was incorporated into the plan.

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## Mission and Vision

**Mission** - We deliver conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world

**Vision** - We promote productive and healthy landscapes across Nebraska through voluntary conservation of natural resources





## Goals

**Goal 1** - Support productive agriculture lands in Nebraska through addressing priority resource concerns

**Goal 2** - Attract, engage, and retain an effective and motivated workforce proud to represent Nebraska NRCS

**Goal 3** - Build and utilize a conservation delivery system essential for Nebraska

**Goal 4** - Engage effectively with partners and customers to achieve conservation outcomes for Nebraska

## **Goal 1 – Support productive agriculture lands in Nebraska through addressing priority resource concerns**

### **Objective 1 - Improve surface and groundwater quality and quantity**

- Strategy 1 – Focus on priority watersheds
- Strategy 2 - Improve irrigation efficiency
- Strategy 3 – Support emerging technologies to improve water use
- Strategy 4 - Develop outreach campaign to small-and medium-sized animal feeding operations (AFO)
- Strategy 5 – Focus on impairments (e.g., atrazine, e. coli, and nitrates)

### **Objective 2 - Improve grassland health and productivity to reduce limitations to livestock production**

- Strategy 1 - Emphasize the importance of prescribed grazing management plan
- Strategy 2 – Encourage reduction of woody encroachment on grazing lands

### **Objective 3 - Improve soil health**

- Strategy 1 - Implement Nebraska Soil Health Strategic Plan
- Strategy 2 - Promote soil health management systems within conservation planning process
- Strategy 3 - Implement practices to reduce wind and water erosion

### **Objective 4 - Enhance habitat for terrestrial and aquatic species**

- Strategy 1 – Promote terrestrial wildlife and invertebrates in the conservation planning process
- Strategy 2 - Implement conservation practices to address the habitat needs for prioritized and at-risk species

## **Goal 2 – Attract, engage, and retain an effective and motivated workforce proud to represent Nebraska NRCS**

### **Objective 1 – Expand and diversify NRCS recruiting pipeline**

- Strategy 1 – Increase NRCS participation/effectiveness at a variety of recruiting events
- Strategy 2 – Build relationships on key sources/influencers of workforce talent
- Strategy 3 – Engage Nebraska NRCS Civil Rights Advisory Committee to identify sources of talent

### **Objective 2 – Hire qualified, diverse candidates**

- Strategy 1 – Leverage national recruiting tools
- Strategy 2 – Encourage Nebraska NRCS personnel at all levels to be directly involved in recruiting
- Strategy 3 – Identify/apply other innovative strategies to refine and enhance our recruiting process

### **Objective 3 – Inspire and support our employees to accomplish Agency mission**

- Strategy 1 - Promote employee recognition
- Strategy 2 - Develop and implement targeted training
- Strategy 3 – Prioritize one-on-one mentoring relationships
- Strategy 4 – Support professional development throughout Nebraska NRCS

### **Objective 4 - Implement an HR support structure for Nebraska NRCS**

- Strategy 1 – Foster timely and transparent personnel actions
- Strategy 2 – Streamline administrative onboarding process
- Strategy 3 – Educate employees on how to self-serve on certain HR topics

### **Objective 5 - Maximize employee retention**

- Strategy 1 - Evaluate root causes and trends related to employee satisfaction
- Strategy 2 – Emphasis and support work/life balance
- Strategy 3 – Prioritize wellness/safety for our staff



## Goal 3 – Build and utilize a conservation delivery system essential for Nebraska

### Objective 1 - Ensure technical assistance delivery is relevant

- Strategy 1 - Establish expectations for direct employee engagement with customers
- Strategy 2 - Deliver technical assistance based on reliable scientific principles
- Strategy 3 – Improve knowledge/use of emerging agriculture industry technology
- Strategy 4 - Assess existing NRCS planning and implementation tools

### Objective 2 - Enhance customer service delivery and support system

- Strategy 1 - Conduct analysis of current organizational structure
- Strategy 2 - Develop FTE staffing analysis tool for each supervisor work unit
- Strategy 3 - Project future Field Office space needs and design

### Objective 3 - Optimize technical and financial assistance implementation

- Strategy 1 - Create statewide effort to enhance customer knowledge of benefits per technical/financial programs
- Strategy 2 - Reduce state financial assistance program requirements that constrain efficiency
- Strategy 3 - Provide financial assistance program training to partners
- Strategy 4 - Ensure conservation compliance efficiency



## Goal 4 – Engage effectively with partners and customers to achieve conservation outcomes for Nebraska

### Objective 1 - Build and maintain relationships with key partners/producer organizations based on mutually beneficial outcomes

- Strategy 1 - Evaluate needs related to partnerships in addressing priority resource concerns
- Strategy 2 - Increase participation in local work groups where appropriate
- Strategy 3 - Update/revise Nebraska Resource Assessment (NERA)

### Objective 2 - Implement seamless delivery of NRCS and partner funding sources

- Strategy 1 - Utilize agreements with partners to increase NRCS capacity
- Strategy 2 - Ensure Nebraska NRCS program application review teams include representatives from field, area, and state levels
- Strategy 3 - Develop and apply principles for effective collaboration

### Objective 3 - Continue advocating for responsible management of our natural resources

- Strategy 1 - Renew/enhance efforts at outreach and education
- Strategy 2 – Encourage more absentee landowners to be responsible stewards of their land





## Next Steps

### Please review and provide feedback

- You will be provided this draft PowerPoint
- So that we can keep the momentum going, we ask that you send in feedback to Tami Nordman, [tami.nordman@usda.gov](mailto:tami.nordman@usda.gov) **no later than December 15, 2022**

**Thank you!**





# Nebraska WAVES *Watershed Science for Decision Makers*

Carla McCullough

Watershed Science Extension Educator



UNIVERSITY *of* NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

A green chalkboard with a wooden frame. The text is written in white chalk. A piece of white chalk lies on the ledge at the bottom left.

What is Nebraska Waves?

Engaging Adult Decision Makers

Focus on Natural Resources Districts

Water Quantity & Quality

Groundwater and Surface Water

Hot Topics



Nebraska WAVES.org

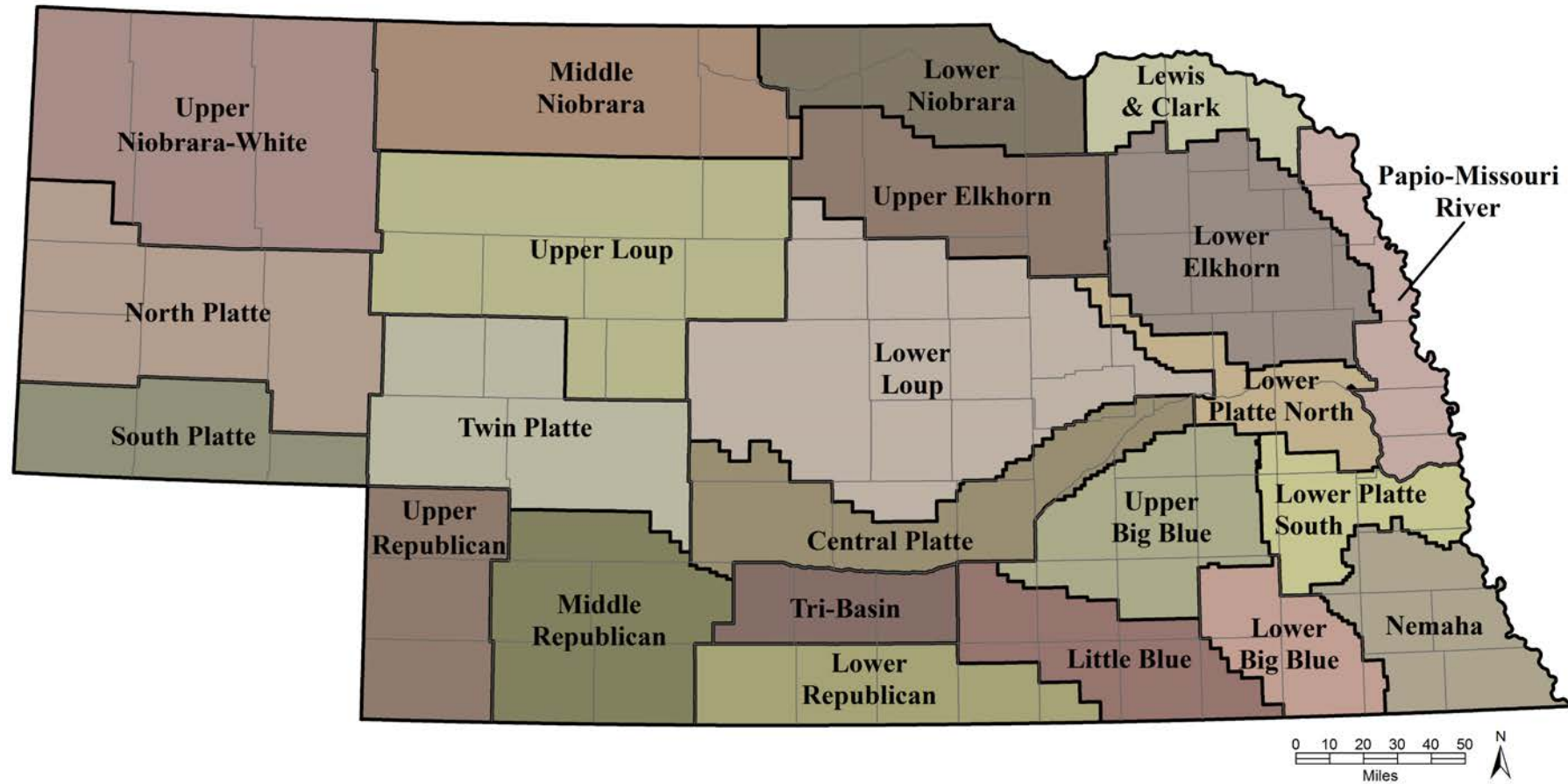
- Nebraska
- Watershed
- Aquifer
- Virtual
- Educational
- System







# NRDs – Watershed Decision Makers



# Engaging NRD Boards

- Decision makers about water and natural resources
- Wide variety of
  - Backgrounds
  - Education
  - Experience



Nebraska's  
Natural Resources  
Districts

# Engaging NRD Boards

- Bite-sized modules (e.g. 5 minutes videos)
- Easy to fit into meetings
- Topics related to decisions NRD Boards make:
  - Water Quantity (Integrated Management Plans)
  - Water Quality (Nonpoint Source Pollution)
  - Hot Topics (Nitrate in Groundwater)



# Engaging Decision Makers





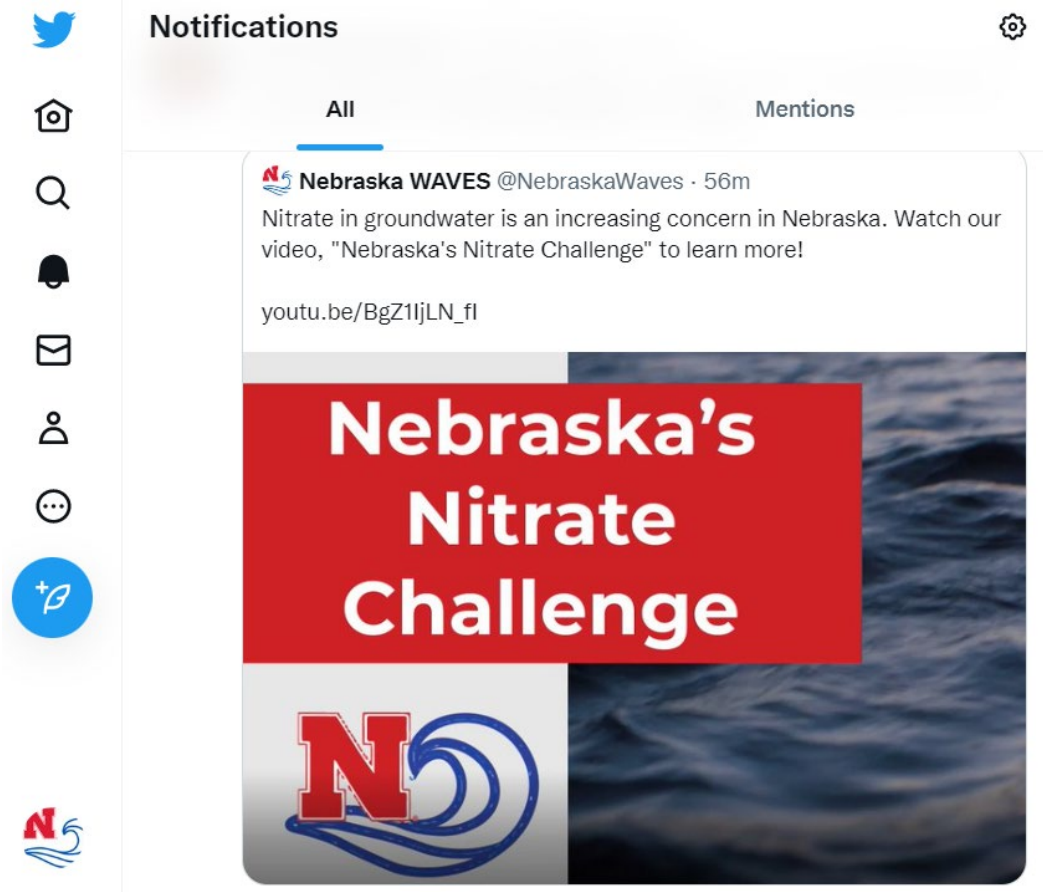
# Engaging Decision Makers



# Social Media

Follow us!

**Nebraska WAVES** on  
YouTube & Twitter









# Nitrate in Nebraska The Basics



**WAVES**

Watershed Aquifer  
Virtual Education System

<https://youtu.be/9koZlifdIGY>



**NebraskaWAVES.org**

Carla McCullough  
Watershed Science Extension Educator  
University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
[carla.mccullough@unl.edu](mailto:carla.mccullough@unl.edu)



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# Small-Scale Farms and Urban Agriculture

August 22- December 20, 2022  
Detail Summary

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**Jami Thoene**

Acting NRCS Urban Ag Conservationist

NE USDA BFR Coordinator (co-lateral)

Resource Conservationist, Wahoo NRCS FO







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# Objectives

1. Establish Urban Ag micro practices for FY 2023
2. Assist with development of training program for Urban Ag
3. Assist with the formation of the Urban Ag subcommittee and development of the agenda for the initial rollout meeting,
4. Promote and assist in the development of Urban Ag policy for Nebraska
5. Assist ASTC-Programs with development of program fund code,
6. Create and promote Urban Ag program information for partners, and
7. NE Urban Agriculture and Conservation Council (NUACC)



# #3

## 1<sup>st</sup> Small-Scale Farm and Urban Ag Subcommittee meeting

August 26, 2022

- Agenda development
- Over 20 + committee members in attendance
- Micro practices List
  - NRCS Engineering, Ecological Sciences, Soils, and Partnerships
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Subcommittee meeting scheduled- December 16, 2022
- New SSUA Chairperson Megan McGuffey Ph.D, Executive Director- Community Crops, Lincoln NE



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# #1 Micro Practice List-Ecological Sciences

32 Small-Scale Farm and Urban Practices / 56 Scenarios

314	Brush Management	375	Brush Management for 1 Ac. or less	Acres
315	Herbaceous Weed Treatment	85	Herbaceous Weed Treatment for One Acre Small Farm	Acres
327	Conservation Cover	102	Pollinator Mix-Small Footprint	1,000 Square Foot
329	Residue and Tillage Management, No Till	31	Small Scale No Till	1,000 Square Foot
340	Cover Crop	51	Cover Crop - 1 acre or less	Acres
380	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation	125	1 row windbreak - small acreage	1,000 Square Foot
382	Fence	93	Fence for 1 Acre or less	Feet
386	Field Border	81	Pr_Small Scale Field Border	1,000 Square Foot
420	Wildlife Habitat Planting	268	Pr_Very Small Acreage (<.5 ac) Planting with Seedlings	Square Feet
490	Tree/Shrub Site Preparation	64	Tree-Shrub Site Prep - small acreage	Square Feet
512	Pasture and Hay Planting	78	Small farm, Pasture and Hay planting for 1 ac.	Acres
528	Prescribed Grazing	26	Prescribed Grazing Management for 5 Acres or less	Acres
612	Tree/Shrub Establishment	109	Tree-Shrub Establishment - Small Acreage	Each
808	Soil Carbon Amendment	129	Compost + Biochar - Small Areas	Cubic Feet
328	Conservation Crop Rotation	95	Pr_Specialty Crop Rotations-Small Scale	1,000 Square Foot
340	Cover Crop	85	Multi-species Cover Crop per 1000 square feet	1,000 Square Foot
340	Cover Crop	95	Mechanical Termination of Cover Crop per 1000 square feet	1,000 Square Foot
342	Critical Area Planting	69	Permanent Cover	1,000 Square Foot
570	Stormwater Runoff Control	35	Rain Garden, small scale	Square Feet
575	Trails and Walkways	52	Wood Chips, Walkway small scale	Square Feet
590	Nutrient Management	297	Pr_Small Scale Basic Nutrient Management	1,000 Square Foot
590	Nutrient Management	270	Pr_Basic NM (Organic/NonOrganic) greater than or equal to 0.5-10 acres	Each
595	Pest Management Conservation System	198	Wp_Water Quality Pesticide Mitigation > 30 Point AND/OR Beneficial Insect Pesticide Mitigation - Small Farm	Each
595	Pest Management Conservation System	198	Pr_Water Quality Pesticide Mitigation > 30 Point AND/OR Beneficial Insect Pesticide Mitigation - Small Farm	Each
595	Pest Management Conservation System	199	Wp_Water Quality Pesticide Mitigation = 30 Point AND/OR Beneficial Insect Pesticide Mitigation - Small Farm	Each
595	Pest Management Conservation System	199	Pr_Water Quality Pesticide Mitigation = 30 Point AND/OR Beneficial Insect Pesticide Mitigation - Small Farm	Each
595	Pest Management Conservation System	202	Pr_Plant health PAMS (Small Farm - each) labor only	Each
660	Tree-Shrub Pruning	29	Pruning Individual Agroforestry tree - small acreage	Each



# #1 Micro Practice List-Engineering

32 Small-Scale Farm and Urban Practices / 56 Scenarios

317	Composting Facility	31	Small Farm Pad + Bins	Square Feet
430	Irrigation Pipeline	97	PVC (Iron Pipe Size), less than or equal to 4 inch, Small Scale System	Linear Feet
430	Irrigation Pipeline	98	HDPE (Iron Pipe Size and Tubing), less than or equal to 2 inch, Small Scale	Pound
430	Irrigation Pipeline	99	Surface HDPE (Iron Pipe Size and Tubing), less than or equal to 2 inch, Small Scale	Pound
436	Irrigation Reservoir	47	Plastic tank, less than or equal to 1,000 gallons	Gallons
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	15	Surface Tape <5 acres	Acres
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	3	Surface PE, with emitters, high tunnel	Square Feet
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	75	Small Microirrigation System	Square Feet
441	Irrigation System, Microirrigation	76	Small Surface Tape System	Square Feet
449	Irrigation Water Management	83	Intermediate IWM < 1 acre	Square Feet
516	Livestock Pipeline	106	HDPE (Iron Pipe Size and Tubing), Small Scale	Pound
516	Livestock Pipeline	107	Surface HDPE (Iron Pipe Size and Tubing), Small Scale	Pound
558	Roof Runoff Structure	37	High Tunnel Roof Runoff Trench Drain and Storage	Linear Feet

325	High Tunnel System	97	High Tunnel, Low Snow and Wind Load	Square Feet
325	High Tunnel System	98	Contiguous US Snow	Square Feet
325	High Tunnel System	99	High Tunnel Gothic with Gutters	Square Feet
325	High Tunnel System	100	Small Gothic HT with Gutter	Square Feet
325	High Tunnel System	116	Small High Tunnel, Snow and Wind	Square Feet
325	High Tunnel System	117	Small High Tunnel, Intensive Sun	Square Feet

# #1 Micro Practice List-Engineering (cont'd)

## 32 Small-Scale Farm and Urban Practices / 56 Scenarios

636	Water Harvesting Catchment	27	Plastic tank, less than or equal to 1,000 gallons	Gallons
812	Raised Bed	23	Unframed Raised Bed field size < 0.10 acres Contamination or Debris Sites only	Square Feet
812	Raised Bed	24	Unframed Raised Bed field size < 0.5 acres Contamination or Debris Sites only	Square Feet
812	Raised Bed	25	Framed Raised Bed Small Lot Contamination or Debris Sites only	Square Feet
812	Raised Bed	26	Framed Raised Bed < 500 sq ft Contamination or Debris Sites only	Square Feet
812	Raised Bed	27	Framed Raised Bed greater than or equal to 500 sq ft Contamination or Debris Sites only	Square Feet
821	Low Tunnel Systems	19	Low tunnel < 1000 square feet- Year 1	Square Feet
821	Low Tunnel Systems	20	Low tunnel management- Year 2-3	Square Feet
821	Low Tunnel Systems	21	Low tunnel 1000-5000 square feet, Year 1	Square Feet





## #6

### Create and promote Urban Ag program information for partners

• UNL Faculty, Extension, Rural Prosperity, OMA-GRO, SECC, NECC, NRD's, Farm to School, NE Department of Agriculture Education, Pheasants Forever, Local Schools and Ag Educators, Non-profits, City and County Zoning, FSA, RMA, RD, TNC, NDEE, NSAS, Community Crops, City Sprouts, Tribal Communities, CFRA, and more.





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## Internal Objectives

**#2 - Assist with development of training program for Urban Ag.**

**- NRCS Bulletin 330-23-02**

**- Approved Urban Ag Micro Practice List Training/ Webinar**

**- NE Urban Agriculture and Conservation Council (NUACC).**

**#4 - Assist Programs with development of program fund code.**

**-Small Scale Farms an Urban Ag Fund Code for EQIP.**

**#5 - Promote/ assist in development of Urban Ag policy for NE.**

**- SSUA Practice Guidance Document for NRCS Employees.**

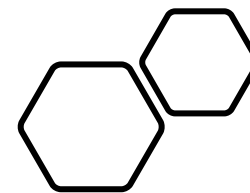






## #7 NE Urban Agriculture and Conservation Council (NUACC)

- Recruit a group of multidisciplinary NRCS NE Staff to continually evaluate the current **USDA-NRCS NE Urban Ag and Conservation Strategic Plan** and provide feedback to leadership on potential improvements of proposed adjustments.
- Train the Trainer –POC for Field Offices



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# Urban Ag and Innovative Production

- New Customers/ Beginning Farmers
- Urban, Metro, Rural
- ROI - Economy of Scale
- Specialty Crops
- Federal Crop Insurance
- Farm Loans
- Disaster Payments
- Education
- Opportunities







# Thank you!

Please feel free to contact me with  
any Small-Scale Farm and Urban  
Ag and or Beginning Farmer and  
Rancher questions.

Jami Thoene  
Resource Conservationist  
Wahoo NRCS Field Office  
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[jami.thoene@usda.gov](mailto:jami.thoene@usda.gov)



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