



United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Programs

FY2021 Programs Update
CSP, ACEP, EQIP, RCPP, CIG



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Conservation Stewardship Program



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Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

- Total Active CSP Contracts – February 2021
 - Contracts = 2,185
 - Contract Acres = 3,745,488
 - Obligated funds = \$152,190,914

Conservation Stewardship Program - Nebraska

- FY2021 Allocations
 - CSP Classic = \$7.85 Million
 - CSP Renewal = \$9.3 Million
 - CSP-Grassland Conservation Initiative = \$405,000
- FY2021 Applications and **funding projection**
 - Classic = 1116 **7%**
 - Renewal = 289 **30%**
 - GCI = 70 **100%**



CSP Priority Resource Concern Categories (PRCC)



Priority Resource Concern Categories

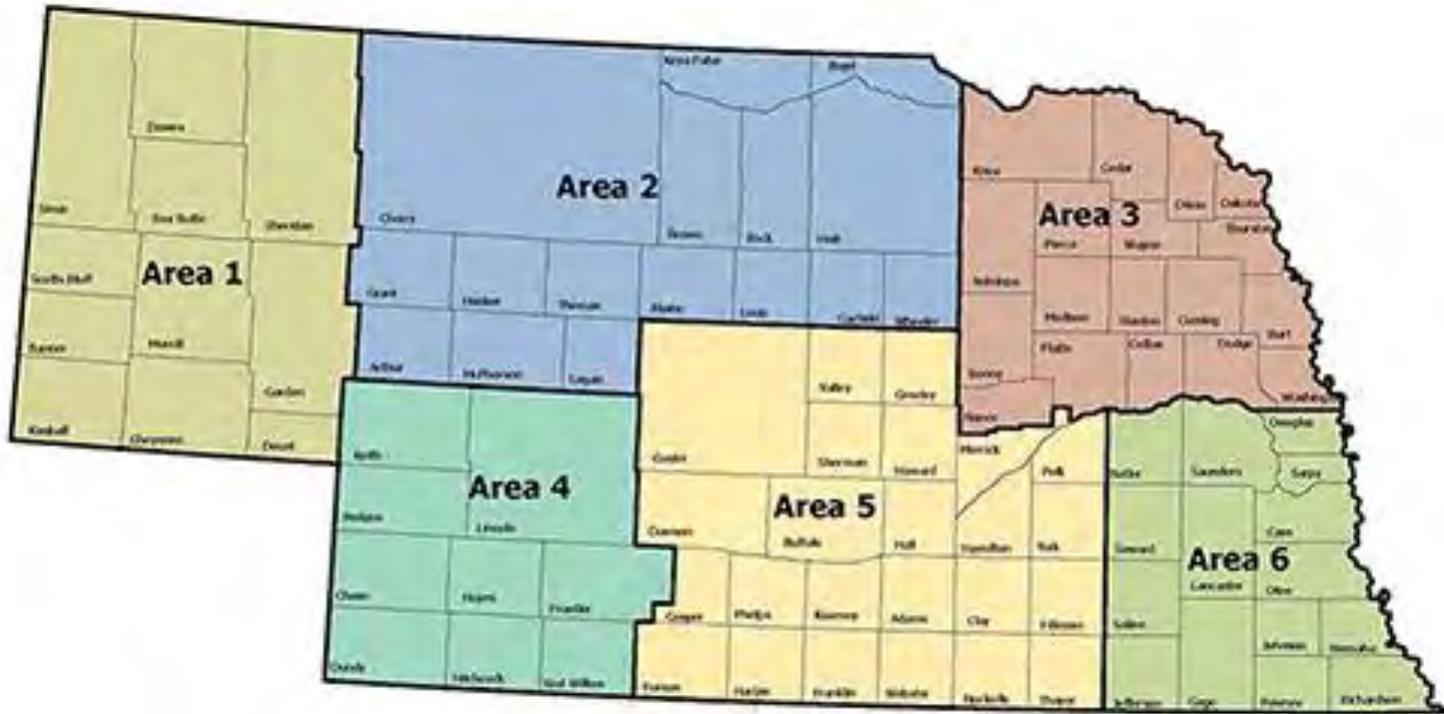
- **Prior regulations required 5 PRCC for each fund pool**
- **New regulations require 8 PRCC's for each fund pool**



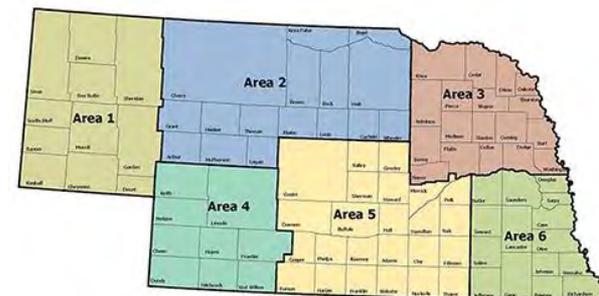
17 Resource Concern Categories

- Air Quality
- Degraded Plant Condition
- Fire Management
- Pest Pressure
- Inefficient Energy Use
- Livestock Production Limitation
- Aquatic Habitat
- Field Pesticide Use
- Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss
- Salt Losses to Water
- Storage and Handling of Pollutants
- Soil Quality Limitations
- Source Water Depletion
- Terrestrial Habitat
- Weather Resilience
- Concentrated Erosion
- Wind and Water Erosion

6 Ranking Pool Areas



Ranking Pool PRCC



Degraded Plant Condition
 Pest Pressure
 Soil Quality Limitation

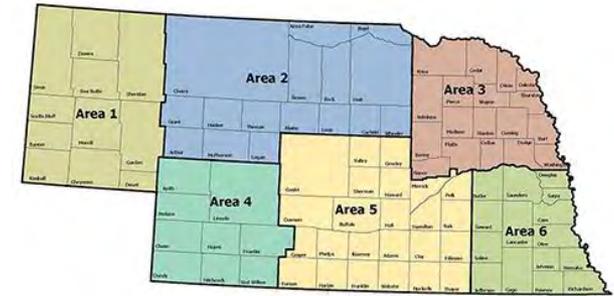
Degraded Plant Condition
 Pest Pressure
 Concentrated Erosion

- **Pool 1**
 - Livestock Production Limitation
 - Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
 - Source Water Depletion
 - Terrestrial Habitat
 - Wind and Water Erosion

- **Pool 2**
 - Livestock Production Limitation
 - Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
 - Soil Quality Limitation
 - Terrestrial Habitat
 - Wind and Water Erosion

[Proposed]

Ranking Pool PRCC



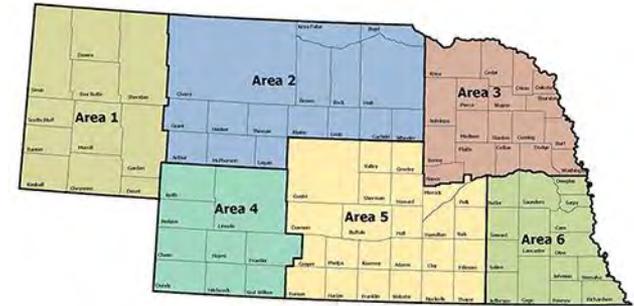
Degraded Plant Condition
 Pest Pressure
 Concentrated Erosion

Degraded Plant Condition
 Pest Pressure
 Soil Quality Limitation

- Pool 3
 - Livestock Production Limitation
 - Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
 - Soil Quality Limitation
 - Terrestrial Habitat
 - Wind and Water Erosion

- Pool 4
 - Livestock Production Limitation
 - Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
 - Source Water Depletion
 - Terrestrial Habitat
 - Wind and Water Erosion

Ranking Pool PRCC



Degraded Plant Condition
 Pest Pressure
 Livestock Production Limitation

Degraded Plant Condition
 Pest Pressure
 Concentrated Erosion

• Pool 5

- Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
- Soil Quality Limitation
- Source Water Depletion
- Terrestrial Habitat
- Wind and Water Erosion

• Pool 6

- Livestock Production Limitation
- Field Sediment, Nutrient, and Pathogen Loss
- Soil Quality Limitation
- Terrestrial Habitat
- Wind and Water Erosion



Ranking Pool PRCC (State-wide Pools)

• Organic

- Degraded Plant Condition
- Pest Pressure
- Field Pesticide Loss
- Soil Quality Limitation
- Terrestrial Habitat

Field Sediment, Nutrient and Pathogen Loss
Concentrated Erosion
Wind and Water Erosion

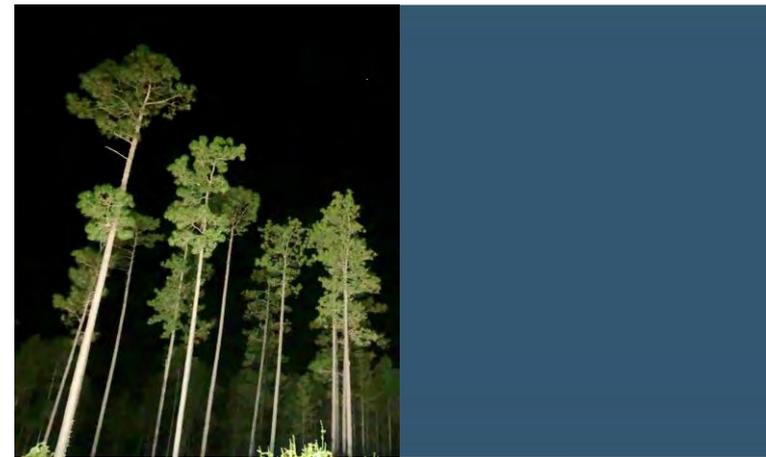
• Non-industrial Private Forestland (NIPF)

- Degraded Plant Condition
- Fire Management
- Pest Pressure
- Terrestrial Habitat
- Concentrated Erosion

Livestock Production Limitation
Field Pesticide Loss
Wind and Water Erosion



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Agricultural Conservation Easement Programs

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FY2021 ACEP - Nebraska

- Applications received
 - WRE Applications = 37, Acres = 5,347
 - ALE Applications = 1, Acres = 6,200
- Appraisals will determine Fair Market Value
- Compensation rate for 30-year easements is 75% of permanent easement value

FY2021 ACEP - Nebraska

- **Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements (EWPP-FPE)**
 - Eligible Applications: 21
 - Acres: 5590
 - Estimated Requested funding: \$20,313,085
 - Applications approved for possible agreements: 7
 - Estimated Acres: 4501
 - Estimated Funding needed: \$16,526,641



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Environmental Quality Incentives Program



Environmental Quality Incentives Program - Nebraska

- Total Active EQIP Contracts – December 2020
 - Contracts = 2,400
 - Contract Acres = 912,000
 - Obligated funds = \$75.5 million



EQIP Allocation FY2021

2021 Mandatory Distribution

- Source Water Protection – 10%
- Wildlife Initiative – 10%
- Historically Underserved – 10%
- **Conservation Incentive – 5%**
- Livestock – 50%

FY2021 STATEWIDE FUND POOLS

- Seasonal High Tunnel
- Organic
- Energy
- Conservation Activity Plans
- Animal Feeding Operations
- Tribal
- HEL Treatment
- Disaster
- **Conservation Incentive Contracts**

- **FY2021 General EQIP Allocation = \$21.1 Million**
 - Wildlife (10%) = \$2.4 Million
 - Historically Underserved (10%) = \$2.4 Million
 - Source Water Protection (10%) = \$2.4 Million
 - **Conservation Incentive Contracts (5%) = \$1.2 Million**
 - Animal Feeding Operations = \$1.0 Million
 - **Disaster = \$200,000**
 - HEL Treatment = \$300,000
 - Conservation Activity Plans = \$200,000
 - Working Lands for Wildlife = \$100,000
 - High Tunnels = \$100,000
 - Organic = \$100,000
 - Tribal = \$100,000
 - Energy = \$25,000

FY2021 PARTNERSHIP FUND POOLS

- National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
 - 3 Projects = \$1.8 million
- Water Smart (Bureau of Reclamation)
 - 2 Projects – URNRD = \$250,000
MRNRD = \$500,000
- Forest Service (Joint Chiefs)
 - 1 Project – UNWNRD, MNNRD, ULNRD = \$400,000



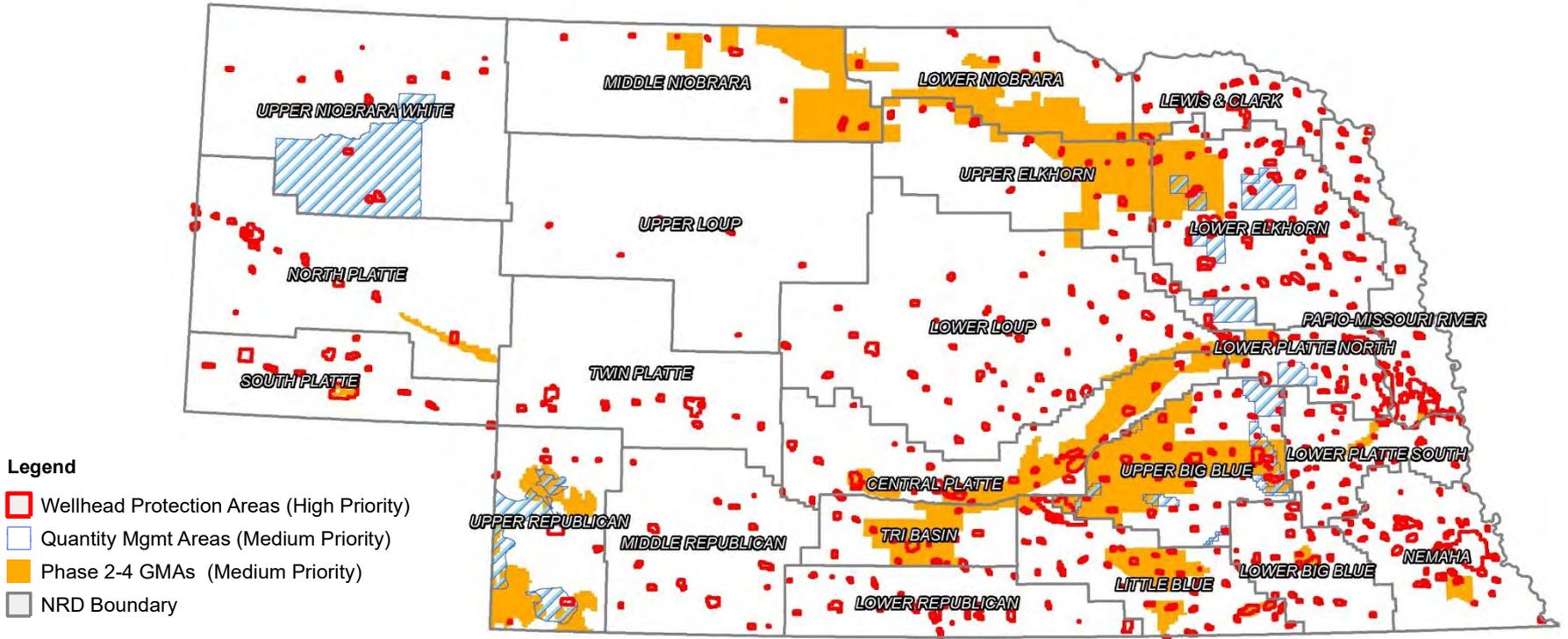
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Source Water Protection

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SOURCE WATER PROTECTION AREA



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

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

Source Water Protection Practice List

* Practices with potential up to 90% c/s rate

- 327 - Conservation Cover
- *328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
- 332 - Contour Buffer Strips
- *340 - Cover Crop
- 342 - Critical Area Planting
- 355 - Well Water Testing
- 386 - Field Border
- 390 - Riparian Herbaceous Cover
- 391-Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393 - Filter Strip
- 412 - Grassed Waterway
- *449 - Irrigation Water Management
- *590 - Nutrient Management
- 635 - Vegetated Treatment Area
- 656 - Constructed Wetland



Source Water Protection Practice List

* Practices with potential up to 90% c/s rate

- *351 - Water Well Decommissioning
- 430 - Irrigation Pipeline
- *441 - Irrigation System, Micro irrigation
- *442 - Sprinkler System
- 512 - Forage and Biomass Planting
- 550 - Range Planting
- *595 - Integrated Pest Management
- *657 - Wetland Restoration
- 659 - Wetland Enhancement



EQIP High Priority Practices

State Conservationists, in consultation with the State Technical Committee, have the **option to select up to 10 high priority practices, which may receive increased payment rates**. A high priority practice must meet one of the following criteria:

- Addresses specific causes of impairment relating to **excessive nutrients in ground or surface water**;
- Addresses the conservation of water, to advance **drought mitigation and declining aquifers**;
- Meets other environmental priorities and other priority resource concerns identified in habitat or other area restoration plans; or
- Is geographically targeted to address a natural resource concern in a specific watershed.

***Selection of practices to receive higher payment should incentivize conservation practices that have high potential for conservation but are underutilized.**

EQIP High Priority Practices

(Maximum of 10 practices allowed)

- 328 - Conservation Crop Rotation
- 338 – Prescribed Burning
- 386 – Field Border
- 391 – Riparian Forest Buffer
- 393 – Filter Strip
- 420 – Wildlife Habitat Planting
- 472 – Access Control
- 590 – Nutrient Management
- 595 – Pest Management
- 657 – Wetland Restoration





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EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts



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EQIP CIC - Purpose

- To incentivize additional conservation around locally established resource priorities:
 - States identify **High Priority Area(s)** (HPA)
 - States identify **Priority Resource Concern(s)** (PRC) associated with HPA
 - States **identify relevant land uses** and the set of **incentive practices** that will address the PRC(s) in the HPA(s).
- Steppingstone for producers from EQIP to CSP:
 - Allows producers to implement elements of CSP on a smaller scale



EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts

- Incorporation of CSP-like program policy
 - Producers must address at least **1 priority resource concern**
 - Provides **annual payments** for certain incentive practices and enhancements to attain increased levels of conservation
 - Provides **practice payments** to implement an incentive practice
 - **Contract length:** Not less than 5, no more than 10



EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts

Payments are made of two components:

1. **Incentive practice payments** for adopting and installing practices
2. **Annual payments** for managing, maintaining, and improving incentive practices during the contract period

Aggregate payment limitation:

- **May not exceed \$200k** total payments to person or legal entity
- Payment Limitation may not be waived



EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts

- Requirement for **establishing high priority areas within each State** that form the backdrop for the new incentive contracts.
- NRCS shall **identify up to 3 priority resource concerns for each land use** within a given high priority area.
- NRCS shall **identify which practices qualify as incentive practices** for each land use within each high priority area based on the priority resource concern(s) identified for that land use.



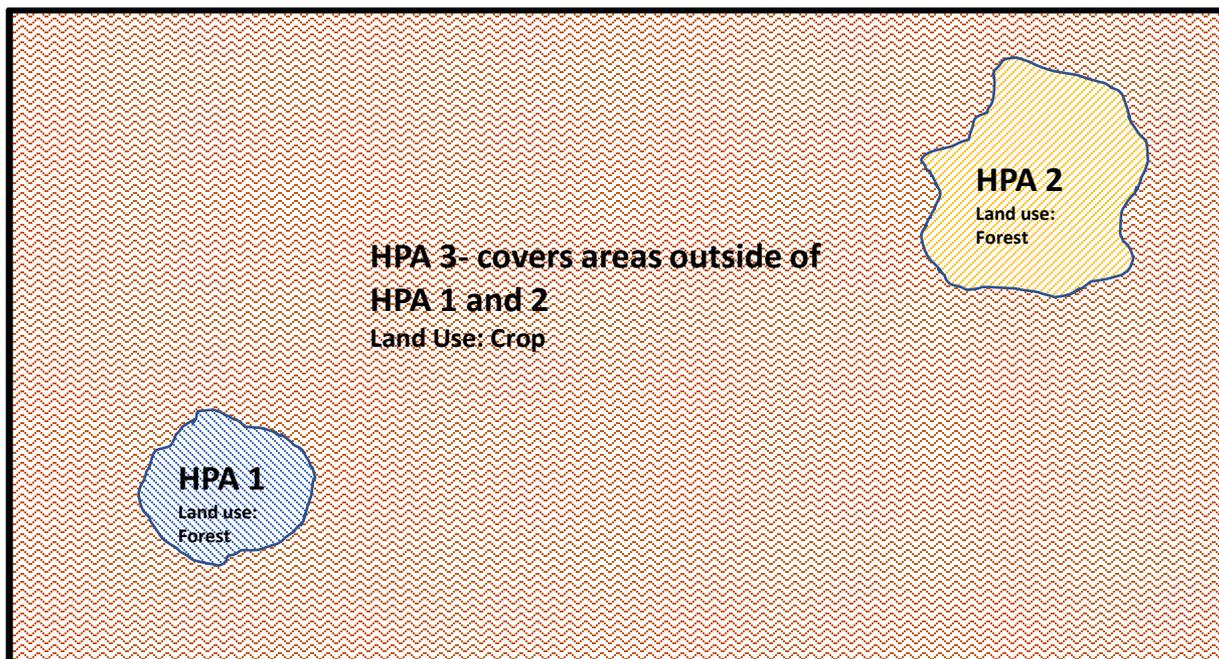
EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts

High Priority Areas:

- Represent areas of significant concern
- Must encompass every region within the State
- May encompass an entire State or overlap with other high priority areas
 - Set of High Priority Areas must cover the whole state



High Priority Area Example



EQIP CIC – Priority Resource Concerns

- **Goal:** Improve Soil Health through adoption of incentive practices to attain increased levels of conservation
- **Outcomes:**
 - Increase soil health in State
 - 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
- **Priority Resource Concern:** Soil Quality Limitations



EQIP CIC – Incentive Practices

- Goal: Select practices/enhancements that target soil health
- Example Practices:
 - 340- Cover Crop
 - 328- Conservation Crop Rotation
 - 329- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till
- Example Enhancements:
 - E328E- Soil Health Crop Rotation
 - 328F- Modifications to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter
 - 329D- No till system to increase soil health and soil organic matter content
 - E340A/B/C- Cover crop enhancements



EQIP CIC – Contract Schedule

- Year 1: Schedule 340- Cover Crop
- Year 2: Schedule 340- Cover Crop
- Year 3: Schedule 340- Cover Crop
- Years 4 and 5: Schedule E340C- Use of multi-species cover crops to improve soil health and increase soil organic matter



EQIP CIC- Allocation

- States will reserve 5% of the general EQIP allocation or \$200,000, whichever is greater for FY2021
 - States have the option to set aside more than the minimum amount, if they choose
- States will have the flexibility to roll unused funds back to the EQIP general fund



EQIP CIC – Next Steps

- Develop ranking tools
 - March/April
- Train staff
 - March/April
- Advertise and announce signup
 - March
- Rank and approve applications
 - May/June
- Obligate contracts
 - July





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NRCS Partnership Initiatives & Grants

Core Principles:

- Innovation
- Partner Contributions
- Impact
- Partnerships & Management



Regional Conservation Partnership Program

RCPP – Classic & Renewals*

- **Active projects in Nebraska – Farm Bill 2014 & 2018**
 - Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery – CPNRD & TPNRD
 - Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife* – NGPC
 - Republican Basin Conservation Partnership – LRNRD
 - Divots in the Pivots – UBBNRD/RWBJV
 - Wahoo Creek Water Quality Sites 26 & 27 – LPNRD
 - Papillion Creek Site WP-1 Dam – PMNRD

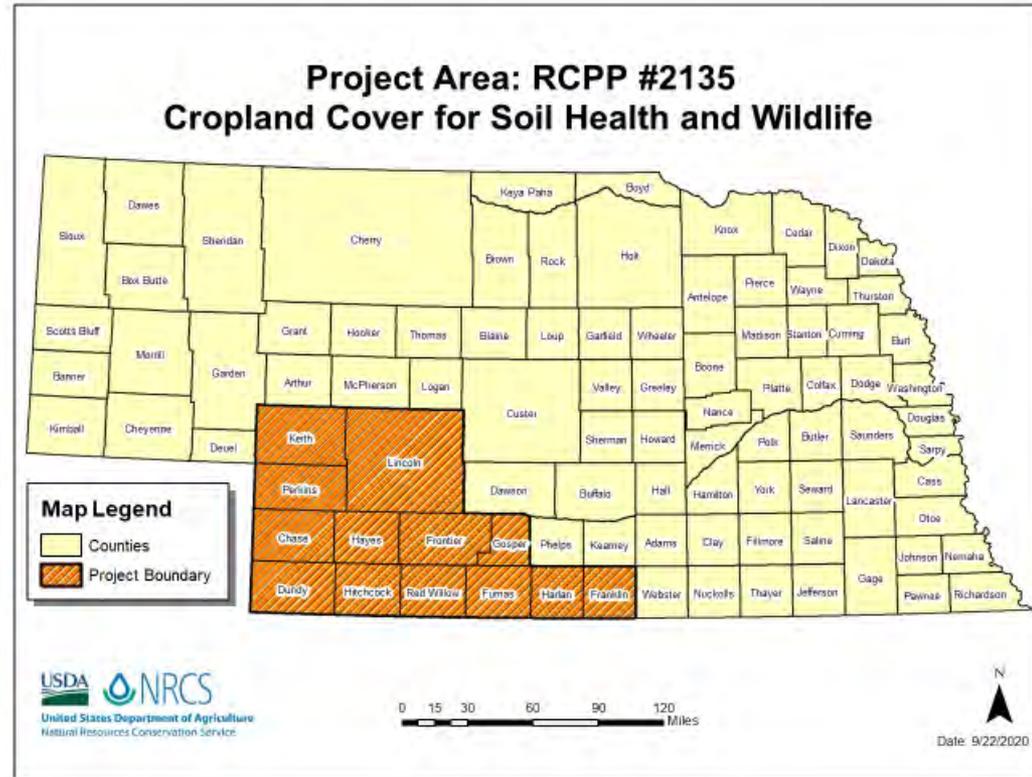
- **New awards for FY2020/21 (in negotiations)**
 - Resilient Futures for Nebraska Soils – TNC, UBBNRD & CPNRD
 - PPA (Programmatic Partnership Agreement) executed soon
 - Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery* – CPNRD & TPNRD



RCPP - Nebraska

Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife - 2021 – NGPC

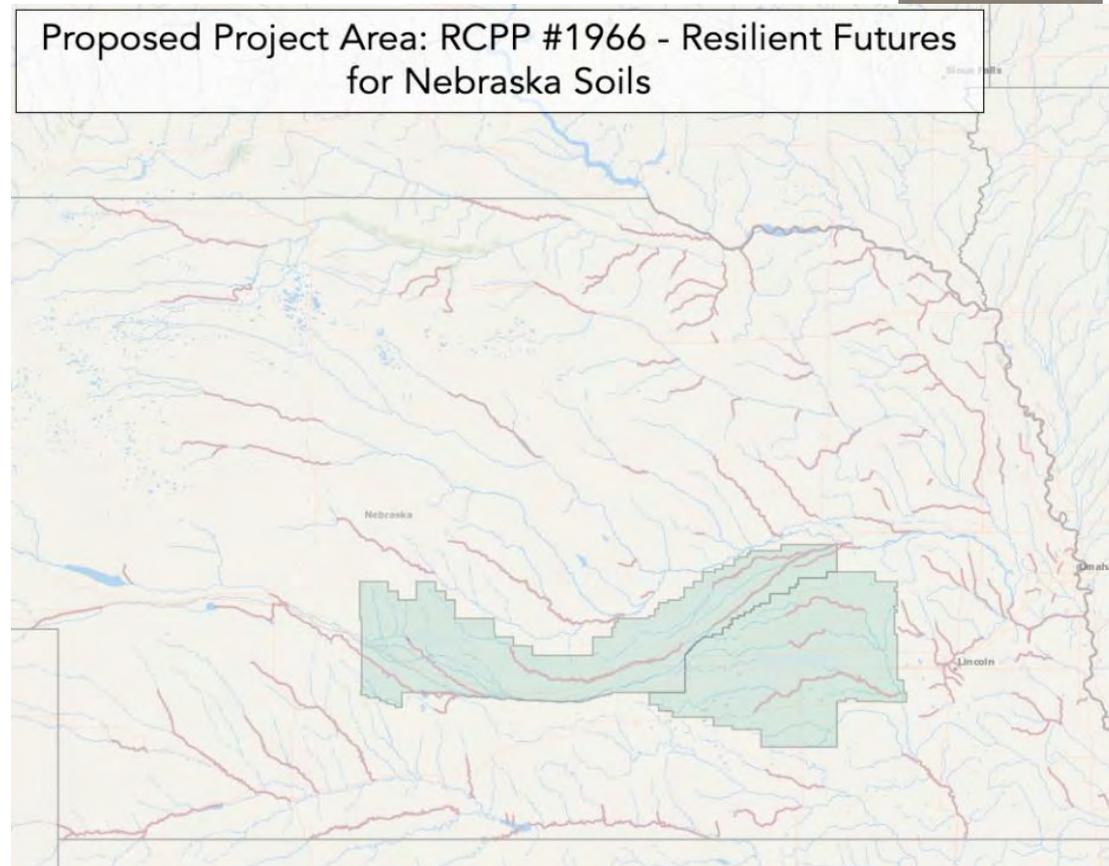
- PPA Approved 1/29/2021
- Expires: 1/28/2026
- Approved funds = \$698,700
- Potential signup in FY2021



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Resilient Futures for NE Soils

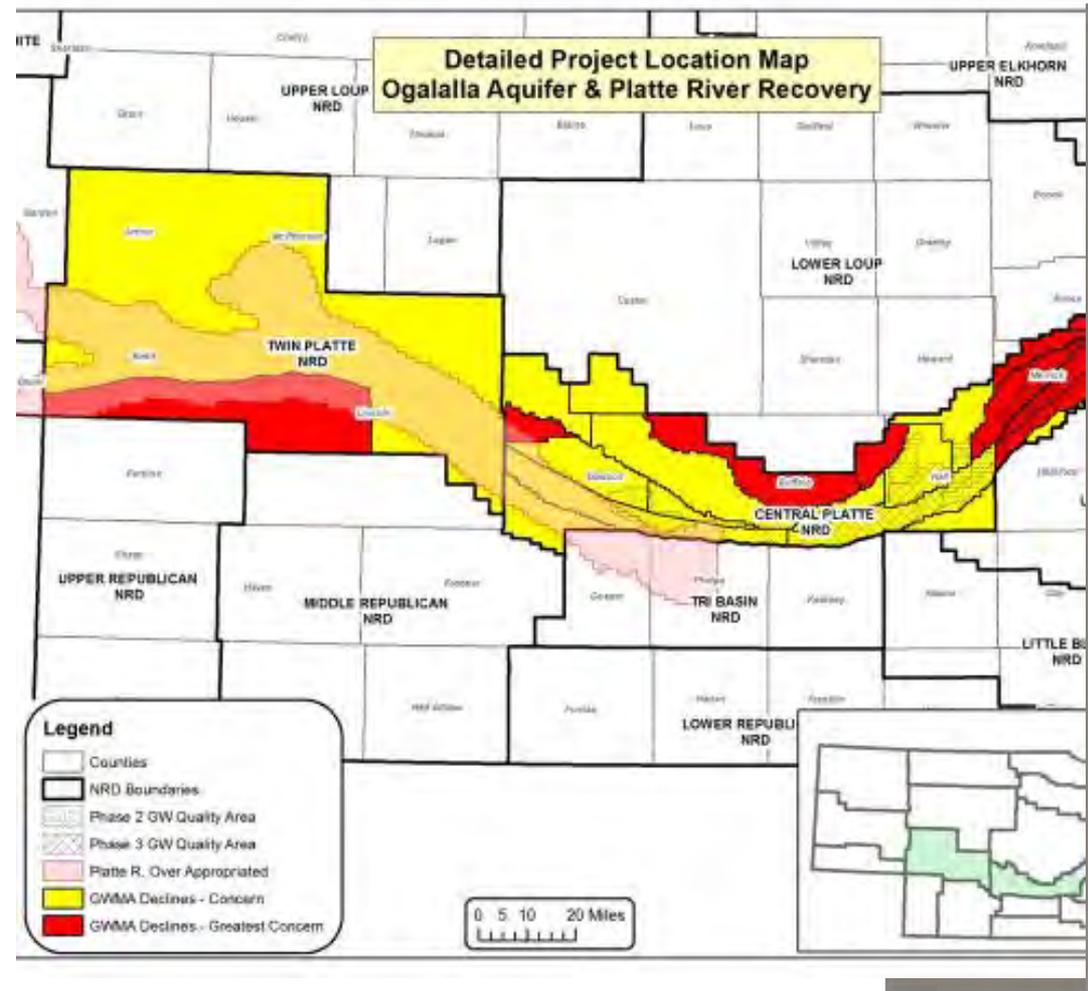
- TNC – Lead Partner
- ~ \$4.4 million
 - 3.1 million FA
 - Potential 5yr project



RCPP - Nebraska

Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery (5 Years, 2015 – 2019)

- CPNRD, TPNRD
- \$ 1.7 million
- 1 year extension approved
- Expires 05/13/2021
- Renewal Award Approved
- Agreement negotiated and signed prior to May 2021
- Potential 5 year agreement for \$2.7 million



Regional Conservation Partnership Program

RCPP – Classic & Renewal

Proposal/Application Deadlines & Award Announcements

- **FY 2020/2021 RCPP Classic funding announcement was released August 6, 2020**
 - Proposals due date was extended to **November 30, 2020**
 - 3 Proposals were evaluated & submitted to NHQ January 14th.
 - Awards will be announced **April 2021**
- **FY 2021 RCPP Classic funding announcement is scheduled for release in summer 2021**
- **FY 2021 RCPP Renewals applications will be distributed mid to late FY 2021**



Regional Conservation Partnership Program Alternative Funding Arrangement (AFA)

- **Proposal Deadlines/Award Announcements**

- **FY 2020 RCPP-AFA**

- September 2020 - Nebraska Forest Service received award. PPA development in negotiations.
 - 10 total projects with \$50 million investment across 16 states. Partner investment is \$65 million.

- **FY 2021 RCPP-AFA**

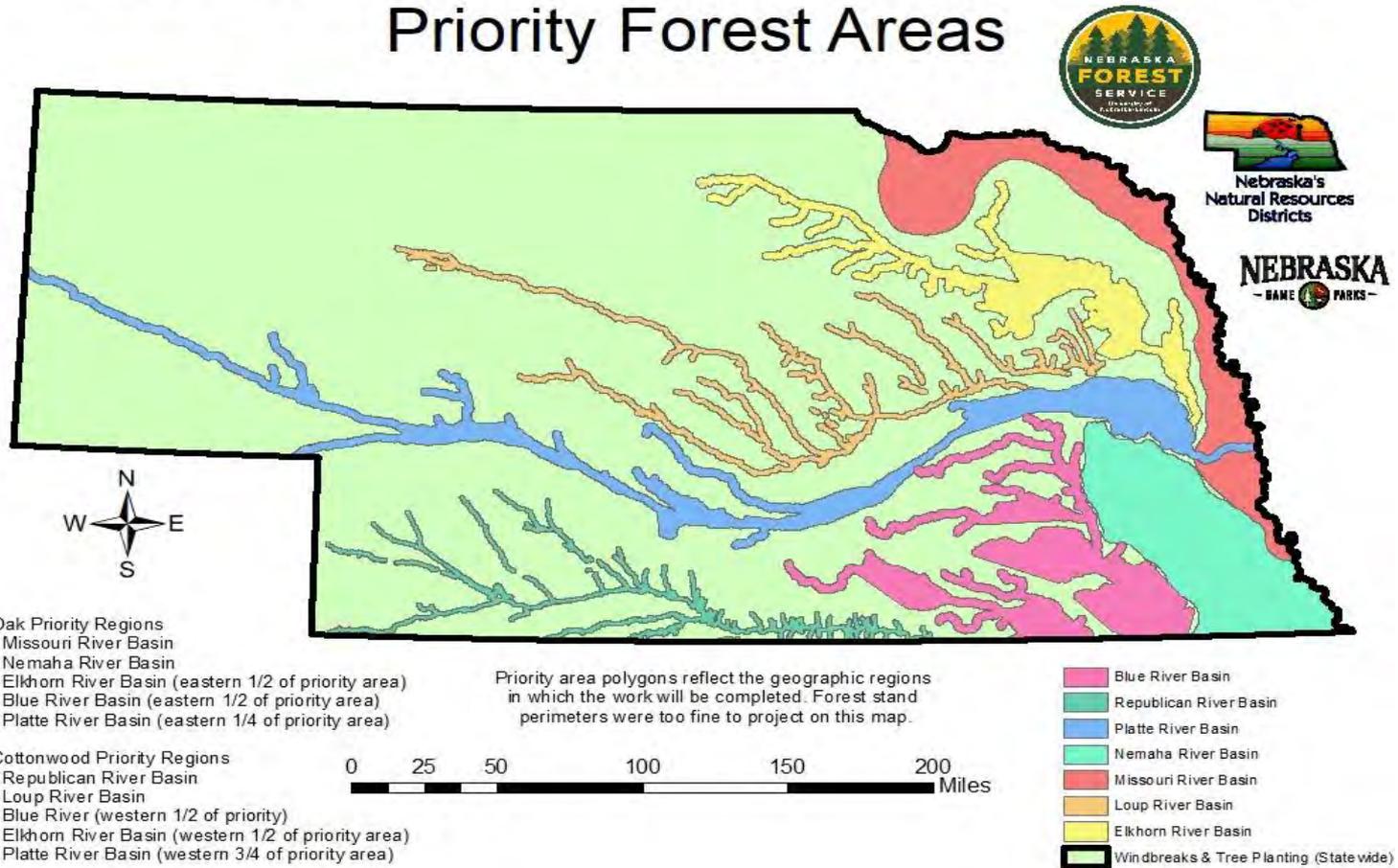
- funding announcement is tentatively schedule for February/March 2021.



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

- Awarded RCPP-AFA-2021 –Agreement in development (10 Projects were funded)

Nebraska Forest Restoration Partnership Priority Forest Areas





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Conservation Innovation Grants



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National CIG

- Funds the development of promising approaches and technologies—which may or may not be successful!
- Funding rarely provided directly to producers
- Projects often include small-scale pilots or demonstrations
- National and State competitions –funding announcements in late winter/early spring



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National CIG

- **2019 National CIGs – in Nebraska**
 - University of Nebraska – Accelerating adoption of water conservation technologies and management practices through innovative engagement programming (Testing Ag Performance Solutions - TAPS) (**\$850,000 - NE, OK, CO, KS**)



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National CIG

- **2020 National CIGs – No Nebraska Awardees**
- **Nebraska is included in:**
 - Indian Land Tenure Foundation - \$513,915
 - Tribal Lands Carbon and Co-Benefits Tool
 - Playa Lakes Joint Venture - \$514,560
 - Decision Support Tool for Brush Management



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CIG On-Farm Trials

- Funds the implementation and evaluation of innovative approaches, systems and practices that we know provide a conservation benefit.
- Funding must be provided directly to producers to offset implementation risk.
- Partners must complete both conservation and economic evaluations.
- Soil Health Demo Trial awardees must agree to use consistent assessment methods.
- National competition only - funding announcements in late winter/early spring



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CIG On-Farm Trials

- **2019 On-Farm Trials in Nebraska**
 - University of Nebraska – Adoption of Precision Ag Nitrogen Management through Nebraska On-Farm Research Network (**\$1,267,747 – NE**)
 - Soil & Water Conservation Society - Advancing precision ag & soil health with retailers (**\$1,453,232 – NE, KS, IA**)
- **Nebraska is included in:**
 - Farmers for Advancing Regenerative Management Systems (FARMS) (**\$1,672,546**)
 - National Fish & Wildlife Foundation – Measures of holistic soil health management – Cooperate Supply Chain (**\$3,000,000**)



CIG On-Farm Trials

- **2020 On-Farm Trials in Nebraska - No Nebraska Awardees**
- **Nebraska is included in:**
 - Michigan State University – Reduce N fertilizer losses through N application rates & replacing row crop with restored native vegetation. (**\$2,571,064**)
 - University of Illinois – Deploy data intensive crop management system base on on-farm precision experiments (**\$4,000,000**)
 - North Carolina State University – Adds new row crop farmers to existing network of producers for online learning. (**\$2,003,778**)



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Conservation Innovation Grants

National Funding Announcements for 2021

National Classic – April, tentatively

On-Farm Trials – March, tentatively

Information and Funding Announcements:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>



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Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program

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VPA-HIP

Voluntary Public
Access and Habitat
Incentive Program

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VOLUNTARY PUBLIC ACCESS and HABITAT INCENTIVE PROGRAM (VPA-HIP)

- Competitive Grants Program through grants.gov
- The primary objective of the VPA-HIP is to encourage owners and operators of privately-held farm, ranch, and forest land to voluntarily make that land available for access by the public for wildlife-dependent recreation, including hunting or fishing, under programs implemented by State or tribal governments.
- NE Game & Parks received this three-year grant for FY21 because of the well-established Open Fields & Water Program (OFW)
 - \$3,000,000 Federal Funds
 - \$500,000 Non-Federal Funds



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Bureau of Land Reclamation - WaterSMART

WaterSMART Program



The EQIP WaterSMART Landscape Conservation Initiative supplements the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Program –Water Conservation and Efficiency Grants.

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EQIP WaterSMART Initiative



FY21 Project Proposals Approved

Middle Republican NRD \$ 500,000

Priority Resource Concern:

Irrigation Water Use Inefficiency

Upper Republican NRD \$ 250,000

Priority Resource Concerns:

Irrigation Water Use Inefficiency

Nutrients Transported to Groundwater

Plant Productivity and Health



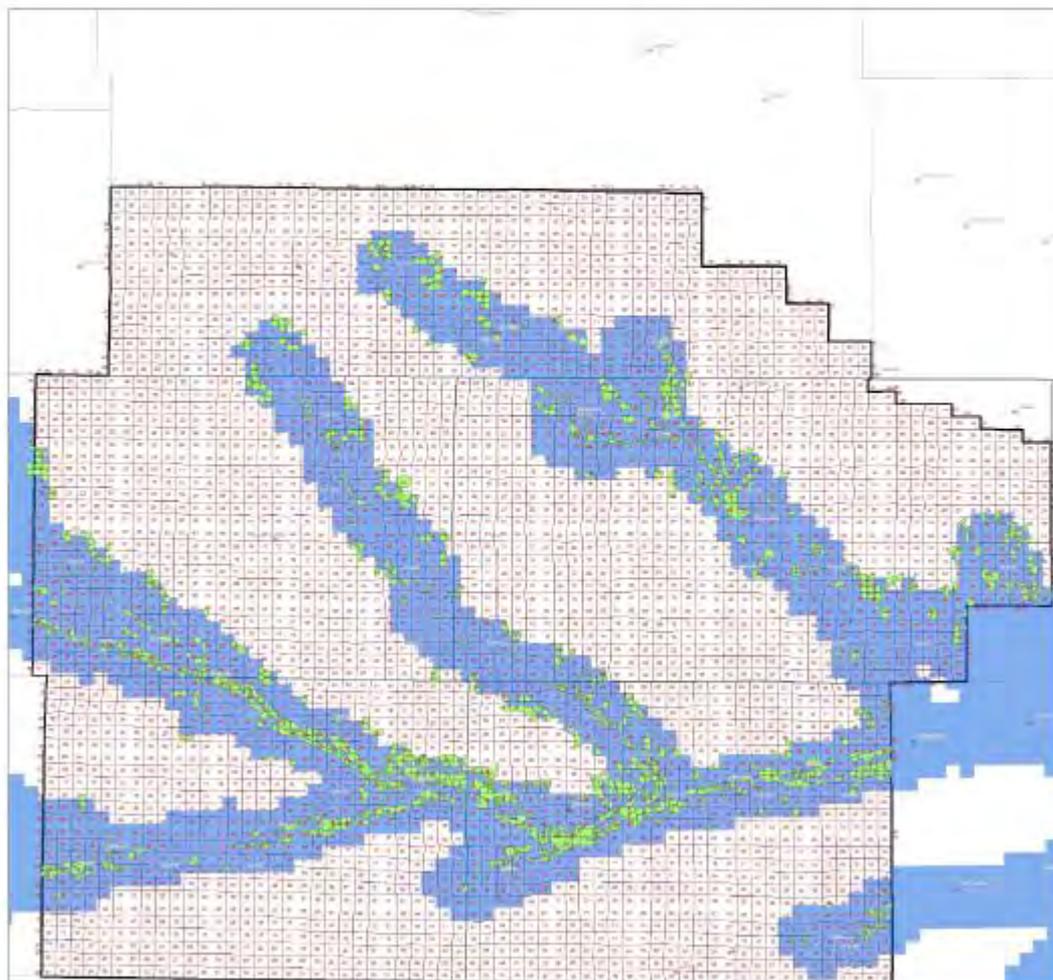
EQIP WaterSMART Initiative



MRNRD Quick Response Acres

Middle Republican NRD

Reduce consumptive use within the Quick Response area.



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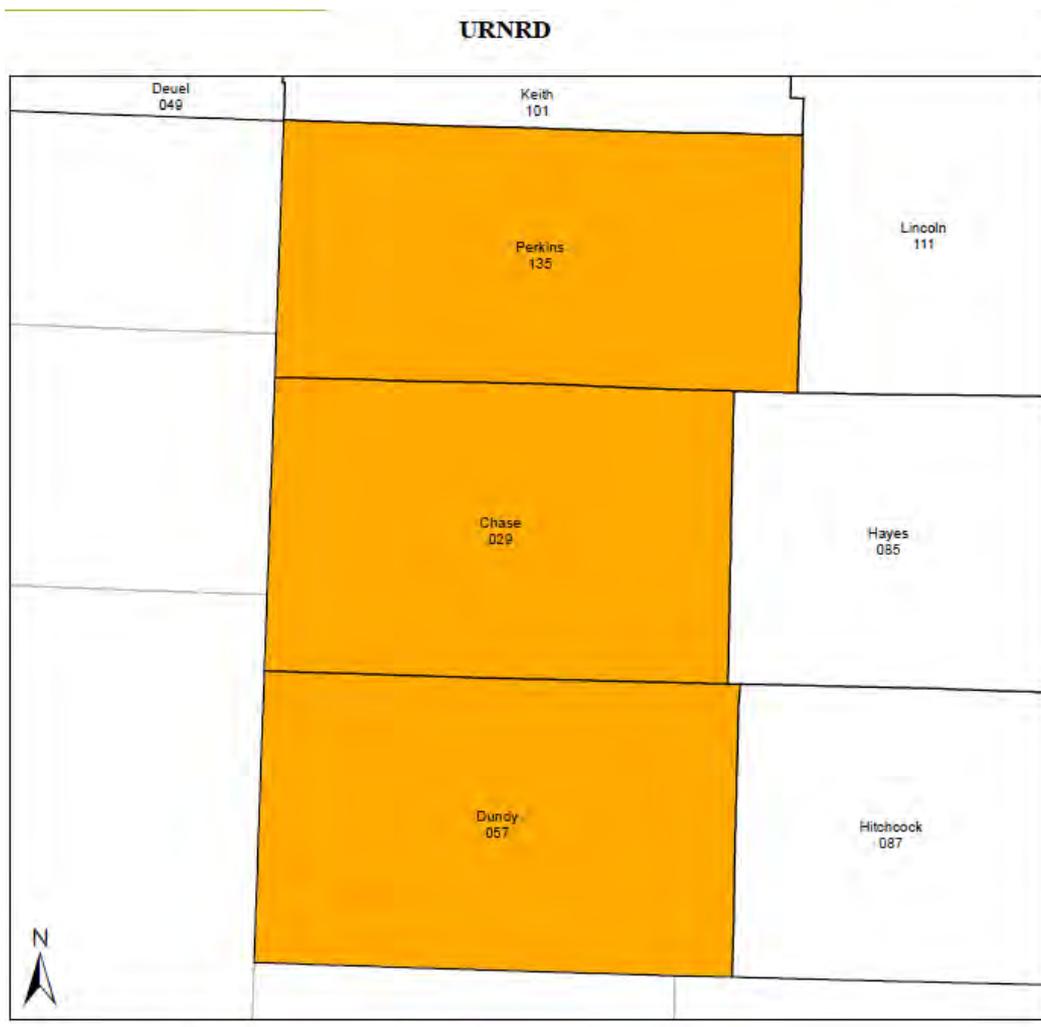


EQIP WaterSMART Initiative



Upper Republican NRD

Improve water efficiency applied & annual reduction of water use.



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EQIP WaterSMART Initiative



Information about the EQIP WaterSMART Initiative at the National NRCS Landscape Initiatives website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/initiatives/>

Landscape Initiatives



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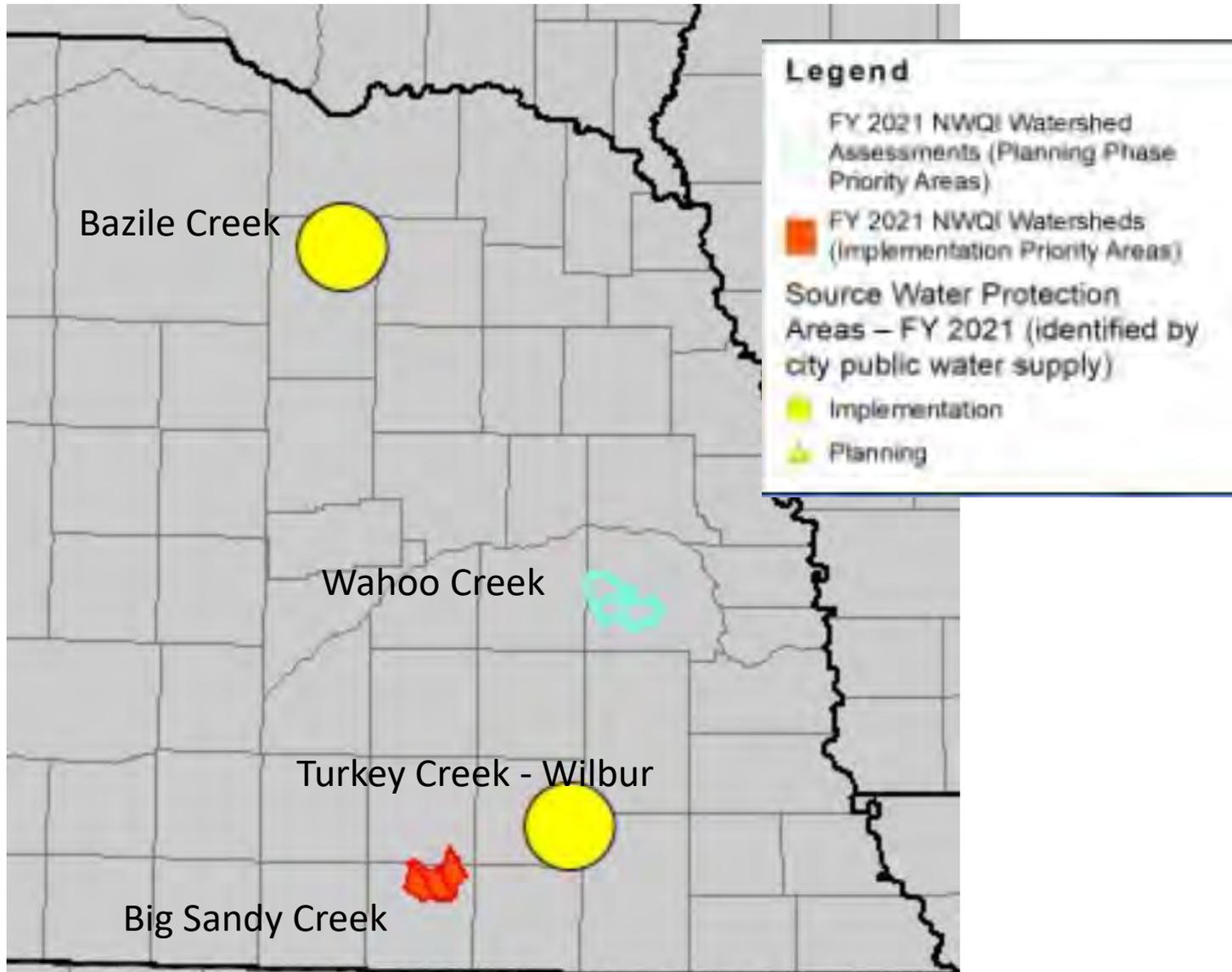


NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE (NWQI)

National Water Quality Initiative

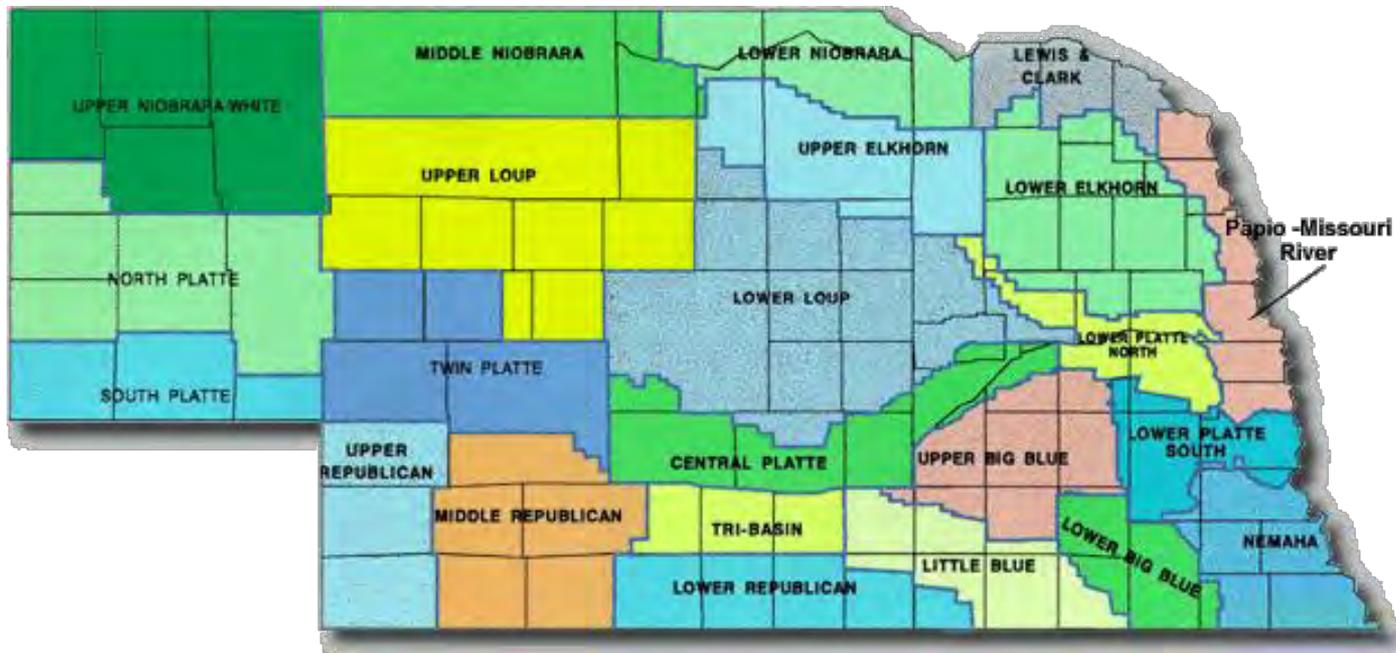
- **Wahoo Creek** – Lower Platte North NRD
- **Bazile Creek** – Lower Elkhorn NRD, Lewis and Clark NRD, Upper Elkhorn NRD
- **Big Sandy Creek** – Little Blue NRD
- **Turkey Creek** – Lower Big Blue NRD

NWQI FY 2021 Watersheds and Source Water Protection Areas



- **FY2021 NWQI Allocation = \$1.8 Million**
 - Big Sandy = \$285,000
 - Wahoo Creek = \$0
 - Bazile Creek = \$855,000
 - Turkey Creek = \$712,000

FY2021 LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS



LOCAL WORK GROUP MEETINGS

- Meetings completed in January/February 2021
- *LOCAL WORK GROUP AGENDA ITEMS:*
 - Priority Resource Concerns
 - Fund Pools - Ranking Tools – Screening Tools
 - Practice Payment Schedule
 - Local issues



QUESTIONS?