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# RESOURCE

A Monthly Publication of the Nebraska Environmental Trust

## April 2016

Executive Director Corner

At the April 7th board meeting we approved the 2016 grants. We, then hosted Grantee Seminars on April 11th and 14th. We had great turnouts, including a couple of Senators and a staffer.

The Legislative session is over and there were no "reallocations" of Trust funds. We were fortunate that there was no legislation enacted that directly impacted the Trust after the dust settled. We monitored several pieces of legislation; two in particular involved the Trust. One piece was killed in committee and the other was modified to our satisfaction.

Allison and Sheila manned our booth at the Earth Day Omaha celebration in Omaha on April 16th, and then Sheila had a booth at Gallup's Earth Day event in Omaha on April 22nd while Allison participated in Wesleyan University's Earth Day the same day. While Sheila and Allison were busy with the booths, I was attending the Leopold events at the Capitol. The next day I set up the booth at Lincoln's Earth Day and got to visit with many folks about the Trust. Marilyn had a booth at the Environmental Sustainability Celebration at First-Plymouth Church on April 24th.

On Earth Day, Friday, April 22nd, Governor Pete Ricketts announced the Peterson Family from Gordon as the



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### **Pete Ricketts, Governor** **Board of Trustees**

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#### **Agency Directors**

Nebraska 2016 Leopold Conservation Award winners. Rex and Nancy Peterson along with their son Patrick and his wife Krista operate a 2,300 acre farm and ranch near Gordon. Their work with cover crops, no-till farming, rotational grazing and use of interns all contributed to their recognition. The \$10,000 award and Aldo Leopold crystal are made possible by numerous partners, including the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the Sand County Foundation, Nebraska Cattlemen, Cargill and others.

I was privileged to attend the Water for Food Global Conference in Lincoln at UNL's Innovation Campus for two days. Not only did I learn about some new technologies in agricultural water use in Nebraska, but advances around the world. Sometimes it is educational to visit with international citizens and see the world and our backyard through their eyes.

As you can see, we have been busy. Enjoy these April showers and let's hope they bring May flowers, bountiful crops and lots of tall grass for the grazing.

Mark Brohman  
Executive Director

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### **Nebraska Environmental Trust Announces 2016 Grants**

At a meeting in Lincoln on April 7, 2016 the board of the Nebraska Environmental Trust announced that 118 projects will receive \$18,799,900 in lottery proceeds for natural resource work in Nebraska. Out of these, 69 are newly funded grants and 49 are carry-over projects. This is the 23rd year of grants from the Trust, which has provided over \$250 million in lottery revenue to preserve and protect the air, water and land of our state. Some of the projects

Jim Douglas, Nebraska Game  
and Parks Commission

Greg Ibach, Nebraska  
Department of Agriculture

Jim Macy, Nebraska  
Department of Environmental  
Quality

Jeff Fassett, P.E., Nebraska  
Department of Natural  
Resources

Courtney Phillips, Nebraska  
Department of Health and  
Human Services

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### **Trust Staff**

Mark A. Brohman  
Executive Director

Marilyn Tabor  
Grants Administrator

Sheila Johnson  
Public Information Officer

Lori Moore  
Administrative Secretary

Allison La Duke  
Grants Assistant

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The Nebraska  
Environmental Trust

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Lincoln, NE 68509-4913

receiving funding include:

- Northern Prairies Land Trust – Expanding the Tallgrass Prairie Partnership
- The Nature Conservancy: Making A Place for Monarchs
- Nebraska Energy Office: Enhancing Access to Renewable Biofuels & Air Quality in Nebraska
- North Platte NRD – DAMP Project
- PrairieLand Gold LLC – Wastewater Treatment & Nutrient Recovery

A complete listing of all approved 2016 grants and summaries can be found on the Nebraska Environmental Trust web site at [www.environmentaltrust.org](http://www.environmentaltrust.org).

[2016 Board Approved Final Rank Order](#)

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### **A Preview of Successful 2016 Grantee Projects**

#### **North Platte Natural Resources District Receives Funding From the Trust for Telemetry Program**

The North Platte Natural Resources District (NRD) was awarded a \$750,000 grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust to expand their telemetry pilot project, Data Access and Monitoring Program (DAMP), to a total of 863 units in the next three years. The grant will be combined with a \$250,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and will bring \$1 million of investment that will go directly to helping producers manage water and save the NRD money.

The NRD's telemetry project will provide telemetry units to producers/landowners free of charge, with the goal of reading ground water flow meters remotely. The AMCi MeterEye telemetry unit has a camera located under the

web site:

[environmentaltrust.org](http://environmentaltrust.org)

hood and will take a picture of the flow meter once a day. That image is then wirelessly delivered to a website, through a cellular connection, where it is stored and then converted to digital data. The stored images and data can be viewed by both the producer/landowner and NRD staff and can be used to improve water management practices. The first phase of three phases will start approximately on May 1st with the installation of 261 units.

The producers/landowners will benefit because they will know exactly how much water they have pumped and can easily figure out how much water they have used and have left in their allocation. They will be given unique, password protected login information, so their data will remain private. They will also be able expand the units to include moisture sensors, evapotranspiration gauges, weather stations and more. The add-ons will provide a more complete picture of how much water is in the soil and will help in their water management decisions.

The NRD will benefit greatly from the telemetry units too. Each year, the NRD spends nearly \$170,000 in salaries, fuel, wear and tear on vehicles and other expenses reading each of the district's 1,800 flow meters in the over appropriated portion of the district. That number will increase by nearly 400 flow meters once the NRD starts reading the flow meters in the fully appropriated portion of the NRD. Many are difficult to get to and some pose safety risks to staff. Once the telemetry units are installed, the data will be automatically downloaded at the end of the water year and reports can be generated more quickly. The telemetry units will also notify district staff when a potential problem has occurred with the flow meter, allowing for more timely repair or maintenance.

The NRD hopes to have all the regulated wells in the over appropriated and irrigation wells in the full appropriated portions of the NRD installed with telemetry units in the

next five to eight years. For more information on the telemetry project, go to [www.npnrd.org](http://www.npnrd.org).

Photo below shows the installation of a telemetry unit.



### **The Nature Conservancy - Making A Place For Monarchs**

The population of monarch butterflies, honey bees and other pollinators has been declining at an alarming rate in recent years. The Trust grant to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will help to improve habitat conditions on TNC land, better evaluate and distill key principles from successful management actions and then share those principles with interested landowners/managers who would like to improve pollinator and wildlife conditions on their land.

TNC has broad expertise in grassland management for plant diversity, pollinators and wildlife and proposes to improve management on approximately 30,000 acres of its own land in the Platte and Niobrara River valleys.

Pollinator conservation is critically important for both economic and ecological reasons. The key habitat attributes needed by pollinators (plant diversity and a wide

range of habitat conditions) also cover the conservation needs for most wildlife species and for ecological health.



### **Nebraska Pharmacists Association - Preventing Poisoning, Pollution and Prescription Drug Overdose for A Healthier Nebraska**

The Nebraska Medication Education for Disposal Strategies (MEDS) Coalition and the Nebraska Pharmacists Association (NPA) have been addressing the safety concerns of unused medication for over seven years.

This project is an expansion of the 2012 pilot program currently supported by the Trust in Lancaster County. The NPA, along with the Nebraska MEDS Coalition, continues to advocate for strong educational approaches along with simple, cost effective options that allow for the safe and legal disposal of unused medications across all Nebraska communities.

Funding from NET will support collection containers, shipping and disposal costs to expand the current pilot and statewide efforts to address collection of both non-

controlled and controlled medications in 2016.



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### **2016 Nebraska Leopold Conservation Award Recipient Announced**

Governor Pete Ricketts joined Sand County Foundation, the Nebraska Cattlemen, Cargill and the Nebraska Environmental Trust to announce Plum Thicket Farms as the recipient of the 2016 [Nebraska Leopold Conservation Award](#)® on April 22nd. The annual award honors Nebraska landowner achievement in voluntary stewardship and management of natural resources.

Located on the northern edge of the Nebraska Sandhills is Plum Thicket Farms, a diverse crop farm and cattle ranch owned and managed by Rex and Nancy Peterson, and their son Patrick and his wife Krista. Under Patrick's leadership, the farm was transformed to a no-till operation to prevent erosion and improve water retention, despite knowing the crop yields would initially take a hit. After eleven years, their investment in no-till management is paying off.

Cover crops are an important aspect of the Petersons' commitment to biodiversity. The family uses a multispecies "cocktail" of annual forages for intensive grazing. The mix contributes to the health of the soil, while also providing a nutritional food source for the cattle and pollinator habitat.

The Leopold Conservation Award is presented in honor of renowned conservationist and author Aldo Leopold, who called for an ethical relationship between people and the land they own and manage. Award applicants are judged based on their demonstration of improved resource conditions, innovation, long-term commitment to stewardship, sustained economic viability, community and civic leadership and multiple use benefits.

"The Nebraska Environmental Trust was so honored to be a part of the Leopold Conservation Award and to recognize great families like the Petersons and all the applicants," said Nebraska Environmental Trust Executive Director Mark Brohman. "The Petersons are a very deserving family who make all Nebraska landowners proud."

The Leopold Conservation Award in Nebraska is possible thanks to generous contributions from many organizations, including: Cargill, Farm Credit Services of America, Natural Resources Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Audubon Society, Nebraska Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Nebraska Association of Resource Districts Foundation, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, Sandhills Task Force, Tri-State Generation & Transmission Assoc., World Wildlife Fund, DuPont Pioneer and The Mosaic Company.



In the photo: left to right, Homer Buell (Nebraska Cattlemen), Mark Brohman (Executive Director, NE Environmental Trust), Rex Peterson, Nancy Peterson, Governor Pete Ricketts, and Troy Stowater (Nebraska Cattlemen)

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### Upcoming Events

- May 10, 2016 (Tuesday) - 8:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival, Grand Island, NE.
- May 13 - 14, 2016 (Friday - Saturday) - Spring Into Spring at Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha, NE.
- June 4, 2016 (Saturday) - Waterfest and Public Works Day, Lincoln, NE
- August 8-9, 2016 (Monday/ Tuesday) - 3rd Quarter Board Meeting, Fort Robinson, Crawford, NE

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