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RESOURCE

A Monthly Publication of the Nebraska Environmental Trust

May 2016

Executive Director Corner

It has been a busy time for the Trust the last few weeks. After all of the events last month, the hectic schedule continues this month. Sheila and Allison had a booth at the Children's Groundwater Festival in Grand Island. Sheila and I hosted a booth at Lauritzen Gardens on May 13th and 14th. Marilyn and I attended a groundbreaking ceremony on May 18th at Pyrtle Elementary School (see article below). Seeing several hundred elementary kids sitting quietly on the playground and then thanking the Trust was pretty special. I had the honor of attending the Lake Helen dedication in Gothenburg on May 20th. Sheila and I will have a booth at the City of Lincoln's Waterfest on June 4th.

I hope everyone has gotten their crops in and you didn't get too much rain or the large hail that recently hit Lincoln and Omaha. I saw photos of softball sized hail that went through a roof, the insulation, the inside ceiling and land on the floor of a Lincoln house. The insurance, roofing and auto body folks are plenty busy in our part of the state.

Safe travels.

Mark Brohman
Executive Director



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Volunteer Opportunities at the Ferguson House

Our team of volunteer docents at the Ferguson House work during rental events on the first floor of the House. They are responsible for answering questions about the House, giving tours of the four-floor historic home, and being the representative of the House during events, when renters need assistance.

If you are interested in volunteering please contact Event Coordinator Allison La Duke at allison.laduke@nebraska.gov If you have questions about volunteering, you may contact Allison via email or phone (402-471-5417).

Thank you!

Photo below shows some of the docents that volunteer at the Ferguson House. We are so appreciative of their service to us and the community.



Outdoor Enhancement Project at Pyrtle Elementary School in Lincoln by Kari Hoeft

Jim Douglas, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

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Pyrtle has "broken ground" for their Outdoor Enhancement Project. The new recycling and trash cans have been installed. Every kid helped plant over 1300 buffalo grass plugs and perennials in the new berms. This summer a shade structure will go up and rain barrels will be installed. Six raised garden beds will go in waiting to teach the children all about growing and harvesting fruits and vegetables. There will be a "Little Nebraska Prairie" for the kids to see first hand the changes over the seasons with the grasses and habitat. To help with water, a rain garden will also be planted over the summer. This will bring to life a variety of plants that children can enjoy learning about, seeing pollinators and appreciating the beauty these plants bring to our every day life.

Pyrtle is excited to incorporate this outdoor learning area into it's every day learning. Planting the berms over this last week they were able to see first hand how excited the children are to learn about nature, get their hands dirty and watch the fruits of their labor grow.

Mark Brohman and Marilyn Tabor spent the afternoon with a couple hundred special kids at Pyrtle Elementary School in Lincoln on May 18th. The kids thanked the Trust for funding their playground project that included rain barrels, berms, low water plants like buffalo grass, and erosion protection.

web site:

environmentaltrust.org



Fontenelle Forest's land stewardship department: It's not just about trails! - Jeanine Lackey, Director of Research and Stewardship

A year of "firsts" happened at Fontenelle Forest during the fall of 2015 and spring of 2016. Four oak woodland restorations-focused town hall meetings were held during which over 200 community members were briefed about the benefits of prescribed fire and restoring oak woodlands; their questions were answered and concerns were addressed.

Prescribed fire and burn cache equipment was obtained by way of grant funds from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, including burn skids (water tanks that slide into the back of a 4-wheeler), drip torches, Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), hoses, GPS units, chainsaws, two-way radios and other safety supplies.

The burn crew has grown bigger than ever....They now

have 6 land stewardship staff trained in wildland firefighting, three FF education staff, and several FF volunteers who are trained and certified to help with prescribed fires. The land stewardship staff also attends conferences and workshops, as well as trainings, to stay current in the field of restoration and wildland fire.

In total, 240 acres were successfully and safely burned in order to begin the restoration process and return our oak woodlands to a healthier, more sustainable state (172 acres Neale Woods and 68 acres at Fontenelle Forest in Bellevue). In many areas, this was the first time these woods had seen fire in 150 years!

Previously, about 10 acres were burned inside Hawthorn Trail and inside the third loop of the boardwalk.

Several burn units contained more fuel than other units, and by fuel we mean oak leaf litter. Oak leaves contain a waxy substance that is a bit more volatile than other deciduous leaves, making it the perfect fuel to carry slow-moving, low-intensity fire through the oak woodlands.

The low-intensity fire creates a patchwork of fuel on the forest floor of burned and unburned fuel, creating refugia for overwintering insects and other critters. Heterogeneity (differences within a group) is the goal. The land should not look all similar.

While the team try to plan fire breaks and burn units using mainly locations of trails, they often have to create a fire break in a separate location. This sometimes causes confusion with hikers who may wonder onto a fire break that appears to be trail, so signs have been posted on some of the fire breaks demarcating the fire breaks from the trails.

The team are anxiously waiting to see how the oak woods

and openings respond to the management efforts. Other techniques used in restoration efforts included thinning over story trees, removing invasive species and inter-seeding high diversity seed mixes into our native prairies.

The future of their oak woodlands is looking brighter, now that the team completed the first year of the 100 year restoration plan. The stewardship department will continue to maintain trails at Fontenelle Forest and Neale Woods for hikers, students and naturalists. Their hope is that the positive ecological changes that happen along the way this year, and for many years to come, will be noticed and enjoyed.



**Master Naturalist Program - University of Nebraska,
Lincoln - Submitted by Shawna Richter-Ryerson,
Communications Associate, UNL”**

The Nebraska Master Naturalist program recently received \$91,947 as the third installment of a three-year Nebraska Environmental Trust grant to continue helping to protect and preserve the state’s natural resources.

Conservation agencies and organizations preserve, restore

and manage tens of thousands of acres of land across Nebraska, creating a need for specialized, dedicated volunteers to help manage the natural resources. The Master Naturalist Program, a science-based, nonprofit, adult-volunteer education program, does just that.

Since its inception in 2010, the program has trained 308 people, 279 of which have maintained their membership and receive regular notices of volunteer and continuing education opportunities. Members contribute at least 20 hours a year to volunteer conservation efforts with partnering agencies and organizations.

Over the last six years, Master Naturalists have invested more than 34,000 hours of conservation service, an estimated value of about \$799,000.

The grant will help fund the Master Naturalist general program efforts and expenses. Training sessions are scheduled for May 19 to 21 at Nebraska 4-H Camp in Halsey; June 5 to 11 at The Nature Conservancy's Niobrara Valley Preserve, Valentine-Ainsworth-Bassett area; July 7 to 9 at Panhandle Research and Extension Center, Scottsbluff, Gering area; and Sept. 30 to Oct. 1 and Oct. 7 to 8, AkSarBen Aquarium at Schramm Park, Lincoln-Omaha-Gretna area. For more information or to register, visit naturalist.unl.edu.

The funding also makes possible the annual Master Naturalist calendar, available at the Nebraska Maps and More store.

The Master Naturalist Program benefits from matching support through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the UNL School of Natural Resources and Nebraska Extension.



*This photo shows (L-R) Master Naturalists Bill Smith, Tim Olin and Tim Tharp who pose in front of Joel Sartore's blow-up photo of the endangered Salt Creek Tiger Beetle (SCTB) (*Cicindela nevadica lincolniana*) at the lower floor of Morrill Hall, ready to demo how the SCTB larvae are reintroduced into their burrows in the wild, saline wetland, after being reared in labs at Henry Doorly and the Lincoln Children's Zoos.*

Upcoming Events

- 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
- August 26-September 5, 2016 - Nebraska State Fair, Grand Island

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