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RESOURCE

A Monthly Publication of the Nebraska Environmental Trust

April 2017

Executive Director Corner

The Legislature has completed over three quarters of the 90 day session. The Trust continues to monitor several bills including three bills (LB 452, 312 and 563) because they pertain to repealing the tax exemption to lottery tickets. It appears none of these three bills will be advanced to the floor, but the Revenue Committee has prioritized and advanced LB 461 that contains parts of those bills, but not the language pertaining to repealing the tax exemption on lottery tickets.

Another bill impacting the Trust is LB 331, which was introduced by Speaker Scheer at the request of the Governor. LB 331 would transfer \$3.3M a year for the next three years to the Water Resources Cash Fund. This represents about 18% of the funds the Trust has available for grants, so it would have a significant impact on the Trust. We are hoping that the Appropriations Committee at least reduces the take to two years instead of three, as the Legislature is only securing matching General Funds for two years. These transfers were a negotiated settlement six years ago and were to sunset this year with the Trust not funding the Water Cash Fund after 2017.

On April 6th the Trust board met and the Board approved the Recommendations for Funding Placed in Rank Order list. The Trust staff held three Grantee Seminars (two in



Pete Ricketts, Governor

Board of Trustees

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Vacant - TBA

James Hellbusch - Columbus

Kevin Peterson - Osceola

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Gerry Lauritzen - Omaha

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Sherry Vinton - Whitman

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Gloria Erickson - Holdrege

Agency Directors

Lincoln and one in Grand Island) to discuss the grant reporting requirements with the successful grantees. We had several Senators join us at the Lincoln seminars and Senator Quick joined us for lunch in his home District at the Grand Island seminar.

The spring game was a success in Lincoln on April 15. There were 78,310 Husker fans, including a number of recruits. We have since learned that Tanner Lee (transfer from Tulane) will be our starting quarterback in the fall if he stays healthy. I know all but a handful of Universities envy the numbers of attendees Nebraska gets at their spring scrimmage. Only Ohio State with 80,134 bested Nebraska this year with Clemson coming in a distant third with 60,000 fans. This weekend the Huskers volleyball team will play in front of a sold out crowd in Kearney. They will take on Colorado State in their only spring exhibition game this year. It is nice to see the gals go to the heartland. Again, with more than 2,000 tickets sold, almost all college volleyball teams are envious of those kinds of numbers for a exhibition game.

Travel safe, watch out for all of those kids about to get out of school for summer and here's to a safe planting season.

Mark A. Brohman
Executive Director

Nebraska Environmental Trust Announces 2017 Grants

At a meeting in Lincoln on April 6, 2017 the Board of the Nebraska Environmental Trust announced that 85 projects will receive \$16,680,000 in lottery proceeds for natural resource work in Nebraska. Out of these, 33 are newly

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

Dr. Tom Williams, Nebraska
Department of Health and
Human Services

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Environmental Trust
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funded grants and 52 are carry-over projects. This is the 24th year of grants from the Trust, which has provided over \$265 million dollars in lottery revenue to preserve and protect the air, water and land of our state. Some of the projects receiving funding include:

***Habitat for Humanity of Omaha ReStore
Deconstruction Program Phase 2***

***Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition – Soil Health and
Water Conservation Through Grazing Cover Crops***

***Lincoln Children’s Zoo – Lincoln Children’s Zoo
Expansion***

***Rowe Sanctuary – Wetlands for Communities and
Schools***

***Wachiska Audubon Society – Fertig Prairie Acquisition
Project***

A complete listing of all approved 2017 grants and summaries can be found on the Nebraska Environmental Trust web site at www.environmentaltrust.org.

The Nebraska Legislature created the Nebraska Environmental Trust in 1992. Using the revenue from the Nebraska Lottery, the Trust has provided grants to over 2,000 projects across the state. Anyone can apply – citizens, conservation organizations, communities, businesses and individuals that want to protect Nebraska’s natural habitat, improve water quality and quantity or find ways to manage our waste. The Nebraska Environmental Trust works to preserve, protect and restore our natural resources for future generations.

Lincoln, NE 68509-4913

web site:

environmentaltrust.org

**Trust Will Move Towards An Electronic Grants Process
with help from the School of Raikes Design Studio
Team**

The last quarter of 2016 and 1st quarter of 2017 marked an important milestone for the Trust. The School of Raikes Team, our Database Consultant (Marie Gregoire) and the staff of the Trust worked diligently to move towards a fully electronic grants process that will be launched in a few months.

We cannot thank the entire team from the School of Raikes enough for all the hard work that was put into the project. The Senior Design Team members consisting of Eric Policky, Kevin Allen, Jun Sun, Michael Marsh and Alex Sturtz, were dedicated, committed and a wonderful group to work with. They were always ready to offer input, provide new ideas and work independently in developing the grant portal.

A special thanks too, to our Database Consultant, Marie Gregoire; Jeremy Suing, the Project Manager; Frank Dolezal, Coach and the team from Stone Fin, Carl Steffen, Jesse Temple and Greg Hofman. They made it a breeze for the Trust! The Trust staff is excited about the next phase of this project.

The Electronic Grants Portal will be going through a testing phase and then "live" in time for the 2018 Grant Cycle due on September 5, 2017.



The School of Raikes Team with Trust staff and Database Consultant, Marie Gregoire. (Pictured above).



The School of Raikes Team with entire Trust staff. (Pictured above). From left to right: Jeremy Suing (Project Manager) Eric Policky (Squad Lead & Product Manager), Michael Marsh, Alex Sturtz, Jun Sun (all Software Developers), Kevin Allen (Development Manager), Pam Deines (Administrative Assistant), Allison La Duke (Grants Assistant), Mark Brohman (Executive Director), Sheila Johnson (Public Information Officer), Marilyn Tabor (Grants Administrator).

Rainwater Basin Joint Venture - Divots in Pivots



An aerial view of a Divots in Pivots Project

Background

Pivot irrigation became established in the Rainwater Basin (RWB) in the 1960s. To maximize efficiency, pivots must complete full rotations. As a result, many wetlands were drained or modified to try to maximize irrigated acres under the pivots. Today, 72% of all historic playa wetlands are intersected by pivot irrigation systems. Despite past drainage attempts many historic wetlands continue to pond water during the growing season.

Nebraska Environmental Trust Grant

In 2015, the RWB Joint Venture (RWBJV) partners were awarded a Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) grant titled "Divots in Pivots". This grant was leveraged with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) funding. Funding from the NET and RCPP will be leveraged with partner contributions to support development of 10 demonstration sites. At these sites the wetlands will be restored and transitioned to irrigated pasture while the pivot irrigation system will be upgraded with Variable Rate Irrigation (VRI) technology. VRI will

allow the producers to monitor soil moisture levels and strategically apply irrigation inputs on the adjacent cropland based on crop water needs and completely shut the pivot off over the wetland. This allows natural hydrology to be restored to the wetland and reduces excess irrigation over the entire field.

Project Delivery

The RWBJV corporate partners (Lindsay, Valley, Rinke, and Cropmetrics) have taken the lead in the initial marketing phase, identifying producers with priority wetlands in fields that would benefit from VRI. Project implementation has three elements. Element one is wetland restoration completed by the RWBJV partners and protection through NRCS's Agriculture Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). Element two includes installation of VRI upgrades to the pivot, field mapping, soil moisture probe installation, crop water budget development, and generation of irrigation prescriptions. Funding for this element will be through RWBJV partners including NET and NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Project element three is installation of grazing infrastructure. In 2016, two pilot projects, that included these project elements, were completed. The University of Nebraska is currently evaluating these sites against other fields with farmed wetlands and conventional pivot irrigation systems to quantify adoption of conservation practices on net-farm income.



Fencing associated with a Divots in the Pivots site.

Upcoming Events

- April 21, 2017 (Friday) - Earthstock, UNL, Lincoln NE.
 - April 21, 2017 (Friday) - Eco Fair, Wesleyan, Lincoln NE.
 - April 22, 2017 (Saturday) - Earth Day Omaha, Elmwood Park, Omaha NE.
 - April 22, 2017 (Saturday) - Lincoln Earth Day, Lincoln NE.
 - April 24, 2017 (Monday) - Auburn School, Greenhouse Dedication, 1 - 2:30pm.
 - April 27, 2017 (Thursday) - Sustainability Expo, UNMC/Nebraska Medicine, Omaha NE.
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