

Our Neck of the Woods

Insider News From and For NFS Staff



Thursday, July 20, 2023

Vol. 4 No. 4

A note from your state forester . . .

Budget management strategies

During June 22nd Town Hall, we announced that we have effectively managed the budget reductions associated with the FY22-23 Fiscal Years. One advantage we possess compared to other units in the university is the proportion of funds coming from various sources.

While addressing the budget reductions for the FY22-23 fiscal years, our main focus was to overcome the challenge of reallocating a few staff positions to funds that would be resistant to budget cuts. Our strategic approach centered around utilizing state-restricted funds and different types of federal funds, ensuring their immunity from budget reductions.

After the final approval, just in time for the June Town Hall, we have successfully implemented strategic budget diversification strategies that have proven to be highly effective in safeguarding NFS from potential financial difficulties. This positive momentum has established a strong financial foundation for current and future initiatives.

As we move forward, we remain committed to implementing and refining our budget diversification strategy, which will continue to protect NFS and empower our agency to overcome any financial obstacles that may arise. With our proactive and resilient approach, I have full confidence in our ability to navigate challenges while fulfilling our mission of enriching the lives of all Nebraskans by protecting, restoring, and utilizing Nebraska's valuable tree and forest resources.



John Erixson

In this issue . . .

Staff Spotlight: Pages 2-3

*Kun-Yuan Lee and Kendall Weyers
Chrissy Land and Matt Holte*

Each issue meet some of our NFS employees from around the state. We are a diverse and amazing bunch!

NFS at Work—Pages 3-7

See the latest updates from every corner of the state. This month, we highlight a special feature, the Fire Shop, Forest Health and Management, and Youth Conservation Education.

Just for You—Pages 4 & 6

- *Nebraska Natives* takes a look at a "husky" tree species, the shagbark hickory.
- *Staff Picks*: check out our team's favorite vacation spots!
- *Words*: A fun activity awaits!

Thesis Completed: Hip, Hip, Hooray!

by Ben Bohall, Communications Specialist

A big congratulations to NFS (Senior) Student Worker Kianie David for successfully defending her honors undergraduate thesis: "Concepts in Agroforestry: An Analysis of Agroforestry's Tropical and Temperate History and its Practiced and Definitions in the United States."

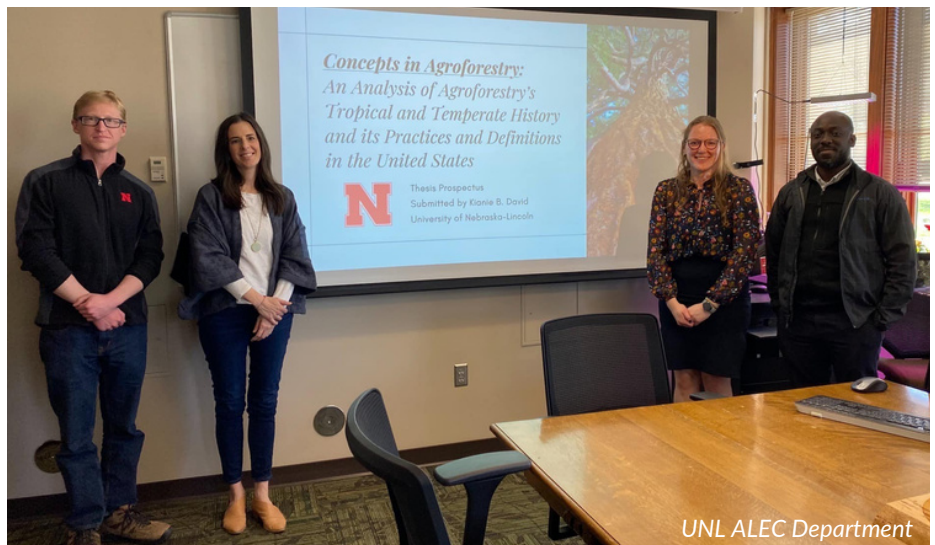
Her committee included thesis advisor Dr. Lord Ameyaw from the School of Natural Resources, her Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Communications academic advisor Dr. Heather Akin, and NFS Communications Specialist Ben Bohall.

Kianie's thesis examined the correlation between different agroforestry terms used in each U.S. state's Forest Action Plan. She thoroughly reviewed every state's plan and reported the results. Kianie achieved this by analyzing the data she had collected and examining how agroforestry and its practices were understood in the U.S. It was the first study of its kind.

"I had never written a thesis before, so it was kind of intimidating," Kianie said. "The more I got into it though, it really began to come together, and I enjoyed writing it. It was something I worked hard to achieve, and I'm glad that I did it."

Lord and Kianie are now in discussions with the National Agroforestry Center regarding further implications for the study, including standardizing agroforestry terms to assist departments in obtaining federal funding.

Kianie will begin graduate school classes at UNL this fall and will work with Lord as his Research/Graduate Assistant. She'll also continue working as a student worker at NFS.



UNL ALEC Department



Staff Spotlight

Welcome to the NFS Team, Kun-Yuan! *by Kianie David, Student Worker*



On June 19, 2023, we welcomed our new GIS Specialist into the team, Kun-Yuan Lee. With a bachelor's degree in both geography and meteorology and climatology, Kun-Yuan has also received two master's degrees, one in earth atmospheric science and another in geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing, from UNL.

Kun-Yuan has begun working on projects that involve developing a distribution map for eastern red cedar trees and analyzing the dynamics of vegetation and forest canopies in Nebraska.

"As a GIS analyst, I enjoy working on various aspects of geospatial analysis and mapping," he said. "It is incredibly rewarding to utilize the power of GIS to solve complex problems and make a positive impact."

One of Kun-Yuan's missions is to enhance the current mapping systems at the Nebraska Forest Service.

The goal is to transition from traditional static maps to interactive web mapping platforms, he said.

When he is not working, Kun-Yuan has an interest in traveling. He has had the opportunity to visit 49 of the 50 States, with Hawai'i being the only one remaining.

Some of the other things he enjoys the most are going on road trips, experiencing new landscapes, and learn about different cultures.

In the future, Kun-Yuan plans to finish his third master's degree, which he is currently pursuing online, in computer science from the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Kendall Weyers: Family man, Buffet fan

Introduction

My title is Sustainable Communities Coordinator and my main role is coordinating multiple community forestry grants, including Trees for Nebraska Towns and the Ten Free Trees mini-grant program

Background

I have a long and varied career in horticulture, but I've been in my current position at NFS since 2011. My wife Brenda and I recently celebrated our 24th wedding anniversary and we are still adjusting to being empty-nesters. We decided to take advantage by finally going on a long-dreamed-of trip to Italy, which we've planned for this fall.

What do you do when you're not working?

I have too many hobbies, including biking, hiking, woodworking, reading, and photography, but what I seem to spend most free time on is maintaining my yard and 100-year-old house

What is your greatest accomplishment?

Since I'm writing this the day after Father's Day, and my oldest just graduated from UNL "with highest distinction" in engineering, I'm currently feeling like my greatest accomplishment is helping raise two smart, funny, kind, generally amazing sons.

What are your goals and dreams?

My goals and dreams aren't set in stone, but instead tend to range from one day wanting to have a significant impact filling the great need of improving Nebraska's community forests to the next day just trying to survive without pulling the retirement ejection seat handle.

What's the best advice you've given or received?

I'm a big Jimmy Buffett fan, partly because his lyrics are full of both humor and good advice. One of my favorites is, "Some people never find it. / Some only pretend, but me? / I just want to live happily ever after / every now and then."



Kendall with his family following his son's graduation from UNL.



Our Neck of the Woods

Thursday, July 20, 2023

Page 3

Staff Spotlight

Outdoorswoman Chrissy Land discovers her green thumb

Hello, my office at the North Platte NRD in Scottsbluff. I cover the western half of the state, HWY 183 is the gray boundary line between Graham and I. So, everything from Valentine, Kearney down to Harlan County Reservoir at Alma, and west is my territory.

Background

I grew up in the North Platte valley around Scottsbluff and graduated from Scottsbluff High School. I have an associate in business administration from Western NE Community College, a bachelor in Horticulture – Landscape Design (UNL), and I am on track to completing my masters in Community and Regional Planning from UNL fall of 2023.

What do you do when you're not working?

I do a lot of walleye fishing in the summer at Lake Minatare, camping/fly fishing in the Laramie Range, and bird hunting in the fall/winter. I have a new 20' x 40' greenhouse to put together this year that I plan on using as a 3 season in ground food forest. I also do a lot of home renovation projects on our 1930's farmhouse.

What is your greatest accomplishment?

I received an amazing opportunity to design and coordinate the planting at the Gering Plaza for the City of Gering in 2018-2019. This included the site layout, plant, and materials selection for what is essentially a small amphitheater garden.



Chrissy with her Grandfather Roger Brown, who operated a greenhouse for 50 years. This is where Chrissy's love for plants and people grew.

What are your goals and dreams?

Family always comes first. Otherwise, as long as I am working with plants and people, I believe I will be happy with whatever I am doing. I particularly love to design, create, learn, and teach. I only need a foundation of what I love, know what I don't and trust that the rest will sort itself out.

What's advice you've given or received?

"Always be looking for your replacement." – Amy Seiler

This was very confusing to me at first, but now I understand turnover and leaving a legacy much differently than I ever did before. I have realized it is important to be ready for whatever opportunities life throws at you. Be ready to hand off whatever you have achieved to the next person so that you feel confident they will continue to build upon your hard work.

It's that time of year for...

The 2023 Annual Report!

The NFS Comms team is gearing up for this year's Annual Report. Each year, the publication highlights the importance of our agency's mission to protect, restore, and utilize.

If you have a topic or success story you'd like considered for this year's edition, please email Ben at bbohall2@unl.edu.



Matt Holte embraces the outdoors

Hello, my name is Matt Holte, and I'm the fire operations team leader for the Nebraska Forest Service.

Background

I have been working in fire for over 20 years now, with a lot of that time being spent in the Rocky Mountain Region and the Southwest Region of the United States.

When do you do when you're not working?

When I'm not working, I love fishing and camping.

What is your greatest accomplishment?

I'd have to say that my greatest accomplishment is definitely my family.

What are your goals and dreams?

Right now, one of my goals is to retire and live somewhere near a high mountain lake.

What's the best advice you've given or received?

"To add value to others, one must first value others."



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Nebraska Forest Service



Feature: a goodbye letter...

Lessons learned; life lived better

by Sandy Benson

By the time you read this, I'll be officially retired, but I don't anticipate sitting around with my feet up any time soon. I didn't get an opportunity to say goodbye to all of you; heck, I didn't even get to meet several of you! But John asked me to write a 'lessons learned' article to pass along.

First, I want to thank the NFS and each of you for a wonderful experience and for allowing me to cap my career with an outstanding organization. It's been a great run, and a privilege to work with you to further the cause of protecting, restoring, and utilizing Nebraska's tree and forest resources.

Over the years I have, indeed, learned a few lessons as a field forester, grant writer, and later, as I prepared Community Wildfire Protection Plans across the state. Even though most of this is just common sense, it took me years to learn it, and sometimes I still don't get it right. I hope sharing will help others get there faster than I did.

- **Listen.** Everyone has a story. We can learn a lot from the experiences of others. Understanding what's important to people, their goals, and how they see life, can help us work smoothly with just about anyone. Listening enables us to design good projects that meet landowners' needs, contractors' abilities, and NFS and partners' objectives. It helps us mesh our skills with those of co-workers to produce great results.
- **Measure twice, cut once.** Double-checking our work saves resources and saves face. I've been embarrassed more than a few times by miscalculating on the fly. Take the time to do it right the first time. Re-dos can be costly. And when we do mess up, own it. Apologize and then fix it. Avoid that counterproductive blame game.
- **Share.** Be generous. Time is one of our most important resources. Help people, not just when they are in a bind, but also when they are just plugging along. They'll appreciate the company, and it may inspire them to help others. Contribute to group discussions, share ideas, and be willing to help implement them. It's always give and take; not 'my way or the highway.' Give credit to others for their efforts. Everyone appreciates being appreciated.
- **Remember.** Our parents were right about much. When we mind our manners, life is better. Say please and thank you. Be reliable and punctual. If we say we're going to do something or be somewhere, do it or be there. People will know they can count on us. Don't make excuses; just make it right.

The NFS has grown and changed for the better in recent years, evolving into a more effective and respected organization during some very trying times. Congratulations for making that happen.

You've changed me, too, hopefully for the better. Thank you. I will miss you all. Please look me up if you ever travel to the western North Carolina Mountains.



ONW Vol. 4 No. 4 Word Search

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K M B E E T L E T R E E S U I
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Stay Updated...

Things are heating up at The Fire Shop!

The Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop Facebook group has become a bit of a sensation. Since its launch in 2019 it's garnered close to 3,000 members, primarily made up of volunteer firefighters and departments throughout Nebraska.

"We have a great group of followers, and they respond when I take the time to post," says Fire Shop Office Associate Jeanine Kavan. "It is a great way to show the different types of equipment and items that we can provide to the volunteer fire departments across Nebraska."



All the activity isn't limited to the interwebs, however. NFS Fires Shop Manager Lew Sieber recently customized an enclosed trailer for the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum to use, complete with roll out shelving for hauling lots of plants. Sustainable Landscape Specialist Sarah Buckley has already put it to good use.

The latest project Lew is preparing for is updating the SEAT Bases with 5 – 5k gallon poly tanks. The shop has also procured free retardant from the USFS, saving the State of Nebraska money in the process.



How's it hanging, Chat Canyon?

by Jason Severe, Rural Forester

Recent management at Chat Canyon WMA which has involved NFS staff assistance includes:

- **Winter 2021-Spring 2022** – cost-share assistance for 34.4 acres of hazardous forest fuels reduction to remove eastern redcedar and ponderosa pine ladder fuels and thin pines to desirable stocking levels. Sadly, a wildfire in Summer 2022, burned through approximately 1/3 of this project area.
- **Fall 2022-present** – Luke Gazak (while employed by NWTF) initiated a 37 acre hazardous forest fuels reduction project to be funded through a NWTF "Waterways for Wildlife" grant to remove eastern redcedar ladder fuels from hardwood stands located adjacent to the Niobrara River.

Chat Canyon Wildlife Management Area (WMA), which is now owned and operated by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), was acquired in 2013 following a multi-year effort led by NFS and other partners including the U.S. Forest Service (USFS); NGPC; Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET); The Conservation Fund; National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF); and two adjacent landowners.

More information about Chat Canyon WMA can be found at <https://nfs.unl.edu/chat-canyon-wildlife-management-area>.

Potential future management involving NFS staff assistance:

- Planting of hardwood seedlings to promote species diversity and reforest some of the bottomland areas that burned during the Summer 2022 wildfire.



Luke Gazak



Jason Severe



Jason Severe



Tree Tips...

Japanese Beetles

by Jennifer Morris, Forest Health Specialist

As of third week of June, no Japanese beetle sightings have been reported on the eastern and mid-eastern parts of the state. This could be due to the droughted conditions of last summer, winter and even this spring. Conditions of this type can make egg hatch and larvae pupation unfavorable.

Japanese beetles are an introduced insect. The larvae (grubs) feed on the roots of turf and the adults feed on over 300 species of plants (including corn and soybeans) creating a lacey pattern on leaf tissue.



An adult Japanese beetle

This insect can be quite a nuisance, especially on linden, cherry, crabapple, buckthorn and roses. Lawns can be checked for grub activity. If there are yellow areas in the turf, grass can be pulled up close to the edge of the yellowing and grubs will be present in the soil.

Usually, grubs will be actively feeding on turf roots in late May and June before pupating into adults. Adults will feed, mate and lay eggs through August. Management of the insect can sometimes be difficult. Pheromone traps are not a good management tool. The traps have been shown to attract more beetles to the area. Hand picking and disposal is an option, planting certain plants like chives, garlic and catnip will deter the beetle in rose beds and gardens. Pesticides can be used as either a soil drench to control the grub or sprayed on the foliage to discourage feeding of plant tissue by the adult. Be sure to check label guidelines as most products cannot be used on lindens or basswoods (*Tilia sp.*).

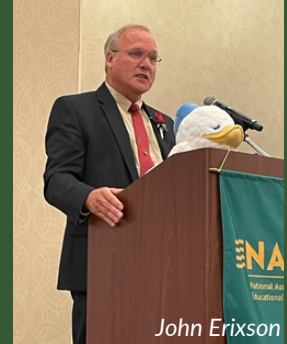


UNL Cropwatch

Congrats, John!

On July 18th, State Forester John Erixson accepted the award for the National Association of Educational Office Professionals' 2023 Educational Administrator of the Year. Winners are chosen for their unrelenting support of educational office professionals and staff professional development.

"It was a great ceremony and John gave a wonderful, humble acceptance speech giving all the credit to the NFS staff," said NFS Business Associate Lola Young.



John Erixson

Staff Picks...

A Variety of Vacations

by Kianie David, Student Worker

We asked our NFS team where they would recommend going on vacation:

- **Steven Jara, NFS Deputy Director:** "I recommend Holland. I lived there for 12 years, and there are a ton of great sites to see and amazing food to eat!"
- **Darla Huff, Office Associate:** "The Lake of the Ozarks. My 5th annual trip is this year!"
- **Andrew Zahn, Forestry Property Operations Supervisor:** "Reindeer Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada. I've only been once, but I'd never caught so many fish. The shore lunches with a fresh catch are tough to top."
- **Michelle DeRusha, Communications Specialist:** "Arches National Park and Zion National Park in Utah for the spectacular scenery and amazing hiking."

Reminder



Saturday, August 12th
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

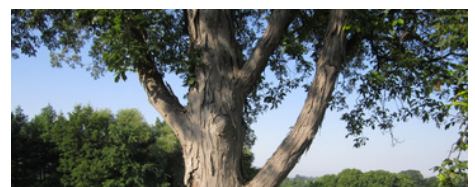
Come join us at this year's last Discovery Days! Teach Nebraskans how they can protect restoring, and utilize Nebraska's tree and forest resources at our booth! Free swag gear and other goodies will be available.

Nebraska Natives...

Shagbark Hickory

The shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) is a deciduous tree native to Eastern Nebraska. This species is best used when planted in groups with other hickories or oaks.

As its name implies, this tree produces a very prominent "shaggy" bark that peels off in long, curving strips as it matures. The pinnate leaves typically have five (sometimes seven) large leaflets that turn yellow in the fall. The tree produces a tasty nut encased in a 4-part, egg-shaped husk that splits open in the fall.





Arbor Day 'n Play in Halsey

by Jack Hilgert, Conservation Education Coordinator

Thursday April 27th USFS, NFS, Nebraska Extension and several partners came together to lead an inaugural Arbor Day Festival at Halsey Forest and Bessey Nursery. Over 200 elementary school students from area schools came to the forest for a fun-filled day of learning. Students were rotated through five stations where they hiked through the forest, toured Bessey nursery, and experienced Project Learning Tree curriculum activities. Students were able to take an Ohio buckeye seedling home to plant for Arbor Day the following day.



Festival workers hand out trees to plant.

Amber Stevens, Extension Educator and Project Learning Tree/Project WET facilitator, said "Feedback from the teachers was overwhelmingly positive. Both teachers and students really enjoyed the stations, everyone learned something new, and one teacher mentioned that their students talked about it for days after and they hope to get invited back next year"

Amber Pearson, Recreation Technician with USFS, said "We had more students and teachers in attendance than the population of the town of Halsey, which is a great turn-out for us. We hope to expand this to a two-day event next year to draw in students from schools further away."

Conservation Education Coordinator Jack Hilgert said, "It is always great to work with our valued partners and empower them to use the high-quality lessons from Project Learning Tree to enhance educational opportunities for Nebraska's children in their local communities."



Students gather around to learn at the festival.

Events like this help place NFS on the forefront of conservation and environmental education, connecting our states' future landowners and leaders with our trees, forests, and shared natural home, he said.

Already, the group has begun planning to expand to a two-day festival for 2023.

Additionally, Hastings Museum and NFS are planning a similar Project Learning Tree Festival on Thursday, October 26th, 2023, which will replicate this model for south-central Nebraska youth.

Reach out to Jack if you are interested in assisting at these or other Conservation Education events across the state or if you want assistance choosing a PLT activity for your next outreach program.

Events Calendar

Send your info about events that will be of interest to staff to bbohall2@unl.edu

July

20th - @ 3:30 - Teach Outside! Monthly Outdoor Learning Educator Workshop Series

24th - @ 1:00 via Zoom - Leading Little Learners in Nature! Early Childhood Educator Workshop Series

August

12th - @ 10:00 a.m. to 2 p.m. - East Campus Discovery Days

15th - @ 9 a.m. - Projects Learning Tree, WET and WILD Facilitator Training

17th & 18th - Western Field Day in the Panhandle

- Day One: 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Day Two: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
 - Contact Chrissy Land for more details

September

8th - @ 4:00 to 8:00 p.m. - 2023 Forest Festival Family Fun Night at Horning State Farm



Kids climb during the NFS Forest Festival Family Fun Night.