

The Nebraska Forest Service



Strategic Plan 2021-2025





INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Nebraska Forest Service, I would like to thank you for taking the time to review the efforts of our agency.

Each year, the Nebraska Forest Service undertakes dozens of projects and initiatives aimed at protecting, utilizing, and enhancing Nebraska's tree and forest resources. We take great pride in engaging Nebraskans of all ages and backgrounds in the state's rich tree-planting heritage.

Expanding our financial assistance services, building reciprocal partnerships, protecting life and property, and delivering locally relevant programs in all corners of the state are no small feats. Yet, the Nebraska Forest Service continues to grow its efforts by leveraging its resources to secure millions of additional dollars in local, state, and federal grants. These awards are a testament to the value of the work the Nebraska Forest Service undertakes and how we maximize it in service to the people of Nebraska.

This strategic report reflects on a pivotal five years for the Nebraska Forest Service. We hope it provides insight into our department's work and mission. We look forward to continuing to work with you and our many partners to further protect and utilize the state's natural resources for all Nebraskans.

Respectfully yours,

**JOHN ERIXSON
STATE FORESTER AND DIRECTOR
NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE**

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MISSION AND VISION

*"To enrich the lives of
all Nebraskans by
protecting, restoring,
and utilizing
Nebraska's tree and
forest resources."*

The Nebraska Forest Service (NFS), part of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, provides comprehensive forestry education, technical and financial assistance, and many other services to all Nebraskans.

The NFS is firmly committed to leading the state in sustaining and improving Nebraska's tree and forest resources. This will be accomplished by caring for and utilizing these resources wisely and helping develop the people who will steward them now and in the future. The staff of the NFS operates under the guidance of the agency's mission, vision, and core values.



VISION

The NFS leads the state by inspiring and assisting others to create and sustain healthy, productive forests.

CORE VALUES

- Integrity in all interactions
- Responsible and sustainable stewardship
- Outstanding service

FOREST ACTION PLAN



Congress asked the states to assess the condition of trees and forests within their boundaries, regardless of ownership, and develop strategies to conserve working forest landscapes, protect forests from harm, and enhance public benefits from trees.

GOALS:



- Enhance the role of Nebraska's forests adaptation to the global change in climate
- Manage trees and forest landscapes to include rural and community forest settings
- Manage the function of forests in Nebraska for maximum and sustained benefits
- Improve, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat in Nebraska
- Restore fire-adapted landscapes and reduce risk of wildfire impacts on Nebraska's forests
- Manage for the health and productivity of Nebraska's trees and forests
- Manage forests, in conjunction with the forest products industry and agriculture
- Maintain the natural environments of Nebraska
- Manage Nebraska's forest and trees to enhance the water resources of Nebraska
- Improve air quality and energy conservation through tree planting
- Connect people to the state's trees and forest resources
- Engage Nebraskans in the stewardship of trees and forests

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan charts the agency's course over the next five years to ensure the agency's programs remain relevant and impactful in a changing world



1. Connect Nebraskans to trees, landscapes, and forests

- Meaningful experiences emphasizing the value of trees, landscapes, and forests
- Serve the tree, landscape, and forest interests of all Nebraskans
- Meaningful relationships with diverse stakeholders including underserved and underrepresented communities

2. Manage Nebraska's trees, landscapes, and forests for the greatest environmental, economic, and social benefit

- Provide information and resources for active forest stewardship and protection
- Build and nurture partnerships
- Promote resilience to natural disasters and long-term climate impacts

3. Provide a positive impact for our staff, the State, and the University

- A welcoming, professional climate
- Good stewardship of our resources
- Active engagement with IANR and UNL's vision and mission

NEBRASKA LEGISLATIVE MANDATES

Nebraska Statute § 81-825-82 requires cooperative relationships with federal, state, and local entities to maximize services and funding

Our agency's mission prioritizes education and services covering all aspects of planting, protection, care, and utilization of the state's tree and forest resources, and shall support fire protection for rural lands in cooperation with the state's rural fire protection districts.



The NFS shall provide education and services through four core programs:

- **Rural Forestry Assistance**
- **Urban and Community Forestry**
- **Forest Health**
- **Rural Fire Protection and Control**

NFS aims to change attitudes about the environment by providing the proper knowledge and skills to inspire on-the-ground action.

DIVERSITY EQUITY INCLUSION BELONGING

MISSION: (Adapted from Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources)

The Nebraska Forest Service values the contributions of each person and strives to make each interaction matter. We are committed to engaging in practices that demonstrate the value of diversity and inclusive excellence. We consider and implement ways to respect and value each person's background, experience, ability, ideology, culture, and identity. The degree to which we can create a welcoming and inclusive environment is the degree to which we can maximize our impact, both today and into the future.

DEIB STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK (From IANR)

Maximize Impact

Accelerate Inclusion

Value Diversity

Foster Belonging

Create Opportunity

NFS PROGRAMS

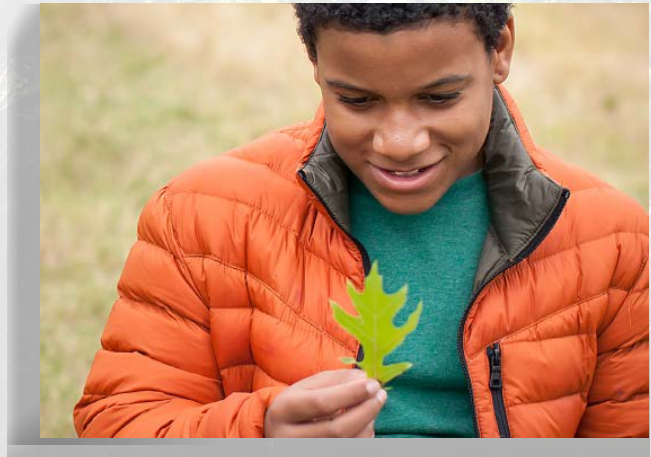


FOREST HEALTH

A healthy forest landscape has the capacity for renewal and recovery from a wide range of disturbances while continuing to provide public benefits and ecosystem services. The Forest Health program includes education, diagnosis, and monitoring of pests, diseases, herbicide damage, invasive and aggressive native plant species, air pollution, and weather extremes that threaten Nebraska's forests.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Conservation Education provides both formal and non-formal educators, families, and natural resource professionals with resources to educate Nebraskans on conservation concepts and issues. The NFS specifically focuses on developing critical thinking and decision-making skills to help Nebraskans understand complex environmental issues and make informed decisions.



COMMUNITY FORESTRY

The NFS provides direct, on-the-ground, technical, and educational assistance to communities and green industry professionals through its Community Forestry Program. Programming investments provide robust green infrastructure services for municipalities, green industry professionals, and community groups.

WILDLAND FIRE

The NFS works closely with volunteer fire departments to provide planning, training, grant assistance, and equipment that increases districts' capacity to protect life and property and implement effective education programs. The NFS also works closely with the State Fire Marshal's Agency and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency to provide training and support for volunteer fire departments, increasing their qualifications and capacity to respond to incidents.



PROPERTIES

The NFS, as part of the University of Nebraska, currently manages or collaboratively operates five forested sites in the state. Most recently, the NFS was asked to assume management of Prairie Pines—home to the state’s first conservation easement. Partners from a variety of organizations are increasingly turning to the NFS for its expertise in multiple-use forest management.



FOREST PRODUCTS

Our agency provides technical and financial assistance to the state’s forest products industry to promote and develop wood products and other utilization opportunities for the state’s tree and forest resources. Innovative and strong forest products markets provide economic incentives for landowners and foresters to ensure the health, longevity, and sustainability of Nebraska’s forests.

Find more online at plantnebraska.org.

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE ARBORETUM

The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum is an NFS-affiliated non-profit that believes in grassroots efforts to achieve their mission.

Promoting Biodiversity.
Native Plants
Forestry.
And Clean Water

RURAL FORESTRY

NFS provides direct technical support to landowners and other stakeholders throughout Nebraska. This is accomplished primarily through the implementation of the USFS' Forest Stewardship Program (FSP). This program plays a central role in managing and preserving Nebraska's forestlands and other lands with trees. Forest landowners receive technical assistance from staff in forest and woodlot management, windbreak establishment and management, tree planting, reforestation, and other forestry-related activities.



After all of these years, our mission continues:

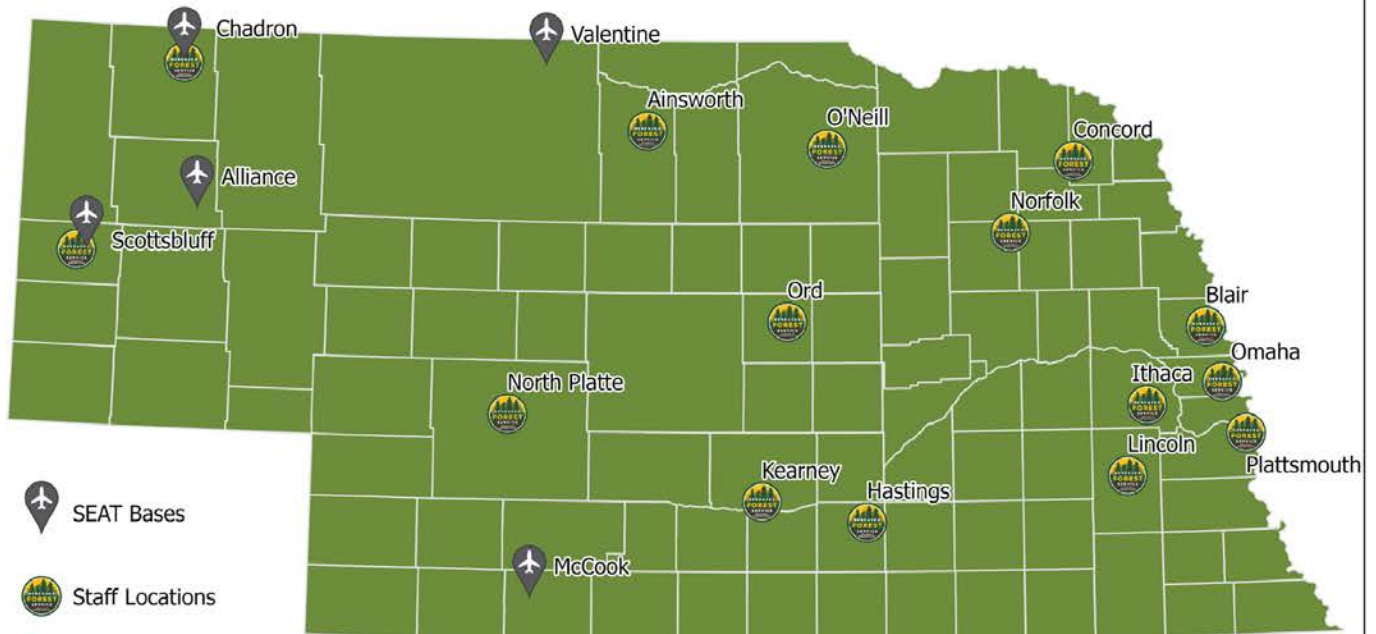
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”



WE'RE BRANCHING OUT ACROSS NEBRASKA!



In 2016, nearly 70 percent of staff were located at our Lincoln office. Since that time, we've expanded our offices. Now 60 percent of our staff are in locations across Nebraska.

SEAT BASES

Alliance - Municipal Airport

Chadron - Municipal Airport

McCook - Ben Nelson Regional Airport

Scottsbluff - Western Nebraska Regional Airport

Valentine - Miller Field

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