

UNIVERSITY of NEBRASKA-LINCOLN



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

A MESSAGE FROM THE NEBRASKA STATE FORESTER



Our Mission

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

Nebraska's trees play a crucial role in our lives, fulfilling essential functions in agriculture, within our communities, and as solutions to present-day economic, social, and environmental challenges. However, our state's trees are now at a pivotal juncture. Over the past decade, we've confronted a range of threats, including the arrival of the emerald ash borer (EAB), devastating wildfires and floods, and repeated bouts of severe weather, all of which have inflicted significant harm on our tree population.

Despite the mounting challenges, the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) and its partners are demonstrating that trees remain indispensable in addressing the challenges that lie ahead. A prime example of this can be seen in the collaborative endeavors involving landowners and partnering agencies. Whether it's providing assistance to local volunteer fire departments when resources are limited, or working with communities to improve green infrastructure; NFS continues to be a lifeline for Nebraskans through the use of competitive grants and our staff's commitment and resolve. All of this is accomplished with fiscal responsibility at the forefront of our objectives.

These achievements underscore the array of opportunities that surround us. However, just as our trees must adapt to the current conditions, we too must be responsive to the evolving needs of the residents we proudly serve.

Within the pages of this publication, you will encounter a multitude of stories that illuminate how the NFS is reenvisioning the role of trees within our state. Trees are no longer mere aesthetic additions; we now regard them as the foundational components of 21st-century infrastructure, capable of contributing value across a wide spectrum of applications.

Reflecting on the year 2023, I can assert with confidence that our dedicated staff is adept at transforming challenges into opportunities, embracing strategies that generate employment and revenue, and forging diverse partnerships that advance our agency's mission and entrepreneurial spirit.



John A. Erixson, Nebraska State Forester

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PROTECT

. . . trees and forests, the benefits they provide, and lives and property statewide.

NFS is assisting Nebraska communities and landowners to plant thousands of trees, cleaning the air and water, saving energy, and making our cities and towns and forests better places to live, work and play. NFS also provides quality fire and incident management training.



“NFS goes above and beyond. They’ll take the initiative of calling us if a new piece of equipment comes in to see what we need . . . It’s not brand-new stuff, and we all know that. But it’s equipment that we can trust is safe in helping us fight fires.”

BRIAN SISSON, ARAPAHOE FIRE CHIEF



OFF AND RUNNING

A sleepy winter gave way to spring's rude awakening. The winds picked up, relative humidity dropped, and temperatures ran unseasonably high. The fire season was once again about to get an early start.

So were Nebraska Forest Service personnel.

It all began east of the state line. The Waconda Fire started in Iowa on April 8th and by evening jumped across the Missouri River into Nebraska. It was situated immediately south of Lake Waconda in Cass County. Before long, the fire had spread to almost 700 acres.

Over 30 volunteer fire departments actively engaged in extinguishing the blaze. Cass County Emergency Management and Incident Command requested that the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS), as part of the Nebraska Incident Management Assistance Team, integrate with local responders to help with the response. While crews responded, NFS staff provided relief as incident command for portions of the fire.

"NFS was a huge help. When we called for them, we were in well over our heads," says Chad Korte, Cass County Emergency Management Director. "They were instrumental in assisting with management in attacking the fire and what kind of resources we needed."

Critical fire weather persisted across Nebraska for the next several days. By the following Tuesday, responders were battling wildfires in at least six counties: Cherry, Garfield, Jefferson, Lincoln, Rock, and Wheeler. Two days later, Governor Jim Pillen declared a state of emergency across Nebraska to help coordinate and activate the necessary resources to effectively combat the wildfires.



“Having NFS staff there gave us direction.”

“We experienced several large fires across the state that pushed the capacity of our fire suppression resources and accentuated the lack of available national resources,” recalls NFS Fire Operations Team Leader Matt Holte.

In Jefferson County, the Rock Creek Fire burned 2,600 acres, making it the largest fire the region had witnessed in years. Several NFS staff quickly responded to the incident, offering professional support in fire behavior and public relations to local incident managers.

“It was the best thing that could have happened,” says John McKee, emergency manager for Saline and Jefferson Counties. “Having NFS staff there gave us direction. Our firefighters and managers were not used to wildland firefighting. NFS brought their experience and professionalism dealing with fires in the West to us here in the East.”

NFS staff helped protect buildings at Rock Creek Station State Historical Park, and provided assistance to the McCann Fire in Cherry County, which burned more than 7,000 acres. NFS Fire Shop Personnel offered logistics support, procuring the incident’s supply chain needs, and managing vehicles

Collaboration among state agencies was key for handling one of the busiest Aprils on Nebraska record. Along with partners including the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and Nebraska State Fire Marshal’s Office, NFS continues to be at the forefront of wildfire response efforts.

“We’re deeply proud and appreciative of our friends and professional partners at the Nebraska Forest Service,” stresses Nebraska State Fire Marshal Scott Cordes. “Our ongoing collaborative efforts in support of the significant wildland fires this past April is just another example of that partnership.”



OLD RELIABLE

Last year, two major wildfires rocked South Central Nebraska and pushed local firefighting resources to the brink. The Road 739 and Road 702 fires occurred within several weeks of each other and overlapped throughout the month. Together, they burned nearly 80,000 acres.

Squarely in the middle of the Road 739 fire was the Arapahoe Volunteer Fire Department. Standing as one of the first lines of defense, they did so at a disadvantage. Several of their more important engines had just been knocked out of commission.

“We had several engines go down on the scene that were crucial to firefighting efforts,” remembers Arapahoe Volunteer Fire Chief Brian Sisson. “However, it wasn’t long before Lew (Sieber) from the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) Fire Shop arrived with a trailer, truck, and tools to get those trucks back out to assist. He also had foam delivered to assist with grain bag fires.”

It’s an anecdote that’s become more common over the years: NFS Fire Equipment Manager Lew Sieber and Fire Shop staff to the rescue.

This year is no different. In April, Lew and other mechanics from the NFS Fire Shop responded to the McCann Fire in Cherry County which burned over 7,000 acres. While there, they provided on-site support to departments responding to fires.



Lew Sieber is Fire Equipment Manager at the NFS Fire Shop. The shop reconditions and maintains vehicles and equipment for Nebraska volunteer fire departments.



“Having the capacity to repair vehicles on site is a great benefit to the fire suppression resources of Nebraska,” says Nebraska Forest Service Fire Operations Team Leader Matt Holte. “Lew does a great job of making himself available to the departments at the drop of a hat.”

Through a cooperative program with the U.S. Forest Service, the NFS acquires and reconditions vehicles declared excess by the federal government. The NFS then loans these vehicles, which remain Federal property, to rural fire districts to use as long as they want them. These programs are known as the Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) and Fire Fighter Property (FFP) programs. Almost 300 pieces of FEPP equipment are in use by 180 rural fire districts and 750 pieces of FFP equipment are loaned out across Nebraska.

“Many of the fire departments in Nebraska are small and underfunded. FEPP is a great way to minimize the fiscal hardship of purchasing equipment for these departments,” says Holte. “This is not only a way to assist the departments, but also the overall response across the state of Nebraska.”

The NFS Fire Shop, located at the University of Nebraska ARDC Field Lab south of Mead, handles the job of reconditioning and maintaining these vehicles. As part of the Fire Shop’s goal of remaining service-oriented, two mobile repair units are available to respond to the maintenance needs of cooperating fire districts. These units are available to provide routine repairs, as well as on-site support for cooperating districts in the event of catastrophic fires.

Whether on the scene of a fire or back at the shop, Sisson says he appreciates everything Lew and the Fire Shop staff does for Arapahoe and the many other VFDs around Nebraska.

“He goes above and beyond. He’ll take the initiative of calling us if a new piece of equipment comes in to see what we need. That whole Fire Shop is incredibly knowledgeable. It’s not brand-new stuff, and we all know that. But it’s equipment we can trust is safe in helping us fight fires.”



THE BIGGEST CAUSE OF NEBRASKA FIRES?

... Human Behavior

"Remember... Only YOU Can Prevent Wildfires"

When we hear those words, many of us will immediately think of Smokey Bear. With his shovel and wide-brimmed hat, the stern yet affable bear has spent the past 75 years reminding us to practice fire safety. For most, his public service announcement (PSA) brings about a certain nostalgia, but is it still effective?

"We're beginning to see younger generations not recognize him at outreach events or grasp his message," says NFS Communications Specialist Benjamin Bohall. "We need to work to reconnect youth with this message."

Focus groups over the last four years say they recognize Smokey's face and his name, and they can even hear his voice. But they don't really listen to him, and they don't know what they can do to prevent a wildfire.

"The numbers tell us he may no longer be resonating with older Nebraskans either," adds Bohall.

“Nebraska fires are increasing in size and the fire season is extending. And humans have a big part to play in it.”

Over 90 percent of wildfires in Nebraska are human-caused. That’s 10 percent higher than the national average. And with last year being one of the most devastating fire seasons to date, that’s cause for concern. **Wildfires consumed over 269,000 acres in 2022,** resulting in the loss of homes and lives.

“The first step is acknowledging this is a growing problem,” says State Forester John Erixson. “Nebraska fires are increasing in size and the fire season is extending. And humans have a big part to play in it.”

The biggest culprits in Nebraska include unmonitored burns, dragging tow chains, underinflated tires, and hot machinery on grass. During the spring planting and fall harvesting seasons, farmers frequently employ heavy machinery. It's possible for that equipment to heat up and ignite, or become clogged and catch fire.

The challenge for NFS staff is to find effective fire prevention marketing campaign tools to reach Nebraskans of all ages. Over the next five years, the NFS Communications department plans to roll out a multi-point marketing campaign with messaging designed to bring down human-caused wildfires by 10 percent.

This year’s efforts included increased media interviews with a focus on human-caused wildfires; developing fun new fire prevention swag for outreach events; running radio PSAs across western and central Nebraska; and promoting an all-out social media blitz.

Future efforts could include developing new classroom curricula, public messaging studies, partnering with state and federal agencies and the university on multimedia video projects.

“Everything is on the table right now,” says Bohall. “The more we can get this on Nebraskans’ radars, the better the chance we have to make a tangible difference.”



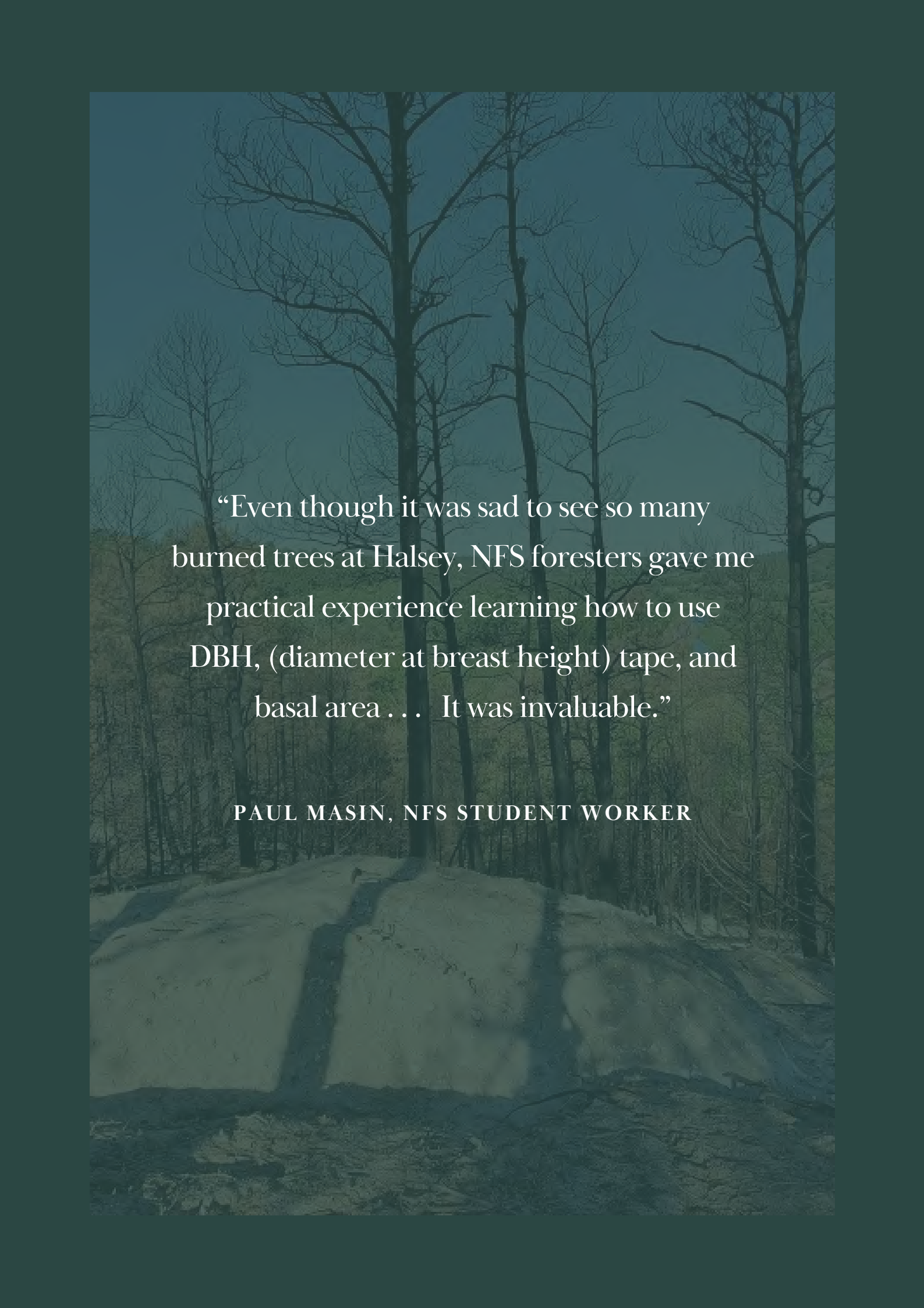


RESTORE

... trees and forests to mitigate and adapt to evolving threats and global changes in climate



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. NFS is working to restore ailing forests by targeting management to areas where actions are most likely to prevent or mitigate negative impacts.



“Even though it was sad to see so many burned trees at Halsey, NFS foresters gave me practical experience learning how to use DBH, (diameter at breast height) tape, and basal area . . . It was invaluable.”

PAUL MASIN, NFS STUDENT WORKER

SILVER LININGS PLAYBOOK

Look at the burnt remnants of the 5,000 acres in Nebraska National Forest impacted by the Bovee Fire, and you'll find a certain eeriness. The carcasses of once-towering trees crowd the barren landscape, and the underbrush has all but vanished, with only a mixture of sand and dirt remaining.

"It's almost haunting," remarks NFS student worker and UNL Regional and Community Forestry major Paul Masin as he surveys the land from a UTV.

The NFS has partnered with the US Forest Service (USFS) to work on salvage operations of timber affected by the Bovee Fire. That includes "cruising the timber." Cruising is the process of measuring forest stands to determine stand characteristics, such as average tree sizes, volume, and quality. The primary purpose of cruising is to obtain a volume estimation to appraise and prepare timber sales.

"We would go out with all of our equipment to measure the trees and determine if it was in the correct range to be cut by the logging companies, and marketable for sales," says Masin.



UNL students worked alongside NFS staff "cruising the timber" in the aftermath of the Bovee Fire at Halsey

The opportunity to study the real-life process doesn't come around very often for University of Nebraska-Lincoln students—particularly those studying forestry or related natural resource fields. Bovee changed that. For Masin, who is just beginning his collegiate career in forestry, being able to dive in before first stepping foot in the classroom has only solidified his decision to pursue a career in forestry.

"This piqued my interest, to say the least. Even though it was sad to see so many burned trees, this gave me practical experience learning how to use DBH (diameter, breast, height) tape and basal area... It was invaluable."

BACK ON THE MAP



WHETHER IT'S NAVIGATING TO A NEW RESTAURANT IN TOWN OR TAKING A LONG-DISTANCE TRIP, MAPS HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE ACCESSIBLE OR ACCURATE. THE SAME CAN BE SAID FOR HOW WE USE THEM TO UNDERSTAND TREES.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have revolutionized the way we approach forestry management and conservation, especially in rural and community forestry settings. Two exemplary GIS projects in NFS are the distribution mapping of eastern redcedar trees and the analysis of vegetation dynamics in Nebraska.

The eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is a native tree species found across various regions of the United States, including Nebraska. However, its rapid growth has led to concerns about its impact on native ecosystems. GIS plays a crucial role in identifying and mapping the distribution of these trees, aiding resource managers and local communities in developing effective strategies for management.

Utilizing GIS software, satellite imagery, and geospatial data, a distribution map of eastern redcedar trees can be created. Remote sensing techniques enable the identification of tree cover, density, and location within specific areas.

By overlaying this data with other environmental factors like soil type, climate, and land use, stakeholders can gain insights into the factors influencing the tree spread and devise targeted management plans to mitigate its impact.

In the context of rural forestry and community involvement, analyzing the dynamics of vegetation and forest canopies in Nebraska proves invaluable. The Nebraska Forest Service is spearheading a project tracking changes in land cover, identifying shifts in forest composition, and assessing canopy health over time. Such analyses contribute to informed decision-making for conservation efforts and sustainable land use planning.

GIS tools allow for the integration of various data sources, including satellite imagery, data, and ground surveys. These sources provide comprehensive information about vegetation health, species diversity, and canopy density. By employing spatial analytics, researchers identify areas of concern, such as forest fragmentation, invasive species encroachment, or potential habitat loss.

STILL BUGGIN' Nebraska



The list of Nebraska counties with known infestations of emerald ash borer (EAB) continues to grow...

Lincoln County was added in July when an infested ash tree was found in North Platte's Memorial Park. This discovery marked the western-most detection of EAB in the state to date.

This wasn't unexpected. North Platte has been preparing for the arrival of the ash tree killer for years. In 2012 with the help of NFS, an inventory of all public trees was conducted, which provided data on ash numbers, condition, and location. In 2015 an "Invasive Community Forest Pest Plan" was drafted, providing direction leading up to, and following, the city's first detected EAB infestation. Public awareness and education have also been emphasized.

"The North Platte Tree Board organized a workshop on ash tree identification to educate citizens," says Parks and Recreation Director Lyle Minshull, "and we have shared information about EAB with a number of community organizations."

These types of proactive plans and activities are crucial to addressing EAB, which is one of the most destructive forest pests ever to occur in North America. The borer has decimated the ash tree population in many areas of the eastern U. S. and Canada, including native woodland trees and valuable landscape ornamentals, and has cost municipalities billions of dollars over the past few decades.



“We see the arrival of EAB as an opportunity to replace trees and diversify the species in North Platte.”

“EAB has the ability to build up its population undetected in trees for many years,” says NFS Forest Health Specialist Jennifer Morris. “Left unchecked, tree mortality levels increase exponentially, overwhelming communities with standing dead trees.”

Many eastern Nebraska communities with EAB are currently reporting significant numbers of ash in severe decline, on both public and private property. These trees are brittle and may drop limbs under relatively calm conditions. Such dangerous trees are often more expensive to take down.

“Communities with a large ash component should consider removing at least some trees before EAB arrives,” Morris says. “Preemptive removal will allow costs to be spread more evenly over time and ease staff workloads.”




Where ash loss is significant, planting new trees can help re-establish the canopy. Diversity is key to improving urban forest resiliency. Minshull notes that Memorial Park has more than two dozen species of trees, including some uncommon trees like English oak and corktree. “Trees were planted to honor soldiers who fought in the first and second world wars, and memorial trees are still planted today in honor of loved ones.” Residents are provided a list of recommended trees for planting. Ash however, is no longer on the list.

All of this planning and proactive work will help North Platte ride the EAB storm.

“We see the arrival of EAB as an opportunity to replace trees and diversify the species in North Platte,” says Minshull. “Planting new trees now before the ash die will allow those trees to become well-established and get some fairly good size to them. Thus, we’ll maintain the benefits of a good tree canopy.”



EAB ON THE MOVE

-  *First confirmed in Omaha in June 2016*
-  *Discovered in Kearney in June 2020*
-  *Confirmed in North Platte in July 2023*



Over 200 elementary school students attended the inaugural Arbor Day Festival at Halsey Forest. It was the first public outreach event since the Bovee Fire in 2022.

A RETURN TO FORM

Following the Bovee Fire in 2022, it was safe to wonder if things would ever return to normal at Halsey Forest. This year's Arbor Day activities provided some much-needed optimism for the future.

On Thursday, April 27th, the U.S. Forest Service, Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Extension, and several partners symbolically 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.



“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!”



“Feedback from the teachers was overwhelmingly positive,” says Amber Stevens, Extension Educator and Project Learning Tree/Project WET facilitator. “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”

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

“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,” says NFS Conservation Education Coordinator, Jack Hilgert.

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 adds. Already, the group has begun planning to expand to a two-day festival for 2024.






UTILIZE

... the opportunities that forested areas present for economic development while protecting sustainability



The NFS is firmly committed to leading the state in sustaining and improving Nebraska's tree and forest resources. We accomplish this by caring for and utilizing these resources wisely and helping develop the people who will steward them now and in the future.

A young pine tree is being planted in a field. The tree is wrapped in burlap and sits in a hole in the ground. An American flag on a pole stands to the right of the tree. Two blue-handled shovels are leaning against the tree. The background shows a line of trees and a grassy area.

“Each fallen hero’s family member has a story. A tree named for each Nebraska fallen hero will provide lasting comfort and support to each family. The Nebraska Forest Service has been crucial in that effort.”

**JIM MEIER, DIRECTOR, HONOR AND
REMEMBER NEBRASKA CHAPTER**

MEMORIES TAKE ROOT

“All gave some. Some gave all.”

That statement is at the heart of Jim Meier’s dream to establish the Nebraska Memorial Forest. Working in conjunction with the Nebraska Forest Service, the first-of-its-kind forest will feature 7,100 trees, representing the 7,100 Nebraskan military service members and first responders who have lost their lives during combat or personal adversity. Collectively, Jim and his organization, Honor and Remember – Nebraska Chapter, celebrate these individuals with the title of Nebraska Fallen Heroes.

“Each fallen hero’s family member has a story,” says Meiers “A tree named for each Nebraska fallen hero will provide lasting comfort and support to each family.”

The Nebraska Memorial Forest takes an expansive approach to its location and seeks to plant memorial groves of trees across the state in eight different multi-county regions. Ultimately, the goal is to have a tree representing a Fallen Hero in or near the county in which they came from. Each memorial tree will be associated with an individual fallen hero and will be marked with a steel marker identifying the hero’s name and branch of service they were in.

The Nebraska Forest Service has planted and will maintain 50 memorial trees in the southwest corner of Horning State Farm. These trees are planted in several designed groves that represent a diversity of species including trees from the genera *Quercus*, *Carya*, *Nyssa*, *Acer*, *Malus*, *Cercis*, *Gynocladus*, *Gleditsia* and *Liquidambar*. In this way, the planting is helping enhance the Horning State Farm landscape by adding tree diversity, which in turn will provide more opportunities for tree education and planting demonstrations to farm visitors.

“We are proud to be a small part of honoring and remembering those that gave the ultimate gift selflessly sacrificing their lives for others.”

Additionally, NFS has reached across the fence to discuss the project with the Pleasant Ridge Cemetery Board and the idea of providing public access to the memorial planting using one of their two driveways. As a result, the memorial tree planting did occur at the cemetery with the planting of seven large oak trees, each one representing the six different branches of the US military, plus first responders.



“Cemeteries are often portrayed by Hollywood as spooky, ghostly places where dead spirits reside,” says Bill Worlein, president of the cemetery board. “In contrast, we at Pleasant Ridge Cemetery believe it is a place of joy, not that our loved ones died but that they lived. It is a place to celebrate the life of those that are gone and to praise God that they were here. We are proud to be a small part of honoring and remembering those that gave the ultimate gift selflessly sacrificing their lives for others.”

It is with this spirit of camaraderie and civic engagement that we anticipate the Nebraska Memorial Forest planting will be maintained and enjoyed by the community of volunteers, advocates, and Fallen Hero families that Jim has brought together to see this project from concept to planting.



Nature's Classroom

Over the past year, the Nebraska Forest Service has continued to expand and grow its Conservation Education (CE) reach throughout the state. Conservation Education at the Nebraska Forest Service connects Nebraskans, especially youth, with our state's trees and forest resources to inspire the next generation of tree planters and conservation stewards.

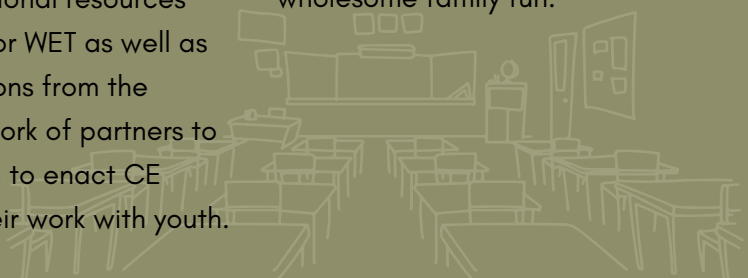


Project Learning Tree (PLT) and Project WET programs provide educators of all types; preK-12 teachers, early childhood educators, nature center/museum/zoo/extension staff, etc. with nonbiased, high-quality environmental learning curricula. In tandem with a statewide network of over 30 partner organizations, NFS provides the necessary training and tools to support educators with integrating CE activities into their day-to-day work with Nebraska's children primarily through a wide range of PLT/WET professional development opportunities.

In 2023, PLT/WET workshops have continued to increase with 100 workshops occurring training 1207 educators in their respective curriculum. At each opportunity educators are provided with high-quality instructional resources from PLT and/or WET as well as local connections from the Nebraska network of partners to empower them to enact CE activities in their work with youth.

NFS has 15 trained facilitators this year for its network of workshop providers in their geographic and professional communities. A total of over 35 certified facilitators are now trained to provide CE workshops in partnership with NFS across the state. Additionally, Creighton University and University of Nebraska-Omaha have joined its preservice program, which trains education majors before they enter the profession.

Field Trips to the Forest at Prairie Pines, an NFS property, continue to see increased participation with over 600 students and adults participating in field trips this year. A successful Forest Festival connected nearly 1,400 Nebraska families to Horning State Farm, another NFS property, while increasing their understanding of the environment and having wholesome family fun.



MAKING THE GRADE



It's a cool, crisp autumn morning at Prairie Pines just outside of Lincoln. Olivia Wagner is preparing to cut down a dying hackberry tree. As the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Regional and Community Forestry major places the blade of her chainsaw against the tree's trunk, she's being carefully supervised by Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) Properties Supervisor Aaron Clare. Clare reminds her of the "watch out" situations to keep in mind before taking down a medium-sized tree.

It's a day in the life of an NFS student worker.

For the past several years, NFS has regularly employed students like Wagner as student workers and paid interns.

"It's mutually beneficial," says NFS Deputy Director Steven Jara. "We receive the benefit of their efforts, and more importantly, they gain the applied knowledge of having worked in a profession in line with their interests, post-graduation."

Thanks to additional federal funding, NFS has seen its internship and student worker program grow substantially in 2023, allowing students additional opportunities in more natural resources fields including Wildland Fire, Community Forestry, Public Relations, and more. More students are applying through the new NFS internship online application portal, which allows applicants to choose their specific areas of interest.

One of those students is Josie Ivy, a UNL Fisheries and Wildlife student who just began working in the NFS Conservation Education program.

"I was interested in pursuing a career in environmental education. I heard about the internship, and it sounded like a lot of fun and great way to learn more," says Ivy. "It's been really cool to see the projects I've been working on be put into use."

One such project Ivy helped design was The Tree Jamorboree, geared toward grades 2-4 featuring hands-on stations with learning activities focusing on trees: their importance for people, ecosystems, and conservation. All were aligned to Nebraska State Standards in Science, English-language Arts, Social Studies, and Math as well as the Next Generation Science Standards.

"Projects like Josie's are giving students applied experience in natural resources," says Jara. "Potential employers see the tangibles of what these students can do, and we believe it puts them ahead in finding the career they're looking for."



FOREST FESTIVAL FAMILY FUN NIGHT

How do you make something great even better?

In 2022, Forest Festival Family Fun Night experienced its most successful year to date, with roughly 950 people attending. It marked a significant increase over the inaugural Forest Fest in 2018 which held an attendance of 200 people.

For 2023, we upped the ante, bringing in over 50 natural resources partners to provide educational and fun outdoor activities.

Activities included trail hiking, tree-climbing, archery, wildlife encounters, hayrack rides, kids' games, nature scavenger hunts, and more. Staff also served up 1,200 hot dog meals for hungry patrons. Best of all, it was entirely free.

"I don't think I've ever been to an event like this where every single staff member was incredibly nice and happy to be there," says Omaha resident and attendee Arielle Miller. "The lines were only long because they gave everyone the same experience without feeling rushed. We all had a great time!"

All told, roughly 1400 people from towns and cities including Weeping Water, Nebraska City, Plattsmouth, Omaha, and Lincoln attended the event.

For NFS Conservation Education Coordinator, Jack Hilgert, the real success came in encouraging kids to get outside and form a long-lasting appreciation for nature.

"Forest Festival Family Fun Night continues to be a way for families to spend some quality time together while also enjoying the outdoors. The beauty of nature is always there—sometimes you just need to refocus the events to incorporate nature into the activities themselves."



CONGRATULATIONS

*... for their contributions to
Nebraska's trees and forests*

The following stories commemorate NFS employees and partners for their service in protecting one of the state's most valuable natural resources: trees.



CAREER SNAPSHOTS



Retirement is the next adventure for these NFS staff members.

Rachel Allison – 30 Years

Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) Western Area Forester Rachel Allison has always recognized the importance of the average joe and jane. You can see it in her countless editorials in newspapers and sincerity in dealing with people.

Rachel began her career with the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) as a District Forester Assistant in Bassett in 1994. Under the guidance of supervisors John Wilson and Dennis Adams, she learned to hone the art of working with landowners. For nearly 30 years, it's been at the forefront of her career. That was apparent when she established the successful "Coffee with a Forester" program.

"I proposed getting big groups of homeowners and landowners together to discuss important forestry items. I'd invite industry guests, we'd do PowerPoints, and just answer questions that were on their minds. It ended up being a great way to stay in touch with locals and get to know them better," says Rachel.

Rachel also dedicated time moving to various positions within NFS and expanding her expertise. She went from rural forestry to community forestry, then to forest health, and finally back to rural forestry. Full circle.

"It's important to be open to new ideas. I came in with a lot of knowledge, just like many of our young foresters, but I also had to learn how to fail on my own. There's a lot you can learn from NFS."



Doak Nickerson – 45 Years

If you know Doak Nickerson, you know his talent for telling a long yarn. It's in keeping with his long and successful career with the Nebraska Forest Service.

It's almost hard to imagine, but District Forester Doak Nickerson first began his career at NFS in 1979 as the Lower Loup NRD at the Instructor Forester rank. From there he steadily worked his way through the University of Nebraska-Lincoln promotional ranks to become the Northwest District Forester in 2005.

"I got to learn from well-grounded, incredible people at NFS. World War Two vets like Dick Gavett and Vietnam Veterans like Dave Mooter. They brought kindness and civility to our assignments," says Nickerson.

He set out to focus on partnerships with the natural resource districts to promote community forestry and cattle windbreaks. Following the fires of 2006 and 2012, Doak coordinated the Pine Reforestation Project in collaboration with the Upper Niobrara-White Natural Resources District, and supervised hand plant crews that planted ¼ million seedlings over a 5-year period with a focus on reforestation of wildfire footprints in the Pine Ridge.

"I boil it down to this: we're the voice for trees, and we're here to help Nebraskans make good decisions. If you see your clientele having fun while they're learning about trees, then you're doing it right."



Fred McCartney – 12 Years

Ever since he was a boy, NFS Forest Fuels Management Specialist Fred McCartney knew he wanted to work in the woods. He spent most of his adult life making it happen.

In 2012, after decades working in timber products, McCartney made the jump from the private industry to NFS. His primary focus would be fuels reductions along the 385 corridor— an area that was host to some of the largest wildfires in Nebraska's history. In 2006 and 2012, over 211,000 acres were scorched across the landscape. The famed 385 was no longer just a highway, it was a strategic corridor that helped firefighters beat back the flames.

"It wasn't a one-time process," says McCartney. "385 is such a critical corridor to the safety of firefighters and homeowners. It came down to grant funding and the successful relationships we've formed with landowners."

Fred has dedicated much of his work to the Pine Ridge area of Nebraska, informing private landowners about the benefits of forest management, as well as quelling the bad advice and misinformation.

"You have to keep fighting the good fight... Stand by your morals and understand it's a continual education process showing people how to properly manage natural resources."



Rich Woollen – 30 Years

Like Fred, Rich Woollen found himself squarely in the middle of a company shakeup in the Montana timber industry. He knew it was time for a change when he saw a forester position become available with the Nebraska Forest Service in Ord. That was October 1993, and 30 years later he's become a staple of central Nebraska forestry and land management.

"I'm proud to have had the opportunity to be a part of tree planting efforts in the state," says Woollen. "I've found it rewarding to work with the local natural resource districts, the Bessey Nursery, and other partners."

It was those partner collaborations that Woollen says he learned much of what he's brought to the trade.

"It's so important to take advantage of the opportunities you have to learn... It's been a really rewarding career overall and I'm grateful for the Nebraska Forest Service."



Sandy Benson – 11 Years

Sandy Benson's start with NFS was almost seamless.

Prior to joining the agency in 2012, Benson worked with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and various land trusts. Both often entailed cooperating alongside NFS foresters. When a position became available, she jumped at the opportunity to work for the agency.

In her decade-long tenure, Benson focused on fuels reduction in the Niobrara Valley and establishing Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) across the state.

"I think we made a real difference in helping protect those communities," says Benson. "You can't get the grant money for fuels reduction without establishing those CWPPs."

Benson says one of the most important lessons she's learned in her time with NFS is to be patient and listen, especially when dealing with other agencies and the public.

"There's a lot to be cultivated there. I've valued my time with the agency and am grateful for everything I've experienced."





A ROUND OF APPLAUSE

A long-term friend of Nebraska's trees and forests is recognized with the 2023 Nebraska State Forester's Award. The State Foresters Award goes to deserving people and organizations that have demonstrated a commitment to positively affecting Nebraska's tree and forest resources.



The awards committee receives nominations from across Nebraska for consideration. Over the past 40 years, there have been 35 recipients of this award including NRDs, journalists, landowners, tree planters, and government officials.

"The person selected for this year's State Forester award is being recognized for his lifelong contributions to Nebraska's trees and forests," says John Erixson, State Forester. "This individual is a long-term friend of Nebraska's forests, he strongly supports natural resources, and his enthusiasm inspires many others to plant and care for many thousands of trees."

This year's awardee is Todd Filipi, the Resource Conservation Coordinator from the North Platte Natural Resources District. Guided by Todd's leadership, the partnership between our agencies helps implement grants across the NRD District. He is a strong advocate for programs like Trees for Nebraska's Towns, a grant program that focuses on tree planting in smaller communities. He supports these communities by delivering hundreds of trees and facilitates the proper planting with community volunteers and leaders.

"Todd is the familiar face that understands the ins and outs of grant programming and our communities", says NFS Community Forester, Chrissy Land. "Without Todd's engagement in the communities, we would not reach as many of them."

Land went on to say, "With any community forestry project in Todd's district, he is a reliable collaborator, Todd is always interested in piloting potential programs and works hard to sort out operational details."

Todd has planted over one million trees in his 11 years with the NRD. He has spent countless hours applying for and coordinating grants and projects such as the Gering High School Senior's, Reforestation Planting in the burn scar. He is dedicated to assisting landowners impacted by the recent fires and will be collaborating with more NFS staff to bring funding and planting projects to the Wild Cat Hills' rocky butte landscape.

"It's an honor and a privilege to win the award but much of the credit should go to the support staff around me, my predecessors for giving me the tools and for setting me up for success, and more importantly to the landowners for putting up with me and being a crucial part of everything we do," says Filipi.



THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD



AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN, DR. RON YODER RETIRED THIS FALL.

“I tell people I did really poor career planning.”

Some might beg to differ from Dr. Ron Yoder’s assessment. This year, after nearly 20 years of leadership at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Yoder retired from his role as senior associate vice chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR).

It’s quite an accomplishment, especially when you consider Dr. Yoder began his career not in Ag, but as an engineer.

During his undergraduate years as a student at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Dr. Yoder majored in Civil Engineering. The program required students to Co-op, spending two quarters in the classroom and two with actual industry experience. It was during that time Dr. Yoder worked for the Department of Environmental Resources in Pennsylvania doing stream surveys and float studies.

“Getting into the water: water resources and engineering geology became my main focus,” says Dr. Yoder. “I had thought I wanted to build bridges and roads, that kind of thing. But this was the answer.”

His budding interest drove Ron Yoder to obtain a master’s degree in agricultural engineering at Clemson, and subsequently a PhD from Colorado State University.

Dr. Yoder then worked at the University of Wyoming, the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Colorado and Washington state, and the University of Tennessee before joining the faculty of UNL in 2004 as the department head for the Department of Biological Systems Engineering. He was appointed associate vice chancellor for IANR in 2011. In 2016, he also filled in as acting Harlan Vice Chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska, after Dr. Ronnie Green was nominated chancellor of the UNL.

During his tenure in IANR leadership, Dr. Yoder has made it a priority to emphasize the importance of the Nebraska Forest Service and Nebraska Statewide Arboretum both within and outside the university’s walls.

“It’s hard to overstate Ron’s impact on the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) and Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA),” says State Forester John Erixson. “Under his leadership, both agencies have seen significant growth and impact around the state, as well as increased involvement in the curriculum for students seeking a career in natural resources and landscape design.”

Now Dr. Yoder will move on to his next new endeavor: retiring to a recently purchased acreage in Tennessee. He plans to fill his time managing the woodlands gracing his land. He will do so with the confidence of knowing two of Nebraska’s agencies are in good hands.

“As an important part of the university, we must value and make them the best they can be so they can serve the people of Nebraska in the best possible way. You can tell when you drive into one of the towns across Nebraska which ones value their trees and quite likely have an affiliate arboretum because they’re just better kept, more pleasant, and much better places to be. That shows the value the citizens of Nebraska place on them and the work those agencies do,” says Dr. Yoder.

2023 GRANT AWARDS AND FINANCIALS

Through grant funding and leveraging its role within the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, we are able to enrich the lives of Nebraskans by increasing the value, condition, and use of the state's trees and forests.

Wildland Urban Interface Grants

Scope: These funds will expand hazardous fuels reduction following the local Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The goal is to implement forest fuels reduction in at-risk WUI areas, prioritizing human safety, property protection, and landscape connectivity.



Pine Ridge Fuel Reduction \$300K



Southwest Fuels Reduction \$300K



Cedar, Dixon, Knox Fuels Reduction \$300K



Niobrara Fuels Reduction \$300K



Missouri River Bluffs Fuels Reduction \$300K



Sandhills Fuels Reduction \$218K



Loess Canyon Fuels Reduction \$300K

Landscape Scale Restoration Grants

Forest Resiliency in the Great Plains (\$300K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: This project engages partners in natural resource management, UNL, and NFS staff to plan and implement projects on UNL-owned/NFS-managed properties. The goal is to reach landowners and natural resource professionals by providing techniques and demonstrations on how to respond to Emerald Ash Borer in an Elm/Ash/Cottonwood forest setting.

Nebraska Forest Restoration (\$300K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: NFS will work with Natural Resources Conservation Districts to provide reforestation financial help to private & state forest landowners to plant 250,000 ponderosa pine seedlings within the burned footprints of the Wildcat Hills, Niobrara River, and Pine Ridge of Nebraska. This is part of a multi-year effort that has planted over 600,000 trees to date.

Tree Diversity and Resiliency Initiative (\$61K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: Nebraska sits at an ecological crossroads where at least 35 native species from across the US reach their natural range limit. These edge species have a proven climate tolerance and deserve to be more widely planted but are often overlooked for planting. The Tree Diversity and Resiliency Initiative will grow, plant, and promote the best-underutilized tree species to improve the diversity and resiliency of high-priority community forests and shelterbelts in Nebraska.

Invasive Species (\$180K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: The project aims to eradicate the highly destructive plant, Phragmites, which degrades water quality and uses large amounts of water, by targeting populations found along and within the channels of the North Platte River. The priority for eradication is based on the risk posed by this invasive species. Our target area is Garden, Morrill, and Scotts Bluff Counties.

Improving Community Forest Education and Engagement and Management (\$200K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: The "Advocate Training for Ensuring Healthy, Sustainable and Beneficial Community Forests" project proactively responds to our community forests' threats. With almost 1.9 million people across 530 towns benefitting from these forests, it's crucial that we manage them sustainably and plan for the future. By enhancing education, outreach, and teamwork among decision-makers and community organizations, we can work together to ensure our community forests' long-term health and resilience.

Green Industry Training: (\$14K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: Engage and inform local arborists, nursery professionals, utility companies, landscape architects, building contractors, and other green industry businesses or individuals directly involved with trees to improve the care and quality of trees.

Volunteer Fire Assistance Grants: (\$390K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: With funding through the US Forest Service, the Nebraska Forest Service provides 50/50 cost-share grants to volunteer fire departments across the state. The grant program funds go to local fire districts to purchase materials and equipment to increase the department's capacity. The grant focuses on expanding the departments' capabilities through equipment purchases, training, and prevention activities. To qualify, departments must be current on their wildland fire reporting. Departments may purchase radios, protective clothing, self-contained breathing apparatus, and/or other fire-fighting equipment.

Nebraska Community Forestry Resilience Program (\$1.875M)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: The Nebraska Forest Service will stand-up a community forestry resiliency program to address the backlog of local community forestry work in the state, position Nebraska's community forests to be more resilient to climate change, and build capacity across local and state levels. The proposed program has two components: 1) Building local capacity and creating a resilient canopy for the future in communities over 8,000. 2) Improving community forestry resiliency in rural towns under 8,000.

Community Wildfire Defense Grant (\$50K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: This grant provides funding to the Nebraska Forest Service to assist communities and partners in the development of grant proposals. NFS provides Technical assistance to determine eligibility, education and outreach to promote the program, help with preparing applications, and aid in determining the "at risk" qualification needed for the program.

Sawlog Community Assistance Funds Adjacent (\$200K)
Awarded by USDA Forest Service

Scope: This project will implement treatments within priority areas to create fuel breaks along public and private roads to allow for safe ingress/egress within the area and significantly reduce and break up the continuity of fuel across the landscape, strengthening the ability to protect surrounding communities from wildfires.

GRANTS/COST-SHARE AWARDED TO NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE PARTNERS IN 2023

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Adams	Ayr	Hastings Rural Fire District	5,000	35,000
Adams	Hastings	Hastings Rural Fire District		209,500
Adams	Holstein	Holstein Rural Fire District		971,500
Adams	Junietta	Junietta Rural Fire District		235,000
Adams	Kenesaw	Kenesaw Volunteer Fire Department	2,691	
Adams	Roseland	Roseland Rural Fire District		628,500
Adams Total			7,691	2,079,500
Antelope	Brunswick	Brunswick Rural Fire District		9,500
Antelope	Clearwater	Clearwater Rural Fire District		200,000
Antelope	Elgin	Elgin Rural Fire District		512,000
Antelope	Neligh	Neligh Rural Fire District		400,500
Antelope	Oakdale	Oakdale Rural Fire District		342,500
Antelope	Royal	Royal Volunteer Fire District	2,754	18,500
Antelope Total			2,754	1,483,000
Arthur	Arthur	Arthur Rural Fire District		200,000
Arthur Total			0	200,000
Banner	Harrisburg	Banner Rural Fire District		414,000
Banner		Landowners**	1,663	
Banner Total			1,663	414,000
Blaine	Brewster	Brewster Rural Fire District		750,000
Blaine	Dunning	Dunning Rural Fire District		919,000
Blaine	Purdum	Purdum Rural Fire District		470,000
Blaine Total			0	2,139,000
Boone	Albion	Albion Rural Fire District		200,000
Boone	Cedar Rapids	Cedar Rapids Rural Fire District	4,250	881,440
Boone	Petersburg	Petersburg Rural Fire District		87,500
Boone	Primrose	Primrose Rural Fire District	5,000	1,570,000
Boone	Saint Edward	Saint Edward Rural Fire District	4,750	233,000
Boone Total			14,000	2,971,940
Box Butte	Alliance	Alliance Rural Fire District		392,000
Box Butte Total			0	392,000
Boyd	Lynch	Lynch Rural Fire District	4,500	430,000
Boyd	Spencer	Boyd County EM/Spencer Rural Fire District		72,000
Boyd	Spencer	Spencer Rural Fire District		430,000
Boyd Total			4,500	932,000
Brown	Ainsworth	Ainsworth Fire & Rescue Department	5,000	
Brown	Ainsworth	Brown County Rural Fire District		359,500
Brown	Long Pine	Brown County Rural Fire District		104,000
Brown		Landowners**	48,944	
Brown Total			53,944	463,500
Buffalo	Amherst	Amherst Rural Fire District		548,000
Buffalo	Elm Creek	Elm Creek Rural Fire District		1,300,000
Buffalo	Gibbon	Gibbon Rural Fire District	4,250	112,000
Buffalo	Pleasanton	Pleasanton Rural Fire District		376,500
Buffalo	Shelton	Shelton Rural Fire District	4,750	262,000
Buffalo		Landowners**	583	
Buffalo Total			9,583	2,598,500
Burt	Craig	Craig Rural Fire District		9,500
Burt Total			0	9,500
Butler	Abie	Abie Fire District		18,500
Butler	David City	David City Volunteer Fire District	4,250	9,500
Butler	Dwight	Dwight Rural Fire District		484,400
Butler		East Central NE Fire Prevention Coop	250	
Butler	Linwood	Linwood Volunteer Fire District		32,500
Butler	Rising City	Rising City Rural Fire District		86,500
Butler	Rising City/Surprise	Rising City/Surprise Rural Fire District		84,000
Butler	Skull Creek	Skull Creek Rural Fire Dist. #12	2,125	
Butler	Ulysses	Ulysses Rural Fire District		20,500
Butler Total			6,625	736,900
Cass	Alvo	Eagle/Alvo Rural Fire District		1,207,700
Cass	Avoca	Avoca Rural Fire District	4,750	1,687,900
Cass	Cedar Creek	Cedar Creek - Louisville Rural Fire District		310,000
Cass	Elmwood	Edmwood Volunteer Fire District		32,000
Cass	Greenwood	Greenwood Rural Fire District		135,000
Cass	Murdock	Murdock Rural Fire District	4,250	434,400
Cass	Murray	Murray Fire & Rescue	4,500	
Cass	Nehawka	Nehawka Rural Fire District		523,000
Cass	Plattsmouth	Plattsmouth Rural Fire District	5,000	295,000
Cass	Union	Union Rural Fire District		105,000
Cass	Weeping Water	Weeping Water Manley Rural Fire District		247,000
Cass Total			18,500	4,977,000
Cedar	Belden	Belden Rural Fire District		415,400
Cedar	Randolph	Randolph Rural Fire District		60,000
Cedar	Wynot	Wynot Fire District		330,000
Cedar		Landowners**	1,168	
Cedar Total			1,168	805,400
Chase	Imperial	Imperial Rural Fire District	4,750	526,000
Chase	Wauneta	Wauneta Rural Fire District		130,000

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Chase Total			4,750	656,000
Cherry	Cody	Barley Rural Fire District		244,000
Cherry	Cody	Cody Rural Fire District	2,250	656,800
Cherry	Kilgore	Kilgore Rural Fire District	4,142	142,500
Cherry	Merriman	Merriman Rural Fire District		1,243,000
Cherry	Nenzel	Mid-Cherry Rural Fire District		1,694,000
Cherry		Region 24 Emergency Management District		50,000
Cherry	Valentine	Valentine Rural Fire District		280,000
Cherry	Wood Lake	Wood Lake Rural Fire District		304,000
Cherry		Statewide Tree Planting	26,820	
Cherry		Landowners**	38,313	
Cherry Total			71,525	4,614,300
Cheyenne	Dalton	Dalton-Gurley Rural Fire District		380,000
Cheyenne	Potter	Potter Rural Fire District	4,907	1,472,000
Cheyenne		Region 21 Emergency Management District	9,657	325,000
Cheyenne	Sidney	Sidney Rural Fire District	4,750	262,000
Cheyenne Total			19,314	2,439,000
Clay	Clay Center	Clay Center Rural Fire District	1,625	478,000
Clay	Clay Center	Clay County Emergency Management District		312,000
Clay	Edgar	Edgar/Ong Rural Fire District	4,728	226,000
Clay	Fairfield	Fairfield Rural Fire District		200,000
Clay	Harvard	Harvard Rural Fire District	4,250	549,000
Clay	Sutton	Sutton Rural Fire District		785,600
Clay Total			10,603	2,550,600
Colfax	Clarkson	Clarkson Rural Fire District	4,500	20,500
Colfax	Howells	Howells Volunteer Fire Department	2,250	
Colfax	Leigh	Leigh Rural Fire District		130,000
Colfax Total			6,750	150,500
Cuming	Beemer	Beemer Rural Fire District		113,000
Cuming		Cuming County Emergency Management District		69,000
Cuming Total			0	182,000
Custer	Anselmo	Anselmo Rural Fire District		1,078,500
Custer	Ansley	Ansley Rural Fire District		181,000
Custer	Arnold	Arnold Rural Fire District		316,000
Custer	Broken Bow	Broken Bow Rural Fire District		63,000
Custer	Comstock	Comstock Rural Fire District		262,000
Custer	Mason City	Mason City Rural Fire District		657,900
Custer	Sargent	Sargent Rural Fire District		534,700
Custer Total			0	3,093,100
Dakota	Dakota	Dakota-Covington Rural Fire District		111,500
Dakota	Dakota	Dakota City Volunteer Fire & Rescue	2,700	
Dakota Total			2,700	111,500
Dawes	Chadron	Chadron Rural Fire District	4,750	199,000
Dawes	Crawford	Crawford Rural Fire District		352,000
Dawes		Statewide Tree Planting	73,000	
Dawes		Landowners**	156,800	
Dawes Total			234,550	561,000
Dawson	Eddyville	Eddyville Rural Fire District		120,000
Dawson	Farnam	Farnam Rural Fire District		289,500
Dawson	Sumner	Sumner Rural Fire District		330,000
Dawson Total			0	739,500
Deuel		Chappell Rural Fire District		387,000
Deuel Total			0	387,000
Dixon	Allen	Allen-Waterbury Fire District		245,500
Dixon	Dixon	Dixon Rural Fire District		136,200
Dixon	Martinsburg	Martinsburg Rural Fire District		576,000
Dixon	Newcastle	Newcastle Rural Fire District		158,500
Dixon	Ponca	Ponca Hills Volunteer Fire Department	4,500	
Dixon	Ponca	Ponca Rural Fire District	1,455	330,000
Dixon Total			5,955	1,446,200
Dodge	Dodge	Dodge County Emergency Management District		13,000
Dodge	Dodge	Dodge Rural Fire District		57,000
Dodge	Fremont	Fremont Rural Fire District	4,928	317,300
Dodge	Hooper	Hooper Rural Fire District		330,800
Dodge	Ingelwood/Fremont	Ingelwood/Fremont Rural Fire District		488,500
Dodge	Nickerson	Nickerson Rural Fire District		230,000
Dodge	North Bend	North Bend Rural Fire District	4,750	473,000
Dodge	Scribner	Scribner Rural Fire District		373,000
Dodge	Snyder	Snyder Rural Fire District		15,500
Dodge	Uehling	Uehling Rural Fire District		622,000
Dodge	Winslow	Winslow Rural Fire District		1,193,100
Dodge		Landowners**	6,300	
Dodge Total			15,978	4,113,200
Douglas	Bennington	Bennington Rural Fire District	1,625	572,000
Douglas	Valley	Valley Rural Fire District		1,300,000
Douglas	Waterloo	Waterloo Rural Fire District		144,000
Douglas Total			1,625	2,016,000

GRANTS/COST-SHARE AWARDED TO NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE PARTNERS IN 2023

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Dundy	Benkelman	Benkelman Rural Fire District		208,000
Dundy	Haigler	Haigler Rural Fire District		360,000
Dundy Total			0	568,000
Fillmore	Exeter	Exeter Rural Fire District		200,000
Fillmore	Faimont	Faimont Rural Fire District		200,000
Fillmore	Milligan	Milligan Rural Fire District		246,500
Fillmore	Ohiova	Ohiova Rural Fire District	3,800	227,000
Fillmore	Shickley	Shickley Rural Fire District		15,000
Fillmore Total			3,800	888,500
Franklin	Campbell	Campbell Rural Fire District		812,000
Franklin	Franklin	Franklin Rural Fire District		97,000
Franklin	Hildreth	Hildreth Rural Fire District		174,400
Franklin	Riverton	Riverton Rural Fire District		364,000
Franklin	Upland	Upland Rural Fire District		360,000
Franklin Total			0	1,807,400
Frontier	Curtis	Curtis Rural Fire District	5,000	387,000
Frontier	Eustis	Eustis Rural Fire District	4,250	994,000
Frontier	Maywood	Maywood-Wellfleet Rural Fire District		232,000
Frontier Total			9,250	1,613,000
Furnas	Arapahoe	Holbrook-Edison-Arapahoe Rural Fire District	5,000	339,800
Furnas	Beaver City	Beaver City Volunteer Fire District	4,250	395,000
Furnas	Cambridge	Cambridge Rural Fire District		72,000
Furnas	Edison	Holbrook-Edison-Arapahoe Volunteer Fire District	2,819	91,000
Furnas	Holbrook	Holbrook-Edison-Arapahoe Rural Fire District	5,000	200,000
Furnas	Oxford	Oxford Rural Fire District	4,750	1,136,800
Furnas	Wilsonville	Wilsonville-Hendley Rural Fire District	5,000	60,000
Furnas Total			26,819	2,294,600
Gage	Barneston	Barneston Rural Fire District	1,483	258,900
Gage	Blue Springs	Blue Springs Rural Fire District		320,000
Gage	Clatonia	Clatonia Rural Fire District		30,000
Gage	Cortland	Cortland Rural Fire District		27,500
Gage	Odell	Odell Rural Fire District		108,000
Gage	Wymore	Wymore Volunteer Fire & Rescue District		73,000
		Landowners**	32,625	
Gage Total			34,108	817,400
Garden	Lewellen	Blue Creek Rural Fire District		504,000
Garden	Oshkosh	Garden County Rural Fire District		440,000
Garden	Rackett	Rackett Rural Fire District		414,000
Garden Total			0	1,358,000
Garfield	Burwell	Burwell Rural Fire District		322,000
Garfield Total			0	322,000
Gosper	Elwood	Elwood - Gosper Volunteer Fire Department	3,325	
Gosper	Elwood	Gosper County Rural Fire District		465,000
Gosper Total			3,325	465,000
Grant	Hyannis	Sandhills Rural Fire District	2,400	322,000
Grant Total			2,400	322,000
Greeley	Greeley	Greeley Rural Fire District	5,000	606,000
Greeley	Scotia	Scotia Rural Fire District		18,500
Greeley	Spalding	Spalding Rural Fire District		165,000
Greeley	Wolbach	Wolbach Rural Fire District		130,000
Greeley Total			5,000	919,500
Hall	Cairo	Cairo Rural Fire District		144,000
Hall	Doniphan	Doniphan Rural Fire District		330,000
Hall	Grand Island	NSVFA - Fire School		15,000
		Landowners**	28,410	
Hall Total			28,410	489,000
Hamilton	Aurora	Aurora Rural Fire District	5,000	1,385,000
Hamilton	Giltner	Giltner Volunteer Fire District	2,174	1,300,000
Hamilton	Hampton	Hampton Volunteer Fire District		200,000
Hamilton	Hordville	Hordville Rural Fire District		530,000
Hamilton	Marquette	Marquette Rural Fire District		597,400
Hamilton	Phillips	Phillips Rural Fire District		330,000
Hamilton Total			7,174	4,342,400
Harlan	Alma	Alma Rural Fire District		378,000
Harlan	Orleans	Orleans Rural Fire District		1,257,000
Harlan	Stamford	Stamford Rural Fire District		399,000
Harlan Total			0	2,034,000
Hayes	Hayes Center	Hayes County Rural Fire District	5,000	484,000
		Landowners**	7,500	
Hayes Total			12,500	484,000
Hitchcock	Palisade	Palisade Rural Fire District		910,000
Hitchcock	Stratton	Stratton Rural Fire District	4,500	264,800
Hitchcock Total			4,500	1,174,800
Holt	Atkinson	Atkinson Rural Fire District	5,000	20,000
Holt	Chambers	Chambers Rural Fire District		190,000
Holt	Ewing	Ewing Rural Fire District		12,500
Holt		Holt County Rural Fire District		66,000

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Holt	O'Neill	O'Neill Rural Fire District	4,476	613,000
Holt	Page	Page Rural Fire District		272,500
Holt	Stuart	Stuart Rural Fire District	2,045	206,000
Holt		Landowners**	2,278	
Holt Total			13,799	1,380,000
Hooker	Mullen	Mullen Rural Fire District		260,000
Hooker Total			0	260,000
Howard	Boelus	Boelus Rural Fire District		697,500
Howard	Dannebrog	Dannebrog Rural Fire District	2,850	220,500
Howard	Elba	Elba Rural Fire District		71,500
Howard	Farwell	Farwell Rural Fire District		236,500
		Landowners**	1,175	
Howard Total			4,025	1,226,000
Jefferson	Diller	Diller Rural Fire District	3,816	107,000
Jefferson	Fairbury	Fairbury Rural Fire Department	4,750	
Jefferson	Jansen	Jansen Rural Fire District #9	5,000	
Jefferson	Plymouth	Plymouth Rural Fire District		236,000
Jefferson Total			13,566	343,000
Johnson	Cook	Cook Rural Fire District	5,000	60,000
Johnson	Elk Creek	Elk Creek Volunteer Fire Department	4,750	
Johnson	Sterling	Sterling Rural Fire District		176,000
Johnson Total			9,750	236,000
Kearney	Axtell	Axtell Rural Fire District	5,000	1,926,000
Kearney	Minden	Minden Volunteer Fire Department	4,250	
Kearney	Wilcox	Wilcox-Ragan Rural Fire District		304,000
Kearney Total			9,250	2,230,000
Keith	Brule	Brule Rural Fire District	1,070	330,000
Keith	Keystone	Keystone-Lemoyne Volunteer Fire & Rescue	1,400	
Keith	Keystone	Ogallala Rural Fire District		1,010,400
	Paxton	Paxton Rural Fire District		421,000
Keith Total			2,470	1,761,400
Keya Paha	Springview	Keya Paha Rural Fire District		407,000
Keya Paha		Landowners**	23,278	
Keya Paha Total			23,278	407,000
Kimball	Bushnell	Bushnell-Johnson Rural Fire District	1,116	200,000
Kimball	Dix	Dix Rural Fire District		74,000
Kimball Total			1,116	274,000
Knox	Creighton	Creighton Rural Fire District	2,895	324,500
Knox	Crofton	Crofton Rural Fire District		342,000
Knox	Niobrara	Niobrara Rural Fire District		395,500
Knox	Verdigree	Verdigree Volunteer Fire Department	4,500	
Knox		Landowners**	110,068	
Knox Total			117,463	1,062,000
Lancaster	Firth	Firth Rural Fire District		72,000
Lancaster	Hickman	Hickman Rural Fire District		302,000
Lancaster		Lancaster Co Emergency Management District		29,000
Lancaster	Lincoln	Southeast Rural Fire District		289,000
Lancaster	Raymond	Raymond Volunteer Fire & Rescue	4,250	
Lancaster	Waverly	Waverly Rural Fire District		654,000
		Landowners**	7,500	
Lancaster Total			11,750	1,346,000
Lincoln	Hershey	Hershey Rural Fire District		69,000
Lincoln	Maxwell	Maxwell Rural Fire District		746,400
Lincoln	North Platte	Lincoln County Dive Rescue District		35,000
Lincoln	North Platte	North Platte Rural Fire District		35,000
Lincoln		Region 51 Emergency Management District		312,000
Lincoln	Sutherland	Sutherland Rural Fire District		373,000
Lincoln	Wallace	Wallace Rural Fire District		927,000
Lincoln		Landowners**	142,967	
Lincoln Total			142,967	2,497,400
Logan	Stapleton	Stapleton Rural Fire District		1,176,000
Logan Total			0	1,176,000
Loup		Region 26 Emergency Management District		165,000
Loup	Taylor	Loup County Rural Fire District		310,000
Loup Total			0	475,000
Madison	Battle Creek	Battle Creek Volunteer Fire Department	3,890	
Madison	Meadow Grove	Meadow Grove Volunteer Fire & Rescue	4,774	
Madison Total			8,664	0
McPherson	Tryon	McPherson County Rural Fire District		150,500
McPherson Total			0	150,500
Merrick	Central City	Central City Rural Fire District		1,815,000
Merrick	Chapman	Chapman Rural Fire District		768,000
Merrick	Clarks	Clerks Volunteer Fire Department	4,241	
Merrick	Palmer	Palmer Rural Fire District		140,000
Merrick	Silver Creek	Silver Creek Rural Fire District		180,000
		Landowners**	6,030	
Merrick Total			10,271	2,903,000
Morrill	Bridgeport	Bridgeport Rural Fire District		622,000

GRANTS/COST-SHARE AWARDED TO NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE PARTNERS IN 2023

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Morrill	Broadwater	Broadwater Rural Fire District	4,500	724,000
		Landowners**	2,014	
Morrill Total			6,514	1,346,000
Nance	Belgrade	Belgrade Rural Fire District		1,100,000
Nance	Fullerton	Fullerton Rural Fire District		480,000
Nance	Genoa	Genoa Fire Department	4,950	
Nance Total			4,950	1,580,000
Nemaha	Julian	Brock-Julian Rural Fire District		60,000
Nemaha	Nemaha	Nemaha Rural Fire District		366,000
Nemaha	Peru	Peru Volunteer Fire Department	5,000	
Nemaha Total			5,000	426,000
Nuckolls	Hardy	Hardy Rural Fire District		330,000
Nuckolls	Lawrence	Lawrence Rural Fire District		334,800
Nuckolls	Ruskin	Ruskin Rural Fire District		600,000
Nuckolls	Superior	Superior Rural Fire District		230,000
Nuckolls Total			0	1,494,800
Otoe	Douglas	Douglas Volunteer Fire District	2,122	19,000
Otoe	Dunbar	Dunbar Rural Fire District		200,000
Otoe	Syracuse	Syracuse Rural Fire District		160,000
Otoe	Unadilla	Unadilla Rural Fire District	1,140	72,000
		Landowners**	63,000	
Otoe Total			66,262	451,000
Pawnee	Burchard	Burchard Rural Fire District		180,000
Pawnee	DuBois	DuBois Rural Fire District		965,000
Pawnee	Pawnee City	Pawnee City Rural Fire District		160,000
Pawnee Total			0	1,305,000
Perkins	Grant	Grant Fire District	2,970	200,000
Perkins	Madrid	Madrid Rural Fire District		574,000
Perkins	Venango	Venango Rural Fire District	4,436	216,500
Perkins Total			1,436	990,500
Phelps	Bertrand	Bertrand Volunteer Fire Department	4,500	
Phelps	Funk	Funk Rural Fire District		334,800
Phelps		Phelps County Emergency Management District		13,000
Phelps Total			4,500	347,800
Pierce	Hadar	Hadar Rural Fire District	2,457	671,000
Pierce	Pierce	Pierce Fire Department	1,853	
Pierce	Plainview	Plainview Volunteer Fire Department	5,000	
Pierce Total			9,310	671,000
Platte	Columbus	Columbus Rural Fire District		20,000
Platte	Duncan	Duncan Fire Department	5,000	
Platte	Monroe	Monroe Rural Fire District		888,500
Platte	Platte Center	Platte Center Rural Fire District		69,000
Platte		Platte County Emergency District		160,000
Platte Total			5,000	1,137,500
Polk	Osceola	Osceola Rural Fire District		785,500
Polk	Polk	Polk Rural Fire District	2,993	907,500
Polk	Stromsburg	Stromsburg Rural Fire District	5,000	1,865,000
Polk Total			7,993	3,558,000
Red Willow	Bartley	Bartley Rural Fire District		90,000
Red Willow	Danbury	Danbury Rural Fire District		84,000
Red Willow	Indianola	Indianola Rural Fire District		402,000
Red Willow	Lebanon	Beaver Valley Rural Fire District		123,000
Red Willow	McCook	Red Willow Western Rural Fire District	3,189	523,200
Red Willow Total			3,189	1,222,200
Richardson	Dawson	Dawson Rural Fire District		180,000
Richardson	Falls City	Falls City Rural Fire District		320,000
Richardson	Humboldt	Humboldt Rural Fire District		140,000
Richardson Total			0	640,000
Rock	Bassett	Gracy Rural Fire District		566,000
Rock	Bassett	Rock County Rural Fire District		624,000
Rock	Newport	Newport Rural Fire District		583,500
Rock		Landowners**	2,091	
Rock Total			2,091	1,773,500
Saline	DeWitt	Saline County Rural Fire District		60,000
Saline	Dorchester	Saline County Rural Fire District		460,000
Saline	Friend	Saline County Friend Fire District	4,750	410,000
Saline	Tobias	Saline County Rural Fire District		227,000
Saline	Wilber	Saline County Rural Fire District		451,500
Saline Total			4,750	1,608,500
Saunders	Ashland	Ashland Rural Fire District	4,750	
Saunders		Big Water Program District		240,000
Saunders	Cedar Bluffs	Cedar Bluffs Rural Fire District		941,400
Saunders	Ceresco	Ceresco Rural Fire District		33,000
Saunders	Colon	Colon Rural Fire District	4,500	470,000
Saunders	Ithaca	Ithaca Rural Fire District	4,250	164,000
Saunders	Malmo	Malmo Rural Fire District	4,750	1,228,000
Saunders	Mead	Mead Rural Fire District	3,563	821,000
Saunders	Morse Bluff	Morse Bluff Rural Fire District		227,000

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Saunders	Prague	Prague Rural Fire District	3,448	
Saunders	Valparaiso	Valparaiso Rural Fire District		133,000
Saunders	Wahoo	Wahoo Volunteer Fire District	4,359	41,000
Saunders	Yutan	Yutan Rural Fire District	5,000	702,000
Saunders Total			34,620	5,000,400
Scotts Bluff	Gering	Gering Valley Rural Fire District	5,000	175,000
Scotts Bluff	Henry	Henry Volunteer Fire District		2,400
Scotts Bluff	Lyman	Lyman Volunteer Fire District		35,000
Scotts Bluff	Lyman	Lyman-Kiowa Rural Fire District		364,000
Scotts Bluff	Minatare	Minatare-Melbeta Rural Fire District	3,990	834,000
Scotts Bluff	Mitchell	Mitchell Rural Fire District	2,516	444,000
Scotts Bluff	Morrill	Morrill Fire District		200,000
Scotts Bluff	Scottsbluff	Scottsbluff County Mutual Aid	2,125	
Scotts Bluff	Scottsbluff	Scottsbluff Rural Fire District		244,000
		Landowners**	784	
Scotts Bluff Total			14,415	2,298,400
Seward	Cordova	Seward County Rural Fire District		200,000
Seward	Garland	Garland Volunteer Fire Department	4,999	
Seward	Goehner	Seward County Rural Fire District		236,500
Seward	Pleasant Dale	Seward County Rural Fire District		18,500
Seward	Staplehurst	Seward County Rural Fire District		283,000
Seward	Tamora	Seward County Rural Fire District	3,393	97,000
Seward	Ulica	Seward County Rural Fire District		130,000
		Landowners**	15,825	
Seward Total			24,217	965,000
Sheridan	Gordon	Gordon Rural Fire District	3,334	269,500
Sheridan	Hay Springs	Hay Springs Rural Fire District		860,000
Sheridan	Lakeside	Heart of the Hills Rural Fire District		1,039,000
Sheridan	Rushville	Rushville Rural Fire District		617,500
Sheridan		Landowners**	7,339	
Sheridan Total			10,673	2,786,000
Sherman	Ashton	Ashton Rural Fire District		267,500
Sherman	Litchfield	Litchfield Rural Fire District		200,000
Sherman	Loup City	Loup City Rural Fire District		172,000
Sherman Total			0	639,500
Sioux	Harrison	Harrison Rural Fire District	4,250	1,155,800
Sioux		Statewide Tree Planting	73,000	
Sioux		Landowners**	150,809	
Sioux Total			228,059	1,155,800
Stanton	Pilger	Pilger Fire District		266,000
Stanton	Stanton	Stanton Rural Fire District		346,000
Stanton Total			0	612,000
Thayer	Alexandria	Alexandria Rural Fire District		124,000
Thayer	Belvidere	Belvidere Rural Fire District		33,500
Thayer	Byron	Byron Rural Fire District		300,000
Thayer	Carleton	Carleton Rural Fire District	4,250	320,500
Thayer	Chester	Chester Rural Fire District		400,000
Thayer	Deshler	Deshler Rural Fire District		859,000
Thayer	Gilead	Gilead Rural Fire District		60,000
Thayer	Hebron	Hebron Rural Fire District		1,907,500
Thayer	Hubbell	Hubbell Rural Fire District		154,500
Thayer Total			4,250	4,159,000
Thomas	Halsey	Halsey Rural Fire District		325,000
Thomas	Theford	Theford Rural Fire District	4,185	491,000
Thomas Total			4,185	816,000
Thurston	Thurston	Thurston Rural Fire District		312,000
Thurston	Walthill	Walthill Rural Fire District		13,000
Thurston	Winnebago	Winnebago Area Emergency Management Fire District		312,000
Thurston	Winnebago	Winnebago Rural Fire District		98,500
Thurston Total			0	735,500
Valley	Arcadia	Arcadia Rural Fire District		180,000
Valley		Landowners**	3,233	
Valley Total			3,233	180,000
Washington	Arlington	Arlington Rural Fire District		459,000
Washington	Fort Calhoun	Fort Calhoun Fire & Rescue	1,740	
Washington	Herman	Herman Rural Fire District		130,000
		Landowners**	5,082	
Washington Total			6,822	589,000
Wayne	Hoskins	Hoskins Rural Fire District		160,000
Wayne	Winside	Winside Rural Fire District		60,000
Wayne Total			0	220,000
Webster	Bladen	Bladen Rural Fire District		193,000
Webster	Blue Hill	Blue Hill Rural Fire District		681,900
Webster	Guide Rock	Guide Rock Rural Fire District	2,805	895,000
Webster	Red Cloud	Red Cloud Rural Fire District	5,000	1,318,100
Webster Total			7,805	3,088,000
Wheeler	Bartlett	Bartlett Volunteer Fire Department	2,356	
Wheeler	Bartlett	Wheeler County Rural Fire District		661,000

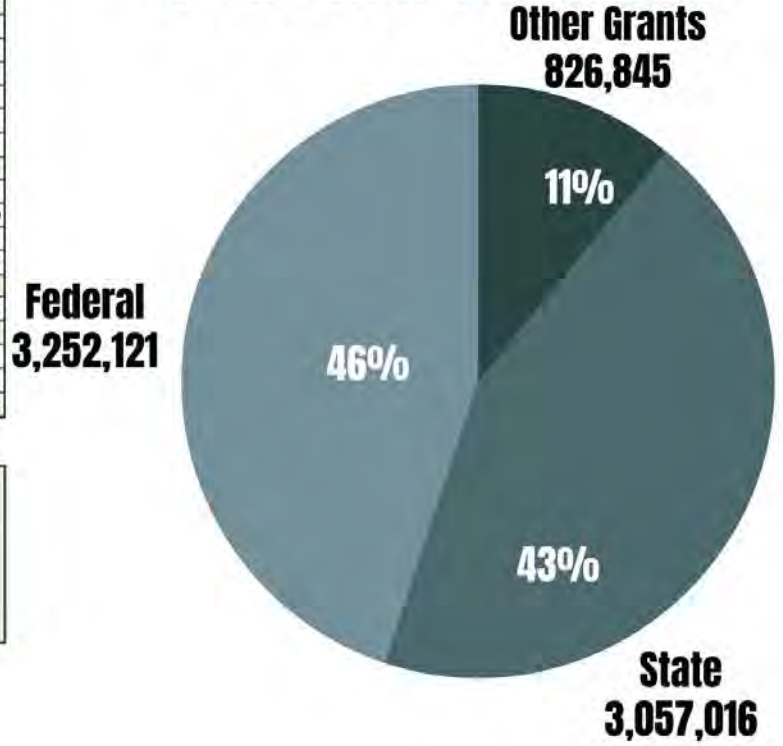
GRANTS/COST-SHARE AWARDED TO NEBRASKA FOREST SERVICE PARTNERS IN 2023

County	Community	Organization/Project	Grant Amount	FEPP/FFP* Replacement Value
Wheeler	Ericson	Wheeler County Rural Fire District	1,805	565,000
Wheeler Total			4,161	1,226,000
York	Benedict	Benedict Rural Fire District		938,000
York	Bradshaw	Bradshaw Rural Fire District		262,000
York	Gresham	Gresham Rural Fire District		402,500
York	Henderson	Henderson Rural Fire District		200,000
York	Waco	Waco Rural Fire District		216,500
York	York	York County Emergency Management Fire District	0	312,000
York Total				2,331,000
Nebraska Emergency Management				313,400
Nebraska Firefighters Museum				1,275
Nebraska Game & Parks - Lake McConaughy				60,000
Nebraska State Fire Marshal				500
NSVFA Fire Prevention Team				3,320
NSVFA Fire School				5,000
Statewide SEAT Program				623,700
Grand Total			1,468,356	127,383,340

*FEPP/FFP = Federal Excess Personal Property/Federal Firefighter Property currently loaned to Rural Fire Districts

**Landowners receiving cost-share funds for forest fuels treatment, forest management activities and/or forest product development.

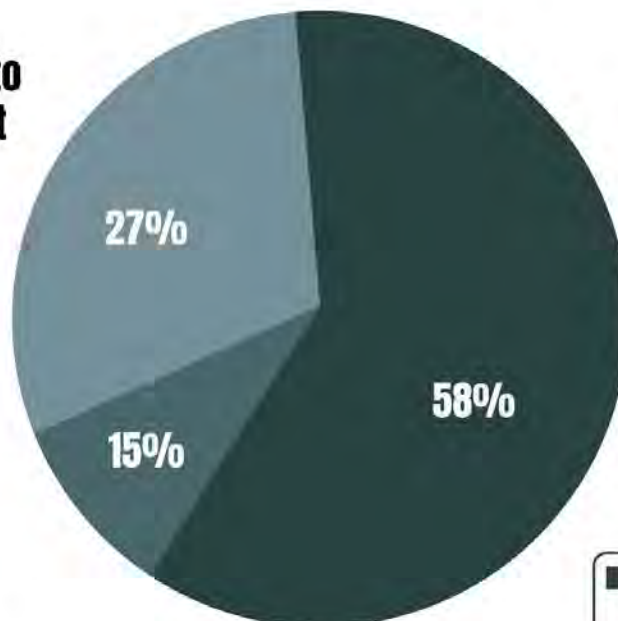
FUNDING SOURCES



NFS EXPENDITURES

Grants/ Cost-Share to Partners and Forest Landowners
\$1,840,768
27%

Operating
\$ 1,057,229
15%



- Salaries/ Benefits
- Grants/ Cost-Share to Partners and Forest Landowners
- Operating

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