

*The RC&D Council and staff offer basic support to conserve and develop natural, human and financial resources*

## 2016 ANNUAL REPORT

*Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development Council Inc.*

RC&D projects are by nature “results oriented” and since 1993 the Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council has been a valued “go-to” resource to get things done. The organization serves the 6-county region of Antelope, Cedar, Dixon, Knox, Pierce and Wayne counties.

12/31/2016

*Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development Council Inc.*

*Project Results of 2016:*

- Properly disposed of 4.3 tons of household hazardous waste plus 289 florescent light bulbs
- Recycled 4.5 tons of obsolete electronics
- Educated 54 adults and students on environmental issues
- Provided grant writing training to 29 professionals and community volunteers
- Brought history to life for 199 citizens during tours and museum visits
- Assisted 200 citizens by having easy access to locally-produced food
- Served as fiscal agent for two entities

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*Since 2000 the RC&D Council has been doing recycling projects. From used oil to prescription drugs, obsolete computers to household hazardous waste these efforts have kept over 927 tons of material out of the landfill while serving 12,478 households and businesses.*

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*President's  
Comments*

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Jim Rabe, RC&D Council President has this to say about the year:

“We want to keep the RC&D going because citizens want what we’ve been offering, especially the recycling projects for obsolete electronics and household hazardous waste.

I feel that by serving on the board, participating in all the meetings, and helping with projects that I’m doing my best to bring needed services to the citizens of Wayne County. “



Jim Rabe, left, has served as President of the RC&D Council since 2015

## *DIGITAL COMMUNITY SIGN*

The community of Niobrara received a \$20,000 grant from the Knox County Convention & Visitors Bureau and they raised almost \$11,000 through private donations and fundraisers for an electronic sign, but they needed a little more since the total cost was \$32,000. The RC&D assisted by providing \$1,000 from a gift they'd received from another local non-profit. The sign was installed the week of July 18<sup>th</sup> and dedicated to the memory of Rayder Swanson, an ardent promoter of Knox County, but especially of his hometown of Niobrara.



## *PLAINVIEW FARMERS MARKET*

The 2016 Plainview Farmer's Market opened in the RC&D parking lot on Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup> and ran each Wednesday through October 5<sup>th</sup>. There were 12 vendors throughout the season who reached a minimum of 150 citizens. Many were regulars and others were passersby traveling U.S. Highway 20. All had access to locally-produced vegetables, baked goods, jellies, jams, native wildflower bouquets and more.



The market was promoted through classified advertisements in the Plainview News, posters placed in Casey's, at Family Dollar, and at the Midwest Bank, along with regular posts to the RC&D Facebook and Twitter pages. It is estimated that vendor sales were approximately \$15,000 over the season.

## *GRASSLAND HABITAT EVALUATION*

This project was the result of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) SAFE acres being very well received in the Nebraska Natural Legacy area of Antelope and Knox counties. An evaluation was needed of those acres to see how well the birds— particularly quail & pheasant - were using them. This was part of a nationwide study on Bobwhite quail with University of Nebraska/Lincoln, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and Mississippi State as partners.



Mark Brogie, local birding expert, was hired to do the evaluation. He checked fifteen different fields of ten transects each in five counties to document the type of cover, how well it was established, the %s of forbs, legumes, exotic vegetation, litter,

woody cover and bare ground. He also documented bird species other than quail and pheasant which included Lark sparrow, Brown-headed cowbird, Northern flicker, Brown thrasher, Vesper sparrow, Blue grosbeak, Northern cardinal, Red-winged blackbird, Orchard oriole, Yellow warbler, Horned lark and more.

Remaining funds were used to purchase copies of the *Field Guide to Wildflowers of Nebraska and the Great Plains* by Jon Farrer for the Weed Management Area as reference material. A small amount of advertising was purchased for the Prairie Chicken & Pasque Flower Tour as well.

## ***HAUNTED TOUR & GHOST WALK***



The event, organized by Judy Carlson of Wausa, was held Saturday, October 29 at the Millerboro Cemetery. Twenty-seven participants were treated to Brad Kellogg's living history presentation of Wil Field of Mars, Nebraska who had been killed in 1889. Judy assumed the character of Mrs. Jacob

Miller, one of Millerboro's first pioneers. Dick Haskin portrayed his great, great grandfather Samuel Haskin, the first pioneer of the Verdigris Creek Valley. The group then moved on to Historic Mars, NE to view a granary where Joseph Kibbee, alias Brad Kellogg, told of his murder in 1889. Samuel Haskin reappeared to share events that transpired after Joseph's death.

The event concluded in the Historic Mars Campground where participants were invited to solve a murder mystery. Hot dogs and chips were served, ghost stories told, and locally-made items were available for purchase.

## ***KNOX COUNTY CEMETERY TOUR***

The tour was held Saturday, August 13 with thirty-three passengers aboard the motor coach. Northern Knox County sites visited included the Mormon Monument, Ponca Tribal Cemetery, Interpretive Trail at the Ponca Agency, Le Qui Court Cemetery in Niobrara, and more.

Knox County Convention and Visitors Bureau provided \$500 for newspaper and radio ads and staff time for marketing. Casey's General Store donated donuts.



Positive feedback in participant evaluations encouraged the RC&D to continue these tours in the future as a way to bring the history of the region to life.



## *NEBRASKA NATURAL LEGACY*



Support from a \$93,000 Fish & Wildlife Service Private Land Stewardship grant helped implement the Nebraska Natural Legacy plan in northern Antelope and Knox counties.

Conservation professionals, landowners, communities, and conservation programs worked together to conserve habitat, promote sustainable agricultural land use, enhance awareness and appreciation of both. Rebekah Jessen, Northern

Prairie Lands Trust, was the project leader with assistance from Scott Wessel, Game & Parks Commission.

The RC&D Council partnered by administering the Fish & Wildlife Service grant and processing payments to landowners for cost-share when they successfully completed grassland habitat improvements. Project benefits were many:

- \* Education to landowners/others on grassland management & alternatives
- \* Financial assistance to seven landowners
- \* Increase in quality wildlife habitat
- \* Improvement in grassland resources
- \* Continued partnerships with Fish & Wildlife Service, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission & Northern Prairie Lands Trust

## *PASSPORT TO HERITAGE 2016*

As a way to promote area museums, the Heritage Museum Network began a *Passport to Heritage* program. Participating museums handed out passport sheets and gave stickers for their listing when people visited their museum. Anyone who visited all the museums was entered into a prize drawing. Each of the twelve participating museums paid a small fee to help purchase FaceBook advertising and posters. The program ran Memorial Day through Labor Day.



Ashfall Fossil Beds gave away the most passports at 120. At the end of the season there were mixed results from the participating museums. The Mars Historical Area saw a 40% increase in tours, while the Adams House Museum in Ponca only stamped 3 passports. However the museums feel it was worthwhile so a 2017 program will be developed.

## *NATURE & BIRDING WALKABOUT*

This free event began at 7:30 a.m. at the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska's headquarters in Niobrara on Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. Fifteen folks from five different communities participated.

Ponca Tribal member Larry Wright Sr. shared information about the behavior of the bison in their herd as the group toured by them. Many ventured down the hill toward the wetland and along the way saw Jack-in-the-Pulpit, wild strawberries and gooseberries, a beaver dam and the stand of native oak. Ponca Environmental Director Julia Sage invited participants to "come again" to enjoy the pristine wetland and the oak woodlands.

Mark Brogie, expert birder, told how more unique birds are being seen in the region due to changes in the environment. Rebekah Jessen, No. Prairie Lands Trust pointed out newly-emerging wildflowers and voiced more on wildlife habitat needs.



This activity was another opportunity to become more informed about what exists in nature right "in our own backyard".

## *PORK 'N CORK*

This fundraising event was held on Saturday, August 20<sup>th</sup> at Nissen Winery & Outlaw Trail Center near Hartington. The evening featured a variety of tasty pork-related appetizers and winetasting followed by a free Humanities Nebraska (HN) program titled "Cattle Towns and Soiled Doves" presented by Marla Matkin of Hayes Center, KS.



A Cedar County Convention & Tourism Board grant helped with advertising and a HN grant covered speaker's costs.

The Winery was a wonderful venue for the event. Participants were pleased to try out the wines Nissens offer and enjoy their site. And Marla Matkin, the HN speaker did a terrific job of telling an important yet short and not well-known story. She told of a 20-year period in history when cattle towns were booming and saloon girls and ladies-of-the-evening were cast in occupations that were less than well-looked upon, but never the less helped in shaping the West. Marla is a wonderful orator and highly sought after.

## *PRAIRIE CHICKENS & PASQUE FLOWER TOUR*

The prairie chickens were in fine form early on Saturday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Prairie Chickens & Pasque Flower Tour. Forty-five people got up way before breakfast to catch these birds in action. Before sunrise they were quietly settled into either the photography blind or bus blind to experience this annual mating ritual.



Over twenty birds were on the lek which is quite an impressive number, habitat experts said. The male prairie chickens puffed out their orange air sacs, raised the feathers on their heads, stomped their feet as fast as they could, and made a continuous booming cry to attract the attention of the females who were playing hard-to-get. For several, seeing prairie chickens dance was on their “bucket list”.

During breakfast at Donna’s Diner in Wynot habitat specialists and educators presented information on habitat needs of prairie chickens, predators they face, and programs making a positive difference in increasing/maintaining their populations.

Hiking two native grasslands to find the Pasque flower near the Missouri River Bluffs was great. Many on the tour had never seen them before. They’re uncommon in the landscape.



Sponsors were Nebraska Game & Parks, Pheasants Forever, Northern Prairie Lands Trust, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Nebraska Natural Legacy Project, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Northeast Nebraska Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council.

## *GRANT WRITING WORKSHOP*

A Grant Writing Workshop was held in Plainview at the public library on December 14<sup>th</sup> with 29 participants from local government, tribal government, non-profits, schools, libraries, and more. The RC&D has offered these types of sessions four times.

Kristal Stoner, Nebraska Game & Parks, focused on three main grants – Recreational Trails Program, Land & Water Conservation Fund, and Watchable Wildlife. She gave tips on how to be successful and insights into mistakes to avoid.



The Shickley Story of philanthropic success was presented by Richard Walter. Their little town of 341 started a community foundation in 2001 which has grown to



have total assets of over \$1.7 million. They are now in a position to make grants to programs in and around Shickley.

Laura Dendinger, Professor of Business at Wayne State College, presented information on developing proposals and finding collaborators, searching out grants, the nuts and bolts of actually writing the proposal.

Bill Sheppard and Anthony Guenther, USDA Rural Development, talked on available federal grants and loans for community facilities, housing, and economic development. They also provided information on common federal forms that apply to any federal grant submission.

### *Northeast Nebraska Weed Management Area*



This group covers an 8-county area and has worked very well together over the past 20+ years. They identify noxious and invasive weeds that are highest priority for control and then they go after them. Control is focused mainly on the use of biological control insects, but some spraying and hand-pulling has been used.

For many years they've been working to control Saltcedar (tamarisk) along the Missouri River, Purple loosestrife on smaller rivers as well as the Missouri, and Leafy spurge along roadsides and in other public areas. Much of the funding for that work has come from the Nebraska Environmental Trust.



More recently the group identified invasive Yellow flag iris (YFI) which is starting to encroach on wet areas in Antelope and Holt counties. Funding from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture will be used on the Elkhorn River and its tributaries where YFI may inhibit flows, impact native vegetation, or impact wildlife. Upper Elkhorn Natural Resource District is providing matching funds.

Educational events are also held to bring information to landowners, citizens and students about these noxious and invasive weeds and ways of controlling them.

### *ELECTRONIC WASTE*

Three electronic waste (E-waste) recycling events were held in the region this fall. Households were able to properly dispose of a large variety of electronic items including computers, TVs, printers, batteries, and more. Disabled Vets at Work RECYCLETRONICS, Sioux City, was selected to





tear down all the material and salvage what they can while properly disposing of the remainder.

Thanks to local volunteers who assisted and to communities and citizens who helped with the cash match required for the Nebraska Environmental Trust grant. Almost 4.5 tons or 9,000 pounds to be exact was collected and properly recycled.

## *Household Hazardous Waste*

The RC&D Council hosted Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) events in September. One hundred and seventy-one households participated from sixteen communities around the region.

Over 4 tons of material was properly disposed of or recycled at these events. This included 580# of pesticide, 6120# of paint, 111# of acids, 75 gallons of used oil, 23 gallons of antifreeze, 440 batteries, 22# of mercury, 16 gallons of 2-4D, 5 gallons of Roundup, 289 florescent light bulbs, and 350# of recyclables. Red Willow County Household Hazardous Waste was the contractor.



The events were funded in part by the participating communities, Wayne's Green Team, a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, and donations from citizens taking part in the program.

## *Financial Statement 2016*

1/1/2016 to 12/31/2016

### Income

Membership Fees	\$22,002.92
Projects & Grants	\$126,596.78
Other Income	\$512.00
Interest Income	\$128.58
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$149,240.28</b>

### *Account Balances 12-31-16*

Checking Account	<b>\$58,154.08</b>
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### Certificates of Deposit

RC&D	\$20,031.36
Endowment	\$25,501.84

### Expenses

Donations & Memberships	\$855.00
Projects & Grants	\$121,342.61
Rent & Utilities	\$4,547.50
Payroll Expense	\$17,810.80
Professional Fees & Insurance	\$1,974.60
Travel & Registrations	204.23
Office Expense	\$2,358.17
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$149,029.91</b>

*Net Income* **\$210.37**

## ***Board of Directors***

County, tribal and Natural Resource Districts provide representatives as board members for the RC&D Council. There are two vacancies in Antelope County, one in Cedar County, and one for the Upper Elkhorn NRD. Contact a board member or call the office to learn more or to volunteer your time. New people and new ideas are always welcome.

Current board members are:

Antelope County – Alexandra McClanahan, Orchard

Cedar County – Glen Anderson, Coleridge; Maurice Ketter, Wynot

Dixon County – Brad Kellogg, Wakefield; Bruce Kneifl & Rhonda Kneifl, Newcastle

Knox County – Janet Gill, Bloomfield; Leonard, Janovec, Norfolk; Chris Kreycik, Niobrara

Pierce County – Joan Alexander, Plainview; Judy Rasmussen, Plainview; Dennis Wacker, Osmond

Wayne County – Lin Brummels, Winside; Georgia Jansen, Winside; Jim Rabe, Winside

Natural Resource Districts – Gary Howey, Hartington, Lewis & Clark NRD; Bob Huntley, Norfolk, Lower Elkhorn NRD; Kent Pavlik, Verdigre, Lower Niobrara NRD

Native American Tribes – Larry Wright Sr., Ponca Tribe of Nebraska; Mike Crosley, Santee Sioux Nation

Officers elected for 2017 are Jim Rabe, President; Dennis Wacker, Vice-President; Janet Gill, Treasurer; Joan Alexander, Secretary

## ***Special Thanks & Awards***

***Extra! Extra! Special Award*** - to Brook Curtiss & the Plainview News for great newspaper coverage of Northeast Nebraska RC&D Council activities in 2016



***Special Assistance Award*** - to Donna Christiansen & the Plainview Public Library for helping out with the RC&D Council's computer issues, meetings & office needs

***Outstanding Farmers Market Promotional Assistance*** - to Shelly Johnston of Casey's

General Store and Teresa Liermann of Family Dollar, both in Plainview



***Above & Beyond Award*** - to Brad Kellogg for supporting the RC&D through historical interpretation, project planning, fundraising & more!

***World's Best RC&D Partner Award*** - to Rebekah Jessen for supporting the RC&D Council's wildlife & wildflower projects with time, talent, and funds



Have a project idea? Contact RC&D via any of the methods listed below or visit with a board member listed in this report. Office hours are 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday each week - and the answering machine is always on!

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