

Memorandum

To: Programs, Projects, and Operations Subcommittee From: Austen Hill

Date: April 29, 2024

RE: Fifth Addendum to the Agreement with Nebraska Land Trust Agreement

The Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) is a 501 C (3) nonprofit organization actively engaged in land conservation in Nebraska since 2001. Rather than duplicating efforts with a P- MRNRD (NRD) conservation easement program that was contemplated over 20 years ago, the NRD decided to partner with the NLT.

The NLT holds full accreditation as a land trust in Nebraska from the National Land Trust Alliance. With only three employees, the organization has successfully completed over 50 individual easements, protecting nearly 48,000 acres under permanent conservation easements across 23 counties. 18 of those easements (32%) are in the Lower Platte Valley in Douglas, Sarpy, and Saunders Counties.

The NRD, a charter member of the NLT Board and in 2009, entered into a three-year Cooperative Agreement with the NLT, providing an annual financial contribution of \$30,000.00. This Agreement was extended in 2012, 2015, 2018, and 2021 to continue the original Agreement for additional three-year periods. The NLT is now requesting that this partnership continue with a Fifth Addendum. (Attached: original 2009 AGREEMENT; Spreadsheet of NLT Conservation Easements through 2023 and a copy of the Nebraska Land Trust: *The LANDSCAPE -2023 IMPACT REPORT.*)

Staff is proposing that the District continue to assist the work of the Nebraska Land Trust in developing land protection and easement acquisition strategies, fundraising plans, conservation easement templates, organizing public meetings, providing easement education, and other conservation easement activities for specific areas within the Lower Platte Valley and other locations within the District for an additional three-year period starting in Fiscal Year 2025.

Staff recommends to the Board that the General Manager be authorized to execute the proposed Fifth Addendum to the 18 March, 2009 Agreement Between Pappas-Missouri River Natural Resources District and the Nebraska Land Trust for Cooperative Assistance that allows for an additional three-year District commitment in the amount of \$30,000/year, commencing in fiscal year, 2025 subject to changes deemed necessary by the General Manager and approval as to form by District Legal Counsel.

**FIFTH ADDENDUM TO
AGREEMENT BETWEEN
PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
AND NEBRASKA LAND TRUST
FOR
COOPERATIVE ASSISTANCE**

This Addendum ("THIS ADDENDUM") is intended to further extend the AGREEMENT BETWEEN PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT and NEBRASKA LAND TRUST FOR COOPERATIVE ASSISTANCE ("THE AGREEMENT") that was executed by the PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT ("the DISTRICT") on March 18, 2009 and by the NEBRASKA LAND TRUST ("the TRUST") on March 16, 2009, and extended by the FIRST ADDENDUM entered into by the parties in March 2012 for a term terminating on December 31, 2014 and the SECOND ADDENDUM entered into by the parties in March 2015 for a term terminating on December 31, 2017 and the THIRD ADDENDUM entered into by the parties in March 2018 for a term terminating on December 31, 2020 and a FOURTH ADDENDUM entered into by the parties in June 2021 for a term terminating on December 31, 2023.

By executing THIS ADDENDUM, the parties hereby agree to continue to be bound by the AGREEMENT and that the term of THE AGREEMENT should be extended for an additional period of time beginning January 1, 2024 and continuing until December 31, 2026, thus also extending the DISTRICT's commitment made therein to pay the sum of \$30,000 annually during the three years of 2024, 2025 and 2026 to the TRUST for the purpose of partially funding the activities of the TRUST undertaken pursuant to THE AGREEMENT.

Except as so extended, THE AGREEMENT is ratified and confirmed in all respects.

THIS ADDENDUM is executed by the TRUST on this ____ day of _____, 2024.

NEBRASKA LAND TRUST

By: _____

Title: _____

THIS ADDENDUM is executed by the DISTRICT on this ____ day of _____, 2024.

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

By: _____

JOHN WINKLER, General Manager

AGREEMENT BETWEEN
PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
AND
NEBRASKA LAND TRUST
FOR
COOPERATIVE ASSISTANCE

THIS AGREEMENT is made and entered into by and between the PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT (hereinafter referred to as the "NRD") and the NEBRASKA LAND TRUST (hereinafter referred to as "the TRUST").

WHEREAS, The TRUST is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization that has adopted Standards and Practices promulgated by the Land Trust Alliance and actively acquires or stewards conservation lands and conservation easements, with the goal of land conservation in Nebraska.

WHEREAS, the mission of the TRUST is to accept conservation easements or gifts of land to preserve lands that remain essentially in their natural state; are ecologically, historically, or archeologically significant; serve as wildlife habitat, and/or are used for low impact agriculture; and,

WHEREAS, the authorities of the NRD include prevention of damages from floodwater and sediment, development and management of fish and wildlife habitat and recreational and park facilities, and forestry and range management, and the NRD wishes to increase its focus on protecting these resources in the lower Platte and Missouri River corridors (hereinafter referred to as "the Corridor"); and,

WHEREAS, the TRUST provides independent oversight to ensure public confidence in voluntary land conservation; and,

WHEREAS, the NRD desires to utilize the expertise and experience of the TRUST to explore the opportunities for acquisition of conservation easements within the Corridor; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, for and in consideration of the foregoing recitals and their mutual covenants hereinafter expressed, the parties agree as follows:

1. The TRUST has prepared A Proposal For The Lower Platte Valley Preservation Project, attached hereto as Exhibit "A" and incorporated herein, and agrees that it shall:

- a. Conduct educational programs with landowners, public officials and others within the NRD for the purpose of explaining conservation easements and the multiple advantages thereof; and,
- b. Develop a land protection strategy and easement templates for the acquisition of conservation easements in the Corridor; and,
- c. Develop a fund-raising plan, target lists and grant writing, record keeping and communications templates specific for the acquisition of conservation easements in the Corridor; and,
- d. Assist the NRD in negotiations and acquisition of conservation easements over priority properties.

2. The NRD agrees that it will cooperate with the TRUST in the Proposal incorporated as Exhibit "A" and will assist the TRUST to develop land protection and easement acquisition strategies for the Corridor; will pay the sum of \$30,000.00 annually, to the TRUST for the purpose of partially funding the activities of the TRUST undertaken pursuant hereto; and, will work with the TRUST to identify prospective donors of conservation easements, additional funding sources and partnership opportunities.

3. The term of this Agreement shall commence upon execution thereof by both parties; and this Agreement shall terminate on December 31, 2011, unless sooner terminated as provided below.

4. The following personnel shall represent the parties in carrying out the terms of this Agreement and are designated to receive notices hereunder:

For the NRD:	For the TRUST:
James Becic, Environmental Coordinator	David Sands, Executive Director
John Winkler, General Manager	John Ellsworth, Chairman

5. This Agreement may be terminated by either party with or without cause on 60 days written notice delivered to the other party. If the NRD terminates the agreement without cause, the TRUST shall not be required to refund the current year's grant.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this agreement on the dates hereinafter indicated.

Executed by THE NEBRASKA LAND TRUST, on this 16th day of March, 2009.

NEBRASKA LAND TRUST

By David Sands
David Sands
Executive Director

Executed by the PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT on this 18th day of MARCH, 2009.

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

By John Winkler
John Winkler
General Manager

Nebraska Land Trust Conservation Easements										
<u>Orginal Owner(s)</u>	<u>Current Owner</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>Date Acquired</u>	<u>How Acquired</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Township/Range</u>	<u>Zip Code</u>	<u>Primary Conservation Values Protected</u>	<u>Monitored</u>	<u>Time on Property</u>
Dave Janke	Barry James	227.71	12/6/2002	0	Douglas	T-14N/R-10E	68069	About 3/5 mile of natural Elkhorn River shoreline, hydrologically connected oxbow wetland, pond, grasslands, riparian woodlands, scenic views from Q St.	9/20/2022	0.5
Clarence Werner	Same	577	12/20/2002	Donation	Douglas	T-16N/R-9E	68064	Over 1 mile of Platte River shoreline along dike, cropland, 18 delineated wetlands, pond, slough, grasslands, and woodlands.	12/14/2022	1
Ginger Woods Reserve, L.P.	Luke Janke	213.66	6/24/2003	Donation	Douglas	T-16N/R-9E and T-15N/R-9E	68064	About 2 miles of natural Platte River shoreline, wetlands, ponds, scenic views, wet meadows, grasslands, riparian woodlands.	12/19/2022	0.25
William Hanley (S&B Part.)	Pete Hanley	37	12/10/2004	Donation	Saunders	T-15N/R-9E	68070	About 1/3 mile of natural Platte River shoreline, seasonal pond, wetland, grassland, historical site, scenic views, adjoins wetland mitigation bank.	3/16/2022	1
Wanda Clark/Monica Dunse	Wiley and Kim Farr	644	12/28/2007	Donation	Lincoln	T-11N/R-28E	69151	Critical habitat for elk and endangered American burying beetle, virgin mid-grass prairie, scenic views, ranching, adjoins Wapiti WMA.	8/23/2022	1
Pat and Nancy Shanahan	Same	257.6	4/11/2008	Bargain Sale using FRPP and NET funds	Saunders	T-17N/R-7E	68015	One-half mile of natural Platte River shoreline, oak/hickory forest at western extreme of range, Pahaku cultural site, scenic views, prime farmland, adjoins Gilbert CE land and Scout Camp.	7/28/2023	0.5
John and William Walz	Jarel Vinduska	90.38	10/21/2008	Bargain Sale using NET and mitigation funds	Sarpy	T-12N/R-10E	68028	One-half mile of natural Platte River shoreline, one-half mile of a Platte River tributary, riparian woodlands, farming, scenic views, adjoins Schramm State Park.	5/16/2023	1.75
John Dunse	Steve and Shelia Markley	343	11/17/2008	Bargain Sale using NGPC funds	Lincoln	T-11N/R-28W	69151	Critical habitat for elk and endangered American burying beetle, virgin mid-grass prairie, scenic views, ranching, adjoins Clark/Dunse CE land.	8/23/2022	0.5
George Krueger	Jo Jean Preuit - Trustee	438.9	6/23/2009	Donation	Seward	T-12N/R-28W	68439	Riparian woodlands along Lincoln Creek and conservation farming practices such as terraces and grass waterways.	11/3/2022	1.5
Theodore (Ted) and Ramona (Mona) Thieman	Same	160	7/17/2009	Donation	Boone	T-22N/R-7W	68652	Native grassland habitat on the eastern fringe of the Sandhills and ranching.	11/3/2022	2.5
Nine Penny Ranch -- Kris Fischer and the L. Wayne Davidson and Chestyne K. Davidson Revocable Living Trust	Kris Fischer	949.05	5/20/2010	Full Purchase using NET and FRPP funds	Lincoln	T-12N/R-28W	69151	Critical habitat for elk and endangered American burying beetle, virgin mid-grass prairie, scenic views, ranching.	6/28/2023	0.75
Ron and Carol Patterson	Same	56.62	6/15/2010	Bargain Sale using NET and FRPP funds	Sarpy	T-13N/R-10E and T-12N/R-10E	68028	Oak/hickory woodlands, flowing stream, significant archeological sites, farmland in an urbanizing county, and scenic views from Hwy 31.	6/5/2023	2
Sunny Brook Ranch, FLP Roy and Steve Breuklander	Steve B.	1,124.57	8/11/2010	Full Purchase using NET and FRPP funds	Keya Paha	T-33N/R24W	68778	Ranching; 4 of the 6 ecosystems found in the Niobrara Valley (ponderosa pine forest, eastern deciduous forest, mid-grass prairie, & tallgrass prairie); 1.3 miles of river front on the Niobrara NSR; contiguous to TNC Niobrara Valley Preserve; scenic views from the river and River Road; recreational uses; 9 archeological/historical sites;	6/23/2023	2.75
OPM Partnership	Same	830.8	8/23/2010	Transferred from Fontenelle Forest	Saunders	T-16N/R-9E	68025	Extensive wetlands, 1.5 miles of river frontage, riparian woodlands, grasslands.	12/14/2022	1
Dean and Wayne Fedde	Same	157.8	3/30/2011	Bargain Sale using FRPP and NET funds	Sarpy	T-12N/R-10E	68028	Oak/hickory woodlands, flowing stream, archeolgical site, farmland in an urbanizing county, adjacent to Schramm State Park, currently an organic farm, and scenic views from Hwy 31.	5/16/2023	0.75

Ron and Carol Patterson	Same	178.99	4/7/2011	Bargain Sale using FRPP and NET funds	Sarpy	T-13N/R-10E	68028	Oak/hickory woodlands, flowing stream, significant archeological sites, farmland in an urbanizing county, and scenic views from Hwy 31.	See Patterson I	See Patterson I
Paul, Lori, and Gregory Hosford	Same	546	12/27/2011	Bargain Sale using wind mitigation funds	Boone	T-20N/R-5W and T-19N/R-5W	68620	Farming, Native American lodge sites, Native American mounds, potential burial sites, riparian woodlands along the Beaver and O'Neill Valley Creeks, meandering unchanneled portions of these creeks, unplowed and restored tallgrass prairie, and educational use by local schools.	11/3/2022	2.25
Gary and Nancy Fisher	Same	546.51	12/29/2011	Full Purchase using NET, FRPP, and other funds	Dawes	T-31N/R-51W	69339	Ranching, key wildlife habitat between two large parcels of public land, key bighorn sheep habitat, a large stocked pond and a portion of West Ash Creek (a trout stream), scenic views from public lands and W. Ash Creek Rd.	6/21/2023	1
Chief Dull Knife College	Same	1,121.36	3/27/2012	Full Purchase using NET, FRPP, and other funds	Sioux	T-31N/R-53W	69346	Adjacent to Ft. Robinson State Park and the Petersen WMA; critical lambing habitat for bighorn sheep; historical significance as the site of the Cheyenne Breakout of 1879; has a locally rare wetland, scenic views from public lands and Hwy 20; continued ranching; potential for education.	6/21/2023	0.25
Stan Swanson and Connie Anderson-Swanson	Same	36.44	7/26/2012	Bargain Sale using NET funds	Sarpy	T-12N/R-10E	68028	Oak/hickory woodlands, significant archeological sites including trail ruts, farmland in an urbanizing county, demonstration plot for cedar removal, and scenic views from 204th St.	12/2/2022	1.25
Francis and Margaret Kennedy	Same	262	7/3/2013	Bargain Sale using FRPP, NPPD, and USFWS	Sarpy	T-12N/R-11E	68028	Oak/hickory woodlands; unhardened Platte River shoreline, farmland in an urbanizing county; scenic views from Hwy 31, the MOPAC Trail (which crosses the land), and Platte River State Park; habitat for endangered pallid sturgeon, least terns, and threatened piping plovers; some archeological sites; rare oak woodland on the river with Chinquapin oaks, the first documented in Sarpy County;	6/5/2023	0.75
Ron and Carol Patterson	Same	174.84	7/5/2013	Bargain Sale using FRPP and NET funds	Sarpy	T-12N/R-10E	68028]	See Patterson I	See Patterson I
Brent and Mary Boerkircher	Same	1,038.31	12/9/2013	Donation	Lincoln	T-11N/R-28W	69151		6/28/2023	1
John and Julia Schutz	Same	80	12/26/2013	Donation	Merrick	T-14N/R-8W		Grassland with some native components; grassland habitat in a farming area; native woodlands; hay production.	11/3/2022	0.25
Claudeen Penry	Same	160	12/27/2013	Donation	Holt	T-30N/R-15W	68713	Native grassland habitat in a farming area; some virgin prairie; fruit trees and honey production; hay production and grazing; potential outdoor classroom for education.	6/23/2023	0.5
Ken and Diane Hansen	Same	67	6/19/2014	Donation	City of Blair	T-18 & 19 N/R-11E	68008	High quality native oak-hickory woodland on Missouri River bluffs and productive terraced farmland in an urbaizing area.	3/29/2023	0.5
Robert and Cheryl Robart	Same	80	12/29/2014	Purchase using wind funds	Jefferson	T-1N/R-3E	68516	Virgin tallgrass prairie in Sandstone Prairies BUL with intermittent stream and associated native woodlands.	11/30/2022	1.25
Terrance and Karen Waite	Same	685	12/30/2014	Donation	Lincoln	T-16N/R-33W	69101	Native Sandhills prairie and portions of Birdwood Creek	6/29/2023	0.5
Todd and Laura McWha	Same	720	2/10/2015	Donation	Lincoln	T-16N/R-33&34W	69101	Native Sandhills prairie and portions of Birdwood Creek	See Waite	See Waite
Armbrust Acres, Inc.	Same	282.93	9/24/2015	Bargain Sale using FRPP and NET funds	Sarpy	T-12N/R-10E	68028	Oak/hickory woodlands; flowing stream; pond; significant archeological sites; terraced farmland in an urbanizing county with soils of statewide importance; and scenic views.	See Patterson I	See Patterson I

Dr. Delia "Dee" Burchfield	Gary Burchfield	983.56	10/27/2015	Full Purchase using ALE/GSS and NET funds	Banner	T-20N/R-53 & 54W of the 6th PM	69334	Ranching, haying, & grazing; native grasslands; wildlife habitat within Wildcat Hills BUL; important habitat for bighorn sheep; scenic views from public places, including the Williams Gap WMA.	6/20/2023	1.25
Gary and Laura Marshall	Same	261.5	11/18/2015	Full purchase using Crofton and Prairie Breeze wind mitigation funds	Boyd	T-32N/R-9W of 6th P.M.	68760	Grassland with some native components; grassland habitat in a farming area; native woodlands; grazing and hay production; lower Niobrara River frontage; wildlife habitat within the Lower Niobrara BUL; wetlands; the original Ponca Agency site which is on the National Register of Historic Places.	11/2/2022	1
Todd and Laura McWha	Same	303.5	12/22/2015	Full purchase using Broken Bow II wind mitigation funds	Lincoln	T-11N/R-27W of 6th P.M.	69123	Ranching and grazing, native grasslands within the Loess Canyons BUL, habitat for the endangered American burying beetle, elk, and other grassland wildlife, scenic views	6/28/2023	1.25
James and Christine Voeller Revocable trusts	Same	1304	12/31/2015	Bargain Sale using NET and partner grant funds	Sioux	T-32N/R-55&56W of the 6th P.M.	69346	Ranching and grazing, native wildlife habitat and plant communities within the Pine Ridge BUL, critical habitat for bighorn sheep and elk, Cold Water Class A trout stream in Sowbelly Creek, scenic views from two public roads and Coffee Park.	6/21/2023	2
Mary Lou Chapek	Same	595.83	12/21/2016	Donation	Washington	T-17N/R-12E	68023	Oak-Hickory woodlands in the Missouri Valley Bluffs; much of the Turkey Creek Watershed, including the creek itself, wetlands and marshes; productive farmland; restored tallgrass prairie; educational use; and scenic views from Hwy 75.	10/20/2022	1
Loy and Jean Baumann	Same	240	12/18/2017	Donation	Keith	T-15N/R-39W	69146	Ranching, native Sandhills prairie, habitat for grassland wildlife and scenic views from Hwy 92 and Lake McConaughy	6/20/2023	0.75
Curtis and Edna Anderson	Same	547.56	1/25/2018	Full Purchase using NRCS/GSS, NET and RMEF funds	Sioux	T-32N/R-53W	69339	Ranching, native grasslands and wildlife, habitat in the Pine Ridge BUL, elk habitat, riparian habitat on Cottonwood Creek and scenic views from Cottonwood and Rimrock Roads	6/22/2023	0.75
Riley, Melissa, Jacob and Megan Licking	Same	2,560	1/25/2018	Full Purchase using Grand Prairie Wind MOU funds	Thomas	T-21N/R-53W	69166	Ranching, native Sandhills prairie, habitat within the Upper Loup Rivers and Tributaries BUL and wildlife habitat including the endangered American burying beetle	9/27/2022	5.25
Sisters of Mercy		22	3/28/2018	Donation	Douglas	T-15N/R-9E	68069	Natural habitat within the Lower Platte River BUL; ~ 700 feet of natural river shoreline; mature woodlands and songbird habitat; scenic views; potential educational opportunities;	9/20/2022	1.75
MJD Ranch, LLC	Same	2443.76	6/11/2018	Full Purchase using NRCS/ALE and NET funding	Dawes and Sheridan	T-33N/R-46 & 47W		Productive grassland and grazing for livestock; prime farmland; if irrigated; ponderosa pine forest; Year-round habitat for a large herd of elk; paleontological resources; natural habitat within the Pine Ridge BUL; springs, streams and riparian habitat; part of historic Sheridan Gates landscape; scenic views.	6/22/2023	2.25
Riley, Melissa, Jacob and Megan Licking	Same	2,020.26	7/30/2018	Full Purchase using Grand Prairie Wind MOU funds	Thomas	T-21N/R-24W	69166	Ranching, native Sandhills prairie, habitat within the Upper Loup Rivers and Tributaries BUL and wildlife habitat including the endangered American burying beetle; Endangered Blowout penstemon; Dismal River frontage.	See Licking	See Licking



THE LANDSCAPE

2023 IMPACT REPORT

Conserving Our Agricultural, Historical, and
Natural Resources

Photo: Graham Crowe Ranch

Board of Directors

FONTENELLE NATURE ASSOCIATION

Michelle Foss
Tyler Irvine

HISTORY NEBRASKA

Trisha Nelson (Treasurer)
John Swigart

LOWER PLATTE NORTH NRD

Tom McKnight (Secretary)
Bob Heimann
Bill Saeger

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NRD

Will Inselman
Larry Ruth

NEBRASKA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Joe Francis (Vice Chair)
Glenn Pollock
Ross Scott

NEBRASKA CATTLEMEN

Tim Kalkowski
Todd McWha

NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

Jim Swenson
Jeff Fields

NEBRASKA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

Dave Koukol
Kimberly Stuhr
Mike Coe

NIOBRARA COUNCIL

Jason Appelt
Kalli Kieborz

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NRD

John Winkler
Austen Hill

AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Mike Linder (Chair)
Ryan Gibson
Mike Kelly
Carl Simmons
Glenn Johnson
Ty Cox
Jennifer Pospichal
Taylor Wohlers
Sarah Sortum

Staff

DAVE SANDS
Executive Director

JACOB ALISHOUSE
Stewardship Director

HANNAH SIDEL
Communications Director

Wild Thoughts



By: Dave Sands, Executive Director

For the past decade or so, I've had license plates that proclaim, "Nebraska, The Beef State." When people ask why, I joke that it allows me to travel the state incognito, so I'm not immediately identified as a city guy. It's also one of our most attractive plates, depicting a pastoral scene of cattle in a green meadow that looks like a postcard from the Sandhills. But in truth, my reasons go much deeper than that.

One is nostalgia. It was the slogan on our plates throughout my childhood, a slogan my dad taught us to be proud of. The beef industry is economically vital to Nebraska and my family was a part of it for over 100 years. Beef literally put food on our table. But my main reason for these plates boils down to just six words; "Love the prairies? Thank a rancher."

Roughly half of our state is still covered by grass, and we should all be thankful for that. Prairies are Nebraska's natural heritage, which transform grass into human food through cattle. Grasslands provide critical habitat for wildlife, from pollinators to pronghorns. They protect water quality by filtering runoff, while acting as a sponge that replenishes groundwater supplies. Prairies can even lessen climate change, by sequestering a huge amount of carbon in roots underground.

Since 97% of land in Nebraska is privately owned, ranchers top the list when it comes to conservation of our grasslands. Most have a passion for "keeping the grass right-side-up" and "leaving it better than they found it." A few take this commitment to another level, through a conservation easement that keeps the grass right-side-up forever.

Les and Jan Graham are two of these rare people. Their ranch has been in the family since 1890, conserving 8,244 acres of prairie along the lower Niobrara River in northeast Nebraska (page 6). It is a region where large, unfragmented grasslands are increasingly rare, making the ranch a magnet for wildlife from threatened butterflies to breeding leks for prairie chickens and sharp-tail grouse. Riverine woodlands and wetlands draw songbirds and waterfowl. It is a family and natural treasure and thanks to years of persistence by the Graham family, it is now a permanent legacy that benefits us all.

Brent and Janet Steffen pursued the same goal for their H Bar Ranch along the Dismal River, a few miles west of the Nebraska National Forest at Halsey (page 8). They wanted 5,959 acres of this historic Sandhills ranch to remain a ranch, when cabin sites or even a golf course were other options. As Brent put it, "The Dismal is the most mis-named river in America...It isn't heaven, but it's in the same zip code." Thanks to the Steffens, four miles of this iconic Sandhills river valley are now in that same zip code permanently.

So, to me it's crystal clear. Love the prairies? Thank a rancher. Especially ranchers like the Grahams and Steffens, who wanted permanence for their prairies and the benefits grasslands provide for us all.

Land Trust Alliance Senior Staff Visit Nebraska



The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) is a national nonprofit dedicated to saving the places people need and love. They accomplish this by empowering and mobilizing land trusts in communities across America to conserve land - and connect people to the land - for the benefit of all.

As an organization that operates on a national scale, they understand the importance of seeing the work of land trusts they support first-hand. In an effort to better understand the needs of land trusts focused on western agriculture, CEO Andrew Bowman, Senior Director of Government Relations Lori Faeth and Board Chair Michael Polemis made the trip to Nebraska.



While in Nebraska, they had the opportunity to visit three protected farms and meet with landowners in the Lower Platte River Valley. These landowners gave important feedback to LTA staff, who lobby the farm bill on behalf of their members.

The Alliance works alongside their members, most notably the 100+ members of their Farm Bill Working Group, to develop a series of targeted recommendations to streamline program administration and implementation while ensuring that critical conservation dollars are available to conserve farmland, ranchland and forested land across the country.

We are thrilled to announce that Nebraska Land Trust is now a certified entity through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Currently, only 32 land trusts in the US have certified entity status with NRCS. Certified entities have an established track record with the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) program and a long-term commitment to conservation of agricultural lands.

As a certified entity, we will be able to expedite our ALE applications, allowing us to better serve our state's landowners who wish to leave a legacy of working agriculture on their land.





TURKEY CREEK PRESERVE ADDITION

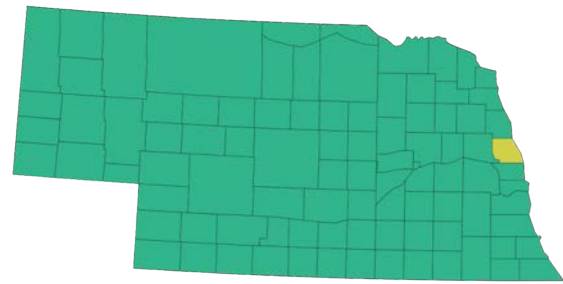
317 Acres | Washington County

Nebraska Land Trust engaged with the Turkey Creek Preserve Foundation for the second time to conserve an additional 317 acres in the existing Turkey Creek Preserve.

This new "Deer Creek" addition is a continuation of the vision of Mary Lou Chapek that is nearly 25 years in the making. Mary Lou's affinity for nature and desire to conserve it for the future has created a contiguous parcel of nearly 1,000 acres previously fragmented by subdivision into smaller parcels.

"I have devoted over 20 years of my life and much of my hard earned resources to preserving this beautiful place for the generations to come."

Thanks to Mary Lou's kind donation, this easement will conserve another special piece of Nebraska's natural resources forever.



THREE SISTERS BERLET

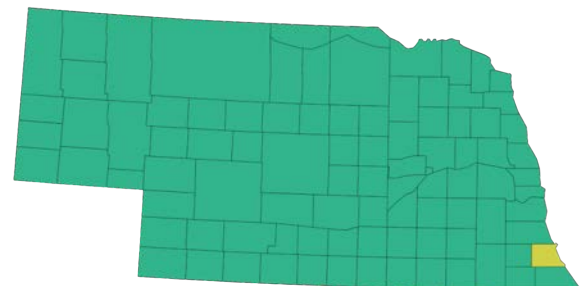
159 Acres | Nemaha County

Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) proudly partnered with Deborah Twombly, Victoria McGoldrick and Christina Robb to conserve their family farm.

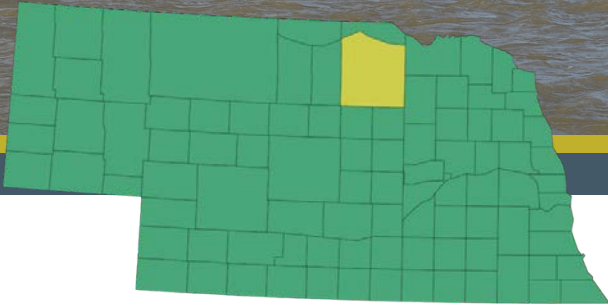
The farm has been in the family since the late 1800s when their grandfather, Peter Berlet, purchased the farm.

The farm boasts prime soils and two spring-fed streams that run into the Little Nemaha River.

"Our sincerest thanks to Deborah, Victoria and Christina for donating this easement and conserving yet another important piece of Nebraska's agricultural resources.



GRAHAM CROWE RANCH



8,244 Acres | Holt County

In June, Nebraska Land Trust completed an easement with Les and Jan Graham on their family ranch. Les and Jan are the 4th generation on the property, and they wanted to ensure that their family legacy of working agriculture remained intact. They also wanted to preserve the conservation value their ranch provides to the region.



Greater Prairie Chicken on Graham Crowe Ranch

Les and Jan explained: “We had a desire to see our grassland stay in its native state and the ranch to be operated as it has always been. A conservation easement seemed to be the option we found to hopefully fulfill that desire. The Nebraska Land Trust shared our vision and were very helpful in guiding us through the process.”

Graham Crowe Ranch is located within one of four core areas of the Great Plains Grassland Initiative through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). This initiative is part of a landowner-driven program conserving the remaining grasslands in the Great Plains.

Graham Crowe Ranch is one of the largest grasslands in northeast Nebraska under one owner, with significant conservation value. It's also considered a biologically unique landscape under Nebraska's State Wildlife Action Plan. With over 4 miles of Niobrara River frontage, this ranch is part of a network of 22 miles of protection between the ranch and the Niobrara's confluence with the Missouri River.

The combination of the ranch's ecological diversity, location and size make it significant to conservation efforts in northeast Nebraska.



Prime habitat for numerous species of conservation concern were identified on the Graham Crowe Ranch by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and the following species were observed on the property:

Greater Prairie Chicken
Sharp-tailed Grouse
Bald Eagle
Trumpeter Swans

Wild Turkey
Northern Bobwhite Quail
White-tailed Deer

Here's what the Nebraska Game and Parks had to say about the significance of the ranch to wildlife conservation:

“The uniqueness of this tract and appropriateness for protection is, we believe, pretty easy to see. There is a long list of considerations which contribute to the ecological value of any given tract of land: size, location within a conservation priority area, diversity of habitats, species richness, presence of at-risk species, proximity and connectivity to other habitats and protected lands, and so on. Not only does the Graham Crowe easement application shine in these categories, its location and the intentions of the landowner make it possible for this property to contribute significantly to larger landscape conservation efforts.”

Conservation of the grassland will also prevent additional center-pivot irrigation development in a region plagued by high nitrates in groundwater, a result of conversion of grassland to cropland. The rare combination of the ranch's ecological importance, location, size and positive impact for water quality make it one of the most significant conservation projects NLT has ever completed.



This easement was made possible by the following donors and funders:

- Les and Jan Graham
- NRCS
- Plum Creek Wind, LLC
- Prairie Breeze Wind Energy, LLC
- Sholes Wind, LLC



HORSESHOE-BAR RANCH

The following feature was published on the Land Trust Alliance national blog “The Dirt”.



5,959 Acres | Thomas County

The sandhills of Northcentral Nebraska. Many have never heard of them, despite being the most intact temperate prairie ecosystem in the world. Comprised of nearly 20,000 square miles of sand dunes stabilized by native prairie, it’s one of the largest intact grasslands in North America. It’s immensely ecologically diverse. Nearly 700 plant species, 300 bird species and over 55 species of mammals call the sandhills home.

Nestled in the heart of the sandhills is the Horseshoe-Bar Ranch, also known as “H-Bar Ranch”. This ranch has historic origins, being initially homesteaded by a friend of Buffalo Bill. The ranch is also the subject of a book titled *The Horseshoe Bar Ranch: Remembering a Prairie Childhood*. With 4 miles of frontage on the Dismal River, the property spans nearly 6,000 acres. Despite its name, the Dismal River offers some of the most beautiful scenery in the state. It’s what drew in H-Bar Ranch owners Brent and Janet Steffen.

“It’s our little piece of heaven” says Brent. “It’s not heaven, but it’s in the same zip code. Dismal River country is pretty special” Brent continued. “The Dismal River is probably the most misnamed river in the country.”

Brent and Janet knew they weren’t the only ones who appreciated the beauty and scenic views on their ranch. There is an increasing trend for buyers to purchase parcels of ranches and turn them into “ranchettes”, or even golf courses. These subdivisions carve up the land into small pieces that are no longer viable for ranching. Once divided, it will never be a working ranch again. This is why the Steffens chose to work with Nebraska Land Trust to conserve their ranch through a conservation easement. They wanted to be sure their ranch would remain a working ranch – forever.

The environmental benefits of keeping grasslands in working agriculture, like the H-Bar Ranch, are both numerous and substantial. The sandhills sit atop the Ogallala Aquifer, one of the largest aquifers in the world. It supplies drinking water to many people in the great plains states, and sources water for agricultural uses such as irrigation. The grasses above the aquifer help to capture and filter the water, before descending into the permeable rock layers below.

Although we often think of forests sequestering carbon, grasslands sequester carbon too. While grasses don’t store the same volume of carbon as trees, the carbon is stored in the biomass underground, which protects the carbon stores in the event of fire.



Pictured L-R: Dave Sands, Janet Steffen, Brent Steffen, and Jacob Alishouse

The easement will also help maintain the impressive ecological diversity on the ranch. Unlike most of Nebraska Land Trust’s easements, this easement contains a cedar management plan. It’s important to remove cedars in this area, as they spread quickly and can rapidly turn native grasslands into cedar forests. With the proceeds from the easement purchase the Steffens were able to implement more efficient methods of cedar tree removal, thereby maintaining native grasslands thereby preserving the ecological diversity on the ranch.

Perpetuity is a word that gives most people pause. It should. The decision to determine the future of your land forever is both significant and deeply personal. At Nebraska Land Trust, the advice given to landowners is to always take their time, consult with their family, and NEVER pursue an agricultural land easement solely for the financial benefit.

“Our major objective entering into this conservation easement was that we didn’t want to see it developed” said Brent. “We wanted it to stay as close to how God made it as it could be. And we wanted it to stay in agriculture.”

The private landowners that land trusts work with belong to a remarkably small cohort in our world. An incredibly small percentage of people in the global population own land. Of those in the world who own land, an exceedingly small percentage of those choose to conserve it through an easement. This means land trusts working with private landowners have the pleasure of working with a wonderfully unique and visionary group of people. NLT has served 47 families who wish to conserve their land in perpetuity.

Land conservation is far from free. Nebraska Land Trust relies on the ALE (Agricultural Land Easement) program through the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to fund many of its easements. The ALE grassland program funded a large portion of the H-Bar Ranch easement. ALE is a farm bill program that provides funding for crop land and grassland easements. This program paid 75% of the value of the easement directly to the Steffens. The remaining 25% of the easement’s value was donated by Brent and Janet. Landowners also agree to give a stewardship endowment donation to the land trust. Since Nebraska Land Trust is promising to enforce the easement forever, these donations are a vital resource for staff to monitor and enforce these easements in perpetuity. While the majority of the easement is funded by ALE, the landowners are making a significant personal investment as well.

Nebraska Land Trust has conserved nearly 48,000 acres to date. 26,815 of these acres were conserved using funding from the ACEP program. This funding is an integral part of Nebraska Land Trust’s ability to help farmers and producers reach their goals for their farms and ranches, and NRCS has been NLT’s most valuable partner in conserving these properties. NLT takes great pride in the number of acres it’s conserved. However, the greatest accomplishments and measure of success lies in the number of families, like the Steffens, that they’ve helped achieve their vision for the future of their land.



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Jennifer and Bill Pospichal

Jennifer and Bill are both Omaha-area natives who are long-time supporters of a wide variety of conservation efforts. According to Jennifer, she and Bill both have a passionate interest in the environment and conservation.

“Bill remembers the campaign decades ago to stop littering, which changed attitudes about the environment and protecting nature. And I have been involved in recycling efforts for years.”

Their list of memberships in conservation and environmentally-focused organizations is extensive, including the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, Nature Conservancy, Crane Trust, Loveland Garden Club, Extension Master Gardening, Fontenelle Forest, Lauritzen Gardens, and Nebraska Land Trust. In fact, their commitment to Nebraska Land Trust goes beyond an annual donation. Jennifer and Bill decided to make a bigger commitment - making a legacy gift to NLT.

“We feel that the Trust is doing fabulous work with conservation easements and making friends with farmers, ranchers and property owners throughout the state.”

Jennifer and Bill heard about NLT through a talk at the Loveland Garden Club given by Executive Director Dave Sands. Over time, their personal investment in NLT grew to a new level. Not only are Jennifer and Bill generous donors to NLT, Jennifer now sits on the NLT board as an at-large member.

“After some wonderful conversations with Dave we felt this was a great opportunity to contribute and get involved.”

Jennifer and Bill have a positive outlook on land conservation in Nebraska. They believe firmly in the investment of time and resources specifically in rural areas of Nebraska.

“Our hope for the future of land conservation is that there is continued outreach for our rural communities.”

We want to thank Jennifer and Bill for their dedication to land conservation throughout our great state!

Planned giving is a wonderful way to leave a legacy that extends beyond your lifetime. If you are interested in learning more about a planned gift through NLT, please contact Hannah Sidel at hsidel@nelandtrust.org.

You can be a Partner in Permanence!

Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) supporters are partners in achieving permanence for agricultural, historical and natural resources. Whether it is an annual donation that supports ongoing projects or an Endowment Gift that supports future projects, please consider the NLT in your charitable giving. For more information, contact Hannah Sidel at hsidel@nelandtrust.org or call 402-438-5263.

We are deeply grateful for the following partners who helped to create permanence for land in a changing world during the past 12 months:

Foundations

Claire M. Hubbard Foundation
Ethel S. Abbott Charitable Foundation
John and Jane Ellsworth Family Foundation
J.A. Woollam Foundation
Julie Morsman Schroeder Foundation
Lincoln Community Foundation
Margaret A. Lindberg Foundation
Stearns Charitable Foundation

Stewards (\$1,000 +)

John and Jane Ellsworth
Judy and Jeff Greenwald
Hod Kosman
Daniel McKinney
Todd and Laura McWha
Ron and Judy Parks
Neal and Deb Ratzlaff
Jeanne Reichstadt and Bruce Schneider
Bob and Cheryl Robart
Nancy Roberts
Dave and Tracy Sands
Julie Schroeder
Dave and Sue Van Horn
Lyle and Joyce Vannier
John and Nancy Webster
Gail and Michael Yanney

Sustainers (\$500 to \$999)

Jacob and Sara Alishouse
Glenn and Elaine Johnson
Mike and Denise Linder
Doug and Kris Pauley
Jennifer and Bill Pospichal
Sara and Gary Radil
Michael and Stephanie Siedschlag
Ron and Camilla Svoboda

Friends (\$100 to \$499)

Kim and Douglas Alvine
Warren and Sue Arganbright
Britton and Barbara Bailey
Laurine Blankenau
Mark Brodkey
Bill Brush
Ron and Karen Case
Jack and Sally Campbell
Jim and Jeannette Commers
Jim and Laura Devine
Joan Dietrich
Marv and Vickie Ehly
Larry and Peg Fletcher
Gregg and Dawn Foote
Michelle Foss
Joe and Jane Francis
Jeffrey Frede
Glenn and Janice Friendt
Meredith Fuller
Austen Hill
Linda Hillegass and Jim McKee
Jean Jeffrey
Shirley Johannes
Dave and Cydney Koukol
Marilyn McNabb
Kent and Barbara Meridith
Nancy and Alan Meyer
John and Vicki Miles
Ed and Sil Pembleton
Don and Joanne Pepperl
Greg and Linda Prorok
Katie Sands
Dan and Nancy Schulz
Steven Schafer
Kathleen and Duane Schwery
Ross and Bess Scott

Friends (continued)

Susan and Gary Seacrest
Lawrence and Diane Shackman
Richard and Carolyn Sieling
Christopher St. Pierre and Melanie Gibson
Jan Thelen
Anne Vidaver
Rich and Karen Vierk
Terry and Karen Waite
Katie and Walker Zulkoski

Businesses and Organizations

American Farmland Trust
Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
Natural Resource Conservation Service
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Plum Creek Wind, LLC
Prairie Breeze Wind Energy, LLC
Schramm Association for a Viable Environment
Sholes Wind, LLC
Thrivent Choice

Conservation Easement and/or Stewardship Fund Donors

Les & Jan Graham
Victoria McGoldrick
Jeanne Reichstadt & Bruce Schneider
Christina Robb
Brent & Janet Steffen
Turkey Creek Preserve Charitable Foundation
Deborah Twombly

In Memory Of Clint Johannes

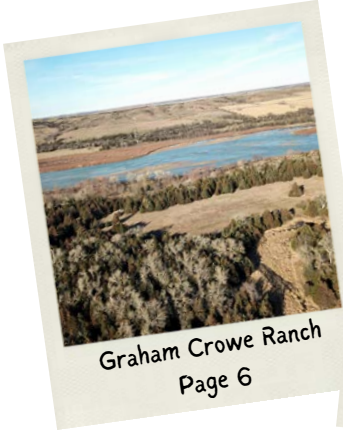
Shirley Johannes

Legacy Donors

Jennifer and Bill Pospichal



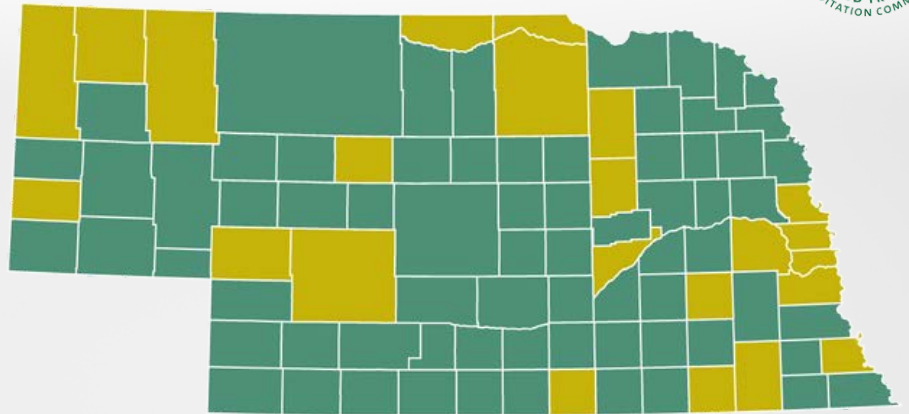
3201 Pioneers Blvd. Suite 107
Lincoln, NE 68502



SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS

47,372
ACRES

Conserved
for
future
generations



23 COUNTIES



47 FAMILIES

Make up the Nebraska Land Trust
easement holders.

Join our email list for exclusive updates from
Nebraska Land Trust. To subscribe, visit:

nelandtrust.org