

Nebraska Highlights

Resource Conservation & Development
RC&D Success Stories 2010

Natural Resources Protection • Economic Development •
Recreation & Tourism • Community Development • Education



Republican River in Dundy County, by Tim Smith of the Southwest Weed Management Association



What is the RC&D Program?

The USDA Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Program, administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), has become a key component in helping rural Nebraska. There are 12 RC&D areas covering all 93 Nebraska counties. The first RC&D authorized in the state was the Panhandle RC&D in 1970. In July 2003, the Sandhills RC&D became the final RC&D to be authorized in Nebraska.

How Does an RC&D Work?

The RC&D program works with a council of local citizens to find resources to benefit their communities. Each RC&D operates under its own "Area Plan."

NRCS supports this effort by providing each RC&D with office space, a coordinator, and a program assistant. NRCS provides about \$1.4 million annually for staffing and operating an RC&D office.

All RC&Ds are non-profit organizations, which operate under 501(c)(3) status. Typically, for most RC&D projects in Nebraska, less than five percent of the funds come through the RC&D program. Most funds come from outside resources identified by the RC&D Council.

A Great Return on an Investment

"During 2010, for every RC&D dollar spent on a project, an additional \$5.43 was gathered from other sources by the RC&D Council to support that project," said NRCS State Conservationist Craig Derickson. "RC&Ds work to make taxpayer dollars go further and accomplish much more."

What Does an RC&D Do?

RC&D projects generally fall into five major areas: economic development, natural resources protection, community development, education, and recreation and tourism. This publication features accomplishments and examples of projects completed by every RC&D in Nebraska during the past year.

The RC&D program has benefitted Nebraska in many ways. Projects have reduced soil erosion, improved water quality, enhanced wildlife habitat, created jobs and businesses, and protected heritage sites - just to name a few. Nebraska's RC&Ds are making great things happen across the state.

Nebraska RC&Ds: Local Effort- Regional Impact

Nebraska RC&Ds at a Glance

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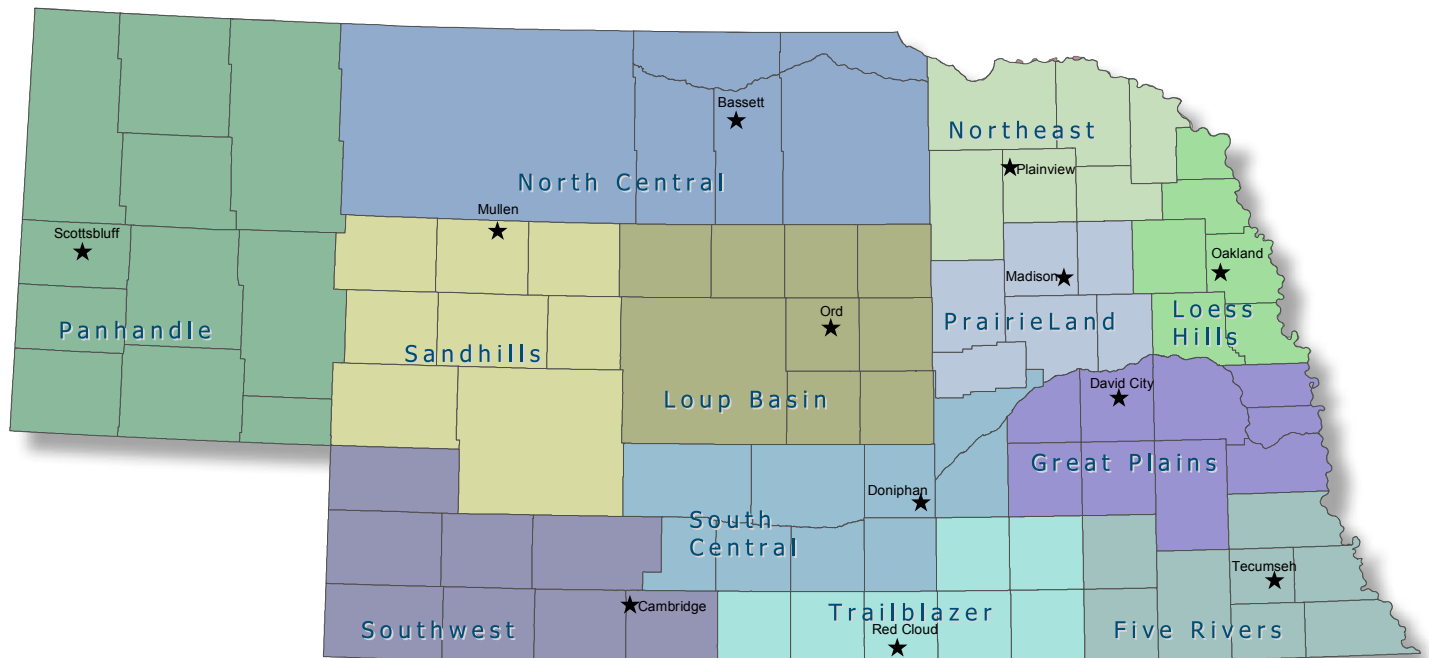
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Nebraska RC&Ds are leaders in the nation. All of the Nebraska RC&D Councils have been given a “Circle of Diamonds” certification by the National Association of RC&D Councils. The Circle of Diamonds program highlights the work that RC&D Councils perform in their communities and recognizes good stewardship of the local non-profit council in “Making Things Happen.”

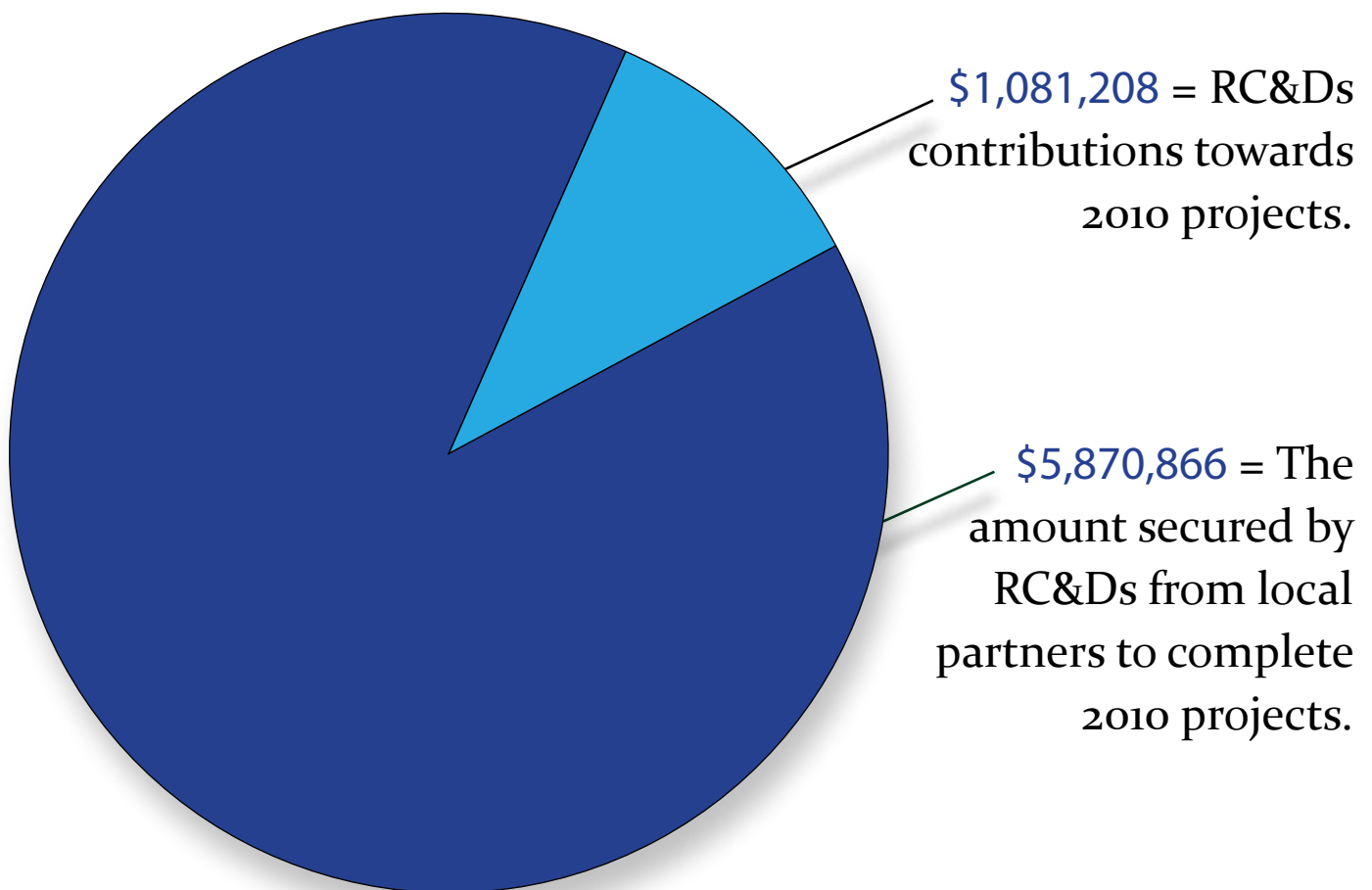


The program has three tiers: Tier I, or “Basic;” Tier II, or “Enhanced;” and Tier III, or “Premier.” Nebraska currently has eight RC&D Councils in the “Enhanced” tier. That’s over half of the Councils that are currently achieving this level nationwide.

During 2010, Nebraska set the bar high by being one of two states in the nation where all RC&D Councils were meeting a set of performance criteria developed to evaluate all authorized RC&D areas (and the other state only had one RC&D Council in the state!). The “RC&D Annual Assessment” criteria help ensure that RC&D areas are performing at a level that merits continued NRCS assistance through annual RC&D appropriations. Nebraska RC&Ds continue to do an excellent job at meeting the goals of the RC&D program.

Nebraska RC&D Statewide Leadership

The RC&D Program - A BIG Bang for Your Buck



During 2010, the Nebraska RC&D Councils worked with several partners - local businesses; organizations; city, state and Federal agencies; schools; and members of individual communities - to leverage over \$5 million for projects across the state. By working within local communities, the RC&D program makes Federal dollars work harder and go further. In 2010, for every dollar the RC&Ds spent on a project, an additional \$5 were secured from other sources to complete projects. That's a great return on the taxpayer's investment dollars.

Natural Resources Protection



RC&D projects promote conservation tillage and organic agriculture, organize waste collection events, and coordinate Weed Management Areas to stop the spread of invasive plants. These are just a few of the RC&D activities protecting natural resources across Nebraska.

Weed Management Areas

Nebraska's RC&Ds have been leading several projects that protect natural resources. One of the largest endeavors has been the fight against invasive plants.

All across the state, several plants have become highly invasive. If left unchecked, they can quickly overtake an area.

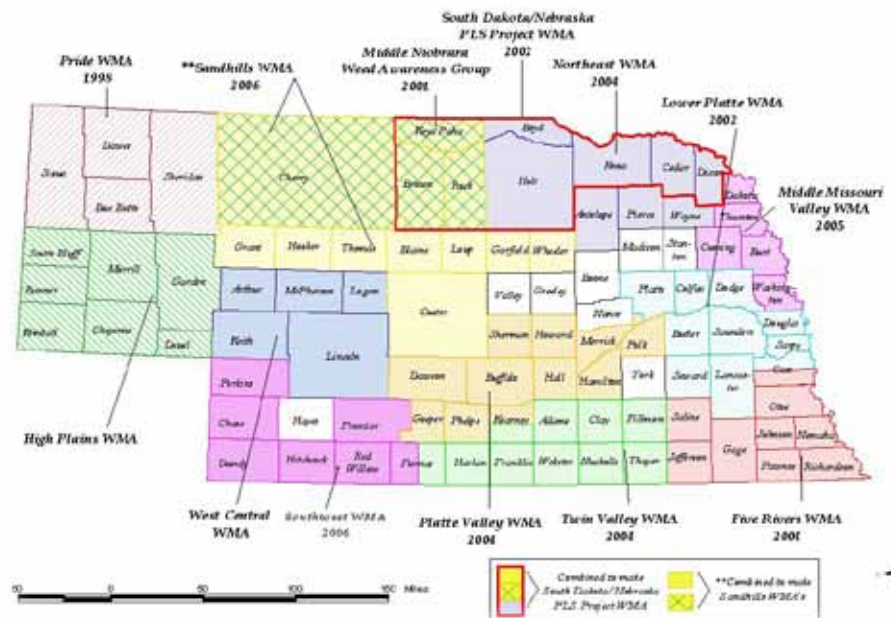
To help fight this statewide problem, Nebraska RC&Ds have formed local work groups called Weed Management Areas (WMA). WMAs are made up of several counties that share common invasive plant concerns.

The **Panhandle RC&D** assists the High Plains Weed Management Association with addressing invasive species. The organization addressed approximately 3,800 acres and improved over 140,000 acres in the watershed by addressing invasive species. The RC&D is providing technical and administrative assistance.



The **Panhandle RC&D** is supporting the High Plains Weed Management Association in their effort to remove invasive plants like the Russian olive shown here.

The Middle Missouri Valley Weed Management Area and the **Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D** created and printed 1,000 copies of a "Noxious Weed - Pocket ID Guide," which includes a color photo and a description of all nine of Nebraska's Noxious and Invasive Weed Species. Weed Superintendents handed them out to farmers as an educational tool. The feedback they received about the guide was overwhelmingly positive.



Thanks in part to Nebraska's RC&D leadership and educational efforts, there are Weed Management Areas statewide organized in the fight against invasive plants.

Waste Management/Collection

Many RC&Ds organized waste collection events. The **Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D** coordinated four recycling events where more than 635 households participated disposing of 6,800 pounds of household hazardous materials, including 170 gallons of used motor oil, 86 florescent light bulbs, and 23 gallons of anti-freeze. Thirty-seven volunteers donated 132.5 hours helping with the collections.

The **Trailblazer RC&D** held seven collection events where about 30,000 pounds of hazardous waste was collected. These collections will create a much healthier environment of air, water, and soil.



Volunteers from Seward High School assist with the **Nebraska Great Plains RC&D** electronics recycling event where over 17,200 pounds of electronic waste were collected.

Organic Agriculture

RC&D Councils helped promote awareness about the process to transition from conventional to certified organic agriculture. With funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, workshops, tours, and field days were held throughout the year to inform interested



Volunteers with **Northeast Nebraska RC&D** help monitor stream health in Bazile Creek.

producers about the transition process, production techniques, and marketing opportunities for organic agriculture.

Information was also provided to area producers about assistance available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Over 250 producers and agency staff attended these events to learn more about organic agriculture.

The **Nebraska Great Plains RC&D** hosted two workshops that showed a total of 95 attendees how to use grazing, and certain crops to help control weeds, and successful methods to produce organic produce and livestock.

Volunteers Monitor Stream Health

As a result of residents' concern about the Bazile Creek watershed - which originates in northeast Nebraska - Wayne

State College and the **Northeast Nebraska RC&D** formed a partnership to host volunteer stream monitoring events.

Volunteers monitored a site on Bazile Creek, and found it to be in good biological health. Measurements were taken of sediment, conductivity, turbidity, and total dissolved solids. Volunteers also collected, counted, and identified approximately 100 macroinvertebrates, and other organisms including creek chubs, cricket frogs and longnose dace and red shiners.

It's been recommended that a network of volunteer monitoring sites be created across northeast Nebraska, focusing on the Bazile Creek and Verdigris Creek watersheds, both of which are considered biologically unique landscapes and tributary streams of the Missouri River. Many partners are anxious to see the monitoring network expand.

Economic Development

As rural communities across Nebraska struggle to create new jobs, Nebraska RC&Ds are working within these communities to help their economies grow. RC&D economic development projects include the promotion of new enterprises - like wineries, dairies, and farmers markets. The RC&Ds also work with communities to educate individuals about starting their own businesses or writing grant applications. As different as these projects may be, they all help grow Nebraska's economy.

Promoting Local Businesses

The **PrairieLand RC&D** provided assistance to Connie Hintz, operator of Poppy's Pumpkin Patch (shown below), with her successful application for Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education (SARE) funding. Poppy's Pumpkin Patch near Norfolk, Neb., provides an educational setting for groups to connect with nature and a farm setting.

Connie utilized a portion of her SARE grant funding to install a high efficiency corn stove furnace, new duct work, air conditioning and insulation to her converted barn/café. USDA Rural Development contributed \$3118.00 to complete the building improvements which allow Connie to extend her seasons and bring in more youth groups and other visitors throughout the summer and fall. Connie can now also rent out the café for family reunions, office parties and other gatherings.

SARE grant funds were also used to add landscaping around the café and to print 8000 edu-

cational booklets highlighting native grasses, wildflowers and trees that can be seen at Poppy's. The plant booklets serve as an excellent resource for teachers and school groups. The booklet was developed by the PrairieLand RC&D staff and is available for everyone who follows the hiking trail through the "woods" at the Poppy's site.

Connie used funds from SARE, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District to install 1700 feet of cross fencing and 1800 feet of livestock pipeline in her 71 acres of native pasture. The grazing lands support her small herd of cattle and bison which can be viewed by the youth along with goats, llamas, ducks, geese, exotic birds and other animals on display at Poppy's.

In addition to viewing the animals, learning to identify the native plants and hiking, young visitors to Poppy's can enjoy various rides and activities, a lookout tower, a maize, several themed outbuildings, and a zip-line.

The improvement project, valued at over \$30,000, has made the Poppy's site/facility capable of accommodating many more visitors of all ages. Connie reports adding two additional part time employees to handle the increased fall workload. She also estimates a 50% increase in summer visits, 30% more craft sales and a 25% jump in café revenues.

Area youth from all over northeast Nebraska can come to Poppy's almost year-round to experience the great outdoors and to learn about nature.



*The **PrairieLand RC&D** helped Poppy's Pumpkin Patch grow their rural business.*

Promoting Locally Grown Food

The **North Central Nebraska RC&D's** Meat Processing Facility project is an example of what can happen when a group starts with a good idea. Like all small towns in rural Nebraska, the city of Bassett wanted to come up with a new business to create a few jobs in town.

Located in ranch country, with about 33 cows for every person, the thought of a custom meat processing facility was discussed regularly. Butcher shops in the region were busy. A wait of several months was normal for an appointment to process an animal. In addition, no USDA certified shops were available nearby, so people wanting that service were forced to transport animals long distances. Also, producers of organic, grass fed, or specialty meats, such as bison, could be enhanced by having a local, certified, processing option.

The city of Bassett continues to provide input and resources for the project, and **North Central Nebraska RC&D** continues to assist. Even though it is still early in the process, by starting with a good idea, laying the groundwork, and reaching out to other interested parties, this project has a strong pulse. With a little luck, local producers will have another option available for processing and marketing their products in the near future.

Economic Development Educational Opportunities

The **Five Rivers RC&D** has been hosting wine-making schools for over seven years.

With an average of 22 students each year, an estimated 60 businesses have been created/retained.

At this year's event, participants from Nebraska, Iowa, and South Dakota enjoyed learning about procedures to "perfect" wines at the Advanced Wine School I. Students also toured the Schilling Bridge Winery and Microbrewery located in Pawnee City, Neb., demonstrating that local beer and wine production can lead to a successful small business.



*Ellie Butz taught 13 participants from Nebraska, Iowa, and South Dakota about procedures to "perfect" wines at the Advanced Wine School I hosted by the **Five Rivers RC&D**.*

Highlighting Local Economic Opportunities

The Antique Critique Show & Tell, a **Northeast Nebraska RC&D** event, was held in Osmond, Neb., and about 50 people from 23 communities brought in special heirloom items to be evaluated by professional ap-



*A valuable antique was discovered at the Antique Critique Show and Tell, hosted by the **Northeast Nebraska RC&D**.*

praisers. The highest valued item was a porcelain figurine of two oxen and a boy, which was in almost perfect condition. The estimator felt it was worth \$2,000. The most interesting item seen was a Hopalong Cassidy radio, valued at \$500.

For those who brought in items, it was chance to answer many questions they had for their antiques: Should they keep it, sell it, put it away so it can't be broken, just use it, or perhaps increase their insurance coverage for that item? Many learned from just listening and seeing new items. It was also an opportunity for antique dealers to see what items are in the area in case they'd like to add to their collections.

Over 500 people attended the Center for Rural Affairs' fourth annual Marketplace entrepreneurship conference held in Kearney. The conference helps link small businesses with technical and financial resources from across the state. **South Central Nebraska RC&D** assisted with planning and publicity for the conference.



Recreation & Tourism

Nebraska has a lot to offer when it comes to recreation and tourism.

With pristine rivers, wide open spaces, and natural beauty, rural Nebraska can provide many opportunities for unique and affordable vacations. The Nebraska RC&Ds are working with local communities and organizations to promote Nebraska's rich tourism and recreation opportunities.



Native American dancers participate in the Intertribal Gathering at Ft. Robinson State Park in northwest Nebraska. The **Panhandle RC&D** helps organize the event.

Scenic Byways

Designating a highway a “Scenic Byway” is a great way to promote an area and encourage tourism. Efforts to designate U.S. Highway 136 a Nebraska Scenic Byway began in 1994. Since then, with the assistance of the **Five Rivers RC&D**, members along Highway 136 have been successful in promoting tourism along Scenic Byway 136, now labeled as Heritage Highway, which stretches from Brownville to Edison, Neb. Heritage Highway promotes many historical and outdoor activities as well as charming restaurants and lodging options to travelers along a 238 mile stretch in southeast Nebraska.

The **Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D** hosts an “Artist of the Month” where local artists display their artwork for an entire



Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D's “Looking for Art” event attracted 445 visitors. More than 500 visitors viewed the artwork in 2010. Since this project began in 2002, more than 100 artists have shown their work.

To expand this project even further, the RC&D partnered with the Lewis & Clark Scenic Byway to bring artists together where they sell their artwork over a 2-day weekend.

The Byway and the RC&D called this self-guided art tour, “Looking for Art”. Thirty-two artists took part in the inaugural event with 445 visitors signing in.

The USDA Rural Development awarded the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway (SJSB) a \$99,900 Rural Business Enterprise Grant that will support business development and entrepreneurship along Nebraska Highway 2. In partnership with the Byway, the **Sandhills RC&D** will perform the grant administration duties.

The SJSB will use this grant to promote existing Byway businesses, raise awareness of new business creation opportunities and attract travelers to a

rural and relatively underserved region of Nebraska. Funds will be used for marketing, promotion and technical assistance. Targeted counties include Blaine, Custer, Garden, Grant, Hooker, Sheridan, Sherman and Thomas.

Tourism Promotion

The Friends of the Intertribal Gathering (FIG) is a committee under the **Panhandle RC&D**. It is a group of individuals who have joined together to support an annual Intertribal Gathering at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford, Neb. This event has brought together over 20 tribal affiliations from Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming.

The annual effort has created 18 seasonal jobs, retained one business, improved a recreational area of 5 acres, and increased the attendance to Ft. Robinson State Park by 3,500 visitors.

The **Southwest Nebraska RC&D** provided assistance to develop a virtual bird watching experience and monthly electronic newsletter on the Nebraska Rural Living website, www.chickendancetrail.com. The monthly newsletter provides articles about various rural businesses and experiences and goes to 1,450 subscribers monthly. The website averages 9,500 hits per month, with people from 13 states responding to various offers. The site showcases the positive attributes of southwest Nebraska.

Events and Establishments

South Central Nebraska RC&D assisted with planning



Visitors from all across Nebraska and 17 other states attended the “Half Way to St. Pat’s” festival in Greeley, Neb. The **Loup Basin RC&D** assisted with the project.

and logistics for the Watchable Wildlife National Conference held in Kearney, Neb. Over 150 attendees learned about the wide variety of wildlife viewing opportunities in the Rainwater Basin and Central Platte Valley.

PrairieLand RC&D assisted the village of Meadow Grove to plan the Feather & Dance Celebration. Over 200 people from several states, and as far away as Brazil and Australia, attended the event held near Meadow Grove, which shared the history, legends, songs and dances of the Native American tribes of northeast Nebraska.

Project partners were the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, **North-east Nebraska RC&D**, Meadow Grove Booster Club, Terry James, Antelope County Resource Center, Highway 14 Association, US Indian School in Genoa, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Total value of the project was nearly \$35,000 which

included over 520 hours of volunteer time.

The **Loup Basin RC&D** assisted with promoting the Greeley Irish Festival - “Half Way To St. Pat’s”. On the third Saturday in September, Greeley, Neb., becomes the Irish Capital of Nebraska as the town’s population swells by three or four times.

This celebration features traditional Irish music, food and culture. Bands from Ireland and the U.S. perform as do bagpipers and Irish dancers. Festival goers are given the opportunity to learn Irish dance, play a bagpipe, and learn about traditional Irish musical instruments.

Visitors from 64 of Nebraska’s 91 counties and 17 other states attended. Over eighty volunteers and supporters helped make an estimated \$80,000 economic impact on Greeley and an additional \$10,000 impact to communities within a 50 mile radius.

Community

Development

Small, rural communities face several challenges, including a lack of affordable housing, suitable housing for the elderly, or a need to update public facilities. Some issues seem like they only impact big cities, such as drug addiction or alcohol abuse, but small towns face these problems as well. Since small towns may not have as many resources as larger cities, Nebraska RC&Ds work with local communities to help them meet challenges and develop solutions.



The Trailblazer RC&D helped 15 communities re-plant trees in public spaces.

Investing in Public Recreation Areas

Due to an ice storm in 2006 there were many trees damaged in the communities in the **Trailblazer RC&D** area. The RC&D worked with the Nebraska Forest Service to replant shade trees in public areas of 15 communities.

The Nebraska Forest Service completed a tree inventory to determine which species of trees would be best suited for the area. The Trailblazer RC&D submitted a grant to the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum to assist in offsetting some of the cost of replacing the damaged and declining trees in these communities.

To date, communities in the Trailblazer RC&D area have planted 270 trees on public areas, i.e. such as parks, ball-fields, or schools. The trees have had excellent survival rates and improved community beautification.

The “Save our Swanson” (SOS) group is working with the **Southwest Nebraska RC&D**

to reclaim recreation areas at Swanson Lake that have fallen into disrepair during the drought years and through ever decreasing state funding.

In the fall, Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation district donated several days use of their equipment to remove trees from beaches. In the spring, Hitchcock County schools brought over 100 junior and senior high students to the lake for a clean-up day. Then in the summer, the RC&D managed a 9 person AmeriCorps Team that worked on clearing beaches of Swanson Reservoir. The team of 5 women and 4 men from the ages of 18-24 worked for 5 weeks in temperatures exceeding 100 degrees to clear 29 acres of beaches of invasive trees, weeds and trash that took over during the drought years.

This effort cleared beaches that improved the access for an estimated 59,000 visitor days at Swanson Reservoir.

Improving Community Facilities and Services

The **Sandhills RC&D** is assisting the Pioneer Memorial Rest Home, to improve the energy efficiency of their facility. A grant to acquire stimulus funds of \$59,000 through the Nebraska Energy Office will provide needed resources to complete energy efficiency updates to the facility.

The **PrairieLand RC&D** was asked by the Columbus Multicultural Alliance to assist with organizing a community garden.

The RC&D worked with local individuals and organizations to find the site for the garden, ar-



*The **PrairieLand RC&D** helped Columbus, Neb., establish a community garden, which brought together members of the community and provided a source of locally grown food for over 25 families.*

range for sod removal, and mark the garden plots.

All 40 plots were quickly assigned to 27 applicants, which include a Hispanic church and the Columbus Community Hospital.

A ribbon cutting held on Earth Day was attended by project partners. A community garden supper was held, which featured several pounds of fresh produce from the garden. The 45 attendees were provided with the recipes for all of the dishes served and also provided guidance on canning and other food preservation techniques.

The Columbus Community Garden project allowed 27 gardeners and their families to produce their own locally grown vegetables. The gardeners represented a cross section of Columbus community members, organizations and cultures. They were able to become better acquainted with their fellow gardeners as they worked their garden plots.

The **Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D** helped plan and conduct the “MidStates Community Development Conference”. This conference is held once a year and attracts nearly 200 business and community leaders from Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska. The theme this year was “The Power of Partnerships”.

Those in attendance this year attended their choice of several sessions, where they gained ideas they could use in their own communities.

The **Five Rivers RC&D** helped establish Nemaha (County) Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse (NADAA), which has a membership of over 100 students from local high schools, as well as community members in the Nemaha County area.

The coalition has five goals: to promote programs about drugs, alcohol, and health; to reduce substance abuse by youth; to participate in getting grants to help prevent drug abuse; to establish collaboration amount various agencies and groups; and to create a county-wide and regional prevention system.

Some of educational activities of NADAA include Red Ribbon Week, anti-bullying workshops, parent forums, fundraisers, etc.



*The **Five Rivers RC&D** helped establish the Nemaha (County) Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse (NADAA) group, which has over 100 members from local high schools and communities.*

Education

Nebraska RC&Ds work with communities, organizations, and individuals to provide learning opportunities across the state. RC&D events help landowners learn more about how to manage natural resources on their property, teach school children about the environment, and help communities learn about its local history. Nebraska RC&Ds are working with local communities to enrich lives and garner an appreciation for Nebraska's vast attributes.

Research and Discovery Opportunities

The Starke Round Barn is four miles east of Red Cloud, Neb. Built in 1902, it has become a site visited by hundreds each year to see the largest round barn in America.

The **Trailblazer RC&D** is assisting with efforts to restore this landmark and replace the roof before it is damaged. Other plans for the historical structure include making it a heritage site and tourism attraction. This would create local jobs and be a positive step for the community's economic development.

In August of each year there is a promotional event called Barnfest, which is a full day of outdoor cooking, butter churning, cider pressing, and many more educational activities. Old time farm machinery displays and demonstrations are also performed. Last year, over 300

attended. The proceeds go towards restoring the historic barn. When completed there will be a farmers markets and tourism events held at the barn.

The **North Central Nebraska RC&D** decided it was time to upgrade the office and surrounding lot. To get this project off the ground, the RC&D partnered with the FFA class at Rock County High School. A course in landscape design was offered, and the students are working on a plan for the RC&D property.

Students met with the RC&D's landscape committee to understand the goals of the "client." They also took measurements of the area in front of the office. Each student will develop a plan, and the RC&D will then select one, or possibly combine ideas from each to form a final design. The goal is to put the plan in place during 2011.

The location of the RC&D office next to the school grounds makes this a great opportunity to work with students to provide a hands-on learning experience.

Environmental Education

The Keep Loup Basin Beautiful organization, which is sponsored in part by the **Loup Basin RC&D**, presented to 719 students in 18 schools, and to 12 community groups with 255 in attendance, and handed out over 10,000 informational brochures and educational items. There were 239 volunteers that logged 479 hours helping educate students and members of the community about the importance of recycling.



Children visit the historic round barn near Red Cloud, Neb., to learn about the region's rich cultural and farming history.



Students in St. Libory, Neb., are excited to learn about ways they can help the environment through the Loup Basin RC&D's "I Recycle" program.

To assist the **Sandhills RC&D** area with renewable energy development, the RC&D Council adopted a project that assists schools with installing small wind turbines as a teaching tool in hopes of developing student interest in the emerging wind industry in Nebraska.

Mullen Public Schools recently received funding to install a 1.8 kW wind turbine north of the high school. The turbine will slightly reduce the electrical costs for the school, but its main purpose will be educational. Juniors and seniors in upper level math and science classes study data logged by the turbine, and monitor wind speed and turbine performance.

The Southeast Nebraska Grazing Association (SENGA), with assistance from **Five Rivers RC&D**, has been hosting educational pasture walks. Several members have invited the group to their properties to discuss grazing trends and methods they

use, what works and what does not, and to seek advice of fellow members. Together, the 66 SENGA members and other grazing land organizations make a great educational partnership to continue best stewardship practices on our grazing lands.

The Norris Institute has twelve acres of land on the west edge of McCook, Neb., where they plan to develop a Prairie Arboretum/learning center. A portion of the property will also host a Rural Electrification Admin-



Students see how goats are an effective method to control weeds on the site that will become the Prairie Arboretum/learning center near McCook, Neb.

istration museum. **Southwest Nebraska RC&D** is providing technical assistance in the planning and fund-raising portions of the project. Nearly 200 hours of volunteer time have been spent on this project this year.

Educating Entrepreneurs

Twenty-five youth from 13 communities proved they could be successful at their mini-entrepreneurial businesses during the **Northeast Nebraska RC&D's** Makin' Money Camps held in June at Wayne and Creighton.

Campers developed business that produced and sold scrap-booking kits, gourd birdhouses, brownie mix, or tin can yard art. Campers took out play-money loans based on their business plans, and met with their "banker" to discuss business issues and the repayment of those loans. Downtown business tours introduced participants to local entrepreneurs and real-life business situations.

Ten area businesses received certificates for their participation in the 2010 EDGE (Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs) training sponsored by PK (Phelps/Kearney County) Partnership. EDGE is a 12-week intensive training that provides entrepreneurs the tools to succeed in business. **South Central Nebraska RC&D**, as a participant in the PK Partnership, assists with organization and publicity for business assistance projects like the EDGE class in Phelps and Kearney counties and the surrounding area.



The Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) program is sponsored by the Natural Resources Conservation Service under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

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