

# SANDHILLS RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT



2010 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 4

"Making the Sandhills a Better Life"

*Serving Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Arthur, McPherson, Logan, Keith and Lincoln Counties.*

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## 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NEBRASKA GRAZING CONFERENCE AUG. 10-11 IN KEARNEY



The 2010 Nebraska Grazing Conference will be held at the Kearney Holiday Inn on August 10 and 11. Eighteen speakers from Nebraska, three other states and two other countries will speak on a myriad of subjects related to the grazing industry. Topics include various grazing strategies, animal behavior, grass-fed beef production and marketing, using custom mineral mixes, improved forages, restoring grassland ecosystems, issues related to passing on the agricultural enterprise from one generation to the next, and much more! The Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition will be

meeting on Aug. 9th for a Strategic Planning meeting and Annual Meeting/Election of Officers.

The two-day conference pre-registration fee (postmarked by August 1) is \$80. The fee covers lunch both days, the evening banquet, break refreshments, and the conference proceedings. Registration fee will be waived for students who will still be in high school next year and who pre-register by the Aug. 1 deadline, compliments of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Reduced registration fees apply for other full-time students. The NE Grazing Lands Coalition will also be reimbursing the \$80 registration fee for the

first 50 graziers that register and participate in the NGLC Annual Meeting on Aug. 9th. Late fees apply to registrations postmarked after August 1 and to walk-ins.

For more information, go to the Center for Grassland Studies Web site, [www.grassland.unl.edu](http://www.grassland.unl.edu), contact the center at (402) 472-4101, e-mail [grassland@unl.edu](mailto:grassland@unl.edu), or contact a local UNL extension office.

The event is sponsored by several public and private organizations, including the conference underwriters – UNL Center for Grassland Studies, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition.

## Our Mission

..to create an environment where all the citizens of the region work together to revitalize the rural economy, enhance and protect the natural resources, improve community infrastructure, and improve and increase tourism opportunities.

## PIONEER MEMORIAL NURSING HOME RECEIVES ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANT

The Sandhills RC&D recently assisted the Pioneer Memorial Rest Home in the application process for a Federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG). Total cost of the project will be \$59,000 and Pioneer Memorial Rest Home was awarded a \$47,200 grant to assist in the completion of this undertaking. The project will increase energy efficiency, reduce energy consumption

and reduce energy costs through efficiency improvements in the building. The plan will replace outdated equipment including a boiler, 20 single pane windows and three entrance doors. Total estimated energy costs savings is projected to be \$7,291.00 annually according to an energy audit conducted by Nebraska Public Power District. The Pioneer Memorial Rest Home is a significant em-

ployer in the region with the facility currently employing 41 staff from seven Sandhills counties surrounding Mullen. This is equivalent to approximately 10 percent of the population of Mullen and will help retain a major employer in the area. Keeping energy costs in the facility as low as feasible helps maintain vital service in the central Sandhills.

## NEBRASKA GRAZING LANDS COALITION HELD FIRST NEBRASKA SANDHILLS GRAZING SYSTEMS AND GRASSLAND BIRD DIVERSITY TOUR



The first Nebraska Sandhills Grazing Systems and Grassland Bird Diversity Tour was held at the Switzer Ranch-Calamus Outfitters near Burwell on June 2nd & 3rd. The event was “sold out” 2 weeks before registration deadline with nearly 60 individuals attending the workshop. The tour was sponsored by NRCS, Loup Basin RC&D, Audubon Nebraska, Grassland Foundation, World Wildlife Fund, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Sandhills Task Force, UN-L, Nebraska Bird Partnership and Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition. Participants viewed abundant bird populations and learned how rangeland management plays an important role in the state’s agricultural

industry as well as provides an exceptional environment for Nebraska’s bird habitat.

The two-day workshop began with a session about the Switzer Ranch rangeland management and history followed by a plant identification session lead by Leah Carson with NRCS and Sheila Luoma, Loup Basin RC&D Coordinator. Audubon Nebraska presented classroom and field-based bird identification sessions with information regarding habitat needs of various species and how grazing practices influence the quality of grassland bird habitat. In the evening, a buffet dinner was served in the Switzer Ranch barn while Audubon Nebraska officially presented the Morgan, Price Gracie Creek and Switzer Ranches with their Important Bird Area designation, the first private-lands IBA in Nebraska. Following dinner, habitat speaker, Bob Budd, with the State of Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, gave a compelling speech on the importance of wildlife on the ranch.

The second day started out early with bird watching and recording species with

the Audubon Nebraska. By mid-morning, participants were bused to the Barta Brothers ranch near Rose, NE to learn about a study that is being conducted on habitat use of prairie chickens during nesting and brooding, presented by Walt Schacht, Larkin Powell and Lars Anderson with the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at the School of Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. To finish the tour, guests traveled to the ranch of Bob and Aaron Price for a picnic lunch and presentation on the Price Ranch holistic management and its positive impact on grassland birds.

## INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES A POSSIBILITY

In April, 1999, a small group of organization leaders and agency personnel gathered in Holyoke, Colorado, to discuss whether there might be anything that could be done to salvage a piece of the disappearing rural America. Representatives of four organizations were present at this meeting: representatives from the USDA Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) districts, the Center for Rural Affairs (Lyons, Nebraska), Holistic Management International (Albuquerque, New Mexico), and the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union-Cooperative Development Center (Denver, Colorado).

During deliberations, the four organizations established a new entity called Ogallala Commons, a structured resource network to serve as the catalyst for the revitalization of agriculture and communities in the High Plains region which produces about thirteen percent of total U.S. agricultural production. The new entity was envisioned with a top priority of building self-sustaining rural communities based on regional solidarity and sufficiency within the High Plains-Ogallala Aquifer region in the central U.S. In line with the long range goals of the organization, this group coordinates a

variety of internships in local communities. As the program was developed, the focus has been in the southern tier of states. But this summer that range expanded and the first intern in Nebraska served in Arnold, NE working with the community economic development office. The goal is to expand the internship opportunities throughout central Nebraska. Interns may serve in a variety of capacities, depending on the needs of a particular community. The Sandhills RC&D is currently investigating internship possibilities for next summer. Anyone interested in learning more should contact the Sandhills RC&D office.

### SANDHILLS RC&D OFFICERS

**Willis Roethemeyer**

President

**Berva Arensdorf**

1st Vice Chair

**Tom Witt**

2nd Vice Chair

**Tammy White**

Secretary

**Mitch Glidden**

Treasurer

### RC&D STAFF

Twila Phillips

Executive Secretary

### NRCS STAFF

Bob Broweleit

RC&D Coordinator

## Society for Range Management - Nebraska Section Range Youth Camp



The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual Range Youth Camp sponsored by the Society for Range Management, Nebraska Section, was held at the Halsey 4-H camp June 7 – 11<sup>th</sup>. Youth attending learned to identify range plants and range sites, judge range condition, and determine stocking rates. Other topics covered included livestock health and handling, range improvements, geology, and wildlife. Crew competi-

tions were held for a variety of activities including water relays, canoe races, scavenger hunts, range judging, and plant identification. During the tour of a local ranch, campers participated in a range judging contest and a “ranch rodeo.” A steak fry and dance topped off the week. With nearly 50 years to perfect and evolve this curriculum, every student, no matter what prior experience they had, learned substantial information



that will help them become more aware of Nebraska’s most prevalent land use.

## BYWAY RECEIVES \$99,900 GRANT

**It’s official!** The USDA Rural Development has awarded the Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway a \$99,900 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) that will support business development and entrepreneurship along Nebraska Highway 2. The SJSB will use this grant to contract with a qualified individual (s) to assist them in promoting existing Byway businesses, raise awareness of new business creation opportunities and attract travelers to a rural and relatively underserved region of NE. Funds will be used for marketing, promotion and technical assistance. Targeted counties include Blaine, Custer, Garden, Grant, Hooker, Sheridan, Sherman and Thomas. Specific action items in this one year grant include:

- Build relationships between Byway & business community
- Increase business development training
- Expand Byway communications including press releases, feature stories, web-

site upgrades & bi-monthly newsletters

- Develop & implement state & regional media advertising exposure
- Develop presentation regarding Byway amenities, quality of life and business development opportunities
- Develop business directory
- Develop user survey to find traveler’s needs & experiences
- Develop & market vacation packages with local attractions & businesses
- Make business opportunity presentations to high school career fairs, college job fairs, chambers of commerce & economic development groups
- Conduct workshops and/or events targeting specific interest groups

- Promote the Byway & businesses at trade shows to increase exposure, boost traffic and create economic development opportunities
- Develop biannual familiarization travel tours for press & media contacts
- Encourage young adults to return to the area to work and live

The promotion of the tourism industry is crucial to the continuing viability of our villages and local businesses that operate along this byway. This grant will assist in the implementation of the long term strategic plan of tourism marketing and business development that is desperately needed to help stabilize current declining population trends in this rural area.



*SJSB Vision Statement:* To Improve our rural economy by working cooperatively to enhance the visitor experience.

### BOARD MEMBERS

- Eric Hansen
- Dr. Steve Boyer
- Dan Deibler
- Cliff Welsh
- Merlin Ring
- Toni Ring
- Stan Pettit
- Rex Lanka
- Carl Rundback
- Lonnie Peters
- Virginia Sizer

We're on the web!

[www.sandhillsrccd.org](http://www.sandhillsrccd.org)

## SANDHILLS RC&D

*Resource Conservation & Development*

P.O. Box 28

102 SE 2nd Street

Mullen, NE 69152

Phone: 308-546-0636

Fax: 308-545-0637

E-mail: [info@sandhillsrccd.org](mailto:info@sandhillsrccd.org)



*" MAKING THE SANDHILLS A BETTER LIFE "*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

July 27th—7:00 pm (CT) Sandhills RC&D meeting—Sutherland Village office

Aug. 4-5—Leafy Spurge Tour & Conference—McCook

Aug. 9th—1:00 pm (CT) NGLC Strategic Planning Meeting—Kearney Holiday Inn

7:00 pm—NGLC Annual Meeting and Election of Officers

Aug. 10—11th—Nebraska Grazing Conference—Kearney

Aug. 11th—1:00 (MT) Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway Meeting—Ellsworth

Aug. 25th—8:30 am (MT) - Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory Open House—features activities and commercial exhibits geared toward rangeland management and the beef cattle industry

Aug. 25th—8:30-11:00 am (CT) - North Platte—Mid-Plains Community College—USDA Rural Development & U.S. Small Business Administration free informational session for Nebraska lenders and economic development agencies

Aug. 31—Sept. 2—NRCS All Employee meeting—Kearney

Sept. 11—Mullen/Seneca—Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway Annual Tanking and evening Star Gazing

Sept. 24-26—Junk Jaunt—Sandhills Journey and Loup Basin Scenic Byways

Sandhills Resource Conservation and Development Council receives technical assistance from the United States department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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The Sandhills RC&D is currently updating the Five Year Area Plan 2011-2015. A current draft of the plan may be seen at the Sandhills RC&D website: [www.sandhillsrccd.org](http://www.sandhillsrccd.org). The draft continues to be edited and modified so questions and comments are encouraged and welcomed.