

Nebraska Environmental Trust Funding

Conserving, enhancing, and restoring the natural environments of Nebraska.

NEBRASKA STATEWIDE SURVEY KEY FINDINGS

Nebraskans overwhelmingly stand behind the Nebraska Environmental Trust, recognizing it as a vital force for protecting our natural resources and investing in the future of our communities across the state.*



2 IN 5

NEBRASKANS HAVE HEARD OF THE NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

79%

AMONG THOSE, THE VAST MAJORITY VIEWS THE TRUST FAVORABLY.

83%

AFTER A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST, THE VAST MAJORITY HAVE A FAVORABLE OPINION.



MORE THAN $\frac{3}{4}$ OF VOTERS OF EACH POLITICAL PARTY HAVE A FAVORABLE OPINION OF THE NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

AFFILIATIONS

77% REPUBLICAN **83%** INDEPENDANT **93%** DEMOCRATIC

*METHODOLOGY: In 2022, New Bridge Strategy conducted a survey of 500 registered voters across Nebraska via live telephone interviews. Interviews were distributed proportionally across the state.

Strong Statewide Support

Nebraska Environmental Trust Impact

It's time to answer the call and protect Nebraska's wildlife habitat.

Funding important conservation efforts across the state to further environmental protection has bipartisan support. Most voters in each party believe some good conservation activities have occurred, but more needs to be done to protect land, water, and wildlife habitat in Nebraska.

63% REPUBLICAN

62% INDEPENDANT

55% DEMOCRATIC



Audubon | GREAT PLAINS



Preserving Nature, Protecting Nebraska's Future

Across Nebraska, the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) makes it possible for people to experience the beauty, wonder, and restorative power of nature.

What is NET

The Nebraska Environmental Trust was established in 1992 through the Nebraska Environmental Trust Act and funded by proceeds from the Nebraska Lottery. It was created to conserve, enhance and restore the natural environments of Nebraska, acknowledging that a prosperous future requires a sound natural environment, and that we must act dynamically, progressively and systematically to ensure bountiful and thriving natural resources.

A lasting legacy of NET lies in its thoughtful structure. From the beginning, it was crafted to complement and leverage private resources, targeting environmental needs with the greatest potential to enhance Nebraska's environmental quality for generations to come.

Why We Care

We believe where birds thrive, people prosper. Grassland birds have suffered the greatest loss, with more than 720 million breeding individuals lost across 31 species since 1970, a 40 percent decline. Additionally, Nebraska is home to the annual migration of more than one million Sandhill Cranes that face habitat loss and degradation.

The Nebraska Environmental Trust is a critical partner for us, and the many partner organizations we collaborate with, in support of our efforts to protect birds and the places they need, today and tomorrow. NET funding has helped us leverage significant private investment that together, further efforts to advance conservation of our natural environment.

**Let's honor voter commitment
by protecting the Trust.**

Continued Support Needed

We need your help to protect the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Created by voters to safeguard our natural resources through Lottery proceeds, the Trust has been vital for conservation across the state.

NET funding reaches all 93 Nebraska counties, supporting nonprofits, municipalities, utilities, and more. It also leverages private investment, built into its scoring criteria to maximize impact. Funding supports projects focused on habitat, surface and groundwater, waste, air, and soil management.

Last session, proposals threatened its integrity, and with a looming budget shortfall, the risk remains. These funds were approved by the will of the people for the environment—not to balance budgets.



Restoring Grasslands With Prescribed Fire

Prescribed fire offers benefits to landowners, wildlife, and the ecosystem. When done properly, prescribed fire is a safe and effective tool to control invasive species, improve species diversity, and improve soil health— all while protecting the prairie for future generations.

Good for the herd, good for the bird.

Prairies evolved with natural wildfires, and today habitat managers use prescribed fire to mimic this process and keep woody species at bay. Grassland birds rely on prairies for their survival and well-being due to the unique characteristics of these ecosystems. These ecosystems are vital for grassland birds, providing nesting and foraging habitat, abundant insects for food, and open space for predator awareness, courtship, and territorial behaviors.

BENEFITS OF PRESCRIBED FIRE FOR BIRDS

- Restores and maintains healthy prairie ecosystems that grassland birds depend on
- Promotes growth of native grasses and wildflowers, improving nesting and foraging habitat
- Supports insect diversity and abundance, a vital food source for many birds
- Creates a natural cycle of renewal and habitat variety, offering birds spaces for nesting, feeding, and displaying

FOR LANDOWNERS

- Improves forage quality for livestock by encouraging nutrient-rich plant growth
- Reduces the risk of uncontrolled wildfires by managing excess vegetation
- Helps control invasive species and woody encroachment, lowering long-term management costs
- Enhances overall land health and productivity, supporting both agricultural and conservation goals
- Strengthens partnerships and community stewardship through collaborative land management

Nebraska Environmental Trust Impact

Funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust is helping restore grasslands through prescribed fire through grant support for equipment, such as mobile burn units, as well as planning, training, and outreach to private landowners.

According to data from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, funding from NET has supported 16 prescribed fire projects in different regions across the state. This funding helped leverage over \$1.8 million in private investment. This combined funding has been vital to advancing prescribed fire as a critical habitat and land restoration practice.

How Easements Safeguard Nebraska's Future

Conservation easements are an effective tool to protect prairie and working lands, providing lasting conservation at a lower cost while keeping the land in private ownership and stewardship.

Conservation restoration landscape/Audubon

Conservation Easements: A Landowner Choice

Conservation and agricultural land easements are voluntary, incentive-based agreements that permanently protect natural, agricultural, and historical resources on private land. Landowners restrict certain future uses, such as development, while organizations monitor and enforce the easement.

In Nebraska, only 0.35% of land is under easement, with an average of just 5,000 acres added each year—about 0.0001% of the state's total acreage.

BENEFITS OF CONSERVATION EASEMENTS FOR BIRDS

- Ensures that prairies, wetlands, and other natural lands remain intact for future generations.
- Safeguards critical habitats and migration corridors for birds, pollinators, and other species.
- Keeps working lands productive while balancing conservation goals.
- Protects clean air, water, and healthy ecosystems that sustain Nebraska communities.

FOR LANDOWNERS

- Financial benefits, including potential tax benefits, making land conservation a smart economic decision.
- Ensures the land remains intact and protected, easing the complexities of estate planning and passing land to the next generation without the pressure to sell or subdivide.
- Aligns land use with their personal conservation values, ensuring their legacy reflects what matters most to them.
- Easements are tailored to individual properties and landowner goals, allowing continued private ownership and use of the land while protecting its conservation values in perpetuity.

Should landowners have the right to make permanent decisions about their land?

- Landowners make “forever” decisions all the time regarding their land.
- One of the most basic of property rights is the right of a landowner to determine the future of their land.
- If a landowner wants to sell their farm for a shopping mall, that is their right even though it is a permanent decision. If they subdivide a ranch into a housing development or ranchettes, it will never be a ranch again.
- A conservation and agricultural land easement is the flip side of this same property right, used by people who want to make a forever decision to conserve natural resources, historic sites, and agriculturally productive land.