



NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

APPLICATION COVER SHEET

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

Instructions to word processing users. Double click on each slash character ("\"), including the ones above in the header, and replace them with your entry. Use your find function (Ctrl + F) to find the slash character "\". This will position your cursor at each response.

- 3. County(s) where project is located: 23 county area in western and southwestern Nebraska (see attached map)
4. Nearest town:NA
5. Total Amount Requested: \$2,695,000
6. Years of funding requested (select one): 1 2 3

Contact Person:

7. Name: Steve Gaul
8. Title: Planning and Assistance Division Supervisor

9. Organization: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

10. Address, City, State & Zip: PO Box 94676, Lincoln, NE 68509-4676

11. Daytime Phone:402-471-3955
12. Alternate phone: 402-471-2363
13. Fax: 402-471-2900

14. E-mail sgaul@dnr.state.ne.us
15. Sponsor web page: http://www.dnr.state.ne.us

16. Is this a continuation request for a project previously funded by the Trust: YES NO: \
Is this a resubmission of a project application previously not funded by the Trust: YES NO: \

17. Please indicate which category best describes the applicant: \
Selections are: Individual City or County Natural Resources District Federal Agency Private for Profit Private Nonprofit Consortium School, Irrigation, Power or Development District State Agency Other (specify):

18. Will this project receive federal funds or require a federal review or permit? YES NO: See answer below
If yes, identify the agency(s) and its role:

This project is not expected to be part of the specific match used for a federal project. However, it is expected to be used to help administer and bring a federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement project about. The extra landowner cost share provided may increase demand for participation in the federal CREP program.

19. Will this project receive other State of Nebraska funds or require a state review or permit? YES NO: \
If yes, identify the agency(s) and its role: \

20. In 300 words or less provide an overview of the project for which you seek funding. If you are asking the Trust to fund only a portion of the project, indicate the components for which you seek funding.

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this project is to help reduce the quantity of water being used for irrigated agriculture in selected areas of the Platte and Republican River Basins in Nebraska. This is to be accomplished through two major activities: 1) providing cost share funds for landowners to seed areas to grass, and 2) to provide funds to hire a state government level administrator for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) related activities in Nebraska. These activities in turn would provide state support for Nebraska participation in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's CREP program.



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This project is especially important to Nebraska for several reasons. First, the targeted areas of the Platte and Republican basins have an imbalance between surface water supplies and demand. This program can help those areas adjust as long-term water management plans are developed and implemented. Second, this grant would be used to help administer and prepare for use of what is expected to be a very large sum (\$126 million or more over 10 years) of federal assistance. This infusion of outside funds would be very beneficial to the state. Finally, this project would provide major conservation benefits to the state, providing cost share that with state and local match should provide grass seeding for about 85,000 acres and providing an administrator that will help keep 100,000 acres of Nebraska in conservation uses. The conservation practices in which those lands will be placed include native grass, filter strips, wetland restoration, wildlife habitat, riparian buffers, and rare and declining habitat.

21. On behalf of the sponsor(s) named above, I hereby certify that the information contained in this application, including all attachments, is true, accurate and complete.

Authorized Signature of Sponsor Organization

Title

Date

Typed or Printed Name of Authorized Signatory

Typed or Printed Title



NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

NARRATIVE SECTION

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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In five pages or less, provide a discussion of your project. Be sure to cover the points specified in the instructions.

NARRATIVE

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to help reduce the quantity of water being used for irrigated agriculture in selected areas of the Platte and Republican River Basins in Nebraska. This grant would be used to help the State of Nebraska and landowners implement a Conservation Reserve Enhancement program grant which the state applied for on August 26, 2004. Water quantity is to be saved by a reduction in consumptive use on 100,000 crop acres. Practices implemented will create and additional 85,000 acres of general wildlife habitat on those acres, 10,000 acres of filter strips and buffers, and 5,000 acres of wetland habitat. It will also result in the improvement of water quality.

Basic Description

Project purposes are to be accomplished through two major activities: 1) providing cost share funds for landowners to seed areas to grass, and 2) to provide funds to hire an administrator for Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) related activities in Nebraska. These activities in turn would provide state support for Nebraska participation in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's CREP program, which it is hoped will bring over \$126 million in federal conservation money into the state over a 10 year period. With expected 20% state match the total program is valued at over \$158 million. However, an additional \$10 million of cost share is needed for seeding program acres and that is to be shared on a 50% federal and 50% state/landowner basis. It is anticipated that this grant would enable the state to cost share with landowners on a 50% basis as well as administer overall CREP funds. Although, the CREP grant proposal has been submitted to the Federal government, there has not been time for a federal response.

This project is especially important to Nebraska for several reasons. First, the targeted areas of the Platte and Republican basins have an imbalance between surface water supplies and demand. That problem has been severely exacerbated by drought in recent years. This program can help those areas adjust as long-term water management plans are developed and implemented. Second, this grant would be used to help administer and prepare for use of a very large sum (\$126 million or more over 10 years) of federal assistance. This infusion of outside funds would be very beneficial to the state. Finally, this project would provide major conservation benefits to the state, providing cost share that with state and local match should provide grass seeding for about 85,000 acres and providing an administrator that will help keep 100,000 acres of Nebraska in conservation uses. The conservation practices those lands will be kept in include native grass, filter strips, wetland restoration, wildlife habitat, riparian buffers, and rare and declining habitat.



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Objectives

Project objectives of the overall CREP process include the following:

- 1) Reduce application of water for irrigation in the priority area by 125,000 acre-feet (over 40 billion gallons) annually. If implemented the project will meet this objective by retiring >8% (100,000 acres) of the irrigated cropland from production. Average application of irrigation water on crops in the priority area is approximately 15 inches/acre or 1.25 feet/acre.
- 2) Conserve 100,000 acre-feet of water annually within priority area reservoirs. Water that is not delivered becomes available for storage in reservoirs.
- 3) Increase flows in priority area rivers by 50,000 acre-feet annually. This water will be available to augment seasonal flows.
- 4) This project will provide 85,000 additional acres of native grassland habitat for wildlife in the priority area. This will increase the populations of pheasants and other ground nesting birds by 25% in the area. The NGPC will employ supplementary habitat development at Harlan County Reservoir. The added emphasis on habitat management is expected to provide a 50% increase in pheasants and ground nesting birds in this localized area.
- 5) Reduce the application of triazine products by 8.3% (130,000) pounds annually in the priority area. This goal will be accomplished by retiring 8.3% of the irrigated cropland in the priority area. Additional reduction of triazine products in agriculture run-off will be accomplished with the use of 10,000 acres of filter strips and an educational campaign to share appropriate use of these products.
- 6) Reduce the application of Nitrogen and Phosphorous by 8.3% (20 million pounds and 2 million pounds, respectively) annually in the priority area. This goal will be accomplished by retiring 8.3% of the irrigated cropland in the priority area. Additional reduction in leaching of Nitrate and Phosphate is anticipated through educational efforts to improve the efficiency of water and chemical use in the project area.
- 7) Assist communities whose public water supplies are affected by Nitrogen and Phosphorous contamination issues.
- 8) Provide educational assistance to project priority area irrigators to develop a more efficient use of applied water, nutrients, and herbicides.
- 9) Monitor the aquatic communities and associated habitat parameters in project priority area reservoirs and rivers to determine biological relationships.



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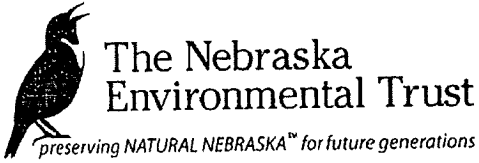
BACKGROUND

The project area includes portions of 23 counties and 7 Natural Resources Districts (NRD), associated with the Republican River, North Platte River and Platte River. Prior to settlement, the vegetative community consisted primarily of lowland tallgrass prairie along the rivers and streams and mixed loess prairie and shortgrass prairie in the remaining area. The soil under these prairie grasses was found to be fertile and quite productive given adequate moisture. Consequently, landowners capitalized on the agricultural potential by converting over 90% of the land in the project area to agricultural production. The result has been the fragmentation and substantial reduction of native vegetative communities and wetland complexes. Many wildlife species have responded negatively to these habitat changes and currently 13 different species in the project area receive some form of federal or state designation of concern.

The project priority area has been suffering from extreme drought conditions the past 5 years. The drought has stressed the availability of water supplies and accentuated the fact that a number of interests important to the state are competing for the same finite resources. This situation has been exacerbated further by the fact that farmers have been forced to apply additional water to existing irrigated cropland to offset precipitation shortfall. The Farm Service Agency (FSA) estimates the project area to contain 1,576,219 acres of cropland of which 72% is irrigated. Corn is the major crop of this area (766,070 acres) and soybeans (178,712 acres), wheat (181,809 acres) and alfalfa (172,273 acres) would be considered secondary crops.

The current drought has already cost this region millions of dollars in agricultural and recreational revenues. Without concentrated efforts, the environment, communities and industries of the proposed project area could suffer additional negative impacts. Nebraska has submitted a proposal to the Federal government to initiate a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) project to reduce irrigation demand on available surface and groundwater supplies. Secondary benefits are also anticipated, such as providing more water for aquatic communities and increased terrestrial habitat by converting cropland to approved conservation practices. These benefits would be accomplished by retiring 100,000 acres of cropland in the proposed project priority area for a period of 10-15 years. The program acres would be divided between the Platte and Republican River basins. Landowners participating in this CREP would receive the average irrigated rental rates for their county for any qualified acreage they enrolled. The 10-year cost of the project to place 100,000 acres under contract is estimated at \$158,215,000 to be divided 80% by Federal and 20% by State sources. An additional \$10,000,000 would be needed for seeding program acres that would be split 50% by federal and 50% by State and local sources. This Environmental Trust grant would be used to supply half of that state/local amount.

The Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP proposal is designed to create and enhance federal, state and local partnerships to address natural resource problems in a coordinated cost effective



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manner. The pooling of personnel and financial resources results in a targeted approach to conserve natural resources and more effectively install land management.

The CREP project priority boundaries selected to maximize water quantity savings are irrigated Nebraska cropland that is:

- designated as quick response acres in the Republican River above the Guide Rock Diversion
- within 2 miles of the North Platte River and Platte River from the Wyoming border down to the Kearney Canal diversion
- within 1-mile of the Pumpkin Creek tributary through the Morrill County line
- receiving surface irrigation water from these defined rivers.

Several criteria must be met for land parcels to qualify for the CREP program including:

- land must have been irrigated 4 of the 6 years (1996-2001)
- land must have been cropped 4 of the 6 years (1996-2001)
- over half of each land parcel enrolled must fall within the project boundaries
- to qualify as surface irrigated land, the water delivered to the land must exceed half the amount needed to augment growth of the crop on that land for 4 of the 6 years (1996-2001)
- surface irrigated acres that are supplemented by groundwater pumps do qualify
- all retired land must currently be legally and capably irrigated

The following conservation practices will be used in the Platte-Republican CREP:

Native Grass Wildlife Habitat
Filter Strips Riparian Buffer
Wetland Restoration Rare and Declining Habitat

In order to maximize benefits throughout the entire project area available acreage will be split between the Republican and Platte River basins (50,000 acres each). Enrolled land in the Republican River Basin will be ranked for potential water savings. Acres in the Platte River Basin will be available with general sign-up, but a ranking system will be developed as more detailed hydrological information becomes available.

Native grass, wildlife habitat, and rare and declining conservation practices are emphasized in this CREP to encourage enrollment of large pieces of land. A benefit to this approach is the efficiency of retiring entire irrigated fields. The efficiency of surface water delivery to fields is often less than 50%, and at times partial delivery suffers the entire loss, therefore retiring the entire field would maximize program benefits. Additionally, larger habitat sanctuaries that are more apt to act as a population source can be created with the retirement of entire fields.



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The 10,000 acres designated towards filter strips and riparian buffers will be effective at removing nutrients and water-borne pesticides. Advantages to these vegetative practices are that specific acres are removed from irrigation, as well as herbicide and nutrient applications. Also, the strips of land actively filter out herbicide and nutrient applications made on cropland above them. This common sense approach will maximize the benefits for this CREP.

STATE ADMINISTRATION

Environmental Trust funding would be used for two specific tasks related to implementing the proposed federal CREP grant. The first would be matching the landowner contribution for seeding on CREP lands. For total seeding cost it is proposed that the Federal government would pay for 50 percent and that the remaining 50% be split between the landowner and the state with a maximum of \$25 per acre in state contribution.

The second item using Environmental Trust Funds would be the hiring of an administrator for the state portion of the program. This would be a three year position charged with: 1) administration of seeding monies, 2) monitoring of state in-kind contributions to the CREP grant, 3) initiating an educational and awareness campaign in the project area, 4) making site visitations to be sure land is retired/seeded, 5) developing partnerships, 6) coordinating with private landowners, and 7) providing an annual report to the USDA. This position would be supervised through the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Two significant questions associated with implementation of this grant are likely to be: 1) will the CREP proposal to the federal government be funded, and if so on what schedule?, and 2) will there be sufficient interest in entering the CREP program to utilize available CREP and Trust dollars, and if so what will the timing be? If there is insufficient demand to utilize the CREP funding available, it is possible that the state match provided for landowner seeding may assist with creating interest/demand related to the CREP program. Alternatively, if demand for all 100,000 acres materializes in the first year, contracts could be written so that payments occur over a three-year period. There is a final question in relation to timing; specifically: "What will be done if a substantial portion of the CREP sign-up and related seeding are completed before the Environmental Trust grants are awarded in the spring of 2005?". For that reason, we request that the grant be retroactive to whatever date the CREP sign-up may begin between now and the time grants are awarded.

FINAL PRODUCT

The outcome of funding for this grant is expected to include seeding provided for approximately 85,000 acres, administration and monitoring necessary to implement a major federal grant, and the major



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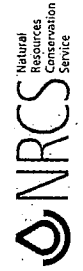
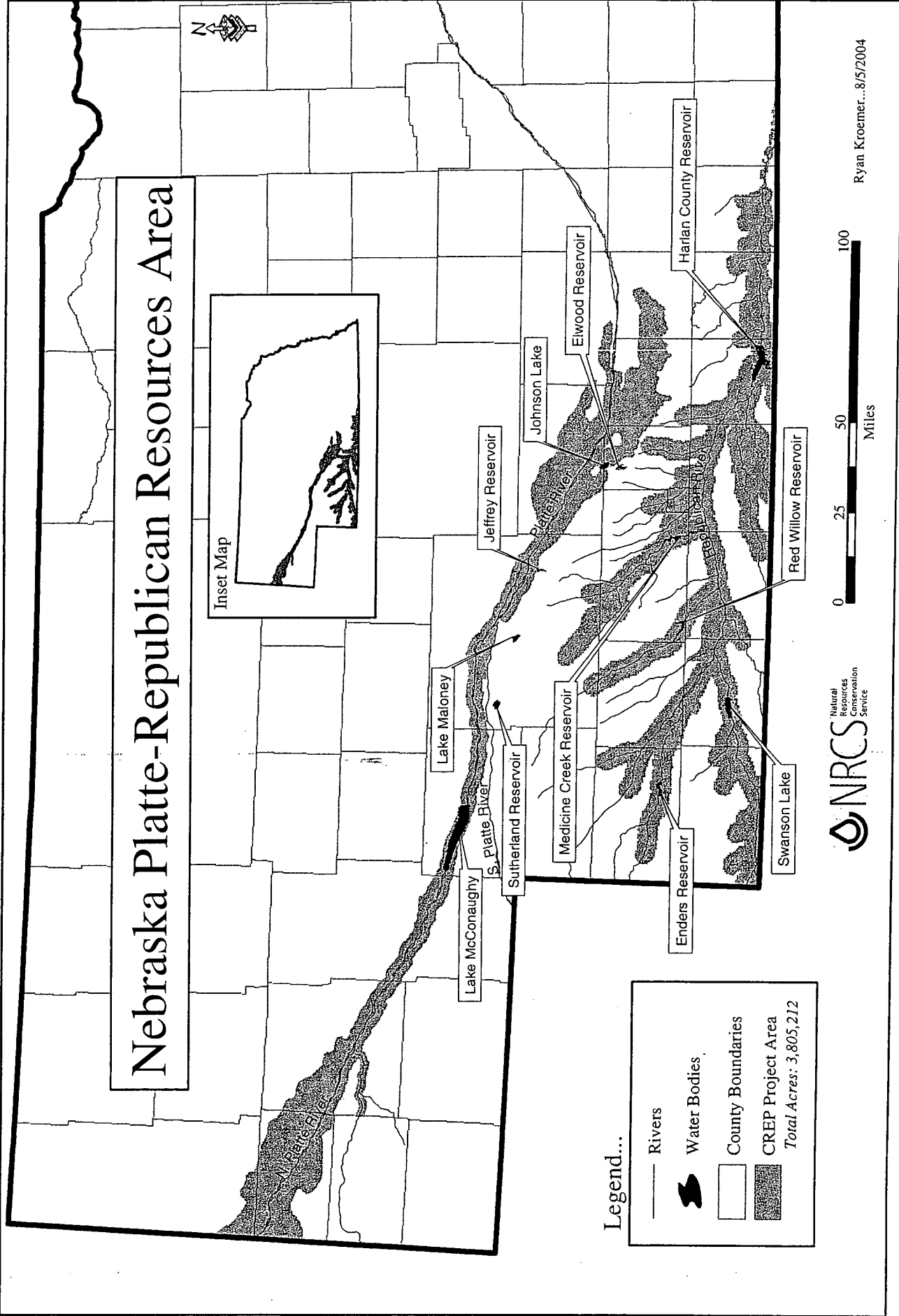
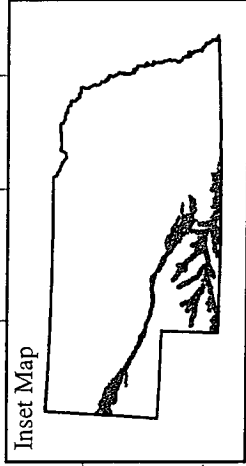
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environmental benefits and major water savings that are expected to result from that federal grant. In addition there should be increased conservation resulting from the education and awareness campaign to be initiated by the position brought about by this grant.

Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area



Ryan Kroemer... 8/5/2004



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APPLICATION BUDGET SUMMARY

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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BUDGET YEAR: SUMMARY/1 YEAR ONLY

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
1. Source of Funds ►	Nebraska Environmental Trust				TOTALS ▼
2. Budget Category ▼					
3. Salary, Benefits, Supplies, Travel, Expenses for Project Administrator	\$195,000	\	\	\	\$195,000
4. Cost Share for Seeding	\$2,500,000	\	\	\	\$2,500,000
5.					
6.					
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12. TOTALS ►	\$2,695,000				\$2,695,000

* Note: In some senses this grant is match for a federal grant of up to \$126 million over 10 years and for state match to that grant of around \$3 million per year. See text for further explanation.



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APPLICATION BUDGET YEAR ONE

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

BUDGET YEAR: ONE
 (This page is used by multi-year grants only. If your project is not a multi-year grant, then ignore or delete this page.)

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
1. Source of Funds ►	Nebraska Environmental Trust				TOTALS ▼
2. Budget Category ▼					
3. Salary, Benefits, Supplies, Travel, Expenses for Project Administrator	\$65,000	\	\	\	\$65,000
4. Cost Share for Seeding	\$834,000	\	\	\	\$834,000
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12. TOTALS ►	\$899,000				\$899,000



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APPLICATION BUDGET YEAR TWO

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

BUDGET YEAR: TWO
 (This page is used by multi-year grants only. If your project is not a multi-year grant, then ignore or delete this page.)

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
1. Source of Funds ►	Nebraska Environmental Trust				TOTALS ▼
2. Budget Category ▼					
3. Salary, Benefits, Supplies, Travel, Expenses for Project Administrator	65,000	\	\	\	\$65,000
4. Cost Share for Seeding	\$833,000	\	\	\	\$833,000
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12. TOTALS ►	\$898,000				\$898,000



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APPLICATION BUDGET YEAR THREE

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

BUDGET YEAR: THREE

(This page is used by multi-year grants only. If your project is not a multi-year grant, then ignore or delete this page.)

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
1. Source of Funds ►	Nebraska Environmental Trust				TOTALS ▼
2. Budget Category ▼					
3. Salary, Benefits, Supplies, Travel, Expenses for Project Administrator	\$65,000	\	\	\	\$65,000
4. Cost Share for Seeding	\$833,000	\	\	\	\$833,000
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12. TOTALS ►	\$898,000				\$898,000



NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

APPLICATION BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

1. Have other sources of funding not listed in the Budget Worksheet been approached for project support? If yes, name them and explain the outcome of your request.

No. However, most interested parties are already contributing heavily to the CREP process. A list of those parties and their amounts is provided in answer to the next question

2. Are all of the matching funds in the Budget Worksheet confirmed? If not, please identify those entities and list the date when confirmation is expected. Explain how you will implement the project if these sources do not confirm participation.

Although there is no match formally mention on the budget sheet, there is a wide variety of match/participation in the CREP process. A list of those parties and their level of contribution to the overall CREP process is included below. In addition the administrative work performed under this Trust grant would serve as match for CREP. Other entities are currently unable to project future in-kind match due to budget uncertainties, but do expect to participate and provide some level of support for this CREP project. There are also some other key entities that the CREP proposal sponsors have yet to contact but believe will provide project support.

ENTITY	PROJECT ANNUAL MATCH
BOSTWICK IRRIGATION DISTRICT	\$494,473
CENTRAL PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$345,460
MIDDLE REPUBLICAN NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$151,116
NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE	\$13,500
NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES	\$887,000
NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION	\$130,000
NEBRASKA PUBLIC POWER DISTRICT	\$143,120
NORTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$100,000
PATHFINDER IRRIGATION DISTRICT	\$190,500
TRI-BASIN NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$217,250
TWIN PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$32,000
UPPER REPUBLICAN NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$100,000
LOWER REPUBLICAN NATURAL RESOURCE DISTRICT	\$366,000
TOTAL:	\$3,170,419

3. If any of the project costs identified in Column B of the Budget Worksheet have been expended or if debt has been incurred for these costs or a sponsor or partner is obligated for these costs in any other way: List these costs here. Explain clearly why Trust grant funds are requested for these costs.



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While no costs have yet been expended or incurred, there is a significant possibility/likelihood that there will be approval of the CREP grant and expenditure of significant or major amounts on seeding prior to actual awarding of the Environmental Trust grants next spring. If this is the case we would prefer to be able to provide cost share from Trust funds to those landowners that had signed up or seeded prior to the awarding of Trust grants next spring.

4. For each line item in column A of the Budget Worksheet, justify the basis for the dollar amount indicated for that item.

CATEGORY/COMPONENT (from Column A of the Budget Worksheet)	BASIS USED TO DETERMINE COST	Attachment? Y or N	ATTACHMENT LABEL
3. Salary, Benefits, Supplies, Travel, Expenses for Project Administrator	Estimate – Salaries in the \$35,000 to \$40,000 range generally, with benefits cost about \$45,000 to \$50,000. This job is likely to have extensive in-state travel.	N	\
4. Cost Share for Seeding	Seeding costs for 100,000 acres were estimated at \$10 million in Nebraska’s CREP grant. The federal Govt. is expected to pick up half of that cost. \$2.5 million represents half of the remaining landowner/local cost	N	\
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PROJECT SPONSOR FINANCIAL INFORMATION

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

Please see the instructions for section C-3. Attachments to this document may be necessary to complete this section. Include these attachments with your hard copy submission.

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources has a FY 05 budget of \$32.4 million (of which \$24.25 million is from general fund appropriations, \$7.65 million is from a cash fund and .5 million is from federal sources).



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TIMELINE

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Nebraska Augmentation Program for USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Efforts

See instructions for section D.

Month/Year	Task Description:
4/05 to 4/08	Project Administration (Sub-duties include: 1) administration of seeding monies, 2) monitoring of state in-kind contributions to the CREP grant, 3) initiating an educational and awareness campaign in the project area, 4) making site visitations to be sure land is retired/seeded, 5) developing partnerships, 6) coordinating with private landowners, and 6) providing an annual report to the USDA.)
4/05 to 4/08	Cost Share for Seeding



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PARTNERS

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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Please see the instructions for filling out section E. Letters of confirmation should be included with your hard copy submission.

Partner	Contribution
While there are no official partners, this project is highly related to the Nebraska CREP grant which has large numbers of partners contributing substantial sums. Those entities are listed in the "Application Budget Justification" section".	\



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REAL ESTATE / SITE PLAN

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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This section will not apply to every project. Please see instructions for section F. Attachments should be sent with the hardcopy submission.

Legal Description	County	#Acres
Not Applicable	\	\