



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

## APPLICATION COVER SHEET

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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: Perkins, Chase, Dundy, Lincoln, Hayes, Frontier, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Gosper, Furnas, Phelps, Harlan, Kearney, Franklin, Webster, and Nuckolls 4. Nearest town:\NA

5. Total Amount Requested: \$600,000 6. Years of funding requested (select one): 1 2 3

**Contact Person:**

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

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: www.dnr.state.ne.us

16. Is this a continuation request for a project previously funded by the Trust: YES NO: This project has received \$67,000 in Environmental Trust funds redirected from a grant to the Tri-Basin Natural Resources district with Trust permission.

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: \

If yes, identify the agency(s) and its role: \$200,000 in U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Funds have been granted to this project, but not yet expended. An additional application for \$644,000 has also been made to the Bureau of Reclamation but action has not yet occurred on that grant application.

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:

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources will use funds from a state appropriation for a portion of this project.

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.

The purpose of this application is to acquire cost share to help purchase approximately 1470 meters for monitoring groundwater high capacity well pumping in Nebraska's Republican River Basin. It is anticipated that the requested \$600,000 would be cost shared with landowners at a 50% rate. In order to most effectively manage groundwater for compact compliance, plans are to see that all of the basin's approximately 11, 700 active registered groundwater irrigation wells are metered as well as any other



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high capacity wells. Natural Resources District estimates indicate that as of July 1, 2003 approximately 4,845 wells remain to be metered.

An accurate accounting of consumptive water use is necessary to meet the terms of Nebraska's recent compact lawsuit settlement with Kansas. Thus, the data provided by the meters helps meet both water conservation needs and provide information to assist in compact implementation. The information is especially needed in dry years when existing groundwater development may be subject to more stringent use limitations and additional conservation is needed. The information is useful in individual landowner water conservation efforts. Studies have shown that when meters are installed water use goes down, even when no regulations are in place.

These monies will be used for meters installed voluntarily by landowners, at least 3 months before rules would require them to do so. We recognize that this proposal raises a question as to whether it is to fund "actions mandated by regulations." If it is determined that the proposal is not consistent with the Trust's eligibility criteria, we request that such a conclusion be communicated to the department as soon as possible. Please see the note in bold in the project description for more information on NRD meter requirements.

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  
Name printed or typed: \

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

## NARRATIVE SECTION

**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

**H2. Project Name:** Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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

### NARRATIVE

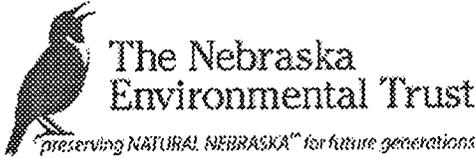
#### DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this application is to acquire cost share to assist in purchasing approximately 1470 meters for monitoring high capacity well pumping in Nebraska's Republican River Basin. It is anticipated that the requested \$600,000 would be cost shared with landowners at a 50% rate. The meters will help assure that groundwater is managed efficiently and are a major tool that will be used to help assure compliance with water use requirements of an interstate compact. The Republican River Basin has received considerable attention in recent years due to a variety of factors, including: recent settlement of an interstate lawsuit with Kansas, the effects of drought, and issues related to the relationship of surface water and groundwater in the basin. Recent developments have highlighted the need for water in the basin to be managed with greater precision and equity. Studies have shown that when meters are installed water use goes down – even when no regulations are in place.

In order to most effectively manage groundwater for compact compliance, plans are to see that all of the basin's approximately 11,700 active registered groundwater irrigation wells are metered plus any other high capacity wells. Natural Resources District estimates indicate that as of July 1, 2003 approximately 4,845 wells remain to be metered and that existing unexpended cost share from all sources came to about \$275,000. To date government funding sources have supplied 50% cost share averaging about \$408 per meter. After existing cost share is accounted for that leaves a remaining need of about \$1,701,768 for about 4,171 wells. \$800,000 of that amount can be met through state appropriations transferred after settlement of the Republican compact lawsuit. Environmental Trust funds would be used for meters that are installed on a voluntary basis at least 3 months prior to being required as a result of any rules or regulations the NRDs have. (See note in bold at end of this section for schedule and related issues).

An accurate accounting of consumptive water use is necessary to meet the terms of Nebraska's recent compact lawsuit settlement with Kansas. Thus, the data provided by the meters can help meet that information need while providing the landowner with useful information. The information is especially needed in dry years when existing groundwater development may be subject to more stringent use limitations and additional conservation is needed. An understanding of pumping and consumptive water use is also vital to helping allocate water use between in-state Nebraska users. The meter data will also be especially useful to the Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) in implementing groundwater management and water quality plans in the basin. The NRDs are reading and calibrating the meters.

In addition to their use in groundwater model calculations for compact requirements, meters have an obvious use for agricultural producers seeking to improve water use efficiency and lower input costs.



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Water conservation by individual irrigators will be a major outcome of having meters. Application of just the amount of water a crop needs at the time it needs it can help limit unnecessary evaporation and transpiration. In a water short basin under drought conditions this can be especially important.

**Note: The Republican River Compact Settlement does not require that meters be installed on irrigation and other high capacity wells in the Republican River Basin. However, such meters would greatly improve the accuracy of Nebraska's water use calculations for the Basin Compact Administration and would also greatly aid in the implementation of measures to ensure future state compliance with the Compact. Therefore, the state asked all of the Republican River Basin Natural Resources Districts to require the installation of meters on such wells. The Upper Republican NRD has required meters for over 20 years. Each of the other districts responded affirmatively to the request and adopted regulations that now require the installation of meters according to the schedule set forth below.**

### **MIDDLE REPUBLICAN NRD**

**December 31, 2003 wells in the SW ¼ of a section**

**December 31, 2004 wells in the NW ¼ of a section**

**Wells in the NE ¼ and SE ¼ are already required to have meters in place**

### **LOWER REPUBLICAN NRD**

**January 1, 2004 – wells in Sections 1-12**

**April 1, 2004 – wells in Sections 13-24**

**April 1, 2005 – wells in Sections 25-36**

### **Tri-Basin (Republican Basin Portion Only)**

**December 31, 2004 – meters must be installed on ½ of an individual's wells**

**December 31, 2005 – meters must be installed on the other ½ of an individual's wells**

**This Environmental Trust proposal would require that a meter be installed after April 1, 2004 and at least 3 months prior to its applicable deadline in order to be eligible for cost share from the Environmental Trust monies.**

**We recognize that this proposal raises a question as to whether it is to fund "actions mandated by regulations." If it is determined that the proposal is not consistent with the Trust's eligibility criteria, we request that such a conclusion be communicated to the department as soon as possible.**

### **BACKGROUND**

The need for metering groundwater pumping in the Republican River Basin has grown from a number of historic developments. In 1935 a major flood in the basin claimed more than 100 lives and served as part of the impetus for eventual development of federal surface water storage projects in the basin. In



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1943 the states of Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado signed a compact allocating consumptive use of water in the basin. Although surface water irrigation developed early and expanded with the federal surface water storage projects, groundwater irrigated acreage later surpassed it, occupying both alluvial areas and the upland. Today groundwater irrigation accounts for the majority of irrigated acreage in the basin.

Although the states accounted for alluvial wells in their compact calculations, well development in both the alluvial and upland areas as well as soil and water conservation practices on both dryland and irrigated acres have affected surface water flows in the basin. How or whether to account for that effect was a significant source of contention in the lawsuit over the Compact. The settlement counts consumptive groundwater use as part of compact calculations to the degree it affects stream flows. Determining what that consumptive use is in a given year requires a set of calculations that include the amount of pumping. Pumping information is used as input to a groundwater model that helps determine the consumptive use impacts of various management scenarios. That management is carried out by local Natural Resources Districts which will also be responsible for reading and calibrating the meters. Meters are the most effective way to determine the amount of pumping and all basin NRDs are pursuing the installation of meters.

### PROJECT DESIGN

The goal is to have 100% of the groundwater wells in the Republican River Basin metered by December 31, 2005. The State has supplied 50% cost share for many meters installed to date. All irrigation well owners in the basin will be required to have meters over the next few years, but the schedule for installation varies with the individual NRD. Many irrigators are installing meters before they would be legally required by their district and the Trust funds would be used only for those well owners installing meters at least 3 months before they were required to do so. (See note in bold under project description for more information on that topic). The process that has been established:

1. Landowner applies to NRD
2. NRD approves
3. Landowner installs/has installed
4. Landowner brings bill to NRD
5. NRD approves
6. NRD sends bill to Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
7. Department of Natural Resources approves claim and pays landowner.
8. NRD calibrates and reads meters and works with landowner to assure maintenance

Natural Resources District estimates from September/October 2002 indicate that as of July 1, 2003 the remaining unmetered wells by District were approximately:

100 Upper Republican NRD  
1,000 Middle Republican NRD  
2,245 Lower Republican NRD

Electronic Grant Application  
April 2003



## NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

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1,500 Tri-Basin NRD

4,845 Total

About \$275,000 in unexpended cost share exists. At \$408 in cost share per meter that would help purchase about another 674 meters, bringing the total number of wells needing meter cost share down to 4171. At \$470 per meter that leaves \$1,701,768 in remaining meter cost. Another \$800,000 is available from funds transferred from the Republican Lawsuit settlement. Application has been made to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for another \$644,000. However there is no indication at this point that the application is likely to be successful. If it were to be, Environmental Trust Funds could be reduced accordingly.

### ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES, BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES

This project will help assure that Nebraska does not overuse its consumptive use allocation of Republican River Basin water. A result of keeping within those allocations is likely to be a higher number of river reaches with greater streamflow than would have occurred without the allocations. Greater awareness of pumping amounts is, in the aggregate, likely to result in more efficient water use and less expenditure of energy for pumping. Keeping within water use allocations is also likely to help bring about a stabilization of groundwater levels.

### ECONOMIC/SOCIAL/PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS

Meters are a vital part of Nebraska's implementation of the Republican River Compact. If Nebraska were to be unable to effectively implement its obligations under the compact due to a lack of water use data or other reasons, there could be significant financial consequences for the state. Kansas could take Nebraska to court and seek financial recompense. Ultimately some method would need to be found to measure consumptive water use and Nebraska or Nebraskans would need to pay for that method. Meters are the most effective way of generating reliable water use information.

The social and economic impacts of implementing the water management program needed to implement the Republican Compact settlement go far beyond the cost of the meters. Three of four of the Republican Basin NRDs have moratoriums on new wells. To meet compact requirements they are also likely to need to allocate water and allocate that water more stringently during dry years. This will not only curtail net new irrigation development but also impose consumptive use restrictions on current users that result in water savings. In this type of belt tightening it will be especially important that allocations needed to meet compact requirements be developed with accurate information and that water users have access to their full allocation. Any mistake can cost a landowner money. Furthermore, the meter is the only way individual irrigators will be able to know they are meeting water use requirements. It will also allow them to plan and conserve water use on a multi-year basis.



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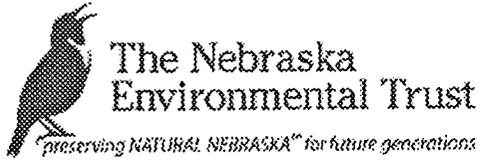
## NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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### OUTCOMES

The success of the overall project will be measured by whether we are able to see that meters are installed on all remaining Republican River Basin registered irrigation wells by the December 31, 2005 goal. This will involve obtaining other funding sources in addition to those being applied for in this grant. Expected outcomes include water savings and positive impacts on groundwater levels, reduced water use per acre of crop production, more efficient and reliable measurement of water use for compact and management purposes, and the ability to more closely tune water use to compact requirements.



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

## APPLICATION BUDGET SUMMARY

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

BUDGET YEAR: SUMMARY

COLUMN A	COLUMN B	COLUMN C	COLUMN D	COLUMN E	COLUMN F
<b>Row 1: Source of Funds Budget Categories</b>	<b>Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund</b>	<b>State Appropriation</b>	<b>Bureau of Reclamation</b>	\	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>2. Funding for Meter Purchase</b>	\$600,000	\$500,000	\$150,000	\	\$1,250,000
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<b>18. TOTALS</b>					



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

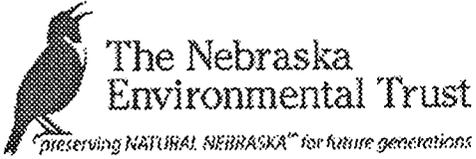
## APPLICATION BUDGET YEAR ONE

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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
<b>Row 1: Source of Funds Budget Categories</b>	<b>Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund</b>	<b>State Appropriation</b>	<b>Bureau of Reclamation Grant</b>	\	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>2. Funding for Meter Purchase</b>	\$450,000	\$350,000	\$150,000	\	\$1,050,000
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<b>18. TOTALS</b>					



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

## APPLICATION BUDGET YEAR TWO

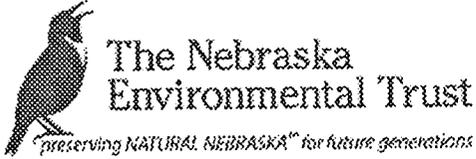
**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

**H2. Project Name:** Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

**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
<b>Row 1: Source of Funds Budget Categories</b>	<b>Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund</b>	<b>State Appropriation</b>	\	\	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>2. Funding for Meter Purchase</b>	\$150,000	\$150,000	\	\	\$200,000
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<b>18. TOTALS</b>					



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

## APPLICATION BUDGET YEAR THREE

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

**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
Row 1: Source of Funds Budget Categories	Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund	\	\	\	<b>TOTALS</b>
2. \	\	\	\	\	\
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18. TOTALS					



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

## APPLICATION BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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.

### SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET TABLES

#### TOTAL METER COST SHARE PROGRAM FUNDS EXPENDED OR COMMITTED TO DATE PLUS ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUNDS SOUGHT IN THIS APPLICATION (1)

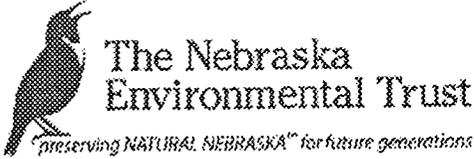
<u>COST SHARE SOURCE</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
State Appropriation	\$1,500,000
Transfer of State Lawsuit Appropriation	\$ 800,000
U.S.Bureau of Reclamation Grant	\$ 200,000
Transfer of Tri-Basin NRD Environmental Trust Grant	\$ 67,000
Environmental Trust Grant Being Applied for with This Application	\$ 600,000
<b>TOTAL COST SHARE COMMITTED PLUS TRUST GRANT</b>	<b>\$3,167,000</b>
<b>REMAINING COST SHARE NEEDS</b>	<b>\$ 301,760(2)</b>
<b>TOTAL COST SHARE INITIATION TO COMPLETION</b>	<b>\$3,468,760</b>
<b>TOTAL LANDOWNER MATCH</b>	<b>\$3,468,760</b>
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM COST</b>	<b>\$6,937,520(2)</b>

- (1) Assumes \$408 per meter average cost share for the approximately 4845 meters remaining after July 1, 2003. This is the average cost of all meters purchased under the program in the Republican Basin up until that date.
- (2) There has been a \$644,000 grant application to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation but there is no indication as yet as to whether any of that amount will be funded.

#### TOTAL STATE APPROPRIATION METER COST SHARE EXPENDED THROUGH JUNE 30, 2003

State Appropriation	\$1,492,000
Landowner Match	\$1,492,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2,984,000</b>

# of Meters Installed with State Appropriation Cost Share through June 30, 2003 - 3,512



# NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

H1. Project Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

H2. Project Name: Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

## ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST APPLICATION FUNDS PLUS COMMITTED COST SHARE FUNDS THAT WOULD BE EXPENDED BETWEEN APRIL 1, 2004 AND DECEMBER 31, 2005 (THIS IS THE AMOUNT LISTED ON THE GRANT BUDGET PAGES)

Transfer of State Lawsuit Appropriation	\$ 500,000
Bureau of Reclamation Grant	\$ 150,000
Environmental Trust Grant	\$ 600,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,250,000</b>

### Description of Funding Sources

While the project is only for meter installation between April 1, 2004 and December 21, 2005 the installation of meters in the Republican Basin has a longer history. To date the installation of groundwater meters has been accomplished by a variety of methods. Almost all of the Upper Republican Natural Resources District had meters for years before the current effort began. Those meters were used by the District to help implement its groundwater management plan. Since July 2001 \$1.5 million in appropriations for meters in the Republican River Basin were made available as cost share to basin landowners through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund. A small portion of those funds went for surface water meters, but the bulk of the funds went to groundwater meters. As of July 1, 2003 about \$8,000 of those funds remained. However, those funds have now effectively been spent, with the final small portion currently in the final payment process.

In addition \$67,000 was transferred from unexpended funds in a previous Environmental Trust grant to the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District. That money has not yet been expended. In addition authority has been received to expend \$200,000 from a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation grant made under the *Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act of 1991*. Those funds have not yet been expended. An additional \$644,000 in Bureau grant funding has been applied for, although there is currently no indication that those funds will be granted. Finally, legislation allowed appropriations left over from Republican River Lawsuit appropriations to be transferred to implementation, including meters likely to be available for meters. Those funds are expected to total \$800,000.

The totals on the budget page reflect only those confirmed funding sources that are expected to be expended after April 1, 2004 – an estimated date for receipt of any Trust funding. About \$500,000 of the \$800,000 in appropriations transferred from the Republican River Lawsuit are likely to be as yet unexpended as of April 1, 2004 and are thus included in this budget. An estimated \$150,00 of the \$200,000 in confirmed Bureau of Reclamation funds will likely not yet have been expended as of April 1, 2004 and thus are also included in this budget. Other funding sources are either expected to be expended prior to that date, or have not yet been granted. It is worthy of note that expenditure on this



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**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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program are likely to be heavily weighted to the months of March, April and May, immediately prior to times of heavy agricultural activity/ irrigation.

Finally, it should be noted that this budget only represents the cost share being made available to landowners. Including the landowner match would roughly double the amounts involved. Furthermore the landowners sometimes have ineligible costs related to the meters which if included would push the total budget even higher. In addition NRD costs for calibration and reading and program administration are not included.

2. If any of the contributing partners listed in the Budget Worksheet have not confirmed participation, list the date when confirmation will be made. Explain how you will implement the project if these sources do not confirm participation.

All confirmations on the budget sheet have been confirmed.

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. NA

1. CATEGORY/COMPONENT (from Column A of the Budget Summary)	BASIS USED TO DETERMINE COST	ATTACHMENT? LABEL?
2. Funding for Installing meters	Estimate based upon average cost of past meters	\
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*"preserving NATURAL NEBRASKA" for future generations*

## NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND

**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

**H2. Project Name:** Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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## NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND PROJECT SPONSOR FINANCIAL INFORMATION

**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

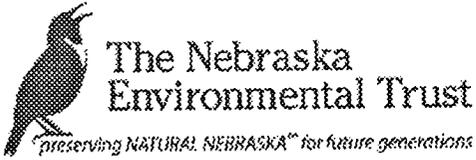
**H2. Project Name:** Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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 2004 current fiscal year appropriation of approximately \$28 million. Agency operating costs comprise about \$7.2 million of that total. Lawsuit settlements account for about \$3.2 million. The remainder is for agency grant funds.







**NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND**  
**REAL ESTATE / SITE PLAN**

**H1. Project Sponsor:** Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

**H2. Project Name:** Republican Basin Water Meter Proposal

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
Note: This grant will be used to provide cost share for meters to be put on irrigation wells on property throughout the Republican River Basin in Nebraska. However, the actual approximately 1276 meters that will be partially funded through this grant will be funded on an ongoing basis and are not chosen ahead of time.		