

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 28, 2006

TO: Lancaster County Board of Commissioners, Lincoln City Council, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board of Directors, The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and The Nature Conservancy

FROM: Tom Malmstrom
Natural Resources Coordinator
Parks and Recreation Department
Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership

RE: Saline Wetland Conservation Partnership
2005 Progress Report

As members of the Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership (SWCP) I want to make you aware of the activities, which occurred in 2005. The project was initiated in 2003 and continues to progress. The City of Lincoln was awarded a Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) grant for the eastern saline wetlands from 2005 through 2008. The "Implementation Plan for the Conservation of Nebraska's Eastern Saline Wetlands, 2003" provides the partnership guidance in efforts to conserve the saline wetlands. Since its inception the partnership has purchased nearly 590 acres of saline wetlands, conducts educational activities, initiated restoration of saline wetland sites, and provides for operation and maintenance of these areas. A summary of the 2005 activities is provided.

EDUCATION

- Saline Wetland Educational Kiosk - The exhibit is located at the Pioneers Park Nature Center. It includes general information about Nebraska's saline wetlands and its flora and fauna, endangered species, a map of the saline wetlands in Lancaster and Saunders counties, and includes a tabletop interactive ecosystem balance. The saline wetlands conservation partnership provided funding for the kiosk.
- Tigers of the Salt Marsh Poster – The poster identifies the 12 species of tiger beetles which frequent the eastern saline wetlands. It includes photographs and descriptions of each species including the endangered Salt Creek tiger beetle. The SWCP and the Check-off for Wildlife Program through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) provided funding for the poster.

- North Star High School – Coordinator established annual program with the Environmental Studies class on saline wetlands. This includes presentations to the class and field exercises conducted at Whitehead Saline Wetlands with assistance from the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD), and the NGPC.
- Coordinator educational presentations - The Coordinator continues to present “saline wetland jeopardy” to fifth grade students attending the Earthwellness festival. Presented to Belmont school along with the LPSNRD on “wetlands.” Other presentations to local groups and conservation agencies.

FUNDING RESOURCES

- Nebraska Environmental Trust – The City of Lincoln received approval for a three year grant for the acquisition and restoration of the eastern saline wetlands beginning in 2005. The grant amount is \$800,000.
- Federal Section 319 – The coordinator on behalf of the City of Lincoln submitted a grant to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality in the amount of \$500,000 for the eastern saline wetland complex. The intention of the grant is for restoration activities. Awards will be announced in the summer of 2006. The City of Lincoln received an additional \$500,000 in 2005 for the eastern saline wetland complex as a supplement to their 2002 grant.

OTHER COORDINATOR ACTIVITIES

- Establishing GPS photo points at saline wetland sites (three seasons at each site from same point) to establish baseline data on the landscape. The intention is to update the data every five years.
- Worked and met with Lincoln Electric System on several occasions regarding the placement of the North Tier III power line.
- Noxious weed control and woody vegetation removal at publicly owned saline wetland sites.
- Submitted an Important Bird Area (IBA) application for the Jack Sinn Wildlife Management Area. The site was approved and recognized by the National Audubon Society as an IBA in October 2005. Three other saline wetlands were also recognized (Frank Shoemaker Marsh, Arbor Lake, and Whitehead saline wetlands).
- Updated the saline wetlands information on the City web site.
- Project Manager for the Frank Shoemaker Marsh wetland restoration project.
- Participating and working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on several issues related to the Federal listing of the Salt Creek tiger beetle as an endangered species.

SALINE WETLAND PROPERTIES

- **Frank Shoemaker Marsh** – 27th Street and Bluff Road
Size: 160 acres
Purchase price and date: \$472,000 on June 12, 2003
Funding sources: 2001 State Wildlife Grant through the
USFWS (\$222,000)
2002 NET grant (\$250,000)
Owner: City of Lincoln

2005 activity summary – A wetland restoration conceptual design was completed in December 2004. The Flatwater Group, Inc. was hired in March 2005 to complete a final wetland restoration design. A 60 percent plan was completed and distributed for comments in November 2005. It is anticipated restoration work will begin in 2006. This project is or will be funded with Federal Section 319 funds and the 2005 NET Grant.

- **Melvin King Property** – South of Arbor Road and East of 27th Street
Size: 61.2 acres
Purchase price and date: \$204,700 in January 2004
Funding sources: Federal Section 6 (\$153,525)
2002 NET grant (\$51,175)
Owner: City of Lincoln

2005 activity summary – Old fence line and debris removed from the property. The west boundary was surveyed and staked to delineate from the Dial Real Estate property. Upland area (approximately 21 acres) was seeded with a high diversity native seeding (163 plant species) by Prairie Plains Resource Institute in December 2005. The native seeding was funded through a USFWS grant received by the LPSNRD.

- **Warner Saline Wetlands - 98th Street and Interstate 80**
Size: 140 acres
Purchase price and date: \$298,580 on December 7, 2004
Funding sources: Federal Section 319 (\$179,148)
LPSNRD (\$43,043.20)
SWCP (\$76,388.80)
Owner: LPSNRD

2005 activity summary –Irrigation well removed and decommissioned by the LPSNRD. Old interior fence line and debris removed from the property. Woody vegetation removal continues with Honey Locusts and Eastern Red Cedars.

- **Little Salt Creek Wildlife Management Area – 1st Street and Raymond Road**
Size: 156 acres
Purchase price and date: \$476,000 in June 2004
Funding sources: Federal Section 6 (\$276,000)
2004 NET grant through NGPC (\$200,000)
Owner: NGPC

2005 activity summary – Site is prepared for a prescribed burn and new fencing.

- **Arbor Lake Extension (Anderson Property) – Adjacent to Arbor Lake, 27th Street and Arbor Road**
Size: 69.2 acres
Purchase price and date: \$361,710.67 on September 1, 2004
Funding source: 2002 NET grant through City of Lincoln
Owner: City of Lincoln

2005 activity summary – Fencing installed on the west and south boundaries. An application was submitted to the LPSNRD Well Decommissioning Program to decommission a well on site. Funding provided by the City and LPSNRD.

- **Little Salt Fork Marsh Preserve** – Located northwest of 1st and Raymond Road and owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). On October 28, 2005 TNC held a dedication ceremony to dedicate the new public access developed for the site.
- **Lincoln Saline Wetlands Nature Center** – Located near Capital Beach in Lincoln. This area is owned by the LPSNRD. On June 4, 2005 the LPSNRD officially opened the Historic Wyoming Bridge connecting a wood chip trail at this saline wetland area.
- **Jack Sinn Wildlife Management Area** – Located south of Ceresco in Saunders and Lancaster counties. This area is owned by the NGPC. In 2005, the NGPC has been conducting restoration activities associated with a Phase III project and making improvements to perimeter fencing. Funding for these projects is provided by the NET, Federal Section 319 funds through the City of Lincoln, and the State Wildlife Grant fund administered through the NGPC.

We think this program has been extremely successful and continues to accomplish many of the goals of the Implementation Plan for the Conservation of the Eastern Saline Wetlands. We hope you would agree. Your continued support is appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact me at 476-2729 or tmalmstrom@lpsnrd.org.