

Activity Report of The Sandhills Task Force January 1 through December 31, 2002



This report is a summary of activities completed or ongoing by the Sandhills Task Force (STF). A total of 21 different projects are identified. The majority (17) are conservation projects directly affecting the natural resources of the Sandhills. Total acres enhanced by these 17 projects are 59,526 acres (49,834 acres of upland grasses, 4,895 acres of riparian habitat, 11 miles of streams and rivers, and 4,786 acres wetlands and wet meadows). One project is associated with research and monitoring. The Task Force supported four projects associated with providing education and information to the public, primarily the ranching community.

The Task Force successes began with a 1996 grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Their contribution allowed the Task Force to provide leverage and financial assurance needed to ensure landuse practices benefitted both ranching and wildlife. Cooperative agreements with other agencies and organizations have brought funding for conservation. Appendixes A and B report the financial activity of the Sandhills Task Force in 2002.



Board of Directors

Back row, l to r: Jim Van Winkle (Project Coordinator), Dean Funk, Ron Dobbins, Craig Utter, Mike Kelly, Kim Stine, Richard Lackaff, Mick Knott, A.B. Cox, Gene Mack. Front row: Al Steuter, Ted LaGrange, Rob Ravenscroft, Barb Cooksley, Byron Eatinger.

Board of Directors include:

A.B. Cox	Rancher	Mullen
Al Steuter	The Nature Conservancy, Rancher	Ainsworth
Barb Cooksley	Rancher	Anselmo
Byron Eatinger	Rancher	Theford
Vacant Nebraska Cattlemen,	Rancher	
Dean Funk	Rancher, Holt County Commissioner	Atkinson
Gene D. Mack	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Kearney
Gene Lehnert	North Central R, C & D	Bassett
Vacant Natural Resources Conservation Service		
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Mike Kelly	Rancher	Sutherland
Richard Lackaff	Rancher	Bassett
Rob Ravenscroft	Rancher	Valentine
Ron Dobbins	Rancher, Chairman Upper Loup NRD	Tryon
Ted LaGrange	Nebraska Game & Parks Commission	Lincoln

In May, Kim Stine took a new position with the Regional Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Her position was left empty until NRCS hired a new person for the position. In November, NRCS hired Dana Larsen and recommended her to fill the empty STF Board position. At the end of September, Craig Utter resigned as a Nebraska Cattlemen (NC) employee. The position he held on the Board is one that is reserved for an NC employee. The Nebraska Cattlemen has not made a formal recommendation to the Board regarding his replacement. Both positions are expected

to be filled at our January, 2003 meeting.

Rob Ravenscroft joined the steering committee of the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation. Rob represents our organization in this multi-organization alliance that will promote a coordinated, science-based, landscape approach to voluntary land stewardship to conserve, improve, and expand habitat for all bird species.

Jim Van Winkle continues to work for the Sandhills Task Force, through a cooperative agreement with Nebraska Cattlemen. Funding for the position comes from the third year funding of grant (#00-126) from Nebraska Environmental Trust. Jim has been instrumental in building working partnerships with government agencies, as well as, providing a greater level of trust between ranchers and the Task Force. Jim is representing the Task Force on the Fire Learning Network. It is a project initiated by the Nature Conservancy to incorporate fire and fire control into landscapes throughout the nation. Jim has represented the Task Force and the Sandhills at two national meetings.

Kyle Graham was hired by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to assist ranchers and the Sandhills Task Force with conservation projects throughout the Sandhills. Kyle is a recent graduate serving in his first permanent position.

Financial Activities

An audit of the organization's financial activity was completed in May by Hellman, Main, Coslor and Pathol., P.C. of Kearney. The report stated "*In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Sandhills Task Force as of December 31, 2001 and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.*"

In 2002, \$189,396.53 were expended by the Task Force for conservation work. Much of that funding came from grants or cooperative agreements with Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and Ducks Unlimited. The sale of the fen property in Cherry County allowed the completion of an NET grant provided to the Task Force and the Nature Conservancy (TNC). The final amount transferred from TNC to our organization was \$488,060.38. This figure was after \$33,000 was paid for the purchase of an easement on West Twin Lake (See Projects below).

Our checking account is held with Tri County Bank in Stuart, Nebraska. Short-term certificates of deposits (\$750,000 total) were purchased from Purdum State Bank, Commercial Bank of Bassett, United Nebraska Bank in Broken Bow, and Pinnacle Bank in O'Neill. It is the Board's policy to bank within the Sandhills.

Each year, the FWS grants between \$20,000 and \$30,000 to the STF for conservation projects within the Sandhills. This money is part of the Service's "Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program." The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission provided funding either directly to the landowner or through a \$25,000 cooperative agreement with the Task Force. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's contribution was \$15,000.

A first time cooperative agreement was signed with Ducks Unlimited for \$10,000. The funds are to be used for conservation projects that benefit waterfowl. Although the funding is not limited to wetland restoration and enhancement, our goal is to direct as much of the funds as possible to this type of work.

Projects

In 2002, the Sandhills Task Force was involved in the initiation or completion of 17 conservation projects in the Sandhills. These 17 represent only those which have signed wildlife agreements between the Task Force and the landowner. Each of the agreements outlines a conservation strategy that meets the

needs of the landowner while providing conservation and wildlife habitat. The length of the agreements are for a period of 10 years. The amount cost-shared by the Task Force and its partners is based on the amount of benefit for wildlife. Projects that predominately benefit ranching with limited benefit for wildlife received a lesser amount of cost share. Likewise, projects that greatly benefitted wildlife with marginal benefit to the landowner were provided a larger amount of cost share. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service serves the role of assuring compliance with the agreements.

In all instances, projects were initiated by landowners who requested assistance from one or more members of the Sandhills Task Force. No agreements were entered into unless the landowner/cooperator shared the same resource concerns and agreed that the management plan developed for their specific landscape was best for their operation and the land. For this reason, compliance with the cooperative agreement has been 100 percent.

Betsey Creek Enhancement

Purpose: A water control structure will be placed in Betsey Creek at a location where stream channeling has caused the stream to down cut. Historically, the channel meandered across the meadow accessing the flood plain during high flows. The landowner's primary objectives are to improve the hydrology of meadows adjacent to Carver/Betsey Creek, which will in turn increase hay production and wildlife habitat adjacent to the stream. Completion of this project will halt down cutting of the streambed therefore allowing the water table to rise. At high flows the water structure will divert excess water to a historic meander and ultimately into an adjacent shallow water wetland. 320 acres of wetland meadows, shallow water wetlands and adjacent upland habitat is expected to benefit.

Funding:

Landowner	\$1,500.00	Installation
STF	<u>\$2,800.00</u>	Structure materials
Total	\$4,300.00	

Accomplishments: The structure was installed in early fall of 2002 when drought conditions had caused the stream to dry up. By late fall, water had begun to flow through the structure.

Bobtail Creek Grazing Project

Purpose: This is a joint riparian/grassland enhancement project in which the cooperator agrees to manage grazing on 4,267 acres along the Dismal River and Bobtail Creek for the benefit of ranching and native grassland. The landowner's primary objectives are to improve native vegetation and enhance wildlife habitat along the Dismal River and Bobtail Creek in Hooker County. Cross fencing and additional wells and tanks will be installed to enhance riparian vegetation and to increase wildlife production and use on the riparian area and associated uplands. A grazing plan (developed by NRCS) will be implemented to provide residual cover for wildlife and promote plant vigor. Habitat enhanced included 1,500 acres of riparian habitat along 3 miles of river, and 2,767 acres of upland grasses.

Funding:

NRCS	\$12,140.75	Fencing, wells, tanks
STF	\$6,000.00	Fencing, wells, tanks, tower and pump
Landowner	\$3,563.25	Fencing, wells, tanks, tower and pump
NGPC	<u>\$2,000.00</u>	Fencing, wells, tower and pump
Total	\$23,704.00	

Accomplishments: Project was completed in 2002.

Buchfinck Riparian Project

Purpose: The 7,091 acre project will change grazing practices for the benefit of ranching, native grassland and riparian habitat along the North Fork of the Dismal River. Season long grazing will be replaced with a rotational grazing system that incorporates longer rest, increases plant vigor and diversity and provides residual cover for wildlife. By fencing the river from upland pastures, additional water sources are necessary. 540 acres of the project have been identified as riparian habitat.

Funding:

STF	\$9,087.25	Fencing, tanks, wells
NRCS	\$10,428.75	Fencing, tanks, wells
Landowners	\$8,172.00	Fencing, tanks, wells
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Fencing, tanks, wells
Total	\$32,688.00	

Accomplishments: Pipeline was completed. Fences are staked out but will not be constructed until 2003.

Buell Riparian Project

Purpose:

The landowner's primary objectives are to improve native vegetation and enhance wildlife habitat on 2,855 acres in Loup County. Cross fencing, pipeline, and tanks will be installed. A grazing plan will use short-duration grazing. Improvements on each side of the Calamus River will allow for high intensity-short duration grazing to enhance native vegetation and wildlife. All pastures will be grazed twice during the growing season with the first rotation exhibiting approximately 50% use and the second rotational grazing being between 35_50% of available forage. Pastures will be grazed once during the dormant season. Pastures adjacent to the river will be managed with a strong consideration for plant diversity and wildlife habitat. The riparian areas will be grazed every other year at a lighter stocking rate. 85 acres of riparian habitat will be affected.

Funding:

STF	\$5,952.25	Fencing, tanks, pipeline
Landowners	\$4,050.75	Fencing, tanks, pipeline
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Fencing, tanks, pipeline
Total	\$15,003.00	

Accomplishments: Most of the project was completed in 2002 with remainder to be done in the spring.

Buffalo Head Project

Purpose: The project will move from season long grazing to a rotational grazing system that incorporates rest in pastures, increases plant vigor and diversity and provides residual cover for wildlife. The project area encompasses the headwaters of the Dismal River. Riparian habitat will be fenced separate from adjacent uplands. Total area is 5,443 acres. 320 acres are identified as riparian habitat. Grazing of the uplands will be 50 percent or less total use based on NRCS recommendations.

Funding:

STF	\$22,279.68	Fencing, tanks, wells
Landowners	\$13,181.50	Fencing, tanks, wells
NGPC	\$7,500.00	Fencing, tanks, wells
NRCS	\$9,943.13	Fencing, tanks, wells
Total	\$52,904.31	

Accomplishments: Construction began in 2002 and is planned for completion in 2003.



Dismal River Grassland Project

Purpose: 10,061 acres, containing wetlands, meadows, and the headwaters of the Dismal River will be managed for the benefit of ranching and native grassland. Cross fencing, pipeline, and additional wells and tanks will be installed. A grazing plan (developed by NRCS) will shift from longer duration to a shorter grazing duration. 446 acres containing the headwaters of the Dismal River will be managed to provide winter wildlife habitat. Habitat enhanced includes 2,450 acres of riparian, 4 miles of river, 209 acres of wetlands,

and 7,402 acres of upland grasses.

Funding:

NRCS	\$24,732.21	Fencing, tanks, and wells
STF	\$16,000.00	Fencing, tanks, wells, tower and pump, pipeline
Landowners	\$14,365.65	Fencing, tanks, wells, tower and pump
NGPC	\$3,000.00	Tanks, fencing, wells, and pipeline
Total	\$58,097.86	

Accomplishments: Construction was completed in 2002.

Education and Outreach

Numerous projects were funded association with education and outreach. A colored brochure describing our organization was printed by Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Display booths were set up at the Cherry County fair, at a range tour at Gudmundsen Research facility, at the NET rally in Lincoln, and at the annual convention of Nebraska Cattlemen. Two advertisements were also purchased for the Omaha World Herald supplements which recognized the Nature Conservancy and the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Both ads identified the STF as celebrating 10 years of conservation work in the Sandhills. A total of \$3,267.53 was granted to sponsor the 4-H Sandhills Academy, college rangeland scholarships, and youth range camp.

Several formal presentations about our organization and activities were completed. They included two presentations to environmental biologists at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia and a presentation to a joint meeting of the Nebraska Society of Range Management and the Wildlife Society.

In October, the national office of the Nature Conservancy, awarded our organization with their

Innovation Award for the success of the grassland/fen project we shared with the Nebraska TNC organization.

Elliot Grazing Project

Project: The project will improve grassland management (through grazing) on 1,956 acres in Cherry County. The landowner's primary objectives are: to improve native vegetation; reduce over_utilization of wetland areas; encourage warm_season grasses; provide residual vegetation for spring nesting; and encourage wildlife production and use of the pastures. Cross fencing and additional wells and tanks were installed to better manage livestock grazing. A grazing plan was developed by NRCS to provide residual cover for wildlife and promote plant vigor. Habitat enhanced included 1,942 acres of grassland and 14 acres of wetland.

Funding:

NRCS	\$13,852.00	Tanks and pipeline
Landowner	\$8,798.00	Fencing, tanks and pipeline
STF	\$7,597.00	Fencing and tank
NGPC	<u>\$4,000.00</u>	Fencing
Total	\$34,247.00	

Accomplishments: All but one fence has been completed in 2002. The remaining fence will be constructed in 2003.

Grassland Bird Study

Purpose: The study was initiated in response to the Task Force's concern about what affect short duration grazing systems vs. other grazing systems is having on wildlife. Grassland birds are recognized as a group of wildlife which is very mobile and can quickly move to preferred habitats. The study will measure the diversity and abundance of birds associated with three different grazing systems: short duration (less than 15 days), mid-duration (30 to 45 days), and season-long grazing.

Funding:

STF	\$45,000.00	Graduate student salary, travel, and lodging
NGPC	\$18,000.00	Graduate student salary, travel, and lodging
Sampson Range and Pasture Management Endowment	\$10,000.00	Graduate student salary, travel, and lodging
UNL & other grants	<u>\$31,681.00</u>	Graduate student salary, travel, and lodging
Total	\$104,681.00	

Accomplishment: In May of 2002, Matt Proett (graduate research assistant, UNL), and his assistants Jace Millikin (AR) and Shona Lawson (B.C., Canada) initiated field work on a study of the effects of various grazing systems on grassland birds in the Nebraska Sandhills. Pastures from eight ranches within Cherry County and Thomas County selected for the study based on geographic location, landscape characteristics, and grazing systems in use. Nine upland study sites were selected: three from each of the following broadly defined grazing systems. They were continuous grazing, medium-duration (e.g., 4-pasture systems) grazing, and short-duration (e.g., management intensive) grazing. Vegetation structural characteristics were also sampled.

Thirty species of birds were recorded on the sites in the 2002 field season. Several of these species such as grasshopper sparrow, western meadowlark, and upland sandpiper have experienced significant populations declines in various parts of the country, although little is known about their population status

in the Sandhills.

Fifty-eight nests were located and monitored during the field season. Species whose nests were found in highest numbers were Grasshopper Sparrow (11), Western Meadowlark (10), and Lark Sparrow (9) (see complete nest list). Of the 39 passerine nests monitored, 11 (28%) fledged at least one host young, 26 (67%) failed or fledged only parasite young, and 2 were not successfully relocated. Only 2 (5%) nests showed visual evidence of damage resulting from cattle. Nest numbers were lower than expected as many double- and triple-brooded species presumably did not attempt multiple clutches due to extreme drought conditions.

Higgins Whole Ranch Grazing Project

Purpose: The project involves changing current native grassland management to improve the grassland's health, diversity, and wildlife benefits. Grazing management will more closely mimic the role bison played in grassland ecology; this includes intense grazing for a short period of time, followed by long periods of rest. Large, continuously grazed pastures will be fenced into 46 pastures or units. Wetland sites will be fenced separate from upland range sites in order to manage the wetlands in accordance with recommended wetland management practices. One large herd (approximately 700 cows with calves) will graze each unit for two to four days during each visit. Each unit will be then be rested for at least 90 days. About 2,200 acres will be left for winter habitat.



One of three wetland complexes associated with Higgins Whole Ranch Grazing Project.

To accomplish these objectives, buried pipelines were installed to provide adequate amounts of water for the large herd during hot summer months. The majority of the project cost is associated with providing livestock water. Total area enhanced is 9,140 acres: 1,000 acres of sub-irrigated meadows, 200 acres of wetlands, and 7,940 acres of upland.

Funding:

Landowner	\$98,762.90	Pipeline, fences, wells, and tanks
STF	\$25,000.00	Pipeline, fences, wells, and tanks
NFWF	\$15,000.00	Pipeline, fences, wells, and tanks
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Pipeline, fences, wells, and tanks
Total	\$143,762.90	

Accomplishments: Work was completed in 2002. The grazing plan was partially initiated in the spring of 2002. The livestock numbers were less than planned because of final fence installations and severe drought conditions.

McMurtrey Gordon Creek Project

Purpose: The project will reduce stream erosion on a portion of Gordon Creek, flowing across a large subirrigated meadow. Currently, the channel has degraded 5 to 7 feet downward and 10 to 15 feet wide. The landowner's primary objectives are to improve the hydrology of the Gordon Creek subirrigated

meadows, which will increase hay production and increase wildlife habitat adjacent to this free flowing Sandhill stream. Historically, the channel was shallower, with flood waters flowing across the meadow. Attempts to increase hay production decades earlier, caused owners to straighten bends in the stream. Water control structures will be constructed to allow the passage of about 80 percent of the peak spring flows. The balance will be allowed to flood across the meadow and flow through the old stream channel. During high flows, numerous shallow, temporary wetlands will be flooded. The project should enhance habitat for several species of native fish known to inhabit Gordon Creek. This is expected to be the first phase of a long term ranch improvement/wildlife enhancement plan envisioned by the landowners. Total enhanced area includes 380 acres of wetland and sub-irrigated meadow habitat, 960 acres of upland grassland, and 3 miles of stream.



Weir installed on existing 10-ft diameter tube.

Funding:

Landowner	\$5,500.00	Weir structures
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Weir structures
STF	<u>\$5,000.00</u>	Weir structures
Total	\$15,500.00	

Accomplishments: In the fall of 2002, two water control structures were installed on the property. There was difficulty with installation because the project called for adding on to existing culverts. The additional 3 feet of water above the structures caused erosion to wash out the culverts. The soil around the structures were re-packed and is currently holding. Plans are to have retaining walls placed on both the upstream and downstream sides. This work is expected in early 2003.

Mud Lake Restoration

Purpose: This project was not one the Task Force was involved in during its initial construction. However, about two years after restoration of Mud Lake, erosion was occurring around the water control structure. NRCS contacted the Task Force and ask if we would be willing to contribute plastic sheet piling material our organization had on hand. The material was driven vertically into the ground to control erosion.

Funding:

STF	<u>\$4,100.00</u>	Sheet piling material
Total	\$4,100.00	

Accomplishments: Project was completed in the fall of 2002.

Mulligan Grassland Project

Purpose: A planned grazing system is being developed to shift from season-long to a shorter duration, rotational system on 3,911 acres containing 800 acres of wetlands. Initially, grazing will be limited to 50 percent or less total use based on NRCS recommendations. Grazing through the life of the agreement will

slowly increase but will not exceed the 60 percent utilization level recommended by NRCS. A small wetland area will be fenced and managed for wildlife. Soil will be removed from scattered wetlands to provide open water in areas choked with cattail. Soil removal is not part of the identified funding, but is allowed by the landowner at the other partners' expense.

Funding:

Landowner	\$9,092.40	Fences, pipeline, tanks, and wells
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Fences, pipeline, tanks, and wells
STF	<u>\$22,277.20</u>	Fences, pipeline, tanks, and wells
Total	\$36,369.60	

Accomplishments: Purchase of fencing materials and construction of wells and pipelines were completed in 2002. The tanks and towers have not been installed. The extreme drought made it impossible to dig post holes in the powdery sand. The remaining construction is planned for 2003. Soil was removed from some wetlands.

Prill Wet Meadow Project

Purpose: A water control structure will be installed on the downstream end of a drainage ditch, constructed to drain a large flat valley. The area was recently purchased by a new owner who wishes to restore to restore hydrology and improve the plant species diversity and vigor. Completion of this project will hold the groundwater table at a higher level for a longer period of time. High flows will be able to flow out over portions of the valley before entering a lake located downstream. The structure and adjacent emergency spillways will be fenced and will be light to moderately grazed once annually to provide residual cover for fall / winter wildlife use and spring nesting cover for wildlife. Approximately 120 acres of wet meadow will be enhanced.



Site where water control structure will be placed in existing drainage ditch.

Funding:

Landowner	\$3,250.00	Fence and installation
NGPC	\$2,014.00	Structure material
STF	<u>\$2,014.40</u>	Structure material
Total	\$7,278.40	

Accomplishments: Materials have been purchased. Project is planned for completion in 2003.

Regan Grassland/Wetland Project

Purpose: The project involves repairing a water control structure and shifting from a season-long to a rotational grazing system on 1480 acres along a tributary of the Elkhorn River. Eighty acres of this is riparian habitat along two miles of stream. The landowner's primary objectives are improving native vegetation, and enhancing wildlife habitat along the Elkhorn River in Holt County. The project design will stop stream down cutting. Cross fences, an additional well, tank and pump will be installed to allow for better grazing; increasing residual cover and plant vigor. The project is being implemented in

conjunction with an Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) contract.

Funding:

Landowner	\$2,978.19	Well, tank, structure repair
NGPC	\$2,500.00	Structure repair
STF	<u>\$5,005.00</u>	Structure repair
Total	\$10,483.19	

Accomplishments: Project was completed in 2002.

A Sandhills Fen and Grassland Partnership

Purpose: The project is to acquire property and restore the hydrology and vegetation (and associated wildlife) of two Sandhills fens located in western Cherry County to their more natural condition and to evaluate the cost/benefit for restoration as it relates to ranching. STF co-sponsored the project with The Nature Conservancy.

Funding:

NET past grant	\$900,000.00	Land acquisition
TNC/STF	\$198,000.00	Surveys and land management
TNC	\$61,000.00	In-kind administration
STF	\$7,000.00	In-kind administration
USFWS	\$17,000.00	Fencing
NRCS ^a	\$12,000 ^a	In-kind technical assistance
NGPC	\$18,000.00	Control Structures
Nebraska Cattlemen:	<u>\$3,000.00</u>	In-kind administration
Total	\$1,201,000.00	

^a NRCS contribution has far exceeded this amount.

Accomplishments: On April 2, 2002 the restoration of Jumbo and Pullman Valley fens was completed with the sale of the property back to private ranching operations. The 2700 acre ranch was sold in two parcels. The larger northern portion (approximately 2200 acres) containing Jumbo Valley was sold to Stan and Jean Huffman. The southern portion containing the Pullman Valley was sold to Glen Coble and Sons, Inc. Both parcels were sold at appraised value with a conservation easement on the property. Prior to the sale of the property, The Nature Conservancy transferred the conservation easement to the Sandhills Task Force.

The easement prohibits future drainage or alteration of the wetland hydrology of the two fens. It restricts the building or improvement of ranch buildings to the six acres has been used as the ranch headquarters. Normal ranching operations are allowed on the entire property.

The value of the easements and property was appraised by Radant Appraisal Service of Valentine. The property value (with easement) on the Jumbo Valley portion was \$325,000. The value of the easement was \$125,000. The value (with easement) placed on the Pullman Valley portion was \$105,000. The easement value was \$50,000.

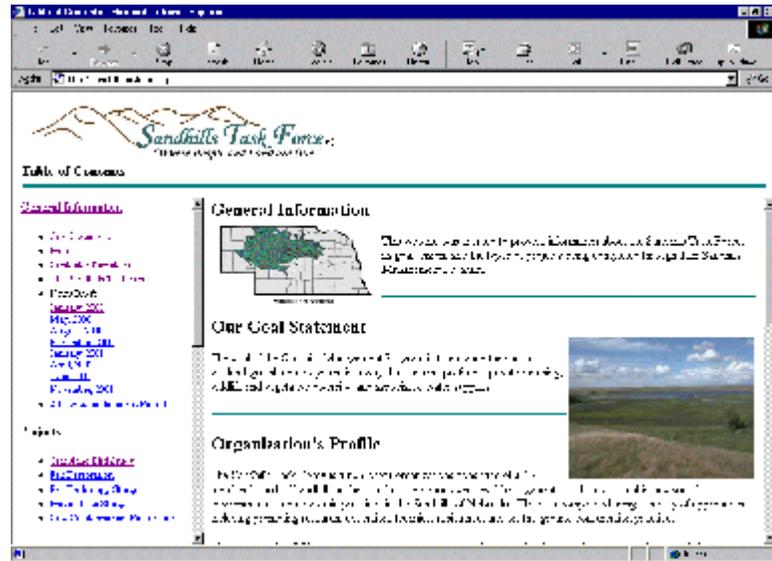
Sandhills Natural Resources Education Cooperative

The Task Force decided to join the newly formed Sandhills Natural Resources Education

Cooperative. Its goal is to provide information and structured educational programs to increase public awareness of Sandhill resources. The Cooperative is organized through the Cooperative Extension Service and Halsey 4-H camp. Al Steuter is the STF's representative. In 2002, \$1,731.25 was provided toward student tuition for youth attending the Sandhills Academy. It is a week long camp that exposes youth to the numerous natural resources, as well as, socioeconomic and environmental concerns of the Sandhills.

Sandhills Task Force Website

Purpose: One of the goals of the Task Force is to increase people's awareness of the Sandhills resources and of the Task Force itself. In 2001, a website was established. It contains information about the organization, its goals, principles, new briefs, and information about various projects the Task Force has funded. The address is <http://sandhillstaskforce.org>.



Home page of the Sandhills Task Force website

Schaeffer Grazing Project

Purpose: This project will help create the infrastructure necessary to implement a rotational grazing program on the project area; to encourage warm-season grasses; to provide residual vegetation for spring nesting; and to enhance wildlife production and use of the 3,311 acres. Currently the landowner is trying to implement a rotational grazing system, but the lack of a sufficient and dependable water supply prevents him from doing so. Cross-fencing and the placement of alternative watering sources are necessary for the landowner to reduce grazing pressure on the pastures and apply a high-density, short duration grazing plan for all pastures. NRCS is working with the landowner to create a grazing system that will benefit both ranching and wildlife.

Funding:

Landowner	\$14,041.00	Well, pipeline, pump, fencing and tanks
NRCS	\$25,315.00	Well, pipeline, and tanks
STF	\$8,000.00	Well, pipeline, and tanks
NGPC	\$8,000.00	Well, pipeline, and tanks
Upper Loup NRD	<u>\$2,649.00</u>	Fencing
Total	\$58,005.00	

Accomplishments: Construction began in 2002 with the balance to be completed in 2003.

Swanson Wetland Project

Purpose: Five small water control structures will be installed within Gordon Creek valley to improve groundwater and surface water hydrology and to control flooding and erosion. The structures will be placed on seasonal feeder streams or overflows. Historically, the channel meandered across the meadow accessing the flood plain during high flows. At high flows the proposed water structure will divert excess

water to historic meanders and ultimately into the adjacent shallow water wetland areas. The project has the potential to affect 920 acres of wet meadows containing numerous small temporary wetlands.



Installing a weir tube in intermittent drainage to check down cutting of stream.

Funding:

STF	\$14,000.00	Materials and construction
Landowners	\$8,000.00	Construction
NGPC	<u>\$10,000.00</u>	Materials and construction
Total	\$32,000.00	

Accomplishments: Four of the five structures were installed in the late fall of 2002. The fifth structure will be a precast concrete structure that will be built during the winter and installed next spring.

Vinton LTD Project

A planned grazing system will be developed on 4,487 acres for the benefit of improving native grassland. A grazing plan will be implemented to provide residual cover for wildlife and promote plant vigor. Management on these acres will benefit ten acres of seasonal wetlands and permanent wetlands and 4,477 acres of associated upland habitat.

Funding:

STF	\$3,371.06	Fencing and tank
Landowners	\$3,630.38	Fencing and tank
NGPC	<u>\$3,371.06</u>	Fencing and tank
Total	\$10,372.50	

Accomplishments: Approximately two miles of fence and one tank has been installed. Completion is expected in 2003.

West Twin Lake with water elevation raised.

West Twin Lake Restoration

In negotiating the sale of the Pullman Valley portion of the property, Glen Coble and Sons, Inc. agreed to sell a restoration and conservation easement on West Twin Lake, located approximately one-half mile east of Pullman Valley. The value of that easement was \$33,000. The landowner also agreed to hold the water level at the historic level using their existing water



control structure for two years while the Task Force obtains a permit.

Currently the lake is surrounded by a drainage ditch that removes enough surface water to allow about half of the lake bed to be hayed. The newly acquired easement will allow the Sandhills Task Force to construct and maintain a water control structure that will restore approximately 113 acres of lake to its near historic level.

Funding:

NRCS	\$20,000.00	75% cost share and engineering design
STF	\$33,000.00	Purchase of conservation easement
STF	<u>\$4,000.00</u>	25% cost share on water control structure
Total	\$24,000.00	

Accomplishments: The landowner is currently holding the lake level at the elevation identified in the conservation easement. The Task Force has applied for Wetland Reserve Program restoration funding from NRCS and a storage permit from the Department of Water Resources. NRCS has designed the water control structure. Construction is expected in 2003.

Purchase of Equipment

Purchase date	Item	Purchase Price	On loan to:	City, State
25-Sep-98	Laptop Computer Model: Dell TS30H SSN: 8390246BY47441A	\$3,657.54	Kevin Hood, Natural Resources Conservation Service	Theftord, NE
12-Oct-00	Total Station Model: Sokkia SET4110 SSN: 026438	\$12,008.43	Don Earl, Natural Resources Conservation Service	Theftord, NE
15-Dec-00	Printer Model:HP G55 Deskjet SSN: SG#07EGGQT	\$529.99	Jim Van Winkle, Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE
18-Dec-00	Laptop Computer Model:Dell Inspiron Model 3800-220-4815 SSN: 060322865	\$2,502.15	Jim Van Winkle, Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE
7-May-01	Digital Camera Model:Olympus D-460 Zoom SSN: 106687323	\$422.94	Jim Van Winkle, Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE
5-Nov-01	Garmin Map 76 w/WAAS, PC Cable /cigarette lighter adaptor, MapSource CD, and GA27C Antenna	\$917.66	Jan Joseph, Natural Resources Conservation Service	Valentine, NE

APPENDIX A

*Sandhills Task Force Checking Account
Tri County Bank, Stuart, Nebraska
January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2002*

Beginning Balance				\$47,642.50
Transaction	Date	Expense	Deposit	Balance
Inlaw Construction, Inc	17-Jan-02	\$4,918.26		\$42,724.24
Eakes Office Supply	22-Jan-02	\$12.71		\$42,711.53
Nebraska Environmental Trust	16-Jan-02		\$49,333.81	\$92,045.34
Postmaster - Kearney	25-Jan-02	\$45.40		\$91,999.94
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	01-Feb-02	\$4,455.16		\$87,544.78
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	04-Feb-02		\$15,000.00	\$102,544.78
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	31-Jan-02		\$90.21	\$102,634.99
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	20-Feb-02	\$4,596.62		\$98,038.37
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	19-Feb-02		\$831.78	\$98,870.15
Commercial Bank - Bassett (Interest)	19-Feb-02		\$979.72	\$99,849.87
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	25-Feb-02		\$46.36	\$99,896.23
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	20-Feb-02		\$1,731.62	\$101,627.85
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	28-Feb-02		\$116.43	\$101,744.28
University of Nebraska Foundation	08-Mar-02	\$1,000.00		\$100,744.28
Secretary of State (Recording fee)	02-Mar-02	\$10.00		\$100,734.28
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	29-Mar-02	\$4,624.56		\$96,109.72
Charles & Lois Regan	01-Apr-02	\$2,505.70		\$93,604.02
Scott Abstract (Easement transfer)	02-Apr-02	\$85.50		\$93,518.52
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	29-Mar-02		\$121.02	\$93,639.54
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	25-Apr-02	\$5,063.18		\$88,576.36
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	30-Apr-02		\$125.93	\$88,702.29
Commercial Bank - Bassett (Interest)	16-May-02		\$961.65	\$89,663.94
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	16-May-02		\$804.66	\$90,468.60
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	21-May-02	\$4,290.77		\$86,177.83
Nebraska Environmental Trust	20-May-02		\$17,426.31	\$103,604.14
Ace Irrigation (Weir tubes)	03-Jun-02	\$4,957.78		\$98,646.36
Ace Irrigation (Weir tubes)	03-Jun-02	\$5,036.53		\$93,609.83
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	23-May-02		\$298.45	\$93,908.28
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	23-May-02		\$447.68	\$94,355.96
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	31-May-02		\$123.18	\$94,479.14
UNL - Office of Research Management	10-Jun-02	\$4,803.60		\$89,675.54
Hellman, Main, Coslor, Kathol, P.C.	14-Jun-02	\$895.00		\$88,780.54
Charles & Lois Regan	27-Jun-02	\$2,499.29		\$86,281.25
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	28-Jun-02		\$107.96	\$86,389.21
4-H Youth Development (Sandhills Academy)	12-Jul-02	\$1,731.25		\$84,657.96
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	12-Jul-02	\$4,975.80		\$79,682.16
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	29-Jul-02	\$4,472.65		\$75,209.51
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	19-Jun-02		\$761.00	\$75,970.51
Nebraska Game & Parks Commission	08-Jul-02		\$9,000.00	\$84,970.51
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	31-Jul-02		\$126.51	\$85,097.02
University of Nebraska, WCREC	15-Aug-02	\$125.00		\$84,972.02

Miller Sign Co (Display sign)	15-Aug-02	\$75.00		\$84,897.02
Checking Account (continued)				
Transaction	Date	Expense	Deposit	Balance
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	26-Aug-02	\$4,675.44		\$80,221.58
The Frame Shop (Display sign)	27-Aug-02	\$47.70		\$80,173.88
Department of Natural Resources	27-Aug-02	\$35.00		\$80,138.88
Bill Elliott	28-Aug-02	\$2,726.91		\$77,411.97
Commercial Bank - Bassett (Interest)	16-Aug-02		\$983.01	\$78,394.98
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	19-Aug-02		\$844.38	\$79,239.36
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	23-Aug-02		\$308.52	\$79,547.88
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	23-Aug-02		\$462.77	\$80,010.65
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	30-Aug-02		\$105.95	\$80,116.60
Inlaw Construction, Inc	10-Sep-02	\$23,588.00		\$56,528.60
Nebraska Sec. Soc. Range Management	11-Sep-02	\$536.28		\$55,992.32
The Nature Conservancy (Land sale)	16-Sep-02		\$488,060.38	\$544,052.70
Bill Elliott	20-Sep-02	\$2,837.86		\$541,214.84
Steve Vinton	24-Sep-02	\$1,800.00		\$539,414.84
UNL - Office of Research Management	08-Oct-02	\$10,505.42		\$528,909.42
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	08-Oct-02	\$5,287.22		\$523,622.20
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	30-Sep-02		\$383.00	\$524,005.20
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	18-Oct-02		\$10,000.00	\$534,005.20
United Nebraska Bank (Purchase CD)	21-Oct-02	\$100,000.00		\$434,005.20
The Tri County Bank (Purchase CD)	21-Oct-02	\$350,000.00		\$84,005.20
Nebraska Environmental Trust	16-Oct-02		\$49,183.29	\$133,188.49
Department of Natural Resources	28-Oct-02	\$32.00		\$133,156.49
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	28-Oct-02	\$4,647.64		\$128,508.85
Buffalo Head Ranch	28-Oct-02	\$2,379.38		\$126,129.47
The Tri County Bank (Checks)	23-Oct-02	\$24.40		\$126,105.07
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	31-Oct-02		\$659.09	\$126,764.16
GD Media Group (Website service)	12-Nov-02	\$384.45		\$126,379.71
UNL - Office of Research Management	12-Nov-02	\$5,575.74		\$120,803.97
Commercial Bank - Bassett (Interest)	16-Nov-02		\$972.33	\$121,776.30
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	18-Nov-02		\$844.38	\$122,620.68
Ace Irrigation (Weir tubes)	25-Nov-02	\$13,650.25		\$108,970.43
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	04-Dec-02	\$4,708.57		\$104,261.86
Natural Nebraska Endowment Fund	09-Dec-02	\$1,500.00		\$102,761.86
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	25-Nov-02		\$308.52	\$103,070.38
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	25-Nov-02		\$462.77	\$103,533.15
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	29-Nov-02		\$148.80	\$103,681.95
Vinton LTD	09-Dec-02	\$5,711.06		\$97,970.89
Nebraska Cattlemen (Staff and overhead)	24-Dec-02	\$4,563.45		\$93,407.44
Ending Balance				\$93,407.44

Appendix B

**SANDHILLS TASK FORCE
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**
December 31, 2002

ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	\$937,948.39
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NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	\$914,537.16
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Permanently restricted	<u>\$23,411.23</u>
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TOTAL NET ASSETS	<u>\$937,948.39</u>
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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES
Period of January 1, 2002 to December 31, 2002

UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

Income

The Nature Conservancy (Sale of fen property)	\$488,060.38
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Interest from Tri County Bank Checking Account	\$2,108.08
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Interest from CD (Commercial Bank - Bassett)	\$3,896.71
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Interest from CD (Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill)	\$4,066.69
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Interest from CD (Purdum State Bank - Purdum)	\$3,325.20
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INCREASE IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	<u>\$501,457.06</u>
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Expenses

Administrative Costs	(\$69.80)
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Educational Grants	(\$1,536.28)
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Scott Abstract	(\$85.00)
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UNL Office of Research	(\$7,081.16)
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Secretary of State	<u>(\$10.00)</u>
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DECREASE IN UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	<u>(\$8,782.24)</u>
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PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS

US Fish and Wildlife Service	\$761.00
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Nebraska Environment Trust	\$115,943.41
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Ducks Unlimited	\$10,000.00
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Nebraska Game & Parks Commission	\$34,000.00
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US Fish and Wildlife Service (reimbursement pending)	\$15,694.04
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Nebraska Environment Trust (reimbursement pending)	\$25,341.95
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National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	\$15,000.00
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Restrictions satisfied by NET agreement:	
Nebraska Cattlemen (Salary and operating expenses)	(\$56,361.01)
Education and Outreach	(\$2,253.41)
Conservation projects	(\$82,670.94)
Restrictions satisfied by FWS agreement:	
Conservation Projects	(\$14,800.34)
Education and Outreach	(\$1,654.70)
Restrictions satisfied by NGPC agreement:	
Grassland Bird Survey	(\$9,000.00)
Conservation Projects	(\$9,088.77)
Restrictions satisfied by NFWF agreement:	
Conservation projects	(\$15,000.00)
Restrictions satisfied by DU agreement:	
Conservation projects	(\$2,500.00)
INCREASE IN PERMANENTLY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS	<u>\$23,411.23</u>
INCREASE IN ASSETS	\$516,086.05
NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF YEAR	<u>\$421,862.34</u>
NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR	<u>\$937,948.39</u>