



State and Private Forestry Fact Sheet

Nebraska 2024



Investment in State's Cooperative Programs

Program	FY 2023 Estimate
Community Forestry and Open Space	\$0
Cooperative Lands - Forest Health Management	\$121,000
Forest Legacy	\$25,000
Forest Stewardship	\$177,590
Landscape Scale Restoration	\$761,720
State Fire Assistance	\$2,597,558
Urban and Community Forestry	\$1,289,146
Volunteer Fire Assistance	\$459,780
Total	\$5,431,794

NOTE: This funding is for all entities within the state, not just the State Forester's office.

Program Goals

Key Issues

Forest Facts and Accomplishments

Selected Facts	Value	FY 2023 Accomplishments	Value
Population	1,961,504	Landowners Receiving Educational or Technical Assistance	4,839
Acres of Forest Land	1,433,522	Acres Covered by New or Revised Forest Stewardship Plans	35,267
Acres of Nonindustrial Private Forest Land	1,227,194	Acres in Important Forest Resource Areas Covered by New or Revised Stewardship Plans	20,081
Number of NIPF Landowners	21,091	Volunteer Fire Departments Assisted	474
Acres of Federal Land Under State Fire Protection	741,247	State Fire Communities Assisted	339
Acres of Private Land Under State Fire Protection	48,342,273	Coop Forest Health Acres Protected	350
Number of Rural Fire Departments	494	Forest Legacy Project Acquisitions	0
Cities and Towns	529	Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	86
Forest Based Employment	2,200	Population Living in Communities Provided Urban Forestry Program Assistance	1,278,972
Economic Impact of Forestry (by rank)	34,000,000	Urban Forestry Volunteer Assistance	13,605
State Forestry Budget (All Sources)	5,306,217		

Program Highlights

Conservation Education

In 2023, the Conservation Education (CE) Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) programming made a significant impact by directly engaging with 12,915 Nebraskans throughout the state, actively working in 25 communities. Our dedicated team conducted 158 presentations, organized 56 events, and contributed to seven news articles and stories.

The outreach efforts specifically tailored for youth and family audiences comprised 33 activities, elevating

the environmental literacy of 9,574 Nebraskans. These activities showcased Project Learning Tree (PLT) and/or Water Education for Teachers (WET) initiatives. Additionally, nine outreach activities aimed at adult audiences successfully enhanced the knowledge of 1,050 Nebraskans about NFS, its CE program, and CE services.

A noteworthy achievement was the completion of 64 workshops, where the CE coordinator and/or CE partners provided training to 1,345 educators in the PLT and/or WET curriculum. This marked the highest participation in CE workshops in a decade, solidifying Nebraska's position as the 3rd ranked State for such educational initiatives.

Furthermore, the Affiliate Education Centers recognize the need for continued education. These centers, strategically located in Omaha, Lincoln, Gering, Ponca, Trenton, Columbus, and Hastings, played a vital role in organizing in-person CE workshops. This innovative approach allowed for more localized and accessible educational opportunities, fostering a broader understanding of conservation practices across the State.

The NFS Tree Trunks program, a valuable resource for Nebraska educators, experienced a surge in popularity in 2023, being utilized 34 times and reaching 564 adults and youth statewide. To address geographic disparities, NFS actively seeks opportunities to establish relationships and house Tree Trunks in underserved areas, expanding accessibility.

Cooperative Fire Protection

In 2022, the Complex Incident Management Team (CIMT)- Type I responded to two fires (the 702 and Bovee) in Western Nebraska. Once in 2022, the Nebraska Type 3 Team deployed (Road 739 fire). NFS staff worked on 54 fires in an overhead capacity as part of Type 3, CIMT, or Wildland Incident Response and Assistance (WIRAT) teams.

Moreover, the fire staff at NFS organized 57 training sessions and classes, accumulating a total of 180,016 contact hours. NFS extended support to volunteer fire departments (VFDs) through the Volunteer Fire Assistance program, offering \$590,000 in financial aid to 115 VFDs for equipment, training, and prevention supplies. An extra allocation of \$50,000 was derived from BIL funding, making a notable impact on VFDs. By providing training and financial assistance to the VFDs, we are building fire suppression capacity within the state and providing means for these departments to increase their knowledge and abilities. This increased capacity has allowed NFS to sponsor VFDs to serve as Nebraska state fire response resources and assist with national wildfire response, supporting our regional partners and providing a source of income for the departments. The coordination between cooperating agencies, VFDs, and community stakeholders assists in keeping fires small and helps mitigate catastrophic wildfire and large-scale incidents.

Lastly, under the Bilateral Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Community Wildfire Defense Grants allocation exemplifies a proactive strategy in protecting communities from the escalating wildfire threat. This grant offers financial support to the Nebraska Forest Service, enabling them to aid communities and partners in crafting grant proposals. The NFS extends technical assistance to assess eligibility, conducts education and outreach to advocate for the program, assists in application preparation, and contributes to determining the necessary "at-risk" qualification for program participation.

Economic Action

In collaboration with the City of Lincoln, NFS staff facilitated the development of a proposal to Bloomberg Philanthropies. This collaboration resulted in the establishment of a City-led biochar development program aimed at transforming urban wood waste into biochar. The initiative effectively addresses local environmental needs and aligns with Lincoln's Climate Action Plan objectives.

The partnership with the City also extends to fostering the Urban Wood Network, streamlining branding and messaging for urban wood activities across Nebraska. Collaborators in this network focus on creating markets that connect end-users with producers.

Additionally, NFS collaborated with the US Biochar Initiative and DoveTail Partners to produce eight fact sheets, enhancing knowledge about biochar in various industries. Furthermore, in collaboration with UNL,

biochar producers, and concrete manufacturers, NFS is conducting innovative research to develop industry-ready, high-performance, and environmentally-friendly biochar concrete capable of effectively sequestering CO₂. Another noteworthy initiative is the Sawmills for Schools program, which is currently implemented at Gering, Chadron, and Ainsworth High Schools. This program integrates sawmills and kilns into the industrial education curriculum, equipping underserved youth with valuable skills, addressing financial constraints, and allowing them to keep and showcase their completed woodworking projects.

Forest Health Protection

The Forest Health staff is committed to enhancing the well-being of rural and urban trees and forests through extensive outreach, educational efforts, and meticulous diagnosis of tree pests and problems. The team actively engages in training initiatives to equip Nebraskans with the knowledge and skills necessary for Forest Health issues, reflecting a comprehensive strategy to foster healthier ecosystems.

In 2023, NFS provided essential technical assistance to Lincoln's At-Risk Tree Program, coordinating plantings on 12 properties owned by low and moderate-income homeowners. With NFS's guidance, the program successfully planted hundreds of trees, addressing environmental concerns by removing over 50 ash trees.

Through a partnership involving multiple states, NFS participated in the Urban Tree Improvement Program, planting 50 trees in test plots and sourcing 150 plants for trial plantings. This collaborative effort included seed collection and coordination with regional partners.

The Forest Health team extended outreach through various channels, creating articles, an annual report, interviews, radio guest appearances, and media releases. NFS efficiently handled approximately 450 tree problem diagnoses through phone consultations, emails, sample submissions, and on-site visits.

Additionally, the team engaged in significant herbicide testing, collecting tissue samples from three Nebraska locations. Test/demo plantings included the collection of potentially gall-resistant acorns, with three viable sources stored for planting next spring. NFS effectively coordinated the Nebraska Invasive Plant Management Grant, treating invasive plants on non-federal State, local, or private lands in Sioux and Dawes counties. Collaborative efforts led to the inventory of 5,500 acres and the treatment of 350 acres affected by invasive plants, exemplifying a proactive approach to environmental stewardship.

Forest Legacy

NFS continues to promote and work on the development of potential Forest Legacy projects in the State. We are continuing to work with the R2 coordinator to determine which projects are worth pursuing due to the unique nature of Forest Legacy Program. NFS has also updated our Forest Action Plan and the priority forest landscapes which now align more with the Forest Legacy Areas in the state.

Forest Stewardship

Utilizing the Community Assistance Funds Adjacent to National Forest (CAFA) and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) funds, the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) initiated 62 projects, treating over 3,990 acres adjacent to or near the Nebraska National Forest. This focused approach aimed to reduce cross-boundary wildland fire threats and enhance overall landscape resilience. In proactive engagement, forestry staff met with 482 new forest landowners, providing valuable assistance in forest management recommendations and practice implementation. This effort resulted in the establishment of 181 management plans, enhancing forest stands, reducing fuels, and supporting activities like tree planting and windbreak establishment, significantly contributing to the long-term sustainability of the region's forests.

Furthermore, NFS strategically allocated funds from State, federal, and landowner contributions, directing millions of dollars to reduce wildfire risks across thousands of acres in coniferous forests, notably in the Pine Ridge and Niobrara Valley. Over the past two decades, NFS successfully treated approximately 40,000 acres.

In addition to fuels reduction projects, NFS achieved forest restoration success through dedicated efforts, planting over 650,000 ponderosa pine trees in the Niobrara Valley and Pine Ridge of Nebraska. With an impressive survival rate of approximately 90% after 3 years, this afforestation initiative significantly contributed to the ecological health of the region. NFS forestry staff played a crucial role in providing

forest management planning and implementation to both private and public landowners.

Finally, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has proven to be transformative by infusing an extra \$748,000 into State and Private Forestry funding for Nebraska. These funds are dedicated to implementing the State Forest Action Plans, resulting in substantial enhancements for each program in Nebraska, particularly in the realm of forest stewardship.

Landowner Assistance

The forestry assistance staff of the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) played a pivotal role in delivering essential forest management planning and implementation support to both private and public landowners. This included conducting over 707 project visits and crafting 181 management plans, with 31 of them specifically tailored as Forest Stewardship Management Plans. These comprehensive management plans contributed to the effective management of 2,490.86 acres. In addition to providing direct technical assistance, the Foresters organized 15 education programs, reaching 978 individuals, and delivered 60 presentations, engaging with 2,319 people. Furthermore, they actively participated in 167 media pieces, enhancing outreach and education about forestry practices.

Landscape Scale Restoration

In 2023, NFS successfully secured Landscape Scale Restoration Grants totaling \$661,720 for key projects aimed at enhancing landscape scale impact in Nebraska. First is the Forest Resiliency in the Great Plains project, addressing the primary objective of assisting landowners in managing the threat posed by the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) to Nebraska's ash-dominated forests.

Additionally, the Nebraska Forest Restoration project is strategically positioned on private and state sites, near USFS Good Neighbor projects. Aligned with the broader Landscape Scale Restoration purpose, this initiative emphasizes collaborative and science-based approaches to restore forest landscapes. The project seeks to provide examples of effective forest management, focusing on restoring fire-impacted forests through reforestation efforts. It aims to increase landowner participation in long-term stewardship, with a comprehensive reforestation program targeting the planting of 250,000 pine trees on both state and private lands.

Moreover, the Tree Diversity and Resiliency Initiative addresses landscape needs by promoting the growth, planting, and endorsement of underutilized tree species. This initiative strives to enhance the diversity and resilience of high-priority community forests and shelterbelts in Nebraska by strategically demonstrating the value of these species through planting in ecological groupings within Nebraska communities and shelterbelt demonstration sites.

In addition to these efforts, NFS received a substantial award of \$1.875 million under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Nebraska Community Forestry Resiliency Program. This achievement underscores the agency's dedication to bolstering community forestry resilience, further solidifying its commitment to the overall health and sustainability of Nebraska's diverse landscapes.

Sustainable Urban Forestry Resilience

NFS received a \$200,000 grant from the USDA's Sustainable Urban Forestry Resilience program, which is dedicated to enhancing community forest education, engagement, and management. The project, named Advocates for Training for Ensuring Healthy, Sustainable, and Beneficial Community Forests, adopts a proactive approach to address potential threats to our community forests. With nearly 1.9 million people in 530 towns benefiting from these green spaces, effective sustainable management and future planning are imperative. The initiative focuses on boosting education, outreach, and collaboration among decision-makers and community organizations to promote teamwork and ensure the long-term health and resilience of our community forests.

Urban and Community Forestry

Our community-focused initiatives have significantly enabled Nebraska communities, enhancing their capabilities to implement robust community forestry programs and contribute to positive community forest outcomes. Here are the highlights:

Community Engagement: Our dedicated staff actively engaged with 137 communities, undertaking activities such as tree inventories, tree planting initiatives, and preparedness activities for the Emerald

Ash Borer (EAB).

Grant Success and Statewide Impact: UCF programs, including the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, have successfully secured grant funding, enabling the program to make a lasting impact on hundreds of communities across the State. (Funding over \$11.8M)

Comprehensive Community Support:

- Conducted 137 community assists, completed 18 full community tree inventories, and provided 101 inventory assists, contributing to effective public tree management. Additionally, two EAB plans were developed to aid communities in responding to the Emerald Ash Borer.
- Recognition and Certification Achievements: Acknowledging excellence, 86 Tree City USA designations were awarded, along with 22 growth awards, 5 Higher Education Tree Campus designations, and 4 Tree Line recognitions.
- Technical Assistance: Our staff provided crucial technical assistance through 491 consultations. Of these, 341 were extended to municipalities, 90 to non-profit organizations, and 37 to schools.

Investing in Community Futures: NFS played a pivotal role in assisting 11 communities with Individual and Community Assistance (IRA) proposal development. Moreover, a substantial \$53-million proposal was submitted to the USFS, reflecting our commitment to advancing community forestry initiatives on a broader scale. (*grant not awarded)

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