

The *Prairie Blade*



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FALLing for Wildlife

Conservation Awards Dinner & FUNdraiser
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Game & Parks Commissioner Mark Pinkerton, Senator Ben Nelson, and Game & Parks Director Rex Amack socialize during the 2010 *FALLing for Wildlife* Awards Dinner & Fundraiser.

For the latest on legislative issues in Nebraska join the Federation's

Wildlife. Action. Network.

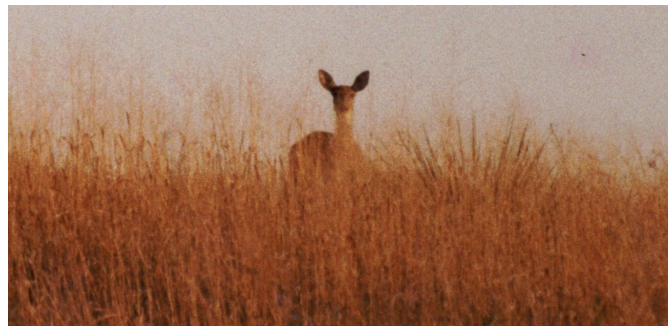


MANAGING NEBRASKA'S DEER

At meetings around Nebraska in December, Game & Parks Commission staff discussed new deer management initiatives. Complaints from farmers and others about damage to crops and cars prompted Game & Parks to set a goal of reducing the whitetail population in eastern Nebraska by 25% over the next three years.

Recent initiatives include:

- A new October season on antlerless deer.
- Additional bonus tags, allowing nearly every whitetail permit to allow for the harvest of a second, antlerless deer.
- A new 'earn a buck' policy in the Wahoo and Elkhorn deer units, requiring a hunter to check in an antlerless deer before or when they check in a buck.



- A longer late antlerless season, running December 26 to January 18 this year.

With the new initiatives and more hunters in the field, Game & Parks expects a record deer harvest of 90,000 deer this year. A record of over 63,000 deer were harvested during the November firearm season.

The plan for 2011: continue the aggressive whitetail harvest, according to Kit Hams at Game & Parks. Hams said the Commission is

considering expanding the 'earn a buck' policy to other deer units, including the Blue Southeast and Blue Northwest. The Commission will likely continue the October antlerless season, and is looking for other ideas to harvest more does.

Pat Molini, who led the Commission's public meeting in Nebraska City, said adding permits would only go so far.

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PIPELINE STUDY INADEQUATE

In a December letter to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Nebraska Wildlife Federation said the Department of State's Draft Environmental Impact Statement on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline is "woefully inadequate." The Federation said the Depart-

ment failed to consider alternative routes to the Nebraska Sandhills and failed to consider climate implications of the tar sands pipeline.

In October, Senator Mike Johanns asked the State Department to broaden the scope of its analysis to consider a route that avoids the

Sandhills. Senator Ben Nelson wrote that "the decision should be based on science, not politics."

In a November report, Plains Justice raised concerns about the capability of emergency response teams to react to a spill or leak along the pipeline's route.



Bruce Kennedy

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

OUR "NATURAL CAPITAL"

In my last president's message, I talked about learning to live within our natural resource budget. And yes, this is just Bruce Kennedy speaking; but a few weeks ago on network television, I saw an environmental special program featuring Prince Charles of Great Britain. This was an excellent program about some of the things that are happening to our environment, and I hope that some of you caught it. Anyway, if you did not happen to see it, here is the gist of what the future King of England had to say.

He was talking about the same things we have all been talking about, such as acid rain, global warming, overpopulation, and deforesta-

tion. Prince Charles coined a phrase I wanted to share with the readers of the *Prairie Blade*. He talked about our "natural capital" and the fact that we are using up said natural capital and not replacing it as we go along. In short, we are not living a sustainable existence on this planet.

Prince Charles talked about what kind of place we were going to leave for our grandchildren. He spoke very bluntly about what was happening to our planet; no denial came from him about global warming or the other environmental perils.

Prince Charles is a knowledgeable world leader; we should take heed of his words. He is setting an example and taking action to correct these

problems. We should do the same.

When we have used up our natural capital, cut down the last tree, over-allocated the last stream or river, and plunged the planet into a warming spell that cannot be reversed, we just simply will not be able to live here anymore.

Back to Bruce Kennedy: The problem, as I see it, is that there are some people who are trying to coexist with nature as the prince recommends. But we are in the minority; there are not enough of us.

I call on our membership and all inhabitants of this planet to turn the situation around. Be one who cares. The time to act is now.

SNAKE RIVER PURCHASE WORTHY

In a letter to Game & Parks Commissioners and the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, Nebraska Wildlife Federation president Bruce Kennedy said a proposal to acquire a stretch of the Snake River "is a project that will benefit our state and all Nebraskans."

The stretch of the Snake River southwest of Valentine is a blue ribbon trout stream. Currently, the 3,100-acre Snake Falls Ranch is leased to a private sportsmen's club. Under the proposal, Game & Parks would acquire 1,300 acres of the ranch, including Snake River Falls and several miles of river frontage upstream from the falls. The Snake River Sportsmen's Club would acquire 1,800 acres and the stretch of the river downstream from the falls.

The Club would place a conservation easement on the lower stretch of the river to protect

it from development, and would give the state first option to buy the downstream stretch should the club ever decide to sell. Game & Parks fisheries administrator Don Gabelhouse said the Commission would likely provide public access to view the falls but would carefully limit fishing access to the upstream stretch of the river to protect the fishery.

The Federation letter said "this is a very worthy endeavor because it seeks to preserve one of the areas in our state that has a considerable amount of natural beauty and fish and wildlife habitat." The letter also urges the Nebraska Environmental Trust to provide funding to support the deal. The Game & Parks Commission applied for \$2.4 million in Environmental Trust funds to complete the purchase.

STATE CONSERVATION LEADERS GATHER IN NEBRASKA CITY

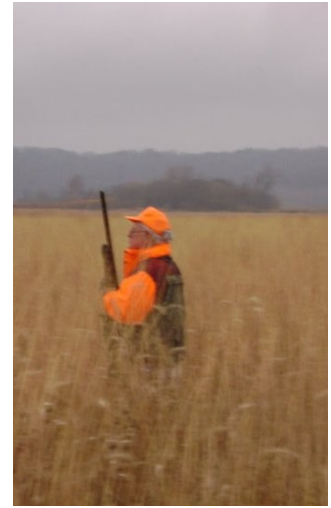
They came from New York, South Carolina, Texas, Idaho, and dozens of other states, and all left with a new appreciation of Nebraska's wildlife and natural resources. Dozens of state executive directors from National Wildlife Federation affiliates around the country converged on Nebraska City in November for NWF's annual executive directors conference.

That same week, directors from state affiliates of the League of Conservation Voters, and organizations part of the State Environmental Leadership Program also met at the Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City.

The gathering of state environmental and conservation group leaders was an opportunity to learn about managing issues and organizations from nationally known speak-

ers and from each other.

Nebraska Wildlife Federation's board of directors hosted a welcome reception November 16. NeWF board member Brian Bashore organized a pheasant hunt for some of the participants, including NWF president Larry Schweiger. NeWF executive director Duane Hovorka led a bird watching excursion to Waubonsie State Park in Iowa.



National Wildlife Federation President and CEO Larry Schweiger on a pheasant hunt in Nebraska.

LEAVE A LEGACY

In 2004, the Nebraska Wildlife Federation board of directors created *Leave a Legacy*, the Federation's permanent endowment fund.

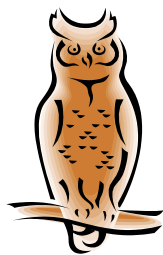
Leave a Legacy was created to allow our donors to be part of a permanent legacy to ensure that the Federation's wildlife conservation efforts will continue to benefit wildlife in future years.

Federation members can make a contribution of cash, stock, bonds or other assets to the fund, and federal and state tax benefits are often available. Members can also leave money to the fund through their will or es-

tate plans.

The *Leave a Legacy* endowment fund is invested for the long term. The principle is protected and earnings from the investments provide support for Federation programs.

To date, Federation donors have contributed \$30,000 for the *Leave a Legacy* fund. If you'd like more information about *Leave a Legacy*, or about wills and estate planning, contact the Federation office.



MANAGING DEER

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"Land access is a real issue," he said. "Ninety-five percent of the depredation problems we hear about in southeast Nebraska are the result of de facto refuges." Molini said convincing private landowners to allow hunters onto those lands where deer are congregating can be a challenge.

Nebraska Wildlife Federation is holding two public forums to take input from hunters and others on how the new 'earn a buck' requirements worked in the Wahoo and Elkhorn units, and whether there is support for expanding the policy into other deer units (see box at right).

If you cannot attend but have thoughts about deer management issues in Nebraska, contact our office.

EARN A BUCK FORUMS

We are hosting two public forums to hear from hunters and others on their views of the new 'earn a buck' policy. Forums are scheduled for:

Jan. 18, 2011
6:00-8:00 pm
Seward Memorial Library

Jan. 20, 2011
6:00-8:00 pm
Scheels, Omaha



Board member and auctioneer Brian Bashore (above).

Volunteer Ashley McAndrews and Board member Marge Kennedy staff the registration table (right).

Over 110 people packed the room at Mahoney State Park (far right).



FALLING FOR WILDLIFE

Each year the Federation recognizes individuals and organizations who make an important contribution to fish and wildlife conservation in Nebraska. This year, seven award winners were recognized for their outstanding work at our *FALLing For Wildlife* Conservation Awards Dinner & FUNdraiser, at Mahoney State Park.

Guests could catch up with old friends during the social hour, and later enjoyed a dinner featuring pheasant,

venison, walleye and other wild game. The live and silent auctions were lively and brought out the thrill of auctions in everyone.

The event raised nearly \$6,000 for the Federation's fish and wildlife conservation work. We send out a special thanks! to all of the individuals and businesses who supported and sponsored *FALLing for Wildlife*.

2010 NEWF CONSERVATION AWARD RECIPIENTS

Lifetime Achievement Award. Rex Amack

For his conservation accomplishments for fish, wildlife, and the parklands of Nebraska. Rex has served the Game & Parks Commission for 42 years, including over two decades as Director.

Conservation Professional. Larry Hutchinson

For his leadership in identifying and comparing instream flow laws around the country, and educating people about the important Public Trust Doctrine. Larry recently retired after working 45 years at Game & Parks supporting Nebraska fisheries.

Conservation Communicator. Joe Duggan

For 17 years as a Reporter, and the many hours he puts into researching hard news and feature articles for the Lincoln Journal Star. Joe's commitment to the outdoors and hunting and fishing, add to the authenticity of his stories.

Conservation Organization. University of Nebraska-Lincoln Wildlife Club

Celebrating 50 years of service, this club brings together students who are interested in wildlife. The Wildlife Club helps educate students to the various aspects of wildlife and members give back by providing opportunities for younger school age children to learn about wildlife and conservation.

Conservation Education Award. Dr. Tom Bragg

For his dedication to restoring and maintaining the health of Nebraska's natural ecosystems. Dr. Bragg has been Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, and Dean of Graduate Studies at UNO. He is devoting the rest of his tenure to establishing an environmental and teaching facility at the University's Allwine Prairie Preserve.

Landowner Wildlife Rich Lodes and Dan

For their work restoring southeast Nebraska grasses, and wildlife previously highly eroded. Resource Coordinator Forester for UNL.



Rex Amack (right) receiving award.

BUDGET CUTS TO DOMINATE LEGISLATURE

When the Nebraska Legislature convenes January 5, the state budget is likely to be the issue that will dominate the session.

State tax revenue shrunk by 9.2% over the last two budget years as a result of the recession. The Legislature responded with cuts during a Special Session in 2009 and the regular session in 2010, and by using \$554 million in federal funds from the stimulus package.

According to the Legislative Fiscal Office's November 16 estimate, the state now faces a

budget shortfall of about \$986 million over the next two years. That is the difference between the expected tax and other state revenue in those two years, and the cost to maintain current programs and services under current law.

The current state budget is about \$3.4 billion per year. To meet the shortfall, state agencies

were asked to submit budgets that included a 10% cut in funding.

The Game & Parks Commission operates mostly with hunting and fishing licenses, park fees, and other non-tax revenue. The Department of Environmental Quality gets most of its funding from the federal government. The Department of Natural Resources gets most of its funds from general state tax revenue.

Combined, these three agencies that share primary responsibility for protecting Nebraska's natural resources received about \$37 million this year in general state tax revenue, just 1.1% of the total state general fund budget.

"Although a tiny part of the state budget, these funds are vitally important," said Nebraska Wildlife Federation executive director Duane Ho-

vorka. "They help maintain and operate our state parks, and manage non-game wildlife.

They provide matching funds that leverage large amounts of federal funding that helps improve air and water quality. The funds ensure that new plans designed to balance water use and water supplies are based on sound science."

Hovorka said further cuts to agency operations will have real consequences for Nebraska's natural resources. For example, the Game & Parks Commission budget request includes a reorganization of the agency that would save \$2.5 million, in part by cutting 30 staff positions. The Department of Environmental Quality's budget request would cut the already paltry water quality monitoring program budget, resulting in about 12% fewer sites monitored (or monitoring for fewer pollutants).

Changes in the Legislature

The November election made the Nebraska Legislature a little less wildlife-friendly, as two wildlife-friendly incumbent Nebraska State Senators lost their seats.

Senator Cap Dierks, Nebraska Wildlife Federation's Conservation Policy award winner back in 2000, lost his bid for re-election to Tyson Larson, 48% to 52%. Senator Kent Rogert lost to Lydia Brasch by 47% to 53%. Both Dierks and Rogert had wildlife-friendly voting records.

Senator Bob Krist won his bid for reelection over Tim Lonergan by just 55 votes. Burke Harr was elected by just 36 votes to replace Senator Tom White, who ran unsuccessfully for Congress. Harr and Krist were endorsed by the Nebraska League of Conservation Voters.

Other incumbents who have been supportive of good natural resource policy and who were reelected include Senators Brad Ashford, Bill Avery, Tom Carlson, Annette Dubas, Russ Karpisek, Steve Lathrop, Amanda McGill, John Nelson, and Norm Wallman.

"Further cuts to agency operations will have real consequences for Nebraska's natural resources."
—Duane Hovorka

STAY UP TO DATE
with the budget debate and other wildlife issues by joining our free Wildlife Action Network. Sign up today at:
www.NebraskaWildlife.org

TS

Habitat Awards. Schulz

ring highly eroded land in
a. Native trees, shrubs,
e are now returning to this
oded sand mine. Dan is a
or for LPS NRD and Rich is a



es his lifetime achievement.

SURVIVING THE WINTER

Bon Elsdale/The Image Bank/Getty Images



A deer mouse settles in for the winter.

Burr! Wouldn't it be nice to snuggle into bed tonight for a long winter's sleep... like until March?

That's what our hibernating wildlife do. It's their way of adapting and surviving the cold winter months.

While some animals hibernate, other critters have different winter survival strategies — for example, our migratory birds head south for warmer digs; and still others adapt by making changes in their behavior or bodies, like growing a winter coat, to help them survive the cold winter months.

As for those animals that truly hibernate, they actually enter a state of “suspended

animation.” Their breathing and heart rate slows, and their body temperature drops so low that it will almost match the temperature outside. They stop eating and in many cases stop excreting. It takes these animals some time to awaken and recover. They do all of this to conserve energy.

There is a great deal of preparation that goes into hibernating for a couple of months. During the fall our toads, ground squirrels, snakes, and others eat more food than usual and store it as body fat, store additional food, and get their winter nests, dens, or burrows ready for a long winter's night.

But what about bats, rac-

coons, opossums, and skunks, who don't actually sleep straight through the winter? Instead they wake up once in awhile, walk around a little, and eat before they go back to sleep. By definition, they don't truly hibernate. Rather they enter a state of Torpor, where their body temperature drops only slightly and they awake relatively easily.

Winter is a time of hardship for wildlife, especially when it comes to the search for food, and finding protection from the elements. Remember to plant fruit bearing shrubs and leave brush piles for the critters.

SALUTE TO BUSINESS COUNCIL MEMBERS

Cindy Paulsen Hovorka, **Hair Market Junction**, Lincoln

Gene Oglesby, **Oglesby Law**, Lincoln

John L. Hughes, **Hughes Brothers**, Seward

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Don Preister, **Joy Creations**, Omaha

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JJ Johnson, **The UPS Store**, Lincoln

David & Linda Titterington, **Wild Bird Habitat Stores**, Lincoln

Jean Hovorka, **Deep Rock Water**, Omaha

Kim Elam, **The Grove**, Lincoln

Contact our office for more information about joining the Federation Business Council.

PUSH YOUR KIDS OUTSIDE

When Richard Louv published *Last Child in the Woods* in 2006, he coined the phrase “nature-deficit disorder” to describe a generation of kids who had grown up indoors instead of outdoors.

For many, the book was a revelation, and it launched a series of national, state, and local efforts to reconnect children with nature.

For the Nebraska Wildlife Federation board, the book was simply confirmation of issues we had been discussing for at least a decade.

When I grew up in the 1960’s and 1970’s in Lincoln, my parents had a rule: be home when the street lights come on. We grew up out of doors, climbing trees and chasing frogs at Seacrest Park and riding bikes throughout the neighborhood.

Today, you often have to push kids outside to get them away from TV and computer screens and back outdoors. Other Federation board members echoed that experience. In 1996, recognizing that school field trips to see parks and wildlife were falling victim to budget cuts and liability concerns, we published our *Guide to Nebraska Schoolyard Habitat Areas*. The report was a guide to help schools bring the natural world to the classroom door.

We created *Adopt a Stream*, an effort to teach educators, youth group leaders, and adults how to adopt, understand, and

conserve the creeks, lakes and wetlands in their own neighborhood.

Though our Wildlife Week activities — carried out for nearly 40 years — we show teachers how to incorporate wildlife and natural areas into grade schools, middle schools, and high schools.

Today, we are looking for funding to bring National Wildlife Federation’s successful *Eco-Schools* program to Nebraska. This international program shows teachers, students, administrators and parents how to make their school green on the inside, in the schoolyard, and in the curriculum.

Eco-Schools is an exciting program that takes a holistic approach to greening schools, but it will take dedicated volunteers and new funding to bring it to Nebraska.

The challenges we face are many. In the 1960’s, cable TV was showing reruns of Little Rascals movies, Pong was the only video game around, and personal computers were the stuff of science fiction. Today, hundreds of TV channels, a barrage of video games, mobile phones and the endless world of the Internet are more than enough to keep a curious child entertained 24 hours a day.

The challenges are many, but the stakes are huge. People protect what they love, and it is very hard to fall in love with

something on a screen. To really understand the natural world, to fall in love with that special place, you have to see it, smell it, touch it, feel it.

Fortunately, this is an area where every one of us can make a difference. Programs are great, and with our help Nebraska schools can be doing much more to connect kids with the natural world. But each one of us can take our kids, grandkids, or neighbor’s kids outside. We can show them how a cricket chirps, how flowers smell, where a toad lives. We can teach them to fish, hunt, camp, canoe, or hike.

Yes, it takes a little time and a little effort. But the rewards for our kids, our communities, and are world are...priceless.



Duane Hovorka

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S WING



Adopt a Stream was created to get kids and adults involved in nearby rivers and lakes.

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Earn-a-Buck Forums

January 18, 2011 * 6:00-8:00 pm—Seward Memorial Library
January 20, 2011 * 6:00-8:00 pm—Scheels, Omaha

Nebraska Wildlife Federation is hosting public forums to learn what hunters and landowners think of the new “Earn-a-Buck” policy in the Wahoo and Elkhorn deer units, and whether the policy should be expanded to other deer units.

Conservation Calendar

- January 5, Legislature Convenes, Lincoln
- January 16, *Wild About Nature*, Thomas Mangelsen & the Omaha Symphony
- January 21, Game & Parks Commission meeting, Lincoln
- January 25, Federation Board meeting, Ashland
- January 28-30, Visit our booth at Pheasant Fest, Qwest Center, Omaha
- January 30, Michael Forsberg at Countryside Church, Omaha