

# The *Prairie Blade*



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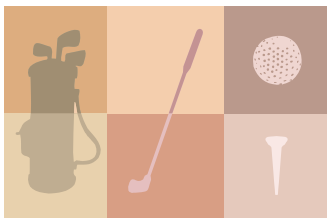
### Attend NeWF's annual business meeting

April 30, 2011  
9:30 am—1:30 pm  
Spring Creek Prairie  
Audubon Center

*See page 3*

### Wild Turkey Scramble,

*See page 5*



## CUTS PROPOSED FOR WILDLIFE PROGRAMS

The Legislature has completed public hearings on introduced bills, and is now in full-day sessions. April 8 will mark the 60<sup>th</sup> day, two-thirds of the way through the 2011 session.

As we go to press, we continue to face an onslaught of anti-wildlife legislation. The Natural Resources Committee advanced LB 229, which would take \$77 million over the next 11 years from the Environmental Trust Fund, and use it for water projects designed to change the timing of river flows or buy out water rights.

Other bills would eliminate the Environmental Trust entirely, outlaw water rights that would protect river flows for wildlife or recreation, and allow counties to require that landowners exterminate prairie dogs that could leave their property. The Appropriations Committee is proposing cuts to the Game & Parks, Department of Natural Resources, and Department of Environmental Quality budgets that are much steeper than cuts being proposed for most other state agencies.

To date, the Natural Resources Committee has re-

fused to advance any of three bills that would address pipeline construction in Nebraska. The Committee has refused to advance a bill that would ensure the Game & Parks Commission has a seat at the table when watershed management plans are developed, and a bill to create a Youth Conservation Program.

To keep up to date on our State Legislature, subscribe to our Wildlife Action Network email system, and check out the state legislative information on our web site, [www.NebraskaWildlife.org](http://www.NebraskaWildlife.org).

## DEPT OF STATE TAKES SECOND LOOK AT TAR SANDS PIPELINE

Good news! The US Department of State announced March 16 that it is planning a Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline. The new assessment could be released by mid-April for public comment.

Federation Board member Brian Bashore was part of a delegation from Nebraska that flew to Washington, DC, in March. The delegation met with officials from the State Department, Environmental Protection Agency, and Nebraska's Congressional delega-

tion to express concerns about the pipeline.

"The State Department decision gives our state leaders a second chance to suggest routes that avoid the Sandhills, and to identify environmentally sensitive areas in Nebraska that should be protected," said Bashore.

He said "the delay also gives the Legislature time to put in place laws that will protect Nebraska landowners from eminent domain abuse, ensure that pipeline companies are liable for leaks, provide safer routes, and require that

*See tar sands on page 4*



Bruce Kennedy

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# NEBRASKA'S WATER PROBLEMS

As I sit down to write my last message as president of the Nebraska Wildlife Federation, my wife and I are freshly back from the Platte River and the Sandhill crane migration in central Nebraska. Sometimes, during the doldrums of winter, one gets to thinking that nothing is right; but as the saying goes, it is spring—and all is well. And in many instances, that seems to be the case—on the Platte River, anyway.

In the nearly 40 years that we have been going to the Platte in the early spring, we have seen many changes for the better. Visitors now come to central Nebraska by the thousands to witness this migratory marvel, there are places to learn about cranes and their host, the Platte River. There are places to view them and nature centers to visit; and celebrations and events up and down the Big Bend of the Platte River rejoice at the coming of the cranes. Newspapers across the state tell us that they are here. Secretary of the Interior

Ken Salazar paid Nebraska and the Platte a visit and spent some time in a blind viewing the cranes. The president of the National Audubon Society, David Yarnold,



*Fortunately, public awareness of the Platte River has increased, but its sustainable future is still in jeopardy.*

was lured here by this magnificent event, according to a recent news article. Public awareness of the cranes and the Platte River has been raised to a very high level.

The Tri-State Compact between Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming, with its Platte River Recovery Plan, promises to restore habitat needed

and water flows that will improve the river for the cranes and all other wildlife. However, a problem exists in that Nebraska has not found a funding source for its part of the Plan, which is a water depletion plan that calls for retiring certain amounts of irrigated acres to restore flows.

A legislative attempt to solve this dilemma is LB 229, introduced by Senator Deb Fischer of Valentine. Senator Fischer claims that this bill will divert money from the Nebraska Environmental Trust to fulfill Nebraska's obligations under the Tri-State Compact. One problem with the bill is that it does not designate the Platte as the target for the funds diverted. Another problem is that even if all money were taken from the Environmental Trust, it would only amount to a drop in the bucket for what is needed to solve Nebraska's water problems. A large and reliable funding source needs to be identified and put in place so that Nebraska can keep up with its bargain on the Platte (and also the Republican River).

## APRIL IS MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

We ask all of our members to renew their membership in April. Having only one renewal time reduces our postage costs and makes more efficient use of our staff time.

There will be a survey in your membership renewal mailing this year. **Please take this time to respond to this survey.** We want to learn more about you in order to better serve your needs, and to build a better Federation.

## WILDLIFE WEEK: GREENING OUR SCHOOLS

In March, the Federation mailed postcards to over 5,000 Nebraska teachers, inviting them to take advantage of Wildlife Week 2011 curriculum materials collected on the Nebraska Wildlife Federation web site, [www.NebraskaWildlife.org](http://www.NebraskaWildlife.org).

The theme of this year's effort to help teachers engage in wildlife-related education is *Greening Our Schools*. The materials, activities and web links are designed to help teachers, students and communities make their schools a

better place to live and learn by reducing energy and water use, developing outdoor classrooms, and tying those efforts into the school's environmental education curriculum.

One focus of the web-based information is National Wildlife Federation's *Eco-Schools USA* program. *Eco-Schools* is an approach that emphasizes the involvement of students, teachers, parents and communities to plan and carry out activities designed to green their schools inside,

outside, and throughout the curriculum.

The theme for this year's 4th, 5th, and 6th grade wildlife poster contest is "Wildlife Moves Me to...". It is designed to find out what actions Nebraska students are inspired to take by their favorite wildlife species. The best art work from around the state will be honored at the Federation's annual gathering, Saturday, April 30, at Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center south of Denton.

### THANK YOU WILDLIFE WEEK SPONSORS

- \* Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center
- \* Central Platte Natural Resources District
- \* Audubon's Rowe Sanctuary
- \* U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- \* National Wildlife Federation
- \* Nebraska Wildlife Federation.
- \* Kuba Travnicek
- \* Jean Henke
- \* Dr. Marian Maas
- \* Bruce & Marge Kennedy
- \* Laura Tegtmeier

## NEWF ANNUAL GATHERING APRIL 30 \* 9:30 AM—1:30 PM

Mark your calendar and plan to attend the Nebraska Wildlife Federation 2011 Annual Gathering on Saturday, April 30, from 9:30 am to 1:30 pm at the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Spring Creek Prairie is a nature center surrounded by 800 acres of native tallgrass prairie, just 20 minutes southwest of Lincoln near Denton.

Federation members will elect a new president, two vice presidents, and a delegate to the National Wildlife Federation in the morning. Members will also hear brief reports from Federation officers.

Activities will include:

- \* Business meeting and election of officers
- \* Demonstration featuring live birds of prey
- \* Lunch
- \* Kid's activities, including a hike through the prairie
- \* Honor winners of the 2011 Wildlife Week grade school poster contest

Visit [www.NebraskaWildlife.org](http://www.NebraskaWildlife.org) for more information, or call the office at 402-477-1008.



A volunteer for the Raptor Recovery Center, Dave Titterington talks about the screech owl. The educational bird he holds is injured and cannot be returned to the wild.



A selection of native plants will be for sale during the Festival.

Tar sands from page 1

pipeline companies have funds in place to cover leaks, spills, or other damage.” Legislation to do that was stuck in the Natural Resources Committee as we went to press.

“The State Department decision also gives our state leaders a second chance to suggest routes that avoid the Sandhills, and to identify environmentally sensitive areas in Nebraska that should be protected.”

—Brian Bashore

“Clearly, the Department of State got the message that its original environmental study fell far short of what was needed,” said Duane Hovorka, Federation executive director. Hovorka pointed to two major problems with the original report.

“First, the Department of State failed to

consider alternate routes that would take the pipeline around the Nebraska Sandhills and avoid as much of the Ogallala aquifer as possible,” he said. TransCanada proposed to build its tar sands pipeline through the fragile Sandhills landscape and right over the Ogallala aquifer underneath.

“Second, the Department needs to better assess the air pollution and climate change impacts that would result from building the pipeline,” said Hovorka. He said the science is increasingly clear that greenhouse gas pollution is a problem we need to address, and the Department of State needs to better understand the pipeline’s impact.

The Federation plans to co-host additional outreach meetings on the pipeline in April in Omaha and Atkinson. Contact our office for more details.

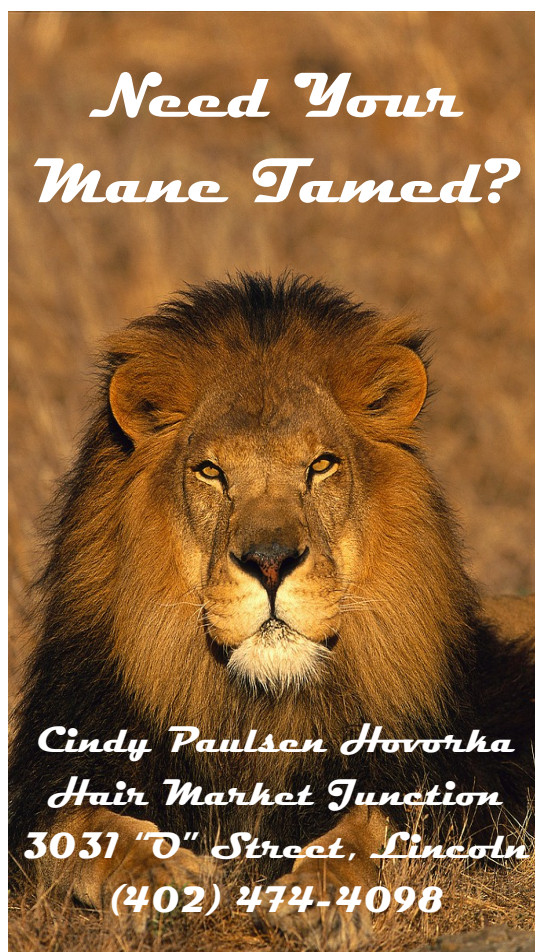
## JOIN US ON THE NIORRARA RIVER

Friends of the Niobrara, Inc., invites all members of Nebraska Wildlife Federation to join them in a day of fun on the beautiful Niobrara River on Saturday, May 21, 2011.

We will be taking part in the river cleanup activities sponsored by the Niobrara Council in the morning, starting at Cornell Dam near Valentine, Nebraska. Canoes are available for those wishing to clean the river itself; you may also elect to clean the River Road. Lunch will be provided at Smith Falls State Park, courtesy of Niobrara Council, following the cleanup.

In the evening, Friends of the Niobrara will be honoring the Breuklander family with our River Keeper award followed by a dessert reception. Evening activities will be held at the Curtis Hoover Event Center in Valentine.

Contact Bruce and Marge Kennedy for details: [brucemargekenn@aol.com](mailto:brucemargekenn@aol.com) or 402-796-2114.



*Need Your  
Mane Tamed?*

*Cindy Paulsen Hovorka  
Hair Market Junction  
3031 "D" Street, Lincoln  
(402) 474-4098*

## “WILD TURKEY SCRAMBLE” GOLF TOURNEY

Join us on Friday, June 17, for the Nebraska Wildlife Federation’s 3rd annual golf tournament. It will be held at the Highlands Golf Course in Lincoln, which features native prairie plants and wildlife-friendly management.

The format is a 4-person best-ball Wild Turkey Scram-

ble with a shotgun start at 1:30 pm. Food and prizes will be provided afterwards by local sponsors. Sponsorship options are available.

Registration deadline is June 1. For more information and registration details contact the office at 402-477-1008 or visit [www.NebraskaWildlife.org](http://www.NebraskaWildlife.org).



## COMMISSION CONSIDERS DEER CHANGES

The Game & Parks Commission tabled until May a package of over 100 changes to Nebraska deer, elk, and pronghorn management regulations at a March 18 Commission meeting. Among other changes, Commission staff proposed that *Earn a Buck* be expanded to include the Blue Northwest, Blue Southeast, and Missouri deer units. Staff also proposed changes to Mule deer conservation area rules

Nebraska Wildlife Federation presented a report of comments on the Commission’s new *Earn a Buck* policy that required firearm deer hunters in the Elkhorn and Wahoo units to harvest a doe before ‘earning’ their permit to harvest a buck this past year. The Federation recommended that, if the Commission con-

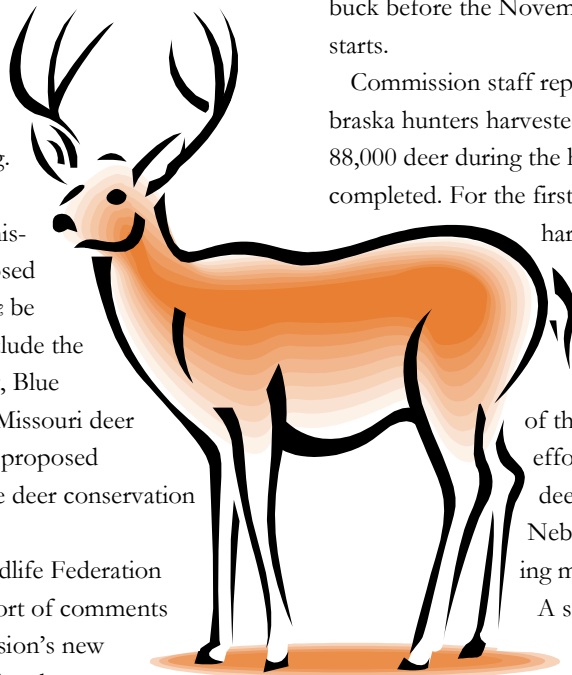
tinues *Earn a Buck*, it should let deer hunters use the October antlerless season, or Season Choice permits, to ‘earn’ their buck before the November firearm season starts.

Commission staff reported that Nebraska hunters harvested a record of over 88,000 deer during the hunting season just completed. For the first time ever, hunters

harvested more antlerless whitetail deer than bucks, indicating the growing success of the Commission’s efforts to reduce the deer herd in eastern Nebraska by harvesting more does.

A staff report also said that 51 out of 3,645 deer tested

were positive for Chronic Wasting Disease. The tests indicate that the disease has moved out of the Nebraska Panhandle and into Central Nebraska, as far east as Hall County (Grand Island).



## TURNING DEAD WOOD INTO HOMES FOR WILDLIFE



Being weak excavators, flickers need the rotting wood of snags and dead limbs to carve out their nesting cavities.

Did you know that fallen and dying trees can be just as valuable to wildlife as healthy live ones? Decaying and standing dead trees, called snags, help feed and house a wide variety of creatures.

"Some people think dead and dying trees look nasty or they're afraid they'll fall on their house so they take down the whole tree," says Kathy McNeil, a naturalist at Huntley Meadows Park in Alexandria, Virginia. "But snags are rich in fungal life and beetle larvae channels."

Beetles and other insects lay their eggs beneath the bark, where their larvae feast on the soft wood. Their activities, along with the invasion of bacteria and fungi, hasten decay and help to loosen the

bark. The insects attract woodpeckers and other birds. These holes can then serve as nesting cavities for raccoons, squirrels, wood ducks, and owls.

### Snags are particularly important habitat for birds.

According to studies conducted by the U.S. Forest Service, as many as 85 species of birds use dead trees in this country. Some, such as the brown creeper, are lured by the insect population and then nest beneath strips of loose bark. Others, like chickadees and woodpeckers, will excavate their own nest holes in soft, rotting wood. Tall snags attract birds of prey. The loftier branches provide outlook perches for owls and hawks, from which they can descend silently to snatch up prey.

### Many mammals depend

on dead trees, too. Gray squirrels, flying squirrels, and raccoons compete for tree cavities in which they can raise their young and take shelter during the winter.

In all, some 80 animal species "actually depend on dead and dying trees, and hundreds more—including reptiles and amphibians—benefit from them," says Debbie Pressman, a biologist with the U.S. Forest Service. Given their value to wildlife, why not leave dead and dying trees standing in your yard?

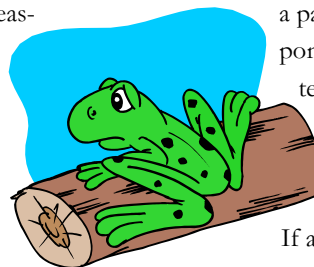
By providing such habitats, you'll undoubtedly be pleased with the wide range of life that takes advantage of the dead wood in your yard.

*Extracted from: National Wildlife Federation, Turning Deadwood into Homes for Wildlife, Olwen Woodier, 12/1997.*

## OTHER WAYS TO USE DEAD WOOD

If your backyard space is measured in yards rather than acres, you can erect a stack of logs or a brush pile to attract wildlife. Like snags, piles of cut wood or branches can also provide refuges and food for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and butterflies.

Try resting a tree trunk horizontally on the ground in a woodland garden, along a shady walkway, in a tangle of weeds, among



a patch of ground cover or by a pond. These trunks provide shelter and nesting sites to staghorn beetles, sow bugs, shrews, snakes, salamanders, and a host of other small creatures.

If a brush pile in a suburban environment needs to be camouflaged for aesthetic reasons, create a narrow bed around the edges and plant wildflowers to attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and other beneficial insects.

# CONGRESSIONAL CHOICES

Less than 2% of Nebraska's land is in state or federal parks, wildlife areas, refuges, grasslands, forests, and other public land managed in part for wildlife and open for public access. We rely heavily on federal conservation programs that provide wildlife habitat – and in some cases, public access – to private farm and ranch land in Nebraska.

The Conservation Reserve Program has taken more than 1 million acres of environmentally sensitive land, like land that is highly erodible or right next to streams and wetlands, out of crop production and into grassland in our state. Over 75,000 acres of Nebraska wetlands have been protected

or restored through the Wetlands Reserve Program.

The Grassland Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, and Conservation Stewardship Program all protect native prairie, restore fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce the impact of farm chemicals on Nebraska creeks and rivers.

Unfortunately, many programs like these are under attack. As difficult as the state budget battle is, the current budget fight on the federal level is even more contentious, more partisan, and more dangerous for people who love wildlife and our natural world.

As we went to press, Congress had still not finalized

the federal government budget for the current fiscal year, which is now half over. It was debating sharp cuts to conservation and wildlife programs, while leaving untouched full funding for oil industry subsidies, crop subsidies, mining industry subsidies, and below-market leases for people who graze livestock on US Forest Service land.

As Congress works to bring the federal budget back into balance, we must all do our best to make sure our members of Congress are making smarter choices that are both fiscally responsible and protective of our water, air, land, and wildlife.



Duane Hovorka

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S WING



### JOIN THE FEDERATION

Do your part for fish and wildlife conservation, education and public policy in Nebraska... join the Nebraska Wildlife Federation or provide a special contribution! Help us ensure that Nebraska is where the *Good Life Means Wildlife!*

- \$ 12 Student
- \$ 30 Individual
- \$ 45 Family
- \$100 Sustaining
- \$500 Patron
- \$1000 Platinum
- \$\_\_\_\_ Other

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Enclosed, or  VISA  MC Card No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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# The *Prairie Blade*

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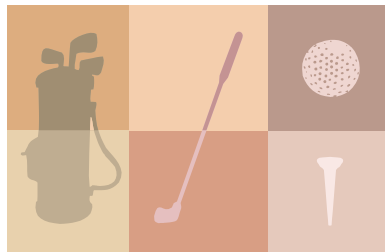
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## Upcoming events

### 3rd annual Wild Turkey Scramble



**June 17, 2011 \* Highlands Golf Course**

Four-person scramble. Shotgun start at 1:30 pm. Food and prizes will be provided by local sponsors. Raffle.

For reservations: [www.NebraskaWildlife.org](http://www.NebraskaWildlife.org), contact or call 402-477-1008.

- **April 14-17, 2011.** National Wildlife Federation 75th annual meeting, Washington DC.
- **April 23, 2011.** Earth Day, Events across Nebraska.
- **April 30, 2011.** NeWF Annual Gathering, Denton.
- **May 21, 2011.** Niobrara River Spring Cleanup.
- **June 18, 2011.** Elkhorn River cleanup, Elkhorn.
- **June 25, 2011.** Great American Backyard Campout.