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Sandhills Task Force

"Where People and Land are One"

P.O. Box 1686

Kearney, Nebraska 68848

November, 2001

Next Task Force Meeting:

The next Board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 29th at Stub's Restaurant in Theford. The meeting agenda is listed below.

Troy Bredenkamp takes new position

In October, Troy announced that he had accepted as CEO for the Colorado Livestock Association. His new residence will be Greeley, Colorado. GregRuehle has been contacted for a recommendation for Troy's replacement. Hopefully, the Board can act on the nomination at its next meeting.

Two CDs renewed

Two \$100,000 CDs matured on November 16. The one from Commercial Bank in Bassett was renewed for a year. The new one-year CD is paying 3.90% APR. The CD at Purdum was renewed for 6 months but would only pay 3.3%. I feeling is that at that low of a return, we are better to get the money out on the land where it can do more good.



NRCS helps complete fen project.

Natural Resource Conservation Service staff pause for a picture while doing the final touches to a water control structure. The engineering staff provided the engineering and construction oversight on all seven structures installed.

Task Force brochure nearing completion

Throughout September and October, the contractor worked on the installation of the structures on Pullman and Jumbo Valley Fens. They were completed by early November.

Jim has been working with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission staff (who print the Nebraska Land Magazine) to develop a color brochure for the Task Force. The brochure will include contact names and website address. Ted was looking into seeing if Game and Parks could pay for the printing.

STF Website <http://sandhillstaskforce.org>

The Board had previously agreed to work with NGPC to put our homepage on a website that was independent of the NGPC's website. As we worked through that process, there were a couple of things that made Jim and I uncomfortable about it: 1) the first page had logos which associated the site with NGPC, as well as, other organizations that could confuse visitors, and 2) the web address for the Task Force would contain "Wild Nebraska" or "Rainwater Basin". To get an address that just stated the Task Force would have cost the Board about \$50 per month.

Jim and I opted to get a totally independent website for about \$50 per month. The website has been set up and currently contains items like the Management Plan, bylaws, and principles of the Task Force. The site will be expanded in the next few weeks.

Community Foundation account closed

I was notified by the Foundation that beginning October 1, they would assess our account \$75 each quarter for membership dues. This was in addition to assessing us 3% surcharge for every check we issued. I requested the account be closed and a check for the balance \$6263.85 be sent to the Task Force.

Bird study for Sandhills moving forward

The University of Nebraska hired a research professor by the name of Larkin Powell. In early September Dr. Powell, Dr. Johnson (UNL) and Dr. Mace Hack (NGPC) took a short tour of the Sandhills with me. The tour gave them a better feel of the landscape and how a study project might be conducted.

The Task Force has committed \$45,000 for the three year study. Additional funding includes \$10,000 from a UNL grant and \$20,000 from NGPC. Dr. Powell is continuing to seek an additional \$25,000 for the project. Everyone is in agreement that no matter who funds the balance of the study, the study will not be modified to meet the needs of new partners if it is in conflict with the STF's objectives.

A landowner fact sheet was developed by Dr. Powell that will be provided to landowners who might be interested in allowing research on their property. Larkin gave me quite a bit of freedom in providing comment on the language in the fact sheet. A couple of key items include: any endangered species observed would not be disclosed to any agencies (UNL policy), and UNL researchers would only be allowed on those portions of the property they had permission for.

Does STF Need Professional Audit?

Terry Galloway, CPA with Shonsey & Associates met with me to discuss the Sandhills Task Force and the possibility of doing accounting work for the Board. His is located in Grand Island and is a past Board member of Ducks Unlimited in Nebraska.

During our discussion, he tried to explain to me the need for the STF do have an audit done early in their existence. He suggested the cost would probably be around \$1700. Terry offered to come and talk to our Board at the November meeting.

Terry also asked if he could discuss with the Board the possibility of the Board partnering with Ducks Unlimited.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation tours Higgins Project

Sarah Ellgen, project administrator from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and her friend from Germany were given a tour of the Higgins project funded by the Foundation and STF.



Our perception was that Ms. Ellgen was impressed by what she saw. We discussed the possibility of submitting a future grant proposal that did not identify specific projects, but allowed the STF to do certain types of projects. Ellgen thought we had pretty good chances if the request did not exceed \$50,000. Projects above \$50,000 were given lower priority.

On a side note, the Higgins enjoyed giving the tour. Tom commented that he wouldn't mind doing more of these in the future. Tours by ranchers will help get the message out that livestock and wildlife can live together.

Higgins Project Moves Forward

Tom Higgins informed me that their NFWF project is about 80 percent complete. The wells have been drilled, the pipeline installed, and about half the tanks put in place. The remaining 5 tanks will be put in next

spring. Fencing is partially done but will be completed next year as they move the cattle through the units.