



Activity Report of the Sandhills Task Force

January 1 through December 31, 2005

Submitted by: Gene D. Mack, Secretary/Treasurer

This report is a summary of 20 projects completed or ongoing by the Sandhills Task Force (STF). The majority (17) are conservation projects directly affecting the natural resources of the Sandhills. Total acres enhanced by these projects are 45,079 acres (38,187 acres of upland grasses, 7.4 miles of streams and rivers, and 5,046 acres wetlands and wet meadows). An additional 5 projects are in the pre-agreement stage of planning.



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 land use practices benefited 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 2005.



Sandhills Task Force board meeting in September of 2005

Board of Directors

Board of Directors (15 total) include:

A.B. Cox	Rancher	Mullen
Al Steuter	The Nature Conservancy, Rancher	Ainsworth
Barb Cooksley	Rancher	Anselmo
Byron Eatinger	Rancher	Theford
Craig Utter	Rancher	Ainsworth
Dana Larsen	Natural Resources Conservation Service	North Platte
Gene Mack	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Kearney
Gene Lehnert	North Central R, C & D	Bassett
Melody Benjamin	Nebraska Cattlemen, Rancher	Lakeside
Mick Knott	Rancher	Hyannis
Mike Kelly	Rancher	Sutherland
Richard Lackaff	Rancher	Bassett
Rob Ravenscroft	Member at Large	Lincoln
Eric Hanson	Rancher, Twin Platte NRD	North Platte
Ted LaGrange	Nebraska Game & Parks Commission	Lincoln
Vacant	County Commissioner	

Ron Dobbins's Upper Loup NRD board member term expired in 2005 and he did not seek to be reelected. The position held by Ron must be occupied by a current NRD board member. After a brief search, the vacancy was filled by Eric Hanson, a Twin Platte NRD board member.

Dean Funk, who held the county commissioner board member seat resigned early this past summer. Several candidates are being considered for the position and will be contacted to gauge their level of interest.

Al Steuter has plans to retire from his position with The Nature Conservancy in February. According to the bylaws Al's position must be, "*recommended by a private environmental or conservation group.*" The board will begin the search for a qualified candidate for this position when Al officially retires.

Jim Van Winkle continues to work for the Sandhills Task Force, through a cooperative agreement with Nebraska Cattlemen. 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.

An agreement with the NRCS was established in 2004 to help cover up to 50 percent of the costs associated with Jim's salary. In 2005 the Sandhills Task Force was reimbursed \$24, 478.30 for Jim technical services covered under the agreement. An amendment to the agreement was done in August that increased funding to the agreement by \$12,550. In December, the Task Force was notified that budget cuts within NRCS reduced our total 2006 funding to \$20,917.

Financial Activities

An audit of the organization's 2004 financial activity was completed in May by Hellman, Main, Coslor and Kathol., 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, 2004 and 2003 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 2005, the Task Force spent \$190,559.34 for conservation work. Source of funds for these projects came from past grants, as well as, from new grants. 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), Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Ducks Unlimited. The following table lists the sources and amounts. All grants, except the \$20,000 from NGPC, are grants that do not provide funding directly, but reimburse the STF for costs incurred in association with terms of the grant.

Organization	Amount
Nebraska Environmental Trust	\$93,000
Fish and Wildlife Service's "Partners for Fish and Wildlife" Program	\$30,000
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission	\$20,000
Fish and Wildlife Service's "Private Lands Stewardship Grant" Program	\$39,010*
Natural Resources Conservation Service's "Section 714 Contribution Agreement"	\$8,031
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's "State Wildlife Grant" Program	\$17,938
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality's "Section 319 Projects"	\$100,000
Totals	\$307,979

*This amount was reported in last year's report but was not finalized until 2005

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

Projects

In 2005, 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 lengths of the agreements are for 10 years. The amount cost-shared by the Task Force and its partners is based on the amount of benefit for wildlife and the natural resources. Projects that predominately benefit ranching, with limited benefit for wildlife, received a lesser amount of cost share. Likewise, projects that greatly benefited wildlife with marginal benefit to the landowner were provided a larger amount of cost share. FWS and NGPC serve the role of assuring compliance with the agreements. Listed below are only those, which have signed agreements. Eight pending potential projects, which represent a significant amount of staff time, are not included.

In all instances, landowners initiate projects by requesting assistance from 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.

The approval of STF funding for projects is done through an established procedure. A standing committee of four board members is responsible for approving each project. That committee includes the three board members affiliated with NRCS, NGPC, and FWS. The fourth member is the rancher board member who lives the closest to the specific project being considered. If any one of the four members has a concern about the project or the funding level, the project is presented at the next board meeting for approval or denial. This process ensures that each project is reviewed for its biological and social merits without reducing the rancher role in decision-making. The process greatly reduces the amount of time the board spends on approving conservation projects.

Bairn Ranch

Description: The project involved constructing a well and tank to allow the cooperator to exclude cattle from a spring that feeds into Clear Creek, Keith County. Historically, the spring - fed area, was the sole watering site for the entire property. The cooperator, STF and FWS designed a plan that will benefit native grasslands, a spring creek, and the ranching operation. The project affects the management of 700 acres of grasslands and a spring-fed creek.

Funding:

Landowner	\$2,630.00	Tanks, fence, windmill
STF	\$5,850.75	Tanks, fence, well drilling & casing
Total	\$8,480.75	

Accomplishments: This project was completed in the fall of 2005 and will be inspected in early 2006 by a FWS employee. The amount obligated by the Sandhills Task Force has been paid.

Beel Ranch Project

Description: The original project was completed in the fall of 2004. In the summer of 2005, the project was inspected and it was decided a 10-foot extension needed to be added to one of the

structures due to spring-time seepage below the structure. Photo on cover shows one of the ponds after a growing season.

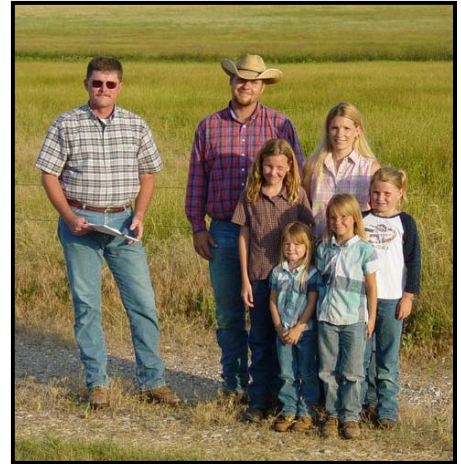
Funding:

Landowner	\$800.00	Installation
STF	\$378.94	10-foot extension and band
Total	<u>\$1,178.94</u>	

Accomplishments: The materials were purchased by the STF and delivered to the site. Winter weather has delayed installation.

Beginning Rancher Program

Description: In 2004, the STF began working with the Nature Conservancy to use their Horse Creek Fen property as part of a beginning rancher program being initiated by the Sandhills Task Force. The Nature Conservancy had acquired the property through a NET grant years earlier. It was the goal of both organizations to get the property back into private ownership, with a conservation easement to remain on the property to protect the wetland from being destroyed. The conservation easement lowered the value of the property, making it easier for a new rancher to purchase. Both organizations wanted, if possible, to help a new rancher get started in the Sandhills. Our selection criterion was set up to follow the legislature’s Beginning Farmer/Rancher program and established criteria.



Accomplishments: The Nature Conservancy and the Sandhills Task Force developed an application process for applicants interested in the program. After extensive interviews of the applicants, by a committee made up of Sandhills Task Force members and TNC personnel, a young family was selected. Shane and Kristi Daniels signed a 5-year lease agreement with an option to buy. The Daniels and their four daughters moved onto the property this summer and are excited to have the opportunity to someday own a ranch in the Sandhills.

A small group of Board members and TNC personal have joined together to mentor the Daniels on financial planning, grazing systems, and routine ranching operations. Plans are also being made to improve the existing grazing system.

Benjamin Ranch

Description: The purpose of this project is to construct additional cross fencing to allow the cooperator to combine cattle into two herds and graze each pasture one time during the growing season. The project is part of a NRCS Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) project involving the management of 3,115 of grasslands, sub-irrigated meadows, and wetland areas. The cooperator working, with one or two technical personnel, designed a management plan that will benefit native grasslands, wetlands, and the ranching operation. Acres affected include 511 acres of wetlands and 2,604 acres of upland.

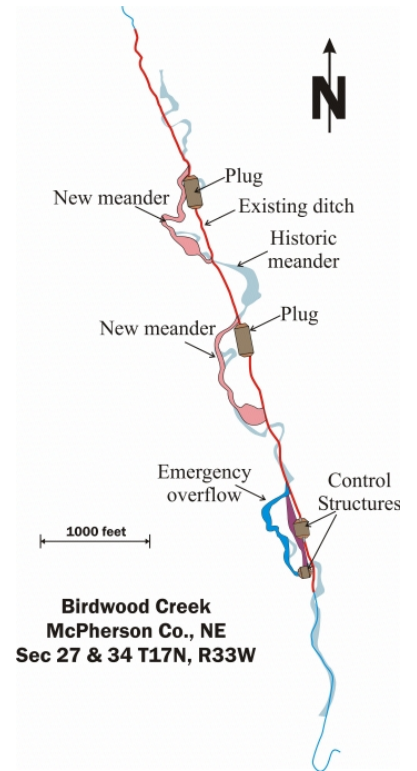
Funding:

NRCS	\$11,384.10	Fencing, native plant seeding
Landowner	\$1,794.70	Fencing, native plant seeding
STF	\$1,000.00	Fencing
NGPC	\$1,000.00	Fencing
Total	<u>\$15,178.80</u>	

Accomplishments: In August of 2005 the Wildlife Extension Agreement was signed by the landowner. The fence will be constructed by spring of 2006. No payments have been made to date.

Birdwood Creek Restoration

Description: Restoration is planned to recreate a meandering channel in a straightened, one-mile segment of the North Fork of Birdwood Creek. The project will involve placing two earthen plugs and two water control structures along the entire segment of stream. Fill for the earthen plugs will come from recreating the old stream channel. It is believed that channel was straightened in the 1950’s or 1960’s. Stream erosion has incised the channel down to an elevation of 4 to 6 feet throughout the valley. Grazing will also be modified to manage the riparian area for more wildlife.



Funding:

STF	\$68,110.00	Water control structure, restoring meanders, enhancing wetlands, fencing
Cooperator	\$35,090.00	Water control structure, restoring meanders, enhancing wetlands, fencing
Total	<u>\$103,203.00</u>	

Accomplishments: In August of 2005 a Wildlife Extension Agreement was signed by the landowner. Funding has been secured through a \$100,000 grant from the Department of Environmental Quality. The landowner also applied for a matching grant from NET. Project construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2006.

Bonnifield Ranch

Description: Management of 3,907 acres of grasslands, sub-irrigated meadows, and wetlands will be enhanced through a partnership with the various agencies. The project includes the addition of a pipeline system and watering sites to allow cattle herds to be combined into one herd, with each pasture being grazed for a shorter period of time and with longer rests. Cross fencing will create three additional pastures. Each year, one of the pastures will be left ungrazed during the growing season. The STF and NGPC portions will be paid through the STF.

Funding:

NRCS	\$28,973.00	Fencing, tanks, pipeline, well drilling
Landowner	\$12,218.00	Fencing, tanks, pipeline, well drilling
STF	\$3,840.85	Fencing, tanks, pipeline
NGPC	\$3,840.50	Fencing, tanks, pipeline
Total	<u>\$48,872.35</u>	

Accomplishments: The pipeline and tank portion of this project have been completed. The additional water in the pasture has allowed the ranch to begin rotating the cattle in one combined herd. The fence building began this fall and will be completed by the summer of 2006. To date, \$5,144.47 has been paid by STF.

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. The riparian area will be grazed independent of the uplands. 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
Landowner	\$8,172.00	Fencing, tanks, wells
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Fencing, tanks, wells
Total	<u>\$32,688.00</u>	

Accomplishments: The final portions of the fence will be completed in 2006. To date, \$10,167.54 has been paid by STF for NGPC and STF portions.

Buffalo Head Ranch

Description: This is a riparian/grassland enhancement project in which the cooperator plans to manage grazing on 5,443 acres for the benefit of ranching, native grassland and riparian habitat. The project area encompasses the headwaters of the Dismal River with Sandhills prairie adjacent to the river. The purpose of the project is to 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. By fencing the river from upland pastures, additional watering sources are necessary.

Funding:

STF	\$22,279.68	Fencing, tanks,
NRCS	\$9,943.13	Fencing, tanks, wells
Landowner	\$13,181.50	Fencing, tanks, wells
NGPC	\$7500.00	Fencing, tanks,
Total	<u>\$52,904.31</u>	

Accomplishments: Over 2 miles of fence was constructed in the summer of 2004. The remainder of the project has been stalled due to a family illness. Construction will begin again as soon as possible. \$20,421.06 has been spent by STF.

Calamus River Headwaters Project

Description: The project will restore, as much as possible, the natural hydrology of the headwaters portion of the Calamus River. Ditching done in the 1990’s caused the channel to down cut, reducing the wetlands and vegetation in the valley. The project has been coordinated with adjoining landowners. A drainage ditch extending from one wetland will be plugged. Three water control structures will be constructed in the ditched, seasonal waterway.



Funding:

Landowner	\$14,150.00	Weir tubes, dirt work, fencing, road buildup, reseeding
STF	\$13,900.00	Weir tubes
Total	<u>\$28,050.00</u>	

Accomplishments: A WEA was signed by the landowner and early January of 2005 and the tubes were purchased and delivered. In June of 2005, before any construction began, the landowner installed a wooden weir that failed and caused adjacent landowners to have reservations about the project. In July, a meeting was held in Ainsworth to address the personal concerns of all interested parties. The landowner then signed an amendment guaranteeing that no modifications will be made to any of the structures once they are installed according to the original design. Construction was planned for this fall but was delayed due to winter weather. STF has spent \$11,299.39 for the structures.

Cody Lake Grassland Project

Purpose: The project involves the management of 1,892 acres of upland grassland, 108 acres of open water, marsh, riparian and wet meadow, including 76 acres in three units of mostly wet meadow directly adjacent to Cody (Jeffords) Lake—2,024 acres total.

Presently the property is in a season-long grazing use. The addition of watering sources will permit the cooperators to combine herds and adopt a rotational grazing plan that will preserve and enhance the present range conditions. The plan involves grazing, combined with adequate rest periods to maintain and promote a diverse range of grasses and forbs in each pasture. Moderate grazing coupled with long rests will maintain the upland nesting cover for a variety of grassland birds. The management on the acres adjacent to Cody (Jeffords) Lake will encourage native warm season plant growth



Funding:

Landowner	\$4,951.12	Windmills, tanks
STF	\$8,000.00	Windmills, tanks
NGPC	\$2,000.00	Windmills, tanks
DU	\$2,000.00	Windmills
Total	<u>\$18,951.12</u>	

Accomplishments: One 30-foot watering tank was installed in the fall of 2005. The majority of the construction was planned for the spring of 2005 and has not been completed due to a family sickness. The STF has spent \$900 to date.

Education and Outreach

The first annual “Private Lands Day” at the FWS Regional Office in Denver invited the Sandhills Task Force to speak about conservation in the Sandhills. In early August, Mike Kelly, Craig Utter, and Kyle Graham spent a day meeting with FWS staff. The event included groups from 6 states sharing their examples of fish and wildlife conservation on private lands.

Several other formal presentations were given to a variety of groups. They included:

- A general presentation on the vision of partnerships between the Sandhills Task Force and the NRCS at the quarterly NRCS staff meeting in Ord, NE.
- Display booths were set up at the August range tour at Gudmundsen Research facility
- Jim Van Winkle represented the Sandhills Task Force at the annual Sandhills Cattle Association convention held in Valentine, Nebraska.
- The Lower Loup NRD monthly board meeting invited the Sandhills Task Force to speak about the group's mission and goals.
- A presentation was given to Brown County landowners regarding the Sandhills Task Force and the function and purpose of water control structures
- At the Nebraska Cattlemen's mid-year convention, a presentation was given to describe the role of the Sandhills Task Force.
- In June, the Nebraska Cattlemen held a range tour on Mike Kelly's property. Gene Mack spoke about a stream restoration project planned on the Buckboard Ranch (Kelly Property). Gene and Jim also explained the role of the Sandhills Task Force in the Sandhills.



A total of \$1,000.00 was given to fund two UNL Grazing Livestock Systems scholarships in 2005. \$500.00 was given to support the Nebraska Society of Range Management Summer Range Camp.

Erickson Ranch Project

Description: The project was designed to change grazing from season-long to short-duration rotational grazing. The project would affect 7,091 acres—including 540 acres of riparian habitat.

Accomplishments: The landowner notified the STF and FWS that he wished to cancel the project due to plans to sell the property. The project was cancelled and no funds were expended.

Falotico Ranch Project

Description: The project would change grazing from season-long to short-duration rotational grazing on 2,192 acres.

Accomplishments: The landowner notified the STF and FWS that she wished to cancel the project due to plans to sell the property. The project was cancelled and no funds were expended.

Ferguson Ranch Project

Purpose: This agreement involves the management of 2,305 upland grassland acres. The cooperator plans to change from continuous-use grazing to short-duration, rotational grazing. In doing so, additional watering sources are needed to allow the cooperator to combine herds.

Funding:

Landowner	\$9,905.80	Pipeline, tanks
NRCS	\$50,717.40	Fences, pipeline, tanks
STF	\$7,000.00	Fences, pipeline
Total	<u>\$67,623.20</u>	

Accomplishments: The pipeline portion of this project was completed this past fall and will be reviewed by FWS personnel this winter. The fencing portion of the project has begun and will be completed by the summer of 2005. The landowner intends perform a prescribed burn on the unit that was rested in 2005. The burn will be done to control cedar trees. The STF has spent \$5594.75 to date.

Fire Learning Network

Description: The Great Plains Fire Learning Network requested the Sandhills Task Force help with the production cost of an information video. The video focuses on the application of prescribed fire as a tool to manage grasslands. The primary audiences are rural volunteer fire departments and landowners. One hundred and fifty videos were sent out in early 2005 to conservation agencies, state/county extension groups, universities, NRCS, USFWS, and rural volunteer fire departments.

Additional copies of the video will be available to other publics. The Sandhills Task Force has contributed \$5,518.50 to date. Nebraska Game and Parks Commission provided half of that amount through a cooperative agreement.

Friskopp Project

Description: The project will improve management on 330 acres of grasslands and 150 acres of wetlands and sub-irrigated meadows. The cooperator, and their partners, designed a management plan that will benefit native grasslands, wetlands, and the ranching operation. The addition of watering sources and cross fencing will enable the cooperator to adopt a grazing and haying management plan that will preserve and enhance the present range conditions. The plan involves grazing, combined with adequate rest periods, to maintain and promote a diverse range of grasses and forbs in each pasture.



Moderate grazing coupled with long rests will maintain the upland nesting cover for a variety of grassland birds. The meadow management will encourage native warm season plant growth by means of seeding (about 40 acres) and haying/grazing rotations. The wetland management plan includes haying the old cattail growth and the end of one growing season followed by grazing the next season. The intent is to change cattail-choked wetlands to sedge-type wetlands that are available to migratory and nesting waterfowl.

Funding:

STF	\$5,000.00	Fencing, tanks, well, and pipeline
NRCS	\$11,281.70	Fencing, tanks, well, and pipeline
Landowner	\$3,565.70	Fencing, tanks, well, and pipeline
NGPC	\$1,500.00	Seeding
Total	<u>\$21,347.40</u>	

Accomplishments: The pipelines, tanks, and wells were completed in 2004. Fencing was done in 2005. The property is grazed in the spring and fall to promote native grass and forb development in the meadows. The STF has contributed \$4,716.80 to date.

Henderson Land and Livestock

Purpose: 4613 acres of grasslands, wetlands, and sub-irrigated meadows will be affected by this project. Addition livestock watering sources and cross-fencing will enable the cooperator to adopt a grazing and haying management plan that will preserve and enhance the present range conditions. It will shift grazing from long-term to short-term grazing with long rests. Each pasture will be grazed one time through during the growing season. Grazing will be deferred on half of one wetland unit during the growing season. Dormant grazing will leave at least six inches of grassland vegetation. Alternating haying and grazing of wet meadows will increase the native warm-season plant species.

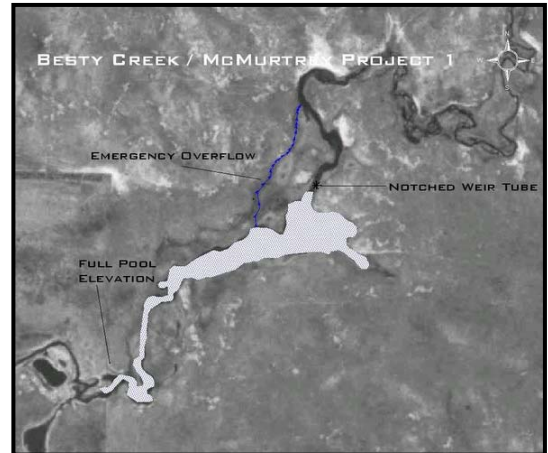
Funding:

Landowner	\$27,630.00	Pipeline, tanks and windbreak
NGPC	\$5,000.00	Pipeline
STF	\$12,000.00	Pipeline and fence
NRCS (EQIP)	\$67,918.00	Pipeline, tanks and windbreak
Total	<u>\$112,548.00</u>	

Accomplishments: In 2004 this project was initiated by a fence built to split a wetland. In 2005 the east portion of the wetland was deferred and the west side was hayed. Additional pipeline will be completed in the spring of 2006. \$2,000 has been spent by the STF.

Betsey Creek Project

Purpose: Two water control structures will create shallow wetlands and control the downcutting of Betsey Creek. The landowner’s primary objective is: to improve the hydrology of Betsey Creek sub-irrigated meadows and adjacent uplands. Historically, the channel was shallower, with floodwaters flowing across the valley. While the upper portions of the Betsey on this property still have meanders and no downcutting, the lower portion has begun to downcut as Betsey gets closer to the confluence with the Gordon. The lower water control structure will stop this cutting and allow flood waters to flow out around the structure before re-entering the channel.



This project should enhance habitat and facilitate movement of several threatened species of native fish known to inhabit Betsey/Gordon Creek. Riparian fencing and additional livestock watering will allow the corridor to be managed in a way that benefits native plant and animal species. This project will be the second phase of a long-term ranch improvement/wildlife enhancement plan envisioned by the landowner. Hopefully, a planned third phase for next year will recreate additional meanders and re-hydrate nearby Gordon Creek meadows during high water events. NRCS is currently working with the landowner on various other components of a multi-year EQIP contract.

Funding:

Landowner	\$6,976.00	Fence, weir tubes, well drillings, windmill
NRCS	\$14,064.00	Fence, well drillings
STF	\$11,460.00	Fence, weir tubes, well drillings, windmill
Total	<u>\$32,500.00</u>	

Accomplishments: The project was completed in 2005. The payments obligated by this agreement were made in full.

Otter Creek Ranch

Description: The project will remove all cedar trees found along a riparian corridor. Tree removal will complement an NRCS EQIP project involving grassland management of riparian, wetlands, and uplands on 340 acres.

NRCS has cost-shared with the landowner in the construction of a fence and alternative watering sites necessary to create a riparian unit along Otter Creek. Future grazing will benefit the ranching operation, as well as, native grasslands, wetlands, fish, wildlife, and riparian areas.



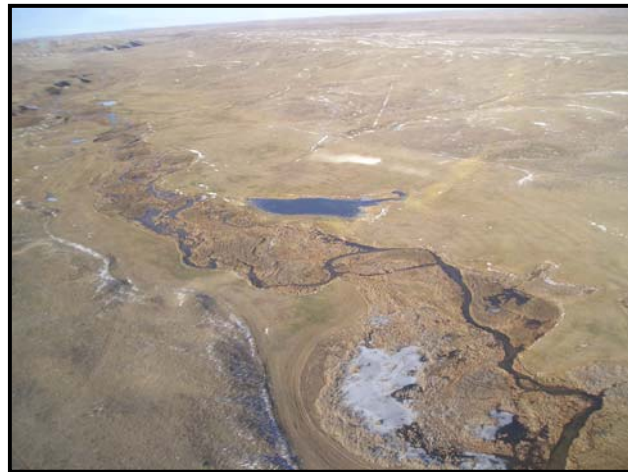
Funding:

Landowner	\$2,750.00	Cedar tree removal & burning piles
STF	\$5,250.00	Cedar tree removal
Total	<u>\$8,000.00</u>	

Accomplishments: In November of 2005, the Wildlife Extension Agreement was signed by the landowner. The tree removal will take place this winter. No STF funds have been spent to date.

Polk Ranch

Description: This project involves the management of 7,000 acres of grasslands, sub-irrigated meadows, and riparian areas. A management plan has been developed to benefit ranching operation, native grasslands, and wetlands. Additional watering sites will allow the cooperators to close two water gaps on Blue Creek. Cross-fencing a 2,168-acre pasture will permit the cooperators to decrease the time the cattle are allowed to graze individual units. One cattle herd will be rotated through each pasture one time during the growing season.



Funding:

NRCS	\$11,821.70	Well & casing, tanks, pipeline, seeding
Landowner	\$3,565.70	Well & casing, tanks, pipeline, seeding
STF	\$5,000.00	Well & casing, tanks, pipeline, seeding
NGPC	\$1,500.00	Seeding
Total	<u>\$21,347.40</u>	

Accomplishments: Construction was completed in the summer of 2005 and inspected this fall by a FWS employee. The entire amount obligated by the Sandhills Task Force has been paid.

Stec Ranch

Description: This project complemented an NRCS EQIP project by moving a center pivot so the last segment of the pivot did not irrigate over a segment of Evergreen Creek. The entire area affected by the two projects was 156 acres of croplands, sub-irrigated meadows, and riparian areas. The EQIP portion involved construction of a riparian fence and installing additional watering sources. The additional watering sites will allow the owner to close water gaps on Evergreen Creek. The riparian area will be managed for wildlife.

Funding:

NRCS	\$1,609.05	Fencing, trees
Landowner	\$4,304.05	Fencing, trees, move pivot
STF	\$1,500.00	Move pivot
Total	<u>\$7,413.10</u>	

Accomplishments: Final payments on this project were made in August of 2005. The project has been inspected by Sandhill Task Force personnel.

Vinton LTD Project

Purpose: A planned grazing system will enhance native grassland on 4,487 acres. Grazing will be limited to a 50 percent utilization rate. 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	\$3,371.06	Fencing and tank
Total	<u>\$10,372.50</u>	

Accomplishments: This project was completed in the summer of 2005 and all the grazing plan is in place. Full payment has been made to the landowners.

Waterfowl Recruitment Study

In 2004 the Board approved funding \$20,000 to Ducks Unlimited researchers to do a one-year pilot study to estimate the survival of mallard hens, nests, and broods using Sandhill wetlands.

In the 2005 field season, 32 mallard hens were captured and marked with a radio tag. Of the original 32 birds, 27 birds were monitored daily throughout June and July. Researchers were surprised by a very high predation rate especially in nests far from and wetlands. The field season ended in July and left waterfowl biologists puzzled as to why the nesting success percentages were very low. In an attempt to understand the results from 2005 and to redesign the methods of data collection, the researchers plan to have another field season in 2006.

The Board approved a second request for a \$5,000.00 contribution to refine their study during the second year of research.

The partners involved in this project are as follows.

- University of Nebraska
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
- Ducks Unlimited



Equipment List

Purchase date	Item	Purchase Price	On loan to:	City, State
25-Sep-98	Laptop Computer Model: Dell TS30H	\$3,657.54	DISPOSED OF 1/12/2006	Thedford, NE
12-Oct-00	Total Station Model: Sokkia SET4110	\$12,008.43	Don Earl Natural Resources Conservation Service	Thedford, NE
15-Dec-00	Printer Model:HP G55 Deskjet SN: SG#07EGGQT	\$529.99	Jim Van Winkle, Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE
18-Dec-00	Laptop Computer Model:Dell Inspiron Model 3800-220-4815 SN: 060322865	\$2,502.15	Transferred from Jim Van Winkle on 6/15/03 to Gene Mack U.S. Fish and Wildlife Serv.	Kearney, 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
6/5/2003	Dell Inspiron 5100 w/ Office Professional SN: CN-09U806-12961-356- 4395	\$1,800.00	Jim Van Winkle Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE
8/11/2003	Digital Camera Olympus D 560 SN: 269C50999	\$363.20	Jim Van Winkle, Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE
8/11/2003	Cordless Mouse for laptop computer	\$25.55	Jim Van Winkle Nebraska Cattlemen	Wood Lake, NE

APPENDIX A

Sandhills Task Force Checking Account Activity

Tri County Bank, Stuart, Nebraska

January 1, 2005 through December 31, 2005

Transactions	Date	Expense	Deposit
Henderson Land and Livestock	1/4/2005	\$2,000.00	
Spring Lake Ranch	1/4/2005	\$5,552.00	
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	1/4/2005	\$4,565.72	
Secretary of State (Biennial report)	1/11/2005	\$20.00	
Fleecs Ranch	1/11/2005	\$3,419.00	
Pelster Ranch	1/18/2005	\$2,964.00	
McMurtrey Ranch	1/18/2005	\$2,000.00	
B & B Video Production (30 copies of FLN video)	1/25/2005	\$173.00	
B & B Video Production NGPC share: 30 copies of FLN video	1/25/2005	\$173.00	
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	1/28/2005		\$315.07
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	1/28/2005		\$655.34
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	1/28/2005		\$655.34
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	1/28/2005		\$655.34
Nebraska Game & Parks (NGPC Coop Agreement)	1/31/2005		\$20,000.00
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	1/31/2005		\$19.76
Gene D. Mack (Postage)	2/2/2005	\$54.69	
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	2/4/2005	\$4,977.63	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Funds for Grouse Tech mtg)	2/7/2005		\$2,000.00
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Money held on behalf of Tech Council)	2/7/2005		
Nebraska Environmental Trust (Reimbursement for fourth quarter)	2/7/2005		\$35,428.20
Schaeffer Farms	2/11/2005	\$343.07	
Schaeffer Farms	2/11/2005	\$343.07	
The Commercial Bank, Basset (Interest)	2/16/2005		\$667.95
Purdum State Bank (Interest)	2/17/2005		\$693.15
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Reimbursements)	2/22/2005		\$3,501.96
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	2/24/2005		\$165.36
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	2/24/2005		\$248.03
Tier One Bank (Interest)	2/25/2005		\$438.57
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	2/28/2005		\$29.43
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	3/4/2005	\$5,058.53	
Nebraska Branch of Holistic Resource (Money held for HRM)	3/8/2005		\$5,400.00
Nebraska Branch of Holistic Resource (Money held for HRM)	3/8/2005		
Natural Resources Conservation (Reimbursement for Technical work)	3/10/2005		\$5,518.19
Nebraska Branch of Holistic Resource (Money held for HRM)	3/16/2005		\$100.00
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	3/23/2005		\$50.33
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	3/23/2005		\$75.50
Tier One Bank (Interest)	3/25/2005		\$151.89
Postmaster - Kearney (postage)	3/25/2005	\$10.79	
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	3/31/2005		\$42.63
Andy Muller	4/4/2005		
Ace Irrigation (Muller project)	4/11/2005	\$11,299.39	
Hellman, Main, Coslor, Kathol, P.C. (Aufot Invoice)	4/11/2005	\$925.00	

Transactions	Date	Expense	Deposit
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	4/11/2005	\$4,950.89	
University of Nebraska Foundation (two scholarships)	4/11/2005	\$1,000.00	
Postmaster - Kearney (postage)	4/14/2005	\$25.80	
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	4/22/2005	\$5,109.18	
Tier One Bank (Interest)	4/25/2005		\$168.16
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	4/28/2005		\$308.22
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	4/28/2005		\$641.10
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	4/28/2005		\$641.10
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	4/28/2005		\$641.10
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	4/28/2005		\$36.78
Nebraska Environmental Trust (Reimbursement)	5/4/2005		\$18,112.83
Ducks Unlimited, Inc (Reimbursement for Spring Lake Project)	5/5/2005		\$3,000.00
Purdum State Bank (Interest)	5/16/2005		\$670.55
Commercial Bank, Basset (Interest)	5/17/2005		\$646.16
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	5/25/2005		\$162.44
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	5/25/2005		\$253.69
Tier One Bank (Interest)	5/25/2005		\$162.73
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	5/31/2005		\$43.29
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	6/2/2005	\$5,071.47	
Greg Polk	6/8/2005	\$5,504.00	
Nebraska Sec. Soc. Range Summer Range Camp)	6/8/2005	\$500.00	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration)	6/10/2005		\$250.00
Cherry County Ag Society (PGTC rental of fairgrounds for 2005 conference)	6/14/2005	\$475.00	
Natural Resources Conservation (Reimbursement for Technical work)	6/16/2005		\$6,029.77
Greg Polk	6/16/2005	\$310.00	
University of Nebraska, WCREC (Display booth at Gudmunson)	6/16/2005	\$125.00	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration)	6/21/2005		\$250.00
Tier One Bank (Interest)	6/24/2005		\$168.16
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	6/30/2005		\$41.61
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	7/1/2005	\$5,216.89	
Cornerstone Mapping (Aerial photo of fens high resolution)	7/5/2005	\$628.00	
Greg Polk	7/6/2005	\$3,513.75	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration)	7/6/2005		\$125.00
Ducks Unlimited, Inc (Mallard Research Study)	7/7/2005	\$20,000.00	
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	7/15/2005	\$5,124.71	
Gene D. Mack (90 postage stamps)	7/15/2005	\$33.30	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Registration for Grouse Symposium)	7/21/2005		\$625.00
Tier One Bank (Interest)	7/25/2005		\$162.73
Natural Resources Conservation (Reimbursement for Technical work)	7/26/2005		\$6,500.34
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration for Grouse Symposium)	7/28/2005		\$500.00
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	7/28/2005		\$311.64
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	7/28/2005		\$648.22
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	7/28/2005		\$648.22
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	7/28/2005		\$648.22
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	7/29/2005		\$34.69
Buffalo Head Ranch	8/4/2005	\$5,912.01	
Middle Niobrara NRD (Maintenance contribution for new weather station)	8/4/2005	\$200.00	
Don Klase	8/10/2005		
Don Klase	8/10/2005	\$5,144.47	

Transactions	Date	Expense	Deposit
Fleecs Ranch	8/10/2005	\$1,200.00	
Lois Beel (PGTC meal catering)	8/12/2005	\$400.00	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration fees)	8/12/2005		\$875.00
Purdum State Bank (Interest)	8/15/2005		\$693.15
Commercial Bank, Basset (Interest)	8/16/2005		\$667.95
Byran Stec	8/18/2005	\$1,500.00	
Nebraska Environmental Trust (Reimbursements for April - June)	8/19/2005		\$11,445.20
Jim Van Winkle (Silent auction gift at NET event)	8/23/2005	\$80.64	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration fees)	8/24/2005		\$475.00
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	8/24/2005		\$245.02
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	8/24/2005		\$382.65
Tier One Bank (Interest)	8/25/2005		\$168.16
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	8/26/2005	\$4,894.05	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration Fees)	8/29/2005		\$1,545.00
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	8/31/2005		\$33.11
Lloyd Buchfinck & Sons	9/1/2005	\$5,850.90	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registrations)	9/2/2005		\$550.00
Ducks Unlimited, Inc (Second year contribution to Mallard Hen Study)	9/2/2005		
McMurtrey Ranch	9/6/2005	\$2,460.00	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration deposits)	9/6/2005		\$595.00
Jodie L. Provost (PGTC refund due to hurricane disaster)	9/9/2005	\$175.00	
Martha Minchak (Refund on PGTC registration)	9/9/2005	\$125.00	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration fees for PGTC)	9/13/2005		\$905.00
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (Registration fees for PGTC)	9/15/2005		\$150.00
Matt Bain (Refund on PGTC registration)	9/19/2005	\$100.00	
Marc Gray (Refund on PGTC registration)	9/19/2005	\$100.00	
Ace Irrigation (Two weir tubes & shipping)	9/19/2005	\$6,807.54	
Ace Irrigation (Two weir tubes)	9/19/2005	\$6,357.54	
Dan O'Brian (PGTC speaker fee)	9/20/2005	\$757.00	
Subway Sandwiches - Valentine (PGTC field trip lunch)	9/22/2005	\$261.63	
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Reimbursements for PSGP)	9/22/2005		\$2,964.00
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Reimbursement for projects)	9/22/2005		\$10,811.48
Tier One Bank (Interest)	9/23/2005		\$168.16
D & M Catering (PGTC field trip meal)	9/26/2005	\$498.00	
Jordan's Fine Dining (Banquet meals)	9/26/2005	\$3,201.40	
Bergman Incentives (PGTC registration gifts)	9/26/2005	\$2,320.36	
Valentine High School (PGTC Bus Fuel)	9/26/2005	\$69.75	
Dennis D. May (PGTC bus driver)	9/26/2005	\$156.00	
Mike Burge (PGTC sound equipment)	9/26/2005	\$150.00	
Scott Taylor (PGTC printing/name tags)	9/26/2005	\$209.71	
Seven Springs, Inc (PGTC bottled water)	9/26/2005	\$140.00	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC registrations)	9/26/2005		\$2,250.00
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC registrations)	9/27/2005		\$225.00
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC registrations)	9/27/2005		\$1,507.00
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC registrations)	9/27/2005		\$2,273.00
Subway Sandwiches - Valentine (PGTC - sales tax)	9/28/2005	\$14.39	
Clayton Stalling (PGTC beverages and supplies)	9/28/2005	\$107.30	
Dan Svedarsky (PGTC Plaque engraving)	9/28/2005	\$10.00	
Lois Beel (PGTC meal catering)	9/28/2005	\$3,820.05	

Transactions	Date	Expense	Deposit
Marsha Bauer - Holiday Inn Express (PGTC mtg room)	9/28/2005	\$1,098.62	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC deposit)	9/30/2005		\$60.00
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	9/30/2005		\$28.55
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC deposit)	10/5/2005		\$105.00
Mace Hack (Auction items purchased at PGTC banquet)	10/7/2005		\$250.00
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	10/7/2005	\$5,032.64	
Inlaw Construction, Inc (Haul tubes & sackrete)	10/7/2005	\$642.03	
Nebraska Game & Parks (PGTC payment for two employees)	10/12/2005		\$300.00
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PCTC deposit)	10/17/2005		\$370.00
McMurtrey Ranch	10/20/2005	\$3,250.00	
Tier One Bank (Interest)	10/25/2005		\$162.73
Leonard Bairn	10/28/2005	\$5,850.75	
Friskopp Ranch	10/28/2005	\$560.00	
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	10/28/2005		\$315.07
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	10/28/2005		\$655.34
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	10/28/2005		\$655.34
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	10/28/2005		\$655.34
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	10/28/2005		\$24.86
Nebraska Cattlemen (staff and overhead)	10/28/2005	\$5,035.16	
Postmaster - Kearney (postage)	10/31/2005	\$37.00	
Winifred Ferguson Family Trust	11/1/2005	\$5,594.75	
Kirk Barnes Construction, Inc (culvert pipe for Beel structure)	11/1/2005	\$257.50	
Kirk Barnes Construction, Inc (culvert pipe for Beel structure)	11/4/2005	\$515.00	
Vinton LTD	11/8/2005	\$1,031.06	
Commercial Bank, Basset (Interest)	11/16/2005		\$660.68
Purdum State Bank (Interest)	11/17/2005		\$693.15
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	11/23/2005		\$245.01
Pinnacle Bank - O'Neill (Interest)	11/23/2005		\$382.65
TechThreat Media (Invoice for 1 year host fee)	11/24/2005	\$150.00	
Tier One Bank (Interest)	11/25/2005		\$168.16
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Reimbursements)	11/25/2005		\$29,480.26
Nebraska Environmental Trust (Reimbursements for July - September)	11/28/2005		\$11,336.05
The Tri County Bank (Interest)	11/30/2005		\$19.58
Ace Irrigation (Annular Band)	12/1/2005	\$121.44	
Prairie Grouse Technical Council (PGTC deposit)	12/2/2005		\$249.00
Natural Resources Conservation (Reimbursement for Technical work)	12/2/2005		\$6,430.00
		\$183,665.57	\$211,419.44

Appendix B

SANDHILLS TASK FORCE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION December 31, 2004 and 2003

Compiled by Hellman, Main, Coslor & Kathol, P.C., Kearney, Nebraska

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
ASSETS		
Current assets:		
Cash in bank	\$ 55,404	\$ 102,878
Certificates of deposit	750,000	750,000
Grant funds receivable	<u>57,162</u>	<u>29,842</u>
Total current assets	<u>862,566</u>	<u>882,720</u>
Property and equipment:		
Land easements	175,000	175,000
Equipment	5,932	5,932
Less accumulated depreciation	<u>(3,575)</u>	<u>(2,418)</u>
Net property and equipment	<u>177,357</u>	<u>178,514</u>
	<u>\$ 1,039,923</u>	<u>\$ 1,061,234</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Current liabilities:		
Accounts payable	\$ 1,620	\$ 963
Accrued wages	7,832	3,666
Accrued payroll taxes	<u>600</u>	<u>281</u>
Total current liabilities	<u>10,052</u>	<u>4,910</u>
Net assets:		
Unrestricted net assets	954,080	993,120
Temporarily restricted net assets	<u>75,791</u>	<u>63,204</u>
Total net assets	<u>1,029,871</u>	<u>1,056,324</u>
	<u>\$ 1,039,923</u>	<u>\$ 1,061,234</u>

SANDHILLS TASK FORCE
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
December 31, 2004 and 2003
Compiled by Hellman, Main, Coslor & Kathol, P.C., Kearney, Nebraska

	<u>2004</u>	<u>2003</u>
UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted revenues and gains		
Unrestricted grant funds	\$ --	\$ 3,628
Investment return	<u>15,718</u>	<u>22,667</u>
Total unrestricted revenues and gains	<u>15,718</u>	<u>26,295</u>
Net assets released from restrictions,		
Restrictions satisfied by payments	<u>123,255</u>	<u>108,558</u>
Total unrestricted revenues, gains, and other support	<u>138,973</u>	<u>134,853</u>
Expenses:		
Program services:		
Project expenses paid	112,417	122,174
Salaries	46,740	44,165
Payroll taxes	3,588	3,472
Employee benefits	5,669	5,870
Reimbursed expenses	3,527	5,228
Supporting services:		
Depreciation	1,157	950
Advertising	--	605
Administrative expenses	<u>4,915</u>	<u>3,055</u>
Total expenses	<u>178,013</u>	<u>185,519</u>
Increase (decrease) in unrestricted net assets	<u>(39,040)</u>	<u>(50,666)</u>
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED NET ASSETS		
Contributions:		
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	14,438	47,601
NE Environmental Trust	5,502	--
NE Game & Parks Commission	83,772	53,287
Ducks Unlimited, Inc.	32,130	59,000
Net assets released from restrictions,		
Restrictions satisfied by payments	<u>(123,255)</u>	<u>(108,558)</u>
Increase (decrease) in temporarily restricted		
Net assets	<u>12,587</u>	<u>51,330</u>
Increase (decrease) in net assets	(26,453)	664
Net assets:		
Beginning	<u>1,056,324</u>	<u>1,055,660</u>
Ending	<u>\$ 1,029,871</u>	<u>\$ 1,056,324</u>

SANDHILLS TASK FORCE

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

December 31, 2004 and 2003

Compiled by Hellman, Main, Coslor & Kathol, P.C., Kearney, Nebraska

2004	2003	
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Federal and state funding	\$ 108,523	\$ 134,069
Other source funding	--	3,628
Interest income	15,718	22,667
Cash paid for operating expenses	<u>(171,715)</u>	<u>(184,920)</u>
Net cash provided by (used in) operations	<u>(47,474)</u>	<u>(24,016)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Purchase of equipment	<u>--</u>	<u>(2,071)</u>
Net cash used by investing activities	<u>--</u>	<u>(2,071)</u>
Net increase (decrease) in cash balance	(47,474)	(26,087)
Cash and cash equivalents – Beginning of year	<u>102,878</u>	<u>128,965</u>
Cash and cash equivalents – End of year	<u><u>55,404</u></u>	<u><u>102,878</u></u>

RECONCILIATION OF INCREASE IN NET ASSETS TO
CASH PROVIDED BY (USED IN) OPERATIONS

Increase in net assets	\$ (26,453)	\$ 664
Adjustments to reconcile increase in net assets to net cash provided by operations:		
Depreciation	1,157	950
Decrease (increase) in current assets:		
Grant fund receivable	(27,320)	(25,279)
Increase (decrease) in current liabilities:		
Accounts payable	657	(540)
Accrued wages	4,166	175
Accrued payroll taxes	<u>319</u>	<u>14</u>
Net cash provided by (used in) operations	<u><u>\$ (47,474)</u></u>	<u><u>\$ (24,016)</u></u>