

# Growing and Expanding Nebraska's Grassland Cores

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Grassland invasion by Eastern redcedar and other woody species harms working rangelands by decreasing forage production and increasing wildfire risk. It also threatens iconic grassland-dependent wildlife like Greater prairie chicken and Nebraska's state bird the Western meadowlark. In response, the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV) partners will deliver \$18.5 million in Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funding via a new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) project. RWBJV partners will work with producers through voluntary incentive-based contracts to improve grassland health and reduce the threat of future woody encroachment.

**100,000 ACRE**

impact to grassland cores

**\$18.5 MILLION**

for project implementation



Photo Credit: USFWS

## Streamlined Delivery and Support for Follow-Up Management

This RCP project streamlines delivery and reinforces the Great Plains Grassland Initiative (GPGI) emphasis on core grasslands. This approach combats encroachment before tracts are overtaken and prevents re-infestation with follow-up management. Available Land Management Practices align with NRCS practice scenarios and must be implemented according to NRCS standards and specifications. An RCP Coordinator will work with RWBJV partners to develop contracts through site visits and an online mapping portal. This streamlined approach gives partner biologists the flexibility to work through their own networks while meeting NRCS standards.

## AVAILABLE PRACTICES

- 314 – Brush Management
- 338 – Prescribed Burning
- 528 – Grazing Management (Deferment)
- 595 – Pest Management Conservation System

*Cost-share: Will vary based on practice selection, location, tree density, and topography. Brush management (\$23-600/acre); prescribed burning (\$16-37/acre); grazing deferment (\$45-59/acre); and pest management (\$12/acre).*

RCP CONTACT INFO



The RWBJV fosters collaborative conservation to positively impact grasslands across Nebraska. Our focus is finding solutions that are sustainable long-term, improve forage production for livestock, and maximize habitat for wildlife.

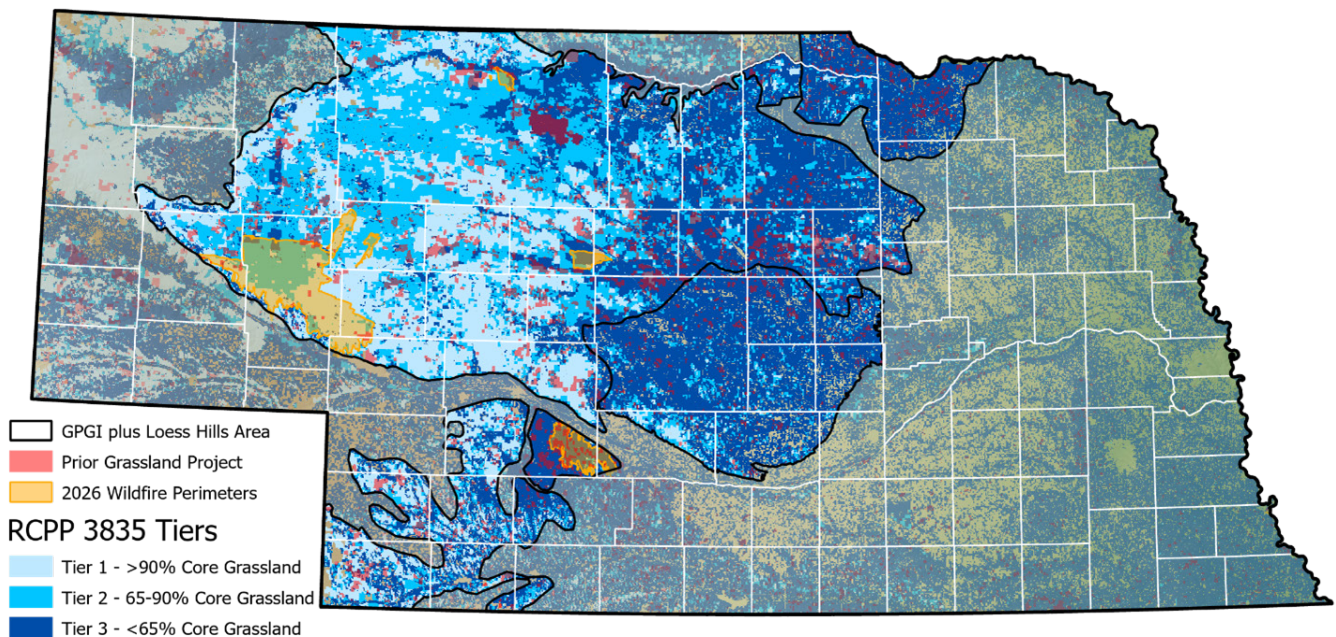
# STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

Photo Credit: Chris Helzer, TNC

Available statewide, this RCPP focuses implementation within GPGI priority areas plus the Central Loess Hills. Priority enrollment eligibility is determined by a combination of factors, including encroachment risk and commitment to follow-up treatments. All grassland tracts in the USDA system have been categorized by canopy cover. RWBJV partners will promote the program to eligible landowners with Tier 1 and 2 tracts through postcards and letters highlighting benefits to birds and producers.

## RCPP Mapping Portal

Lead partners will use an RWBJV-developed mapping portal to streamline applications. This portal creates resource assessments and maps consistent with NRCS programmatic agreements with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), and the State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO). These become part of the application package with available cost-share rates and guidelines for contracted work (i.e., acres, dates, conservation measures). The spatial tool prioritizes tracts that are adjacent to recent projects (within 5 years) to grow the footprint of Nebraska's Core Grasslands. This portal is updated annually as more projects are completed.



*Special Considerations: Self-certified Historically Underserved participants will be elevated to Tier 1, as will tracts adjacent to recent woody encroachment projects (within 5 years). Both will require follow-up treatments.*