

# The Open Fields and Waters Program

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Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Seminar  
Grand Island, NE  
February 7, 2019





# Agenda

- Introduction
  - What is the Open Fields and Waters (**OFW**) Program?
  - Importance of OFW
- Current Status of OFW
- Rainwater Basin Region
- Questions



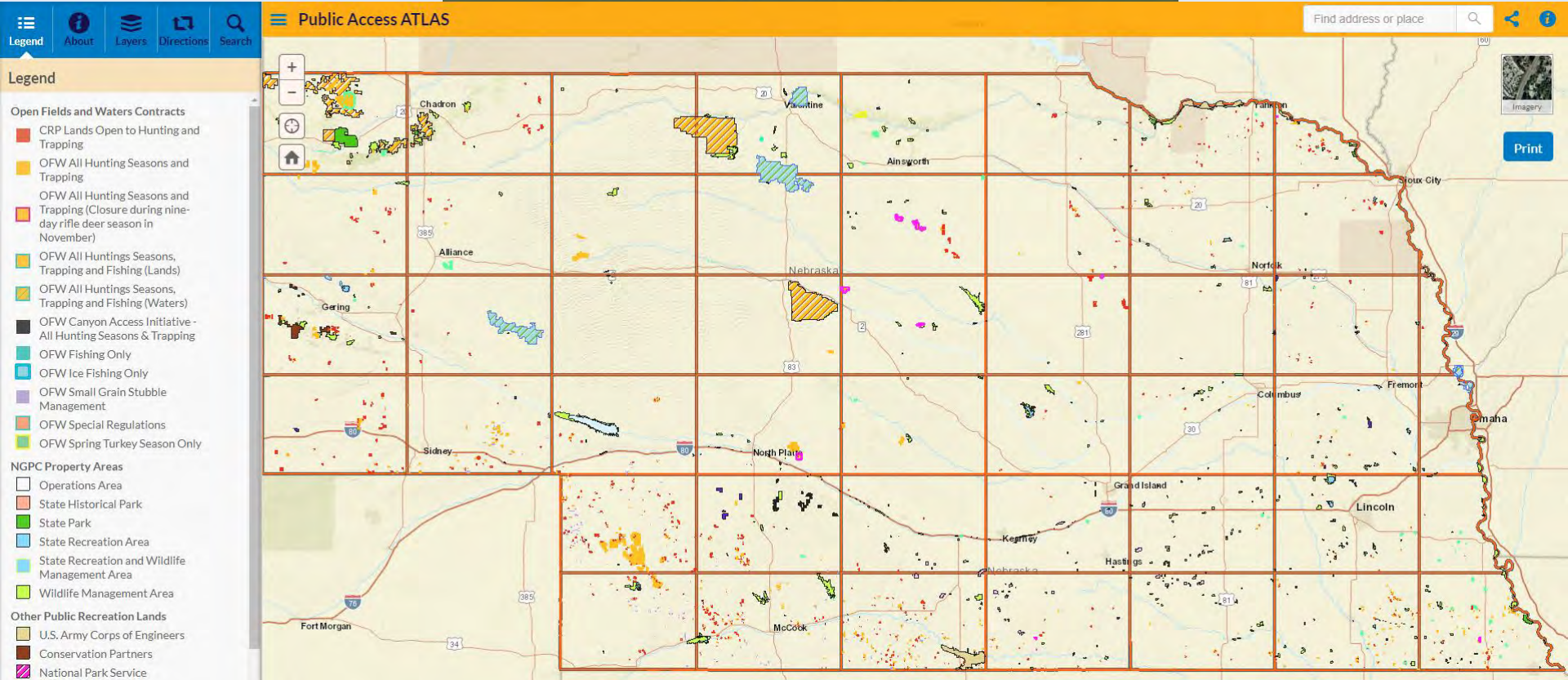




# Open Fields and Waters (OFW)

## More Places to Hunt and Fish

2018 - 2019



This data is valid through July 2019.

Funding support provided by:



Learn more at [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org)



# Some Specifics



# Landowner Benefits

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## LIABILITY

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Landowners who enroll in OFW are afforded protection from liability through the Nebraska Recreation Liability Act (Nebraska Statutes 37-729 to 37-736), which states that landowners or tenants do not assume responsibility or incur liability for injury to any persons who enter land opened to public hunting and fishing under agreement with the state.

For more information, visit  
<https://nebraskalegislature.gov/laws/laws.php>.

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# How to Enroll

1

Contact your nearest NGPC office any time of the year.

2

Your property will be evaluated in the spring and approved tracts are contracted by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

3

Once your contract is approved, NGPC staff will post OFW boundary signs around your property.

4

Your annual payment will be issued in spring (March/April) following closure of the primary hunting seasons.



# Open Fields and Waters (OFW)

## More Places to Hunt and Fish

Pittman-  
Robertson Act

Voluntary Public  
Access and Habitat  
Incentives Program

Habitat Stamp  
Dollars



Open Fields and Waters Program  
**Hunting, Trapping & Fishing**  
**Permitted**

All Species & Seasons

**By Walking Only**

**DO NOT HUNT, TRAP OR FISH  
BEYOND FIELD BOUNDARY**

This site has been enrolled to provide hunting, trapping and/or fishing opportunities with your Habitat Stamp funds. Federal Aid to Fish and Wildlife Restoration and Environmental Trust funds also may have been used.

NEBRASKA  
— GAME & PARKS —

The Nebraska  
Environmental Trust



**Respect the Landowner and the Land!**



# Importance of OFW











- Nebraska's Public Lands
  - Lack of public land in Nebraska
- Nebraska's Hunting Legacy
  - The contribution of OFW to the future of hunting in Nebraska






# Nebraska's Public Lands

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2018 - 2019

**PUBLIC ACCESS ATLAS**  
— FOR WALK-IN HUNTING, TRAPPING, —  
AND FISHING IN NEBRASKA












**~65,000 copies**  
[OutdoorNebraska.org/PublicAccessAtlas](http://OutdoorNebraska.org/PublicAccessAtlas)

The Open Fields and Waters Program is a joint project of the  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and valued partners.  
This atlas is valid through July 2019.

Funding support provided by:



Learn more at [OutdoorNebraska.org](http://OutdoorNebraska.org)

**NEBRASKA PRIVATE LANDOWNERS**

Vehicles Permitted on Gravel  
Roads Only



# Nebraska's Public Lands

## ■ Federal Lands



## ■ State Lands



## ■ Conservation Partner Lands

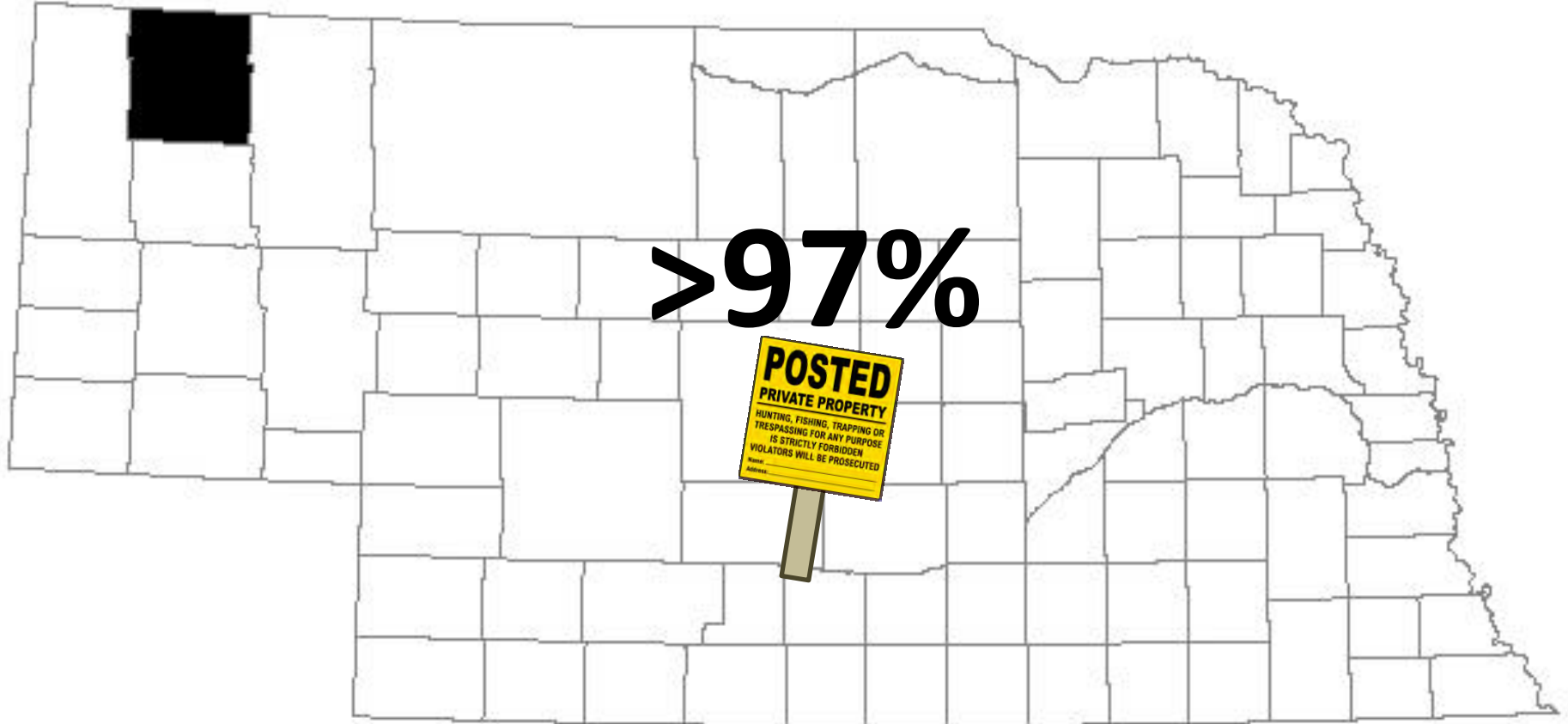


>700,000 ac

49,506,368 ac

# Nebraska's Public Lands

Dawes Co.





# Nebraska's Public Lands

- **Federal Lands**
- **State Lands**
- **Conservation Partner Lands**

Open Fields and Waters Program  
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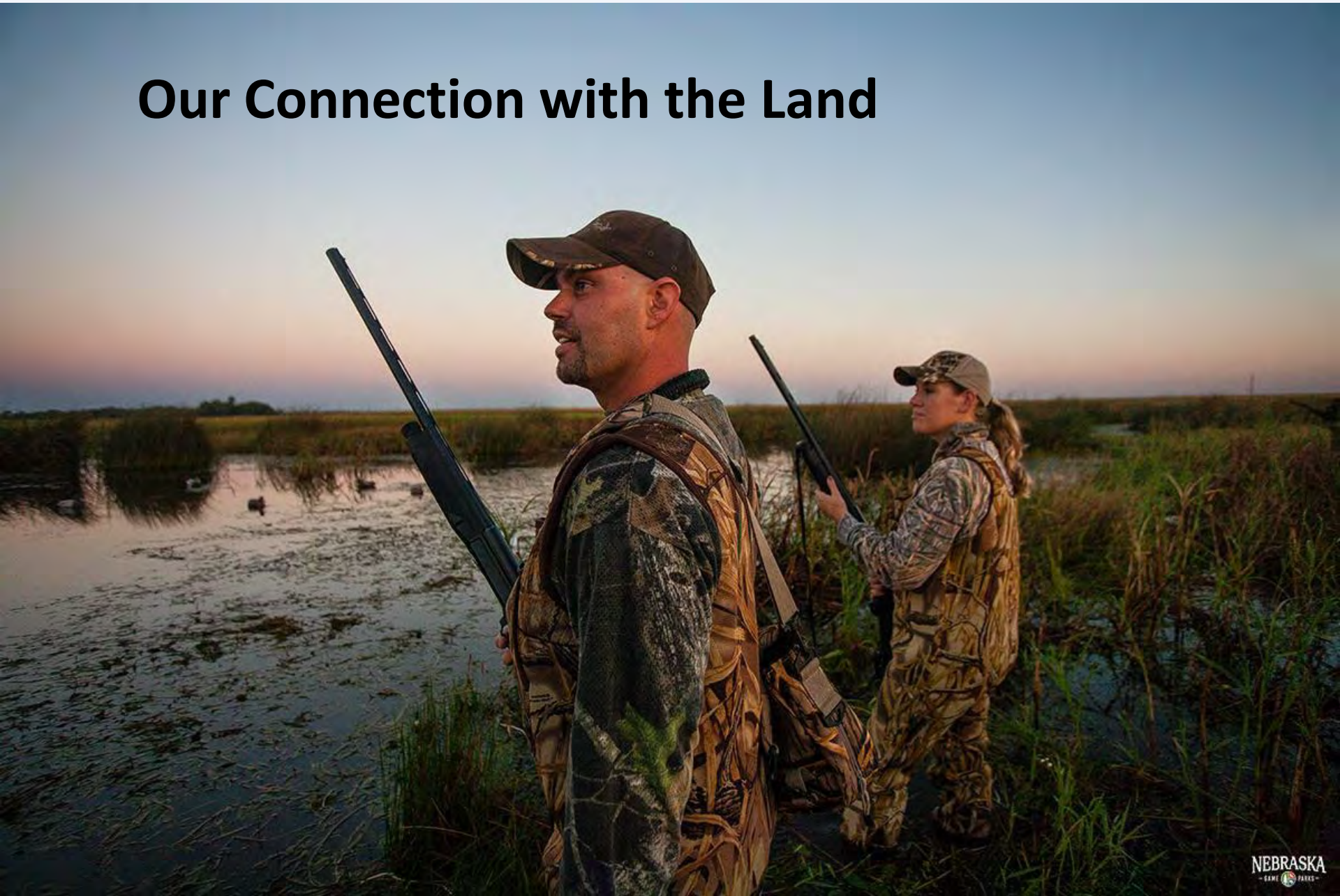
**Respect the Landowner and the Land!**

- **Open Fields and Waters  
+317K acres**



# Nebraska's Hunting Legacy

## Our Connection with the Land





# **Nebraska's Hunting Legacy**

## **Hunter Success Survey**

**NGPC, 2017-2018**

- 3 out of 5 upland hunters utilize public lands
- 25% of total permit sales – Non-Residents
- Availability of public land one of the most important factors influencing non-resident hunters choice to hunt upland and small game, and waterfowl in Nebraska

# Nebraska's Hunting Legacy

## R3 Goals

### Reactivation



Recruitment



Retention





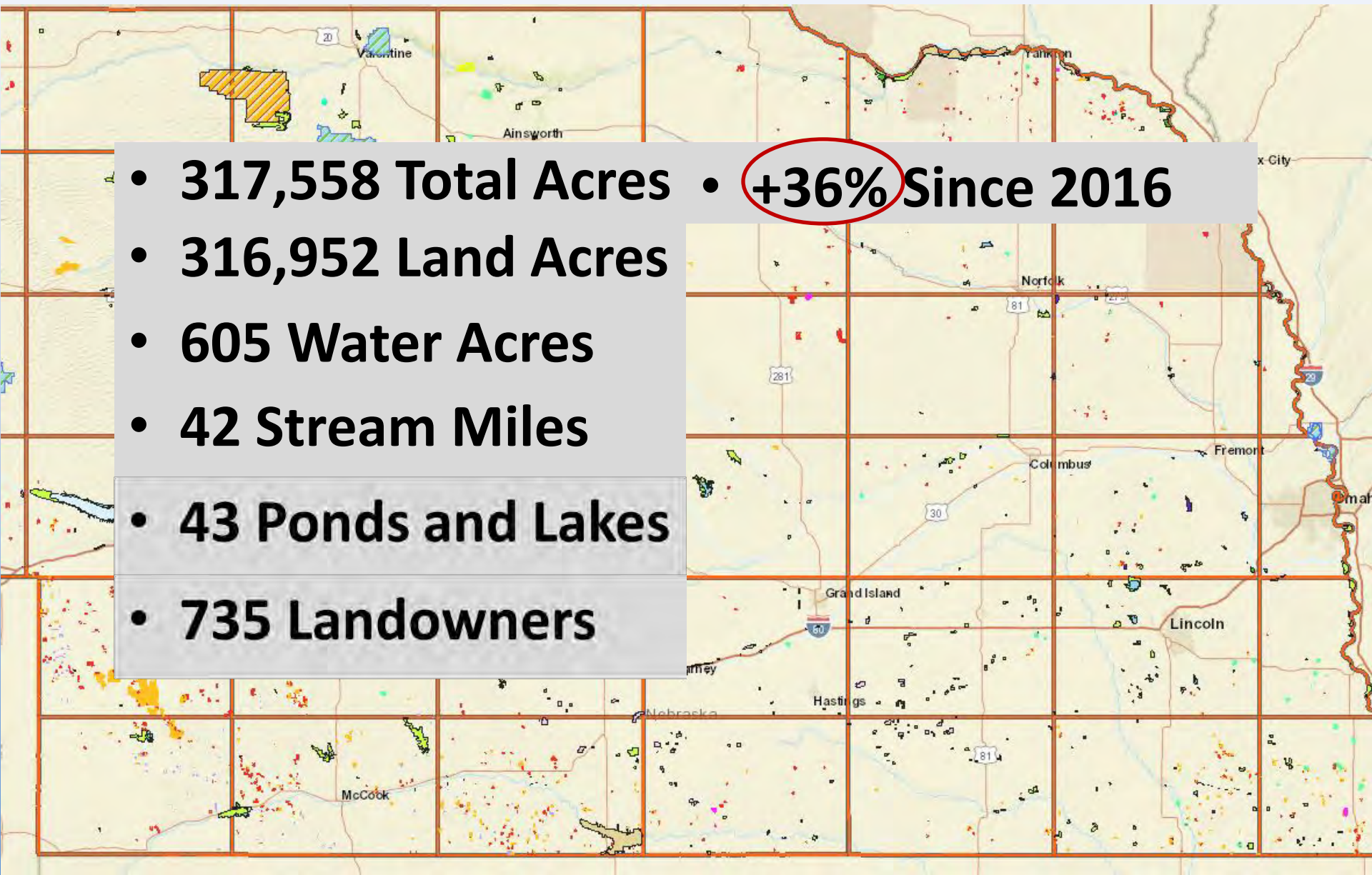
# Current Status of OFW





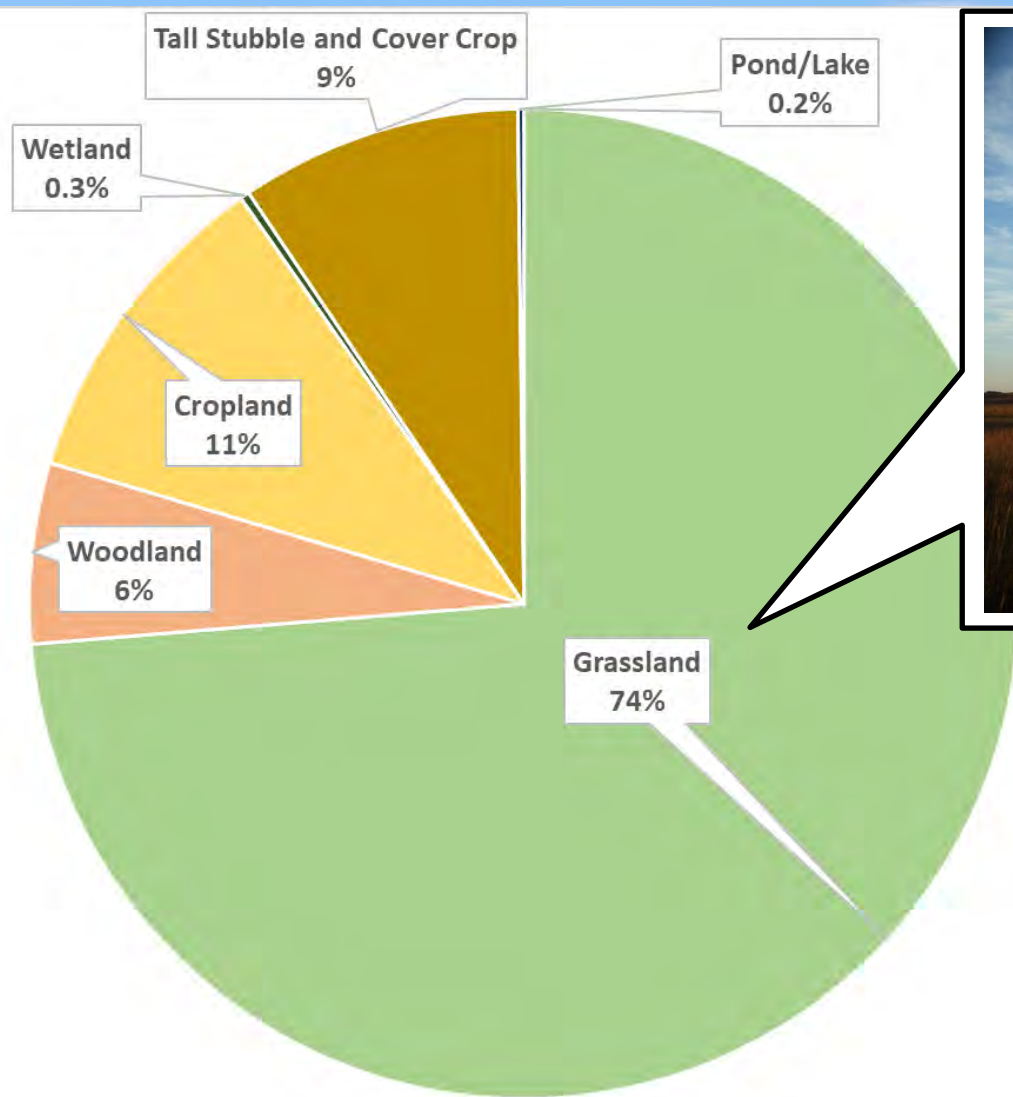
# 2018-19 Open Fields and Waters Program

## Statewide Enrollments

- 
- 317,558 Total Acres • +36% Since 2016
  - 316,952 Land Acres
  - 605 Water Acres
  - 42 Stream Miles
  - 43 Ponds and Lakes
  - 735 Landowners



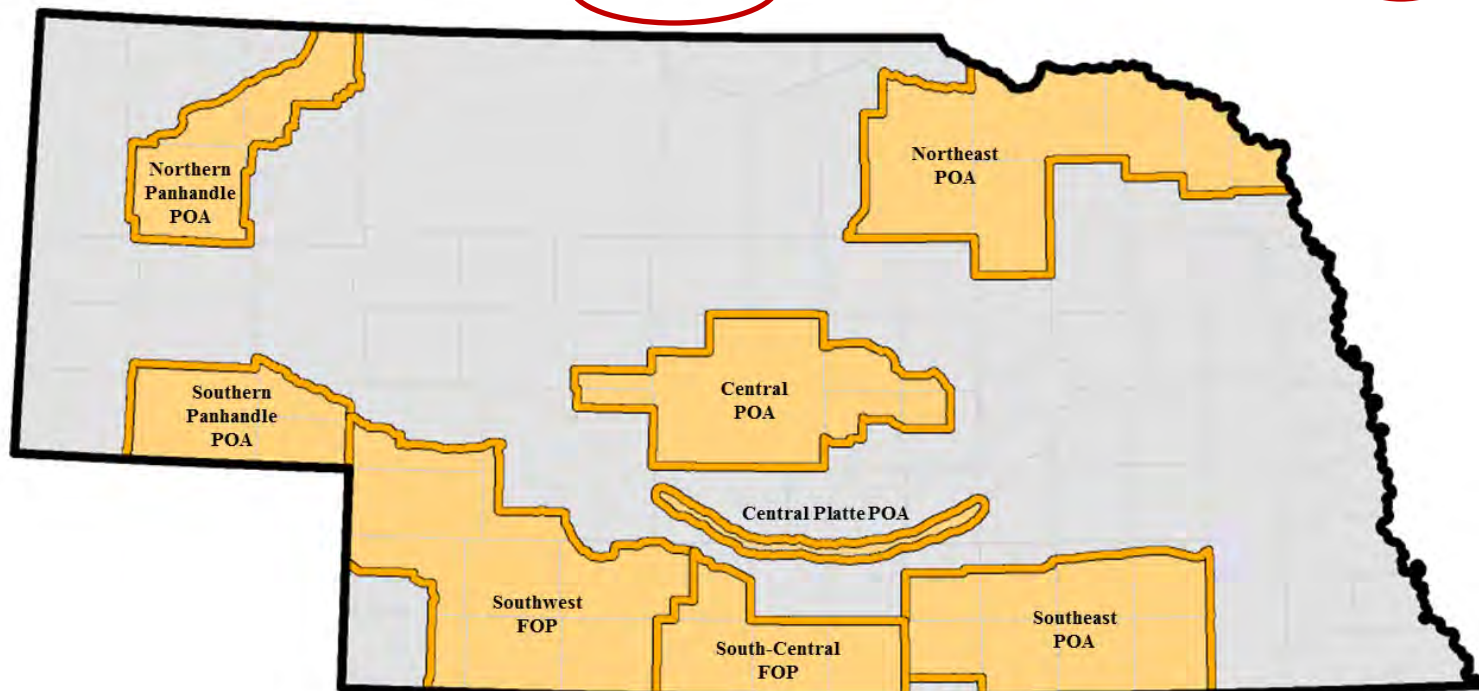
# 2018-19 Open Fields and Waters Program Statewide Enrollments by Habitat Type



# 2018-19 Open Fields and Waters Program

## Enrollments by Priority Area

Priority Area	Acres Enrolled 2018-2019	% Change 2017 to 2018	% Change 2016 to 2018
Central Platte POA	445.7	-49%	-49%
Southeast POA	3,428.2	11%	21%
Central POA	3,635.0	1%	0%
Northern Panhandle POA	13,197.3	30%	43%
Northeast POA	14,581.7	18%	28%
South-Central FOP	20,536.1	21%	36%
Southern Panhandle POA	25,516.9	9%	166%
Southwest FOP	107,605.4	74%	112%
POA/FOP Totals	188,946.2	43%	83%





# 2018-19 Open Fields and Waters Program Enrollments Within Berggren Plan Priority Areas

## Since 2016...

- ✓ Increased public access opportunities in 7 of 8 priority areas
- ✓ Added >85,000 acres to OFW Program within the priority areas (+83%)

### Total Acres Enrolled

2016-17: 103,380.6 ac

2017-18: 132,111.2 ac

2018-19: 188,946.2 ac

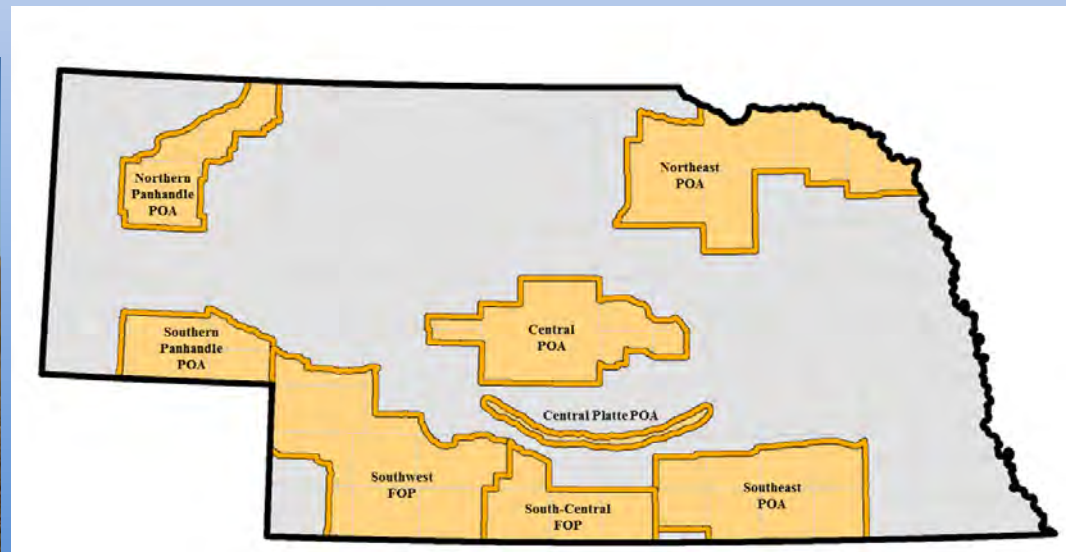
Added >18,000 acres of CRP

(+36%)



Added >13,000 acres of Tall Stubble

(+89%)



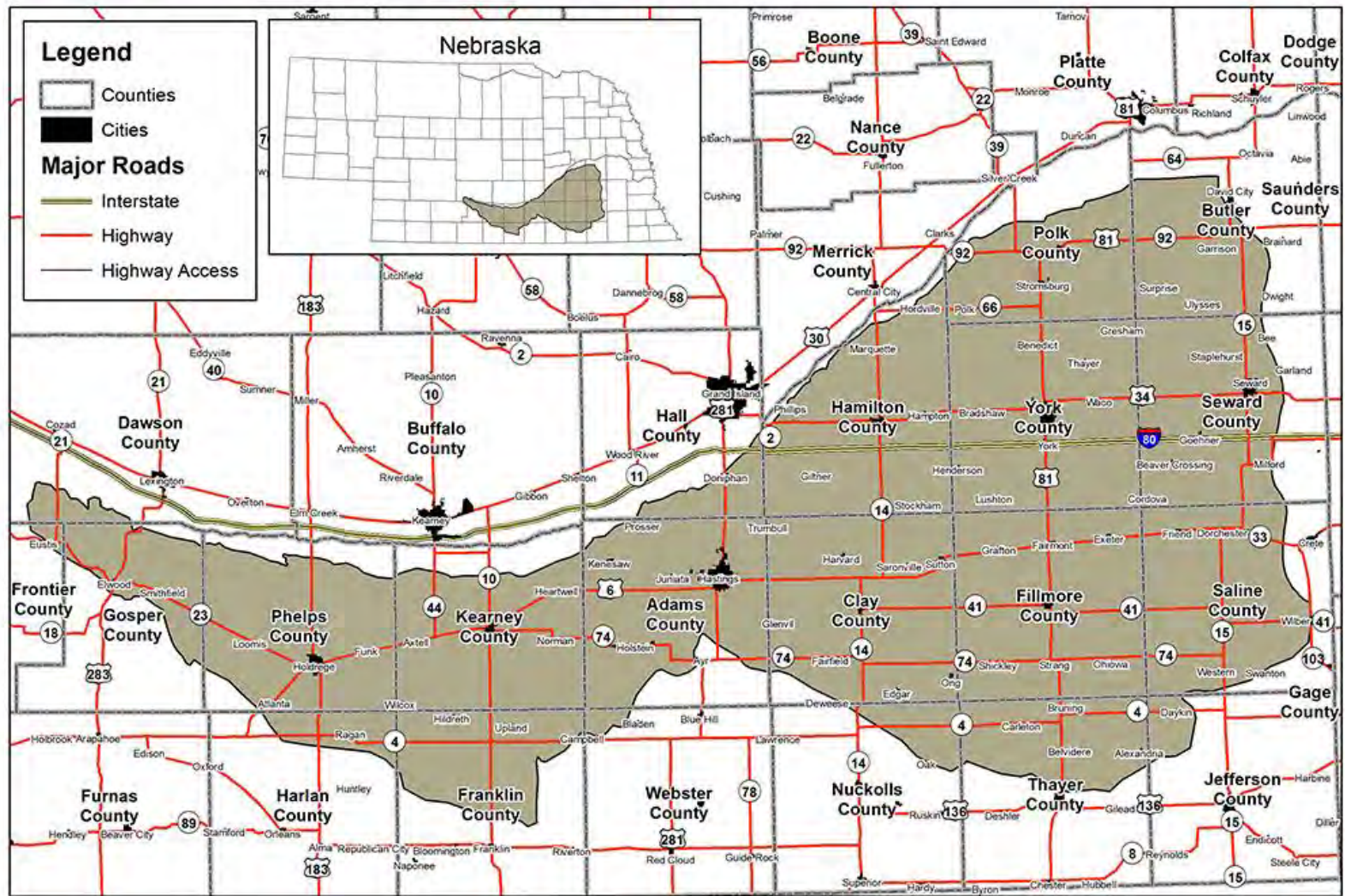


# Rainwater Basin Region





# Rainwater Basin Joint Venture: Rainwater Basin Region



0 12.5 25 50 Miles

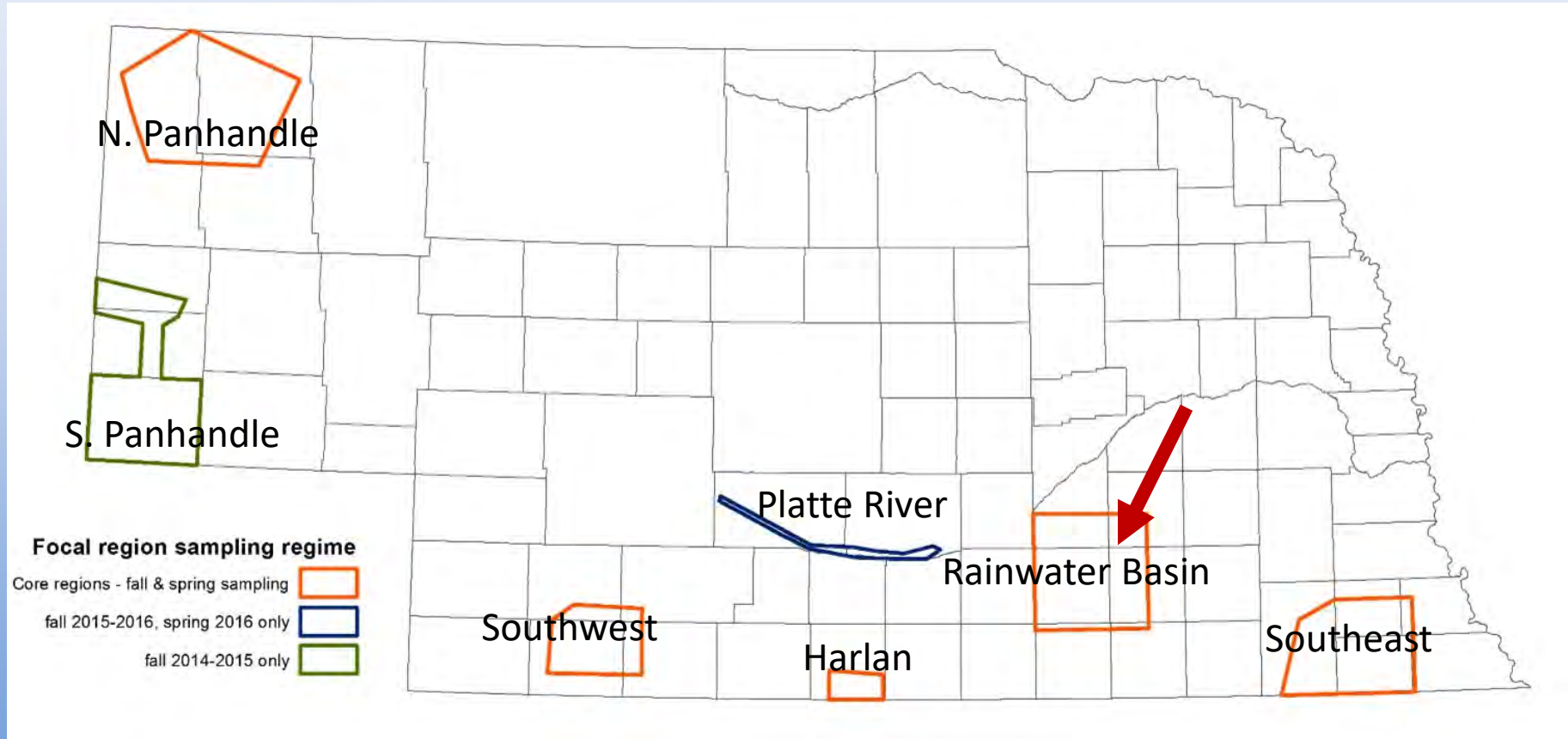
Produced by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, Grand Island, NE, 2017.



# Hunter Use

## UNL Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit

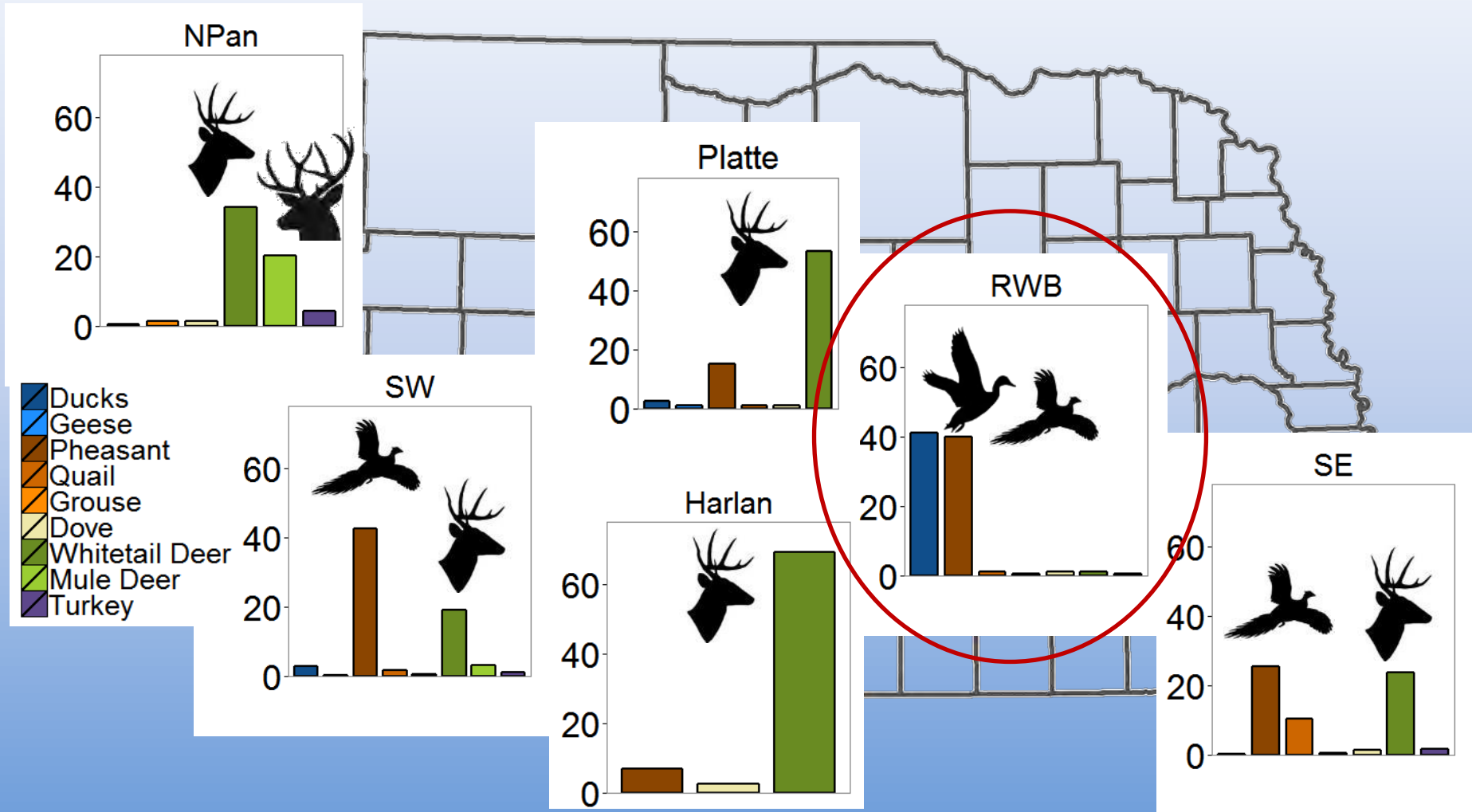
### Hunter Survey Project Focal Regions





# Hunter Use

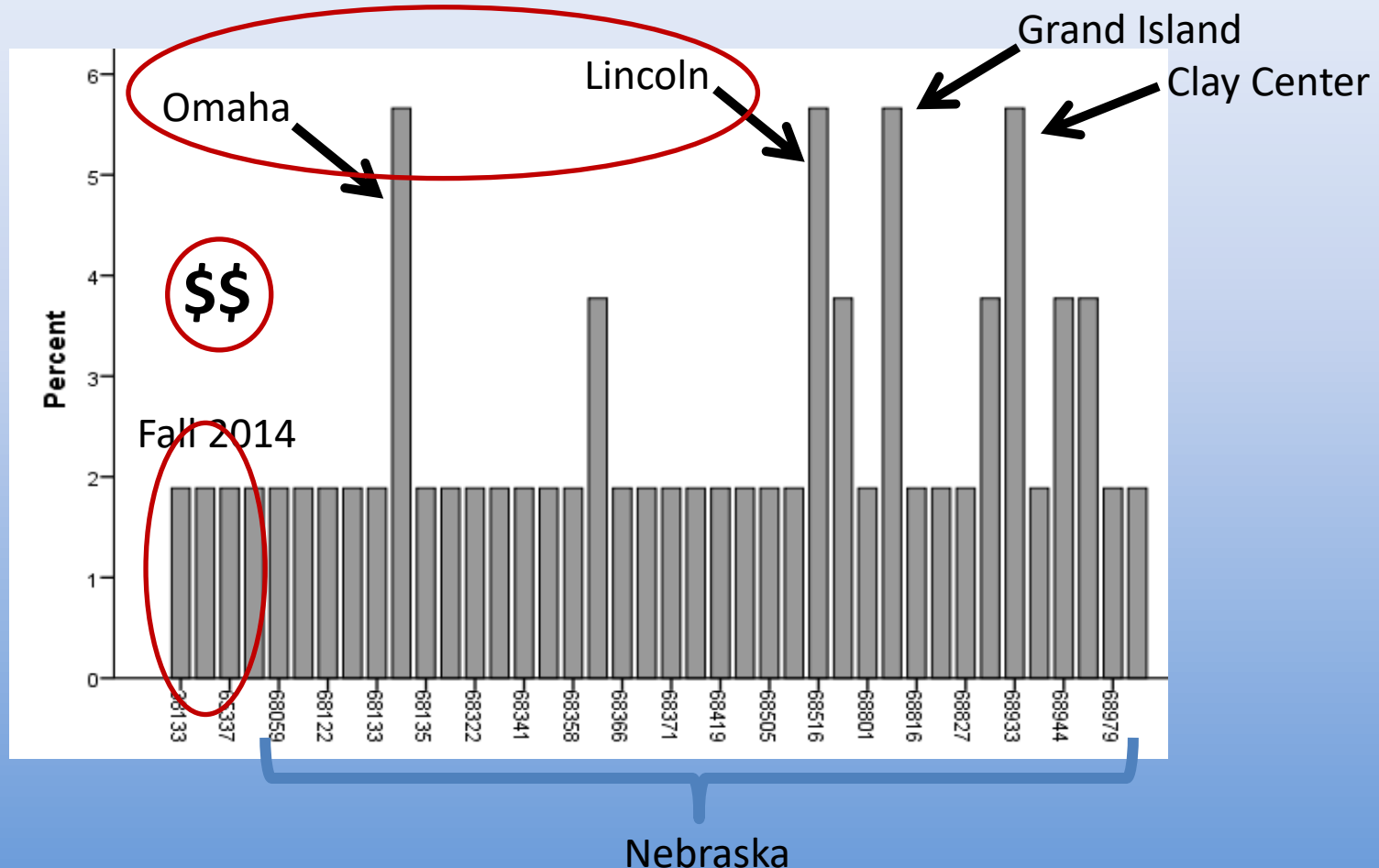
## Target Species by Region (From Interview Data)



**\*SOURCE:** Messinger, L.N. & Fontaine, J.J., unpublished data

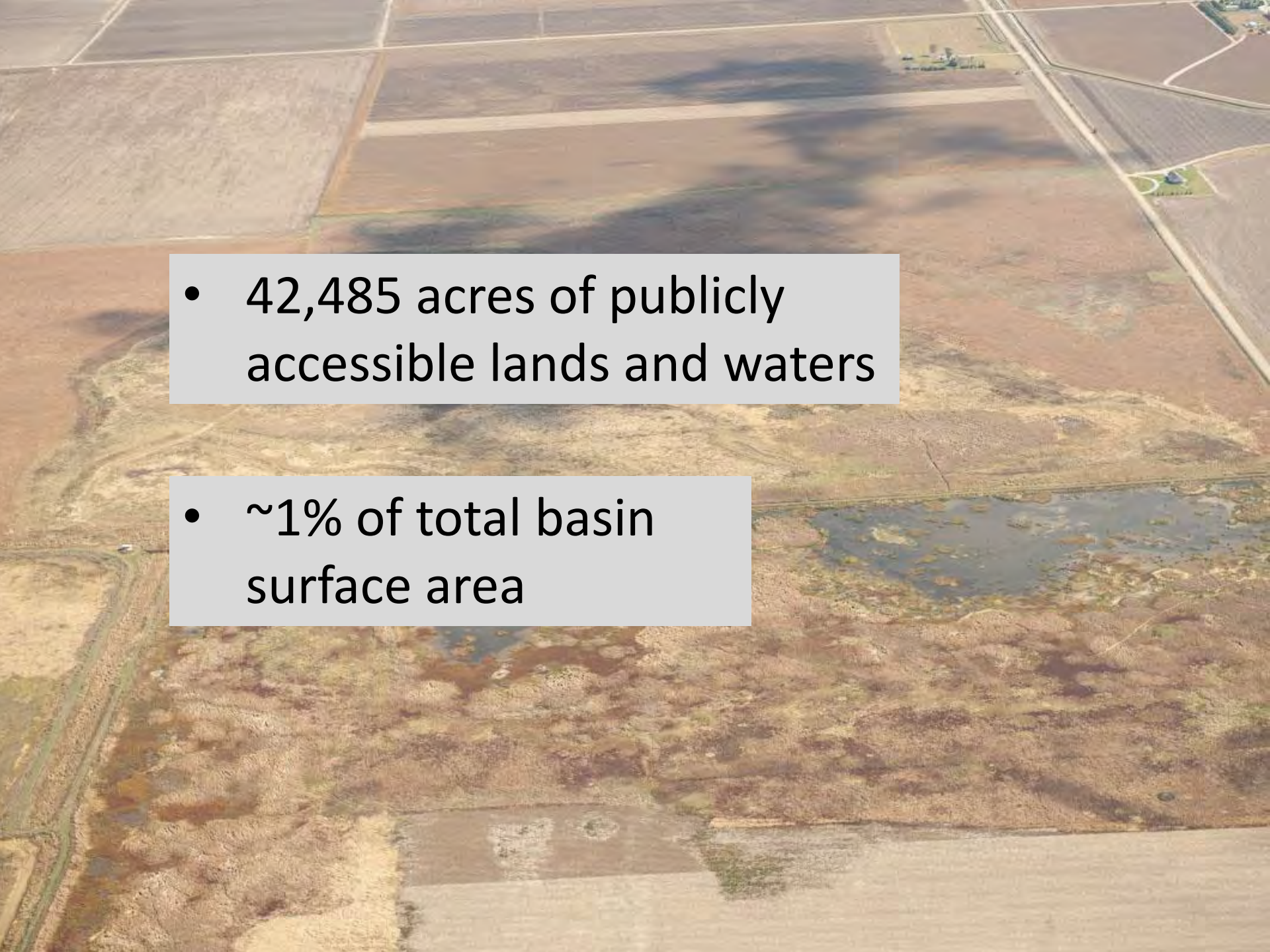
# Hunter Use

## Residency of Hunters in the Rainwater Basins



**\*SOURCE:** Messinger, L.N. & Fontaine, J.J., unpublished data



- 
- An aerial photograph showing a large, flat, brownish landscape, likely a wetland or marsh. The terrain is divided into sections by straight lines, possibly roads or ditches. In the upper right, there's a small cluster of buildings and a road. The lower part of the image shows more irregular, darker patches, possibly water or dense vegetation. A semi-transparent grey box with black text is overlaid on the left side of the image.
- 42,485 acres of publicly accessible lands and waters
  - ~1% of total basin surface area

# Farm Bill Update

- **Voluntary Public Access-Habitat Incentives Program (VPA-HIP)**
- Reauthorizes VPA-HIP for \$50 million, an increase of **\$10 million**
- \$3 million dollars would be targeted at gaining public access on Wetland Reserve Easements



***“I would’ve hung it up a long time ago if  
it weren’t for CRP and state walk-in programs.”***

**- 73-yr old hunter from Missouri**





# Questions?

