



# THE LANDSCAPE

## 2022 IMPACT REPORT

Preserving Our Agricultural, Historical and  
Natural Resources



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Communications Director



To fulfill a need to spread awareness and increase funding, NLT hired its first ever Communications Director, Hannah Sidel. Hannah holds a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife and has a background in nonprofit communications and fundraising.





# Wild Thoughts

DAVE SANDS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A few weeks ago, I was invited to spend a night on a Sandhills Ranch where Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) is working to conserve 6,200 acres along the Dismal River. Following an evening of good food and conversation, I awoke early the next morning and stepped outside to admire the deepening colors in the dawn sky. It was cold, clear and perfectly quiet, except for the occasional hooting of owls. In moments like these and places like this, I wish that time could stand still.

While we can't make time stand still, a conservation easement on this ranch will assure that the magical serenity of a Sandhills sunrise on the Dismal River is timeless. However, one thing that will inevitably change are the families who steward the land and their operations.

This is why NLT designs easements with agricultural flexibility in mind, so that future families have the ability to manage the land as they see fit. These types of conservation easements are also known as Agricultural Land Easements (ALEs) and our success in using these agreements is why NLT was invited to join the highly respected Partnership of Rangeland Trusts, featured on page 4. Our commitment to agriculture was further strengthened when NLT recently created four new At-large positions on our Board of Directors, reserved for "individuals involved with day to day management decisions of agriculture lands." This was done in response to NLT's new Strategic Plan which can be viewed on our website: [www.nelandtrust.org](http://www.nelandtrust.org).

The Stock Family Farm, featured on page 10, is a good example of why flexibility is needed when agricultural land is conserved. When the Stock brothers great, great grandfather, Gottlieb Dettman homesteaded 80 acres in 1869, he never would have dreamed that his descendants would someday be harvesting prairie seed on the farm, because back then, tallgrass prairie seemed to be everywhere. But over the last 150 years, 97% of that prairie has been lost and 60 years ago, as people became interested in restoration, the family started to sell seeds from native plants.

Unfortunately, some have sought to characterize conservation easements as unbending documents that restrict management of agricultural land. At one meeting, a person even claimed that if a conservation easement had been placed on land in 1900, the owners would still have to farm with horses! To rebut this misinformation, NLT and other conservation partners produced a video, [From the Grass Up](#), which can also be viewed on our website. In it, landowners debunk misinformation while explaining why permanent conservation was right for them, including Dean and Wayne Fedde who write about their farm on page 6. Their message is clear: It is possible to conserve timeless landscapes, while still allowing agriculture to change with the times.





1 in 6 acres  
under conservation  
easements held by  
nonprofits in the  
United States  
are held by PORT  
members.



## Harnessing the Power of Partnership

In 2018 Nebraska Land Trust was invited to join the Partnership of Rangeland Trusts known as "PORT". PORT is an alliance of agricultural-focused land trusts dedicated to conserving America's working farms, ranches and productive agricultural lands. PORT began in 2004 due to a need for networking and partnership between western land trusts.

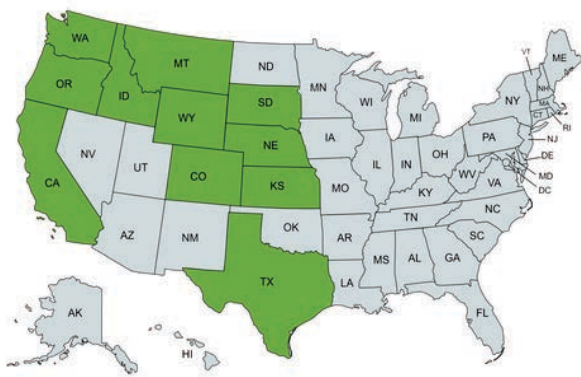


**PORT works across five areas to support its mission:**

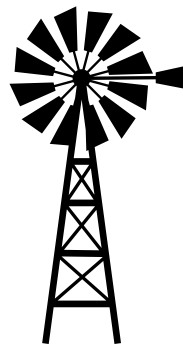
- Increasing the effectiveness of existing and future ag land conservation legislation and programs
- Facilitating the sharing of information and expertise among members
- Expanding funding sources for ag land conservation
- Improving landowner awareness of conservation tools and public understanding of land stewardship
- Promoting the highest business standards for members



Over 1,280 land trusts exist in the US, but only nine have been invited to join. Members are unique from other land trusts because of their close affiliations with their state livestock associations, focus on working agricultural lands and state-wide focus area. "Our type of land conservation is unique because of the focus on western agriculture and there was no organization dedicated specifically to supporting agricultural land trusts in the western states." said PORT President Erik Glenn. Member land trusts place conservation focus on the landowner's goals and the benefits of private ownership.



**11  
STATES**



**1,728 CONSERVATION  
EASEMENTS**



**2.9 MILLION ACRES  
CONSERVED**

PORT members work to conserve un-fragmented agricultural landscapes and economically viable farms and ranches through voluntary, incentive based methods. In order to support this conservation approach, members of PORT agree to adhere to the following operating principles:

- Pursuit of conservation mechanisms that support the long-term protection of agricultural land, but have minimal impact on the landowner's day-to-day management decisions.
- Rejection of conservation efforts [by NLT] that result in a net long-term increase in public lands or employ any type of condemnation action.
- Recognition of the role of sustainable land uses as a means of maintaining open and productive landscapes.
- Rejection of the acquisition of conservation easements with the intent to transfer to governmental ownership.
- Respect the rights of individual landowners to make decisions regarding public access issues on private lands.
- In principal and except under special circumstances, avoid long-term fee title ownership as a means of land conservation.
- Acceptance of conservation easements on properties which represent a significant positive contribution to agriculture by themselves, as part of a working landscape, or to the surrounding agricultural community



# A LOOK BACK AT FEDDE FARM



In September, Nebraska Land Trust, along with our partners, had the opportunity to meet with state senators to discuss the importance of private landowner rights, and how conservation easements support those rights. The event was hosted by Dean and Wayne Fedde on their farm in Sarpy County. The Feddes permanently protected their farm through a conservation easement in 2011, and have been vocal advocates for the land trust community and private property rights. Below is a piece written by Dean which shares the story of his family's heritage and history on their farm in Sarpy County:



Dean Fedde (L), Wayne Fedde, Dave Sands (R) - 2022

"I am a lifelong Nebraskan with deeply planted roots in southwest Sarpy County. For nearly a century, my family has farmed in the Lower Platte Valley, an area with some of our states most fertile soils. For the communities in the Lower Platte Valley, agriculture has provided a window for everyone to view a scenic countryside filled with historic farmsteads, rolling fields of grain, and the diverse habitat needed to sustain the abundant wildlife of the region. But in Nebraska's fastest growing county, agriculture is being squeezed out as farms are forever vanishing at an alarming rate. Unfortunately for my family, we experienced the consequences of being one of those farms.

My brother Wayne and I grew up on the farms of our grandparents John and Stella Deloske, and our uncle and aunt, Joe and Stella Buras. The two farms, located approximately seven miles south of Gretna, were only separated by Nebraska Highway 31.

My grandparents were Lithuanian immigrants who moved in 1932 from a small farm in South Omaha to this much larger 40-acre farm. Along with his family of three sons and three daughters, Grandpa Deloske farmed with horses growing corn, oats, and alfalfa to feed their cattle, hogs, goats, chickens, and geese. It was a family farm and we presumed that it would always stay in the family. However, in 1966, shortly after my grandfather passed away, an investor contacted a part of the family with an offer to buy the farm. Unknown to the rest of the family, the farm was sold. The house, barn, and outbuildings were bulldozed and burned. The land was broken into five parcels as rooftops replaced fields of corn, oats, and alfalfa. Agriculture no longer existed here as this family farm was forever gone.



On the 158-acre farm of our Uncle Joe and Aunt Stella Buras, we learned of conservation and perseverance as they worked diligently to not only protect the environment but to improve it. This farm defined their lives. Following the passing of Uncle Joe in 1982, Wayne and I vowed to not let this farm disappear like the farm of our grandparents. In 1993 we were able to purchase the farm from our Aunt Stel.

When we took over the farming operation we were committed to follow in their footsteps and respect the environment, just as they had. Today, we are a certified organic farm growing corn, soybeans, oats, winter wheat, and alfalfa. To my brother and I, these two farms were not just parcels of real estate to be bought and sold, they were a treasured part of us. We could not save our grandparent's farm, but in 2010 we were offered the opportunity to forever protect the farm and legacy of our uncle and aunt with a permanent conservation easement with the Nebraska Land Trust.

I am sure that most Nebraskans are unaware of this conservation opportunity. Support is needed, but there have been parties who are supplying misinformation concerning permanent conservation easements, so I would like to provide the following verifiable information.

1. By accepting a permanent conservation easement, the owner does not relinquish ownership. Control of the farm/ranch remains with the owner who continues to make all operating decisions.
2. Conservation easements do not freeze land valuations or real estate taxes. The valuations and real estate taxes assessed by Sarpy County on our farm have not been reduced because we have a permanent easement in place.

Conservation easements can be a powerful asset for the farmers and ranchers of our state. Development pressures are certainly not limited to Sarpy County, but Sarpy County may prove to be a prime example of how to preserve agriculture through conservation easements. Now is a critical time as the pressures are growing as every agricultural acre in Sarpy County holds the potential for development. The option of a permanent conservation easement can protect a family farm/ranch for future generations to continue in agriculture. Once an unprotected farm has been broken by development, that land is altered forever and will never again return to agriculture."

NEBRASKA LAND TRUST IS FOREVER GRATEFUL FOR DEAN AND WAYNE'S PASSION FOR THE LAND, SUPPORT OF NLT, AND ADVOCACY FOR PRIVATE LANDOWNER RIGHTS.



# from the GRASS UP

## Offering Truth About Conservation Easements

Over the past two years, misinformation about conservation and agricultural land easements has been spreading like a virus in Nebraska. In particular, one organization from Texas has been acting as the super-spreader of misinformation which some elected officials have been all too eager to embrace. As is the case with any misinformation, truth is the best vaccine.

In an effort to provide the truth, 10 Nebraska landowners agreed to be interviewed in a 15-minute video titled, [From the Grass Up](http://www.nelandtrust.org), which was released in 2022. The video can be viewed on Nebraska Land Trust's website: [www.nelandtrust.org](http://www.nelandtrust.org). In the video's unscripted interviews, landowners explain what conservation easements did and did not do for them. The video was produced in collaboration with several conservation organizations and the landowners themselves. Half of the featured landowners have conservation easements with NLT.

What conservation easements did not do for these families was impact agriculture on their land, their owner's ability to manage it as they see fit, or the property taxes they pay. What these voluntary agreements did do was conserve valuable agricultural, historical and natural resources, protect cherished family legacies and strengthen ag operations. Now, there is no need to take our word for it since you can hear it in the landowners own words, while viewing some of Nebraska's most stunning landscapes! Since its release, the film has been seen throughout the country and received national acclaim. It has even led some to remark, "I didn't know Nebraska was so beautiful!" If you like it as well, feel free to share it with others who may be interested.





# PARTNERS IN PERMANENCE

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## Featuring: Julie Schroeder

Julie is a long-time Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) supporter from Waterloo, Nebraska. She grew up in Omaha's Dundee neighborhood. In fact, her family's history in Omaha dates back to its founding where her ancestors worked in banking and real estate.

"I've always been in Nebraska – I just love it."

Julie says she's always had an affinity for the outdoors, beautiful places and conservation. She spent many summers during her childhood in upstate New York and Maine. In her early twenties, she discovered the great Sandhill Crane migration in Central Nebraska.

"My love of the land is just a part of me. Because of my growing up in Nebraska and summers in the Northeast, I think it was inevitable."

Julie firmly believes that the future of conservation lies with the younger generations, and that environmental education should be part of school curriculums.

"It's just as important as spelling."

Julie has been supporting NLT for so long, she can't recall precisely when she began or how she became connected. But, she knows what she hopes to see for conservation in the future and the part NLT can play.

"Continue conserving productive landscapes! It's a concept many people don't even realize is so important and something they need. Human beings need space."

Most importantly, Julie hopes that people respect both the beauty and value of our land in Nebraska.

"We may not have mountains or seashores, but it's still beautiful and important."

Our heartfelt thanks to Julie for her dedication to NLT's mission and her support of our work.





# Stock Family Farm

## Five generations of stewardship permanently protected in Cass County

The Stock Family is the most recent addition to Nebraska Land Trust's network of farmers, ranchers and landowners who have protected their land through a conservation easement. This easement was generously donated by Darrell, Dave and Ron Stock.

The Stock Family Farm has a rich history, dating back to the original homesteading of 80 acres of Cass County land in the 1860s. Here is some of the history of the farm, which subsequently evolved into Stock Seed Farms, as told by Dave, a fifth-generation farmer:

"From my earliest memories, I have been in the seed business. As a small child I watched my parents drill grass seed fields. As I grew, I helped my father bag certified seed wheat and soybeans. I will never forget how upset my mother was when the mice attacked the switchgrass being stored in the upstairs store room in our house. But I digress...

60 years ago, my parents Lyle & Margaret Stock harvested their first acres of Nebraska Certified grass seed. The seed was a new release from the Agricultural Experiment Station called "Nebraska 28 Switchgrass". The warm season native grass allowed my father to act on his strong commitment to soil conservation and to diversify his traditional corn and livestock farm.

With the help and encouragement of the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) and University of Nebraska personnel, my family has been recognized for the last 60 years as a leader in the production and marketing of native grasses and wildflowers. With the help, encouragement and loyalty of our customers, Stock Seed Farms has developed into a strong company expanding the use of native plants nationwide.

It has given us great satisfaction working with native grasses and wildflowers. Using native plant materials, millions of acres have been protected from wind and water erosion, provided food for domestic animals and additionally provided food and shelter for wildlife. For humans, these same acres have provided food for our eyes, mind and soul."

The Stock brothers' creation of a conservation easement for this historic piece of land ensures that their descendants will be able to enjoy the 'fruits' (prairie grasses) of their ancestors and to honor the family legacy of land stewardship and conservation.



# You can be a Partner in Permanence!

Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) supporters are partners in achieving permanence for agricultural, historical and natural resources. Whether it is an annual donation that supports ongoing projects or an Endowment Gift that supports future projects, please consider the NLT in your charitable giving. For more information, contact Hannah Sidel at [hsidel@nelandtrust.org](mailto:hsidel@nelandtrust.org) or call 402/438-5263.

The Nebraska Land Trust is deeply grateful for the following partners who helped to create permanence for land in a changing world during the past 12 months:

## **Foundations**

Claire M. Hubbard Foundation  
Cooper Foundation  
John and Jane Ellsworth Family Foundation  
J.A. Woollam Foundation  
J.C. Seacrest Trust  
Julie Morsman Schroeder Foundation  
Lincoln Community Foundation  
The Sterns Charitable Foundation

## **Stewards (\$1,000 +)**

Ty and Teresa Cox  
John and Jane Ellsworth  
Greenwald Family Gift Trust  
Barry and Marlea Gruver  
Jim Hruska  
Hod Kosman  
Del Lienemann, Jr.  
Daniel McKinney  
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Ron and Judith Parks  
Sara and Gary Radil  
Neal and Deb Ratzlaff  
Jeanne Reichstadt and Bruce Schneider  
Bob and Cheryl Robart  
Nancy Roberts  
Dave and Tracy Sands  
Dave and Sue Van Horn  
Lyle and Joyce Vannier  
John Wallace Webster  
Gail and Michael Yanney

## **Sustainers (\$500 to \$999)**

Kim and Doug Alvine  
Gary and Marjorie Garabrandt  
Jeff and Judy Greenwald  
Glenn and Elaine Johnson  
Mike and Denise Linder  
Susan and Gary Seacrest  
Katherine L. Walter and Tim R. Rinne  
Katie and Walker Zulkoski

## **Friends (\$100 to \$499)**

Warren and Sue Arganbright  
Laurine Blankenau

Mark Brodkey, MD  
Bill Brush  
Ronald and Karen Case  
Katharine Cohen  
James and Jeanette Commers  
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Thomas de Shazo  
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Deborah Twombly  
Ron and Camilla Svoboda  
Mark van Roojen  
Anne Vidaver  
Terry and Karen Waite

## **Businesses and Organizations**

Eastern Nebraskans Against Chemical Trespass  
Land Trust Alliance  
Lower Platte South Natural Resources District  
MERCK Foundation  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District

## **Conservation Easement and/or Stewardship Fund Donors**

Darrell Stock  
David Stock  
Ronald Stock

## **In Memory of Clint Johannes**

Shirley Johannes

## **In Memory of Mary Schroeder**

Annette and Steven Huff

## **In Memory of Jean Vinduska**

Mike and Dawn Banks  
Michael and Marilyn Cahalane  
Shirley Elrod  
Wayne and Dean Fedde  
David and Elizabeth Hurd  
Harold Knapp  
John Knapp  
Mike Mahoney  
Thomas and Evelyn McKnight  
Virginia Miller  
Sean and Pier Mulhall  
Bob and JoLynne Newsham  
Ron and Carol Patterson  
Theresa and Anthony Peterson  
John Pocousky  
James and Francis Swanson  
Ronald Uhlig  
Jarel Vinduska





3201 Pioneers Blvd. Suite 107  
Lincoln, NE 68502



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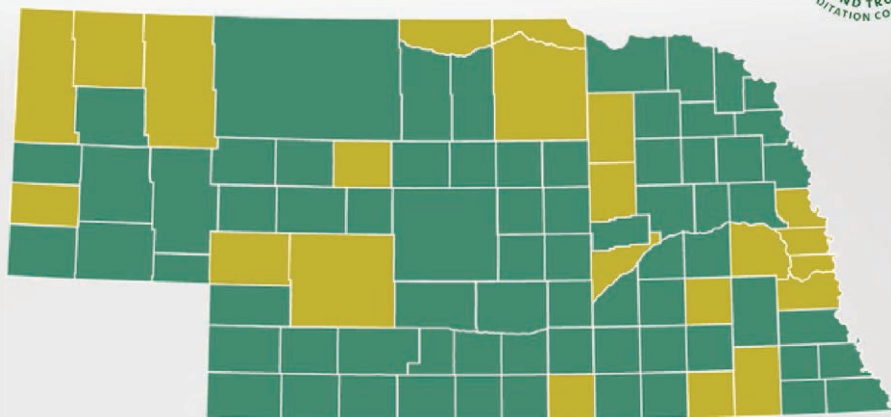
From the Grass Up  
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# SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS



32,694  
ACRES

Preserved for  
future  
generations



22 COUNTIES



44 FAMILIES

Make up the Nebraska Land Trust  
easement holders.

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Nebraska Land Trust. To subscribe, visit:

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