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Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition Receives Grant from Nebraska Environmental Trust

Lincoln, NE – April 12, 2010 – Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition announced today that it will receive \$90,000 from the Nebraska Environmental Trust for “Grazing Lands Monitoring Program for Plant Health and Soil Quality”. The Trust Board announced funding for the project at its meeting on April 1, 2010 in Lincoln. This is the second year of award with a potential for third year funding totaling \$270,000. The project is one of the 88 projects receiving \$14,970,328 in grant awards from the Nebraska Environmental Trust this year.

The Rancher Steward Rangeland Monitoring Project is a cooperative program among local rancher working groups and agriculture students that will provide Nebraska landowners with technical assistance and equipment to effectively monitor plant communities and soil resources on their land. Most landowners are aware of existing systems designed to monitor land health. However, the application of these programs is often unpractical, cost-prohibitive and complicated, and they are not utilized. The Rancher Steward Rangeland Monitoring Project provides the next step for ranchers - onsite technical assistance and data analysis, so they can implement a scientific monitoring program.

The innovative and unique approach of this project is in the design of a simple range and soil quality monitoring program that ranchers can replicate and utilize to make informed grazing management decisions, which will improve ecosystem processes as well as economic stability of their enterprises.



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Based on the theory of "Teach a man to fish," the program will provide, for a reasonable fee, an initial training session and assistance in establishing one monitoring site. This session will include: complete monitoring equipment kit, on-site assistance of a trained university student, potential assistance from local high school students, potential assistance from a local rancher working group, and scientific data analysis of plant and soil samples.

The goal of this training session is to provide the landowner with the equipment and skills to replicate monitoring on additional sites, and eventually train other landowners through their local working group. The only additional cost to the landowner per monitoring site will be for data analysis.

This is a three-year project, with the goal of conducting 100 training sessions each year. However, the scope of the Rancher Steward Rangeland Monitoring Project is exponential - with potential for establishing continual, practical plant and soil monitoring programs throughout Nebraska through simplification and sharing.

The Nebraska Legislature created the Nebraska Environmental Trust in 1992. Using revenue from the Nebraska Lottery, the Trust has provided over \$157 million in grants to 1,231 projects across the state. Anyone – citizens, organizations, communities, farmers and businesses – can apply for funding to protect habitat, improve water quality and establish recycling programs in Nebraska. The Nebraska Environmental Trust works to preserve, protect and restore our natural resources for future generations.

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