



Non-resident hunters utilizing NCORPE public lands.

NCORPE PUBLIC ACCESS PROGRAM - HUNTING

NCORPE Project - Public Lands & Programs Edition

IN THIS ISSUE

Public Access Program Update

NCORPE provides opportunities for the public to hunt, hike, or just enjoy the outdoors. Currently there are 5,120 acres available for hunting and 1,760 acres available for hiking, biking, and horseback riding. For regulations and other information please visit www.ncorpe.org

Several new parking lots have been established on these acres so please, as a safety precaution, do not park vehicles on the county roads.

Thank you to all on behalf of the NCORPE staff for the remarkable job of properly disposing of trash. This makes for a pleasant experience for everyone using the property and keeps an obligation to our neighboring land owners that NCORPE public lands stay litter free. *Pack it In, Pack it Out!*

In summary, the 2017 hunting season went well according to several interactions with hunters utilizing the public lands. Some archery deer were taken early on in September along with grouse hunters indicating moderate success. The weekend opener for pheasant didn't receive as much pressure as 2016 season opener, but high success was reported throughout the season.

It is the staff's hope that these acres remain available for hunting and outdoor enjoyment, but future legislation is pushing for the sale of NCORPE property. You the hunter can have a voice, please contact your local Senator to keep our public land use.

A newer opportunity at NCORPE is the Wildlife Viewing Program. In cooperation with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission every spring reservations can be made to watch Greater prairie-chickens during their mating rituals. This unique opportunity provides education on a species native to Nebraska. Please contact 308-534-6752 to make a reservation or visit www.ncorpe.org for more information.

Public Access Program update

2018 grazing opportunities

Land management update

Pasture Deferment Program announcement

Intern announcement



Public Access Program – Trails

7.1 miles of multi-use trails (horses allowed)

3.8 miles of multi-use trails (no horses allowed)

10.9 miles total of trails

Page 1



Land Management Update



Prairie Reconstruction Project

Cattle are used as tool for combating invasive cool-season grasses.

FAST FACTS

8,660 ac.

of the NCORPE property will be available for grazing in 2018.

2018 Grazing Opportunities

NCORPE is accepting sealed bids until March 5th, 2018 for summer Rx grazing opportunities. Five units are available for bidding. If bidding on multiple units, please specify individually the unit being bid on and its corresponding bid. The bids shall be submitted only once and no counter bidding will be available. All bids need to be mailed to:

NCORPE

Attn: Summer Sealed Bid

24871 S. Lone Star Rd.

North Platte, NE 69101

GRAZING

For additional information and bid submittal form visit www.ncorpe.org

QUESTIONS:
308-534:6752

MANAGING PUBLIC LANDS



Augmentation Project



Re-seeding Project

Currently, the staff is evaluating the acres seeded in 2014 to determine the success rate of establishment. Some re-seeding in the future will be necessary.

FAST FACTS

8%

of NCORPE property will be utilized in 2018 for the Pasture Deferment Program.

69%

of the NCORPE property will be grazed in 2018

PRESCRIBED GRAZING OPPORTUNITIES

For more information visit www.ncorpe.org

After the drilling of 13,388 acres of formerly irrigated acres the prairie reconstruction project is fully underway.

This project in its entirety was contingent on receiving a grant to assist with the purchasing of seed. Fortunately, the Nebraska Environmental Trust awarded a \$700,000 grant to assist with this aspect. These environmental grants are funded through the Nebraska Lottery.

At the beginning, the placement of native seed at an optimum depth in the soil, similar to mother nature's way, took a great deal of precision. Then considering the numerous variables at stake those seedlings either germinated or stayed dormant. Management at this point in any grassland restoration or reconstruction project is really at the mercy of mother nature and her elements. A lot of patience and time is what is required at this stage.

Now entering the phase in which management can play a critical role in the project, many strategies have been implemented on the NCORPE property. Tools such as well-timed herbicide applications, prescribed cattle grazing, sensible mowing, prescribed fire, and good ole fashioned labor can give seedlings the advantage over other undesirable plants. Noxious and invasive species, i.e. Canada thistle and Downy Brome, are the largest concern during early establishment of restored grasslands. These plants can invade early and eventually out compete the seeded species. NCORPE staff has implemented numerous management plans to address these species and will continue to apply adaptive management skills to ensure the success of the project.

Other plants which are annual in nature, i.e. Prairie sunflower and Russian thistle, simply fill a void in grasslands after a disturbance and can even play a positive role in perennial grass establishment. Better known as "weeds" these plants quickly establish by sending down a large taproot to take advantage of moisture, especially in sandy soils, thus preventing soil erosion and creating a hospitable seed bed for other more competitive plants i.e. Switchgrass and Purple prairieclover (*species in the native mixture drilled on NCORPE property*). These annual forbs, "weeds" are also a critical component to wildlife habitat. Several species are dependent on cover produced by weeds for raising their young and the winter food source they produce in the form of seeds.

In the end, these "weeds" slowly give up their dominance on the landscape to other prairie plant species. Typically, native perennial plants are the most dominate species found in grasslands. Only when disturbances such as over grazing, drought, or fire occur do these opportunistic "weeds" again fill the void created by weakened perennial vegetation. So, who is to say "weeds" are entirely bad, they are only "a plant in the wrong place" by definition.



Dickcissel

Grassland Songbird

The NCORPE staff fully understands the concern of some plants being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Russian thistle for instance can cause havoc on fence lines during periods when perennial vegetation is weakened and/or absent. Prescribed grazing and spot mowing are a few tools that have been implemented to lessen this species vigor. In addition to control methods a shredder implement has been used to remove "tumble weeds" from fence lines.

As this change occurs, irrigated farmland back to prairie once again, it is the hopes of the NCORPE staff that this conversion can benefit all people local and abroad. From an education platform for a variety of students to a renewable resource for livestock producers to even a place of solitude for outdoor enthusiasts.



Pasture Deferment Program

Pilot Program

This program promotes the use of prescribed burning as tool for improving rangeland health.

Program Goals:

NCORPE is devoting a grazing opportunity specifically for local landowners who are planning to defer their property in preparation for implementing a prescribed burn.

Requirements for Enrollment Consideration:

Property within one of the following NRD districts: Upper Republican, Middle Republican, Lower Republican, or Twin Platte.

Must have a prescribed burn plan in place and a specific year scheduled for implementation.

Will participate in the execution of the prescribed burn or have a contract for implementation of a prescribed burn with a qualified, agency approved, prescribed burn contractor.

Or

Be a member of a prescribed burn association within the following NRD districts: Upper Republican, Middle Republican, Lower Republican, or Twin Platte.

Applies to both scenarios: Only the deferred property's carry capacity will be taken into consideration for enrollment.

Ranking Criteria:

A ranking system determines successful enrollment after all other requirements are met.

Program Standards:

PDP grazing plan will be followed. **Note:** **maximum animal units will be specified.**

Set rental rate – via combination of UNL's *Trends in Nebraska Farmland Markets* publication and USDA's current Nebraska cattle market reports.

Nuisance factors will be applied to rental rate if necessary.

2nd year enrollment option after burn.

MANAGING FOR BETTER PRIVATE LANDS



Eastern Red Cedar Encroachment

Eastern Red Cedar is a pioneer species and can be considered invasive. If not controlled early this species can out compete many grasses in rangeland. Early control by mechanical methods or prescribed fire can help landowners combat this issue before land production is lost.



Grazing Deferment

Summer pasture deferment is a critical step in implementing a prescribed burn. The build-up of adequate fuel loads is necessary when trying to control brush or tree species.



Prairie Reconstruction Project

Native warm-season grasses provide forage for cattle owned by producers enrolled in NCORPE's Pasture Deferment Program.

Intern Announcement

NCORPE Internship Vacancy
Announcement

Salary: \$14.00 hr.

May-August 2018

Part-time and/or Full-time

Organization:

The Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement project (NCORPE – is a coalition of four Natural Resources Districts including Upper Republican, Middle Republican, Lower Republican and Twin Platte.

Description:

Overall goal of the internship is to assist with general operations of the NCORPE project.

Which includes assisting with range management duties and the implementation of wildlife habitat management on 19,000 acres of project property.

Specific Duties:

General property upkeep; mowing, noxious weed control, trash collection, general repairs, fencing, and security. Activities will also include "hands on" habitat management, posting signs, wildlife surveys, environmental data collection, and outreach/education activities.

Work Requirements: (knowledge, skills and abilities)

Ability to communicate effectively, work as part of a team or as an individual (with limited supervision). Ability to operate large equipment, tractors, various implements (mowing, chemical application), load and haul equipment on trailers, ATVs, general power tools and/or shop equipment, etc. Computer skills including word processing and spreadsheets.

Requirements:

15 semester hours or the equivalent of post high school coursework/training in range management, wildlife management, animal science, horticulture, agronomy, natural resources and/or biology.

Valid driver's license.

Housing maybe available.

TO APPLY: Submit cover letter and resume to bsellers@urnrd.org.



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