

Policy

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policy range aquatics soil forestry wildlife

Did you know that our government creates laws and policies to protect our natural environment? Could you imagine living in a world that did not respect Mother Nature? It's unimaginable that someday your children wouldn't be able to see the beauty of nature that we have come to know as our natural resources.

Here in Nebraska.....

Natural resources and land use policies are created to protect our valuable natural resources. Such policies help ensure that the benefits of those resources will be available for future generations. Policy and land use issues are difficult to research because natural resources policies, issues, and related legal framework change from year to year. Keeping up with these changes can be challenging, even for conservation professionals.

Keeping up with the environmental and land use policies can be very challenging. However, it is very important to understand new and existing policies so you can better serve yourself, your neighbors, community, town, state, nation, and even your world. By learning about these policies you will become a better citizen who will be able to "tip the scales" with knowledge on environmental and land use policies.

Policy

Objective 1

- Understand the role local, state, and federal natural resources agencies have in implementing and creating policy.
- Students must understand funding and development of conservation practices, research, collection and storage of natural resources data, providing education and technical support, developing and enforcing regulations.

Objective 2

- Describe geography and land use:
 - Current policies regarding land ownership and water rights
 - Land and water use, crop types and irrigation use in Nebraska
 - Agrichemical use and its effect on crop production and the environment.
 - Environmental problems and opportunities in Nebraska.
 - Place and names of major rivers, lakes, and geographic regions on a map and describe the function of specific rivers and lakes along with historical significance.
 - Know history of resources use in Nebraska.

Objective 3

- Show up-to-date knowledge on the following:
 - Current land and water use laws and their effects
 - Historical significance of natural resources law and current bills
 - Historical figures who played an important role in development and conservation of Nebraska's natural resources
 - Plants and animals protected in Nebraska by the Endangered Species Act
 - The function of wetlands and current policies regarding the regulation and protection of wetlands
 - Regulatory issues

Practice Exercises

Exercise 1

Contact a representative from your local Natural Resources Districts:

- Discuss policies and their effects on natural resources management and usage
- Discuss local environmental problems and the policies used to control and correct these problems
- Discuss how the role of the local, state, and federal government differs in regard to natural resources

Exercise 2

Check out the "Administration/Legal" links on the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources website (<http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/docs/adminlegal.html>). Note links to the Wyoming and Kansas legal settlements, LB962 Website, and the legislative update (now located on the NARD website). Note the bills and legislation related to natural resources. Check periodically to see if any action has been taken on specific bills, especially those that have been covered by the news media.

Exercise 3

Read and clip out newspaper and magazine articles on land use and policy issues. Keep a scrapbook to use as a study resource. Useful articles can often be found in the Omaha World-Herald and the Lincoln Journal-Star. Magazines such as Nebraska Farmer and Nebraskaland are also good sources of information. Many government agencies and some private organizations publish newsletters that describe their programs and current projects, policy, and land use issues; and some cover natural resource legislation.

Become familiar with the basic roles of various government agencies. Many agencies have websites that are an excellent source of information about what role the agencies have and what services they provide (many can be accessed through the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources website). Most agencies also have brochures or publications that describe their functions.

Some of the agencies involved in natural resources work include:

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM) <http://www.blm.gov>
- BLM Facts page <http://www.blm.gov/nhp/facts/index.htm>
- Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) <http://www.usbr.gov>
- BOR Dataweb, information on projects <http://www.usbr.gov/dataweb/>
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) <http://www.epa.gov>
- Nebraska Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) <http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov>
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE) <http://www.usace.army.mil>
- United States Geological Survey (USGS) <http://www.usgs.gov>
- Nebraska Department of Agriculture <http://www.agr.state.ne.us/>
- Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) <http://www.deq.state.ne.us>
- Health and Human Services System (HHR) <http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/>
- Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) <http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/>
- Water Task Force <http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/watertaskforce/watertaskforce.html>
- University of Nebraska <http://www.unl.edu>
- Conservation & Survey Division (CSD) <http://csd.unl.edu/>
- National Association of Resource Districts <http://www.nrdnet.org/>

Sample Questions

1. What U.S. Government agency collects and evaluates surface water, groundwater and groundwater quality data in order to aid in defining hydrologic systems?
 - a. The U.S. Geological Survey
 - b. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 - c. The Environmental Protection Agency
 - d. The Bureau of Reclamation
2. Nebraska has the _____ highest acreage of irrigated land in the United States?
 - a) First
 - b) Second
 - c) Third
 - d) Fifth
3. Nebraska Sandhill streams are fed by the High Plains Aquifer and baseflow from water infiltrating the sandy soil. These streams are most noted for:
 - a) high levels of erosion
 - b) intensive crop development throughout the basin
 - c) the high levels of overland runoff contributing to the system
 - d) its relatively steady level of flow
4. Which of the following factors is generally not used in defining a wetland?
 - a) Wildlife
 - b) Soils

c) Vegetation

d) Hydrology

5. As the Father of Arbor Day, this editor, farmer, Nebraska territorial secretary and U.S. Secretary of Agriculture helped found an “environmental” holiday in 1872. He noted “other holidays repose upon the past. Arbor Day proposes for the future.” He was:

a) J. Sterling Morton

b) Robert Furnas

c) William Jennings Bryan

d) Dr. Mathew Ricketts

6. Infant methemoglobinemia or “Blue Baby” syndrome can result from:

a) Consumption of high levels of atrazine by infants.

b) Breathing of high levels of particulates by infants.

c) Consumption of high nitrate water by infants.

Reference Materials

Nebraska Groundwater Policy and Water Use: The Great Plains Symposium, 1998: The Ogallala Aquifer “Determining the Value of Water”, March 10- 12, 1998, Gaul, Steve, 1998, Edited by Lori Triplett, pp. 126-129.

Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Strategy; Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, 1991, 1990 update, 34 pages.

Estimated Water Use in Nebraska, 1995; Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, 1998, in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey, 64 pages.

Science for a Sustainable Future of the Grain Plains: Water- Quality Assessment in Central Nebraska;

U.S. Geological Survey, 1996, NAWQA Program

Water-Level Changes in the High Plains Aquifer, 1980 to 1995;

U.S. Geological Survey, 1997, U.S.G.S. Fact Sheet FS-068-97.

Flat Water: A History of Nebraska and Its Water; LTNL Conservation and Survey Division, 1993, Resource Report No. 12, 292 pages

answers: a, b, d, a, a, c