

# WATERSHED AND FLOOD PREVENTION OPERATIONS (WFPO) PROGRAM

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program helps units of federal, state, local and federally recognized tribal governments protect and restore watersheds.



## OVERVIEW

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) facilitates the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program. This program provides technical and financial assistance to states, local governments, and tribal organizations to help plan and implement watershed projects that address critical water-related issues, including:

- Flood Prevention
- Watershed Protection
- Public Recreation
- Public Fish and Wildlife
- Agricultural Water Management
- Municipal and Industrial Water Supply
- Water Quality Management

## LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR RESILIENT WATERSHEDS

In Nebraska, Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) play a vital role in identifying community needs and implementing watershed projects. Grassroots participation ensures that watershed plans are tailored to address local challenges and protect critical landscapes. NRDs act as local sponsors, providing:

- Fiscal management
- Project oversight
- Easements and permits
- Local cost-share funding

In the last five years, Nebraska's NRDs have partnered with NRCS to advance numerous flood reduction and conservation projects, leveraging federal, state and local funds. Currently, \$30 million in federal funds are obligated through the WFPO program with \$22 million already dispersed.

## WHY FUNDING MATTERS

As of February 2025, Nebraska NRCS needs approximately \$245 million in WFPO funds to meet the demand. Investment in the WFPO Program is essential to:

- Protect lives and property from flood risks.
- Ensure sustainable water management for agriculture and communities.
- Preserve our natural resources and enhance public recreation and wildlife habitats.
- Modernize aging infrastructure and bolster water-use efficiency.

Securing funds through the WFPO Program is increasingly difficult, as annual federal appropriations fail to keep up with growing demand. Support for the WFPO Program and related initiatives will ensure Nebraska's watershed infrastructure remains resilient and capable of addressing the state's water challenges for generations to come. Together, we can safeguard our communities, economy, and environment.

## WATERSHED FUNDING

NRDs provide matching funds toward federal watershed programs and actively seek new funding which may include:

- Local taxing authority along with city and county partners.
- Nebraska Water Sustainability Fund (WSF) - presently 52 active projects using \$78M in funds.
- Surface Water Irrigation Infrastructure (LB 1012) - \$50M to repair aging irrigation infrastructure and improve efficiency.
- Jobs & Economic Development Act (LB 1023) - \$20M for Lower Platte North NRD's Wahoo Creek Watershed project.



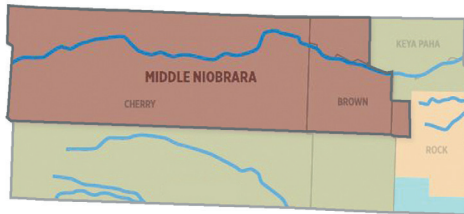
# WFPO PROJECTS: NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICTS

## BONE & LONG PINE CREEK WATERSHEDS

In August 2024, Middle Niobrara NRD in partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service received official approval on the Bone and Long Pine Creek Watershed Project Improvement Plan. With NRCS providing \$665,000 in funding to complete the plan, Middle Niobrara NRD is now eligible to seek additional financial assistance from NRCS to develop detailed project designs, anticipated to begin in 2025. These designs are crucial in addressing critical environmental and safety issues.

The improvement plan identifies watershed protection projects that will provide grade control, stream bank stabilization, and aquatic ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation opportunities within the area. The need for the proposed action is due to extensive stream degradation, widening, and wildlife habitat loss within the watershed.

The Bone and Long Pine Creek watersheds in north central Nebraska cover more than 332,000 acres in Cherry, Brown and Rock counties with a significant portion in Brown County, including the communities of Ainsworth and Long Pine.



## PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED

In August 2024, the Papio-Missouri River NRD in partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service received official approval on the Papillion Creek Watershed Project Improvement Plan. The plan, an extension of an effort that began in 1966, promises to deliver significant environmental and safety benefits to residents across Washington, Douglas, and Sarpy counties.

In 2019, the Papio NRD utilized the WFPO program, which has been critical in advancing the latest supplemental plan, which identifies 40 watershed protection projects aimed at stabilizing degrading streams, reducing erosion and sediment, mitigating flood damage, and improving public safety.

NRCS contributed \$560,000 toward the completion of the plan, enabling the Papio NRD to qualify for additional NRCS financial assistance for developing detailed project designs, anticipated to begin in 2025.

The Papillion Creek Watershed, spanning 245,800 acres in eastern Nebraska, includes a large portion of Omaha and the communities of Papillion, Elkhorn, Millard, and Ralston. The projects outlined in the Supplemental Plan are designed to address the pressing environmental challenges faced by these rapidly growing areas.



## ONGOING & FUTURE WFPO PROJECTS

Nebraska's NRDs are actively working with federal, state and local partners to address critical water-related issues. Continued funding is needed to protect lives, property and the future.

### Preliminary Investigative Feasibility Reports (PIFRs)

- 10 PIFRs are complete and awaiting planning funding approval. These reports cover 8 NRDs, 2.1 million acres and 18 counties.
- 4 PIFRs are in process covering 4 NRDs, 270,000 acres and 12 counties.
- 13 PIFR applications are in the queue pending staffing availability. These reports cover 3 NRDs, 3.2 million acres and 17 counties.

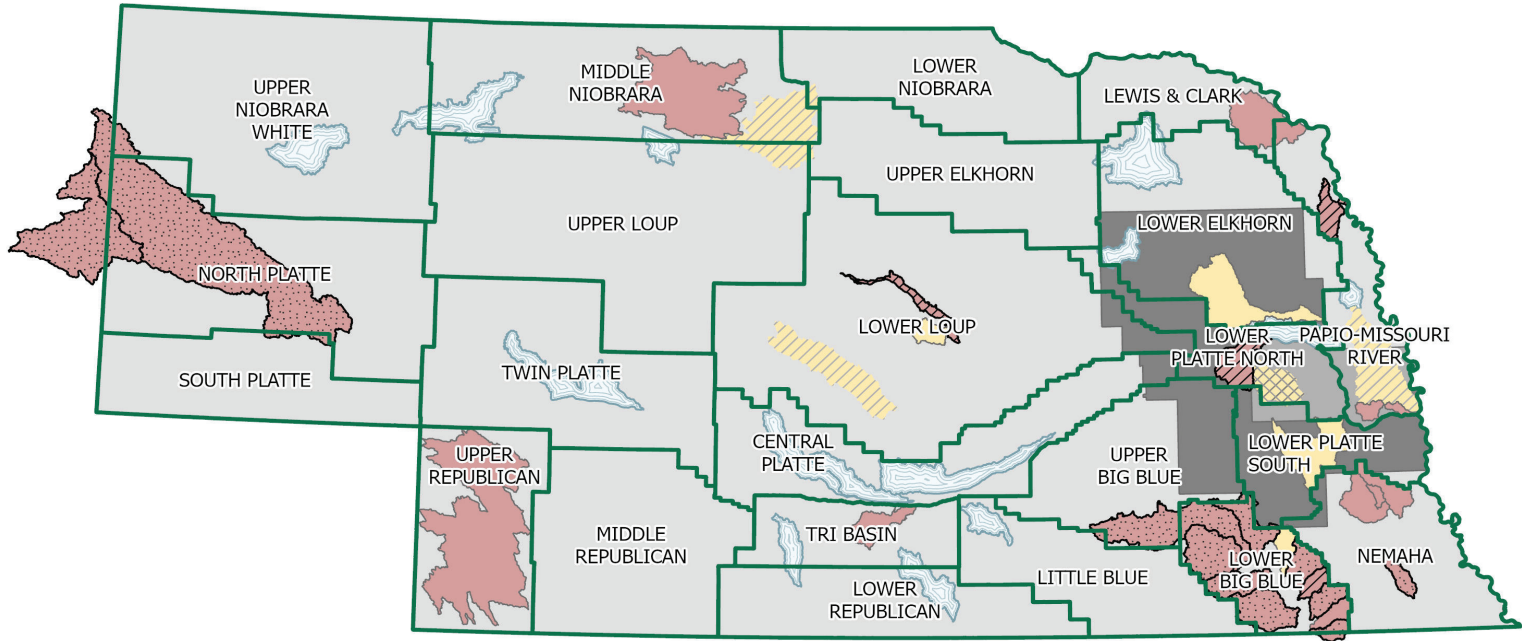
### Active WFPO Plan Environmental Assessments (Plan-EAs)

- 19 Plan-EAs are underway, covering 3.3 million acres across 11 NRDs and 30 counties.

### Completed Plans

- 7 WFPO plans are complete and transitioning to the engineering and construction phase.

# 2025: NEBRASKA'S WFPO WATERSHED PROJECTS

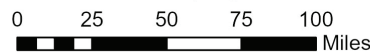


Nebraska WFPO Watershed Projects



2025

Scale: 1:3,200,000



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**USDA** Natural Resources Conservation Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## THE FEDERAL WFPO PROGRAM NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT

Nebraska has been a shining example of how the federal Watershed and Flood Prevention (WFPO) Program can be implemented locally; however, the gap between current funding levels and the remaining needs, makes it clear that without further support, many projects could be delayed or left incomplete.

Legislative support for the WFPO Program is vital to maintain and improve Nebraska's watershed infrastructure. Additional funding will empower local NRDs and NRCS to address flood risk, enhance public safety, and sustain the significant economic and environmental benefits these structures provide.

We urge legislators to continue their support by appropriating funds to the WFPO Program, ensuring that Nebraska's watershed infrastructure remains resilient and capable of meeting the state's water challenges now and in the future.



*In 1908 residents of Sterling, Nebraska, make their way through floodwaters on the west side of town on Broadway Street. The Sterling Eagle reported on June 16, 1908, "The heavy rain of Thursday night caused the Nemaha [River] to leave its banks for the seventh time this spring, and bottoms were flooded Friday, although the water was not so high as the last time."*

# SUCCESS THROUGH WATERSHED PARTNERSHIPS

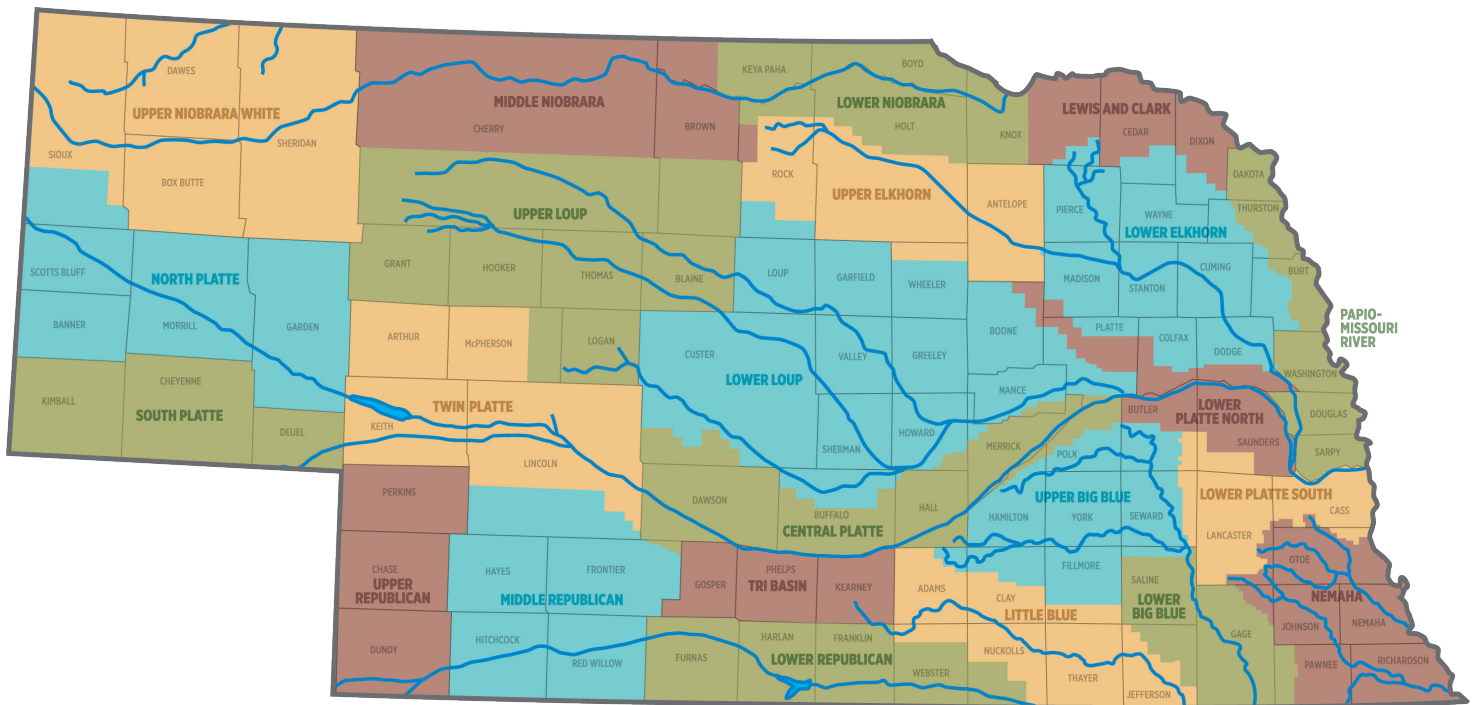
Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) collaborate with public and private partners to identify and address Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) needs, ensuring projects effectively meet local priorities. Strong relationships between project sponsors and stakeholders—whether communities, counties, or others—are key to achieving meaningful results.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides expertise in planning, design, and construction, all of

which are dependent upon funding, including local matching contributions. Partnerships are essential for protecting natural resources and delivering long-term benefits for current and future generations.

For more information on existing, planned, or ongoing WFPO projects, contact your local NRD representative using the details below. NRDs appreciate the opportunity to share updates and highlight project and funding needs.

## CONTACT YOUR LOCAL NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT (NRD)



**Central Platte**  
308.385.6282  
cpnrd.org

**Lower Loup**  
308.728.3221  
llnrd.org

**Middle Niobrara**  
402.376.3241  
mnnrd.org

**South Platte**  
308.254.2377  
spnrd.org

**Upper Loup**  
308.645.2250  
upperloupnrd.org

**Lewis & Clark**  
402.254.6758  
lcnrd.nebraska.gov

**Lower Niobrara**  
402.775.2343  
lnnrd.org

**Middle Republican**  
308.367.4281  
mrnrd.org

**Tri-Basin**  
308.995.6688  
tribasinnrd.org

**Upper Niobrara White**  
308.432.6190  
unwnrd.org

**Little Blue**  
402.364.2145  
littlblueenrd.org

**Lower Platte North**  
402.443.4675  
lpnrd.org

**Nemaha**  
402.335.3325  
nemahanrd.org

**Twin Platte**  
308.535.8080  
tpnrd.org

**Upper Republican**  
888.883.9066  
urnrd.org

**Lower Big Blue**  
402.228.3402  
lbbnrd.net

**Lower Platte South**  
402.476.2729  
lpsnrd.org

**North Platte**  
308.632.2749  
npnrd.org

**Upper Big Blue**  
402.362.6601  
upperbigblue.org

**Nebraska Association  
of Resources Districts**  
402.471.7670  
nrdnet.org

**Lower Elkhorn**  
402.371.7313  
lenrd.org

**Lower Republican**  
308.928.2182  
lrrnrd.org

**Papio-Missouri River**  
402.444.6222  
papiornrd.org

**Upper Elkhorn**  
402.336.3867  
uenrd.org

**Nebraska NRCS**  
402.437.5300