

Message from the Board Chair

*Beautiful Nebraska, peaceful prairie land,
Laced with many rivers and the hills of sand;
Dark green valleys cradled in the earth,
Rain and sunshine bring abundant birth.
Beautiful Nebraska, as you look around,
You will find a rainbow reaching to the ground;
All these wonders by the Master's hand;
Beautiful Nebraska land.
We are so proud of this state where we live,
There is no place that has so much to give.*

*Nebraska State Song, Beautiful Nebraska, lyrics by Jim
Fras and Guy G. Miller*

I learned Nebraska's state song in third grade at Sheridan Elementary in Lincoln. I don't know when I began to believe the lyrics and the sentiment that our state song conveys, but it did occur. Those words became part of me, and I became part of this state. Since that time, my relationship with Nebraska has been much like a family relationship where I will stick up for and defend the state. Heck, I'll even go toe to toe with someone who says driving Interstate 80 across Nebraska is the worst drive anywhere. If it's good enough for a half-million cranes, it's good enough for you and me!

When I drive that Platte River road, I find myself daydreaming—thinking of the pioneers that followed the river in their journey west. I think about how the distance I cover in just an hour or two would have been perhaps a week's worth of travel for those men, women and children, 150 years ago. How grateful I am, that my ancestors homesteaded in Nebraska; that I know the place where they lived in a dugout that first winter; that they loved the land, preserved and protected it for future generations.

Enough with the melancholy thoughts; we can't move forward by just looking in the mirror. And that is what the Trust is all about. We have the mirror as a reference, but we must be looking and moving forward. Since 1993 we have moved forward, throughout and in every corner of the state. We have been able to do this because of the forethought of the electorate that created the Nebraska Environmental Trust, and the grant applicants that are passionate about the future of Nebraska. In this year's Annual Report, we have selected "far reaches" as the theme and you will find highlighted here some of the diverse and far-flung projects with which the Trust has had the pleasure to be associated.



Before I close, let me take a moment to talk about the Trust's staff. They are, by any measure, the most dedicated, hardest working, and friendliest people anywhere. The Board is so grateful for them. I want to thank Lisa Beethe who served as our Interim Executive Director in 2006 while continuing her Grants Administrator duties. Along with Tina Harris who assists her, Lisa's diligence has protected the Trust reputation and integrity.

There are new faces too at the Trust's office. Mark Brohman was selected as Executive Director at the end of 2006. We had many talented applicants to choose from, but Mark's education, background and the comments made by his references easily placed him at the top of the list. Other new staff members are Sheila Johnson our Public Information Officer and Deb Svasek, Administrative Secretary. They have great skills and talents that make them an asset to our organization.

It is an honor to serve on the Nebraska Environmental Trust board. Never has a volunteer endeavor been so enjoyable and educational. Not a meeting goes by that I don't learn something from one of my fellow board members.

Happy trails.

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Paul L. Dunn