

Emphasizing Outreach & Education in Watershed Management through Partnerships

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The Need

Effective restoration and protection of water resources occurs only when changes in human behavior and social norms make water quality improvements sustainable. Effective education, outreach and communication, therefore, is critical to initiate and facilitate changes in behaviors of land managers that lead to adoption and maintenance of water quality management practices to improve and conserve water resources.

Goal

The goal of this program is to use local, watershed-specific partnerships between producers, Extension, local and state organizations, agencies, and government to:

1. Increase understanding of the effects of human activities on water quality by resource managers, public officials, community leaders, producers and private citizens;
2. Encourage the implementation of in-depth information, education and communication during watershed management plan development and implementation; and
3. Support actions to restore and protect water resources from impairment by nonpoint source pollution.

Program Design and Impacts

Partnerships have resulted in an ever-evolving outreach & education model for watershed management in Nebraska. The delivery approaches in this program have varied based on each target audience, the length of the projects, learning objectives, and learning styles. Five areas of high impact include:

Nebraska Nonpoint Source Management Plan

The Nebraska Non-Point Source Management Plan is developed by federal, state, and local agencies, and non-governmental groups involved in nonpoint source management. The plan addresses opportunities to direct technical and financial resources toward restoring and protecting water resources and resolving statewide nonpoint source issues of concern.

Outreach & Education Approach:

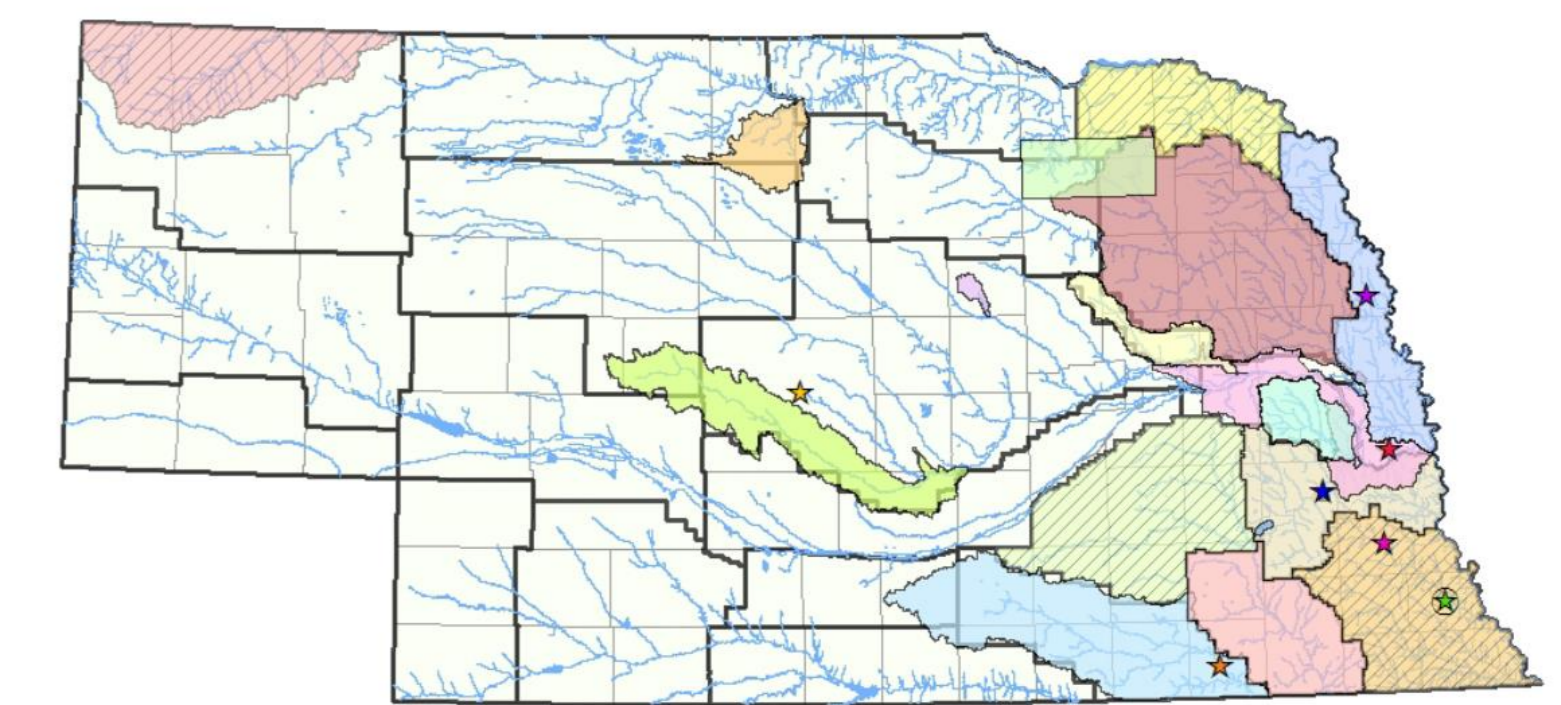
- Develop a coordinated approach to outreach & education programming which results in restored and protected water resources in Nebraska.
- Identify statewide goals with partners to prioritize outreach & education to protect restore and protect water resources.

Outreach & Education in the Section 319 Program

The Nebraska Section 319 program uses Basin Management Plans, Watershed Management Plans and Groundwater Area Management Plans to guide and implement local projects.

Outreach & Education Approach:

- Work with partners to develop outreach & education programs in Section 319 Watershed Management Plans and Projects.
- Incorporate outreach & education at all stages of project development.



Basin Management Plans, Watershed Management Plans and Groundwater Area Management Plans in Nebraska

Local Watershed Group Support

Local producers and stakeholders participate in watershed groups. These groups develop and implement water quality management plans with assistance from conservation professionals.

Outreach & Education Approach:

- Provide guidance and develop outreach & education programming.
- Develop demonstration projects, educational handouts and presentations.
- Incorporate the Nebraska On Farm Research Network as appropriate.

Demonstration Project: Late Season Cover Crop Interseeding with Highboy into Corn for Northeast Nebraska Farmers



Formal Agency Relationships

Formal liaison arrangements create a cadre of professionals from core organizations to improve inter-organization collaboration and improve the quality of watershed programs and projects.

Outreach & Education Approach:

- Provide access for partners to University of Nebraska expertise and resources.
- Connect faculty to partner research needs.

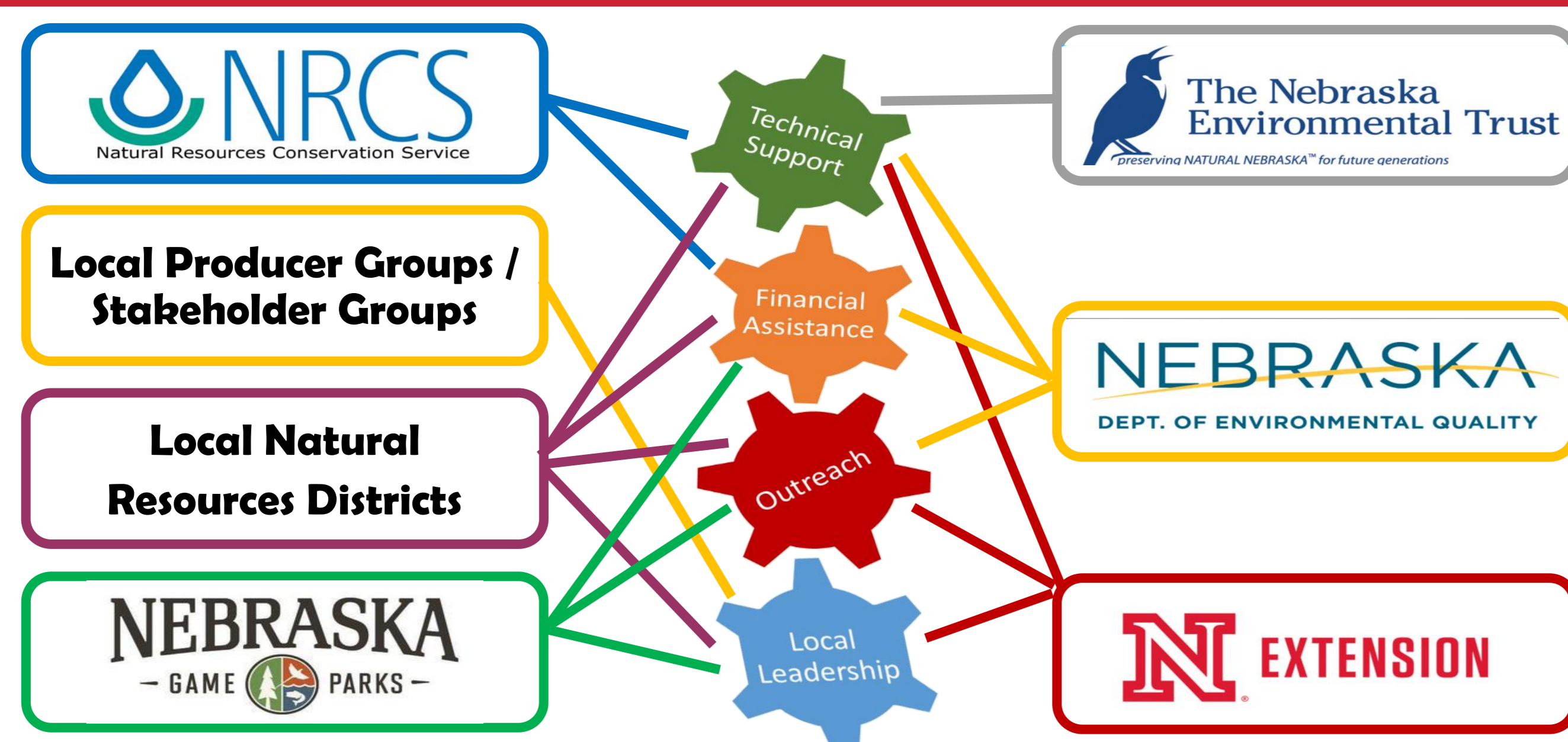
NWQI & SWPI Collaboration

The USDA National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) and Source Water Protection (SWPI) Initiative target the use of on-farm conservation practices by producers to improve water quality in small watersheds. Partner agencies guide local outreach & education, identify resource concerns and prioritize practices.

Outreach & Education Approach:

- Work with partners to submit state pilot projects for national funding.
- Assist producer stakeholder groups in prioritizing resource concerns and practices.

Partnerships



Results

- State planning guidance emphasizes partner collaboration in watershed management programs.
- All Section 319 Watershed Management Plans and projects include robust outreach & education plans.
- Shell Creek stream was delisted in 2019 for Atrazine after 20+ years of outreach & education for implementing conservation practices.
- Demonstration projects have been incorporated into the Nebraska On Farm Research Network.
- Local Extension partners are involved with watershed management partners.
- Two new NWQI areas in Nebraska were selected.
- Locally perceived producer barriers to adoption of conservation practices and preferred practices were surveyed to help in the planning process.

Student Water Quality Team taking samples in Shell Creek, which was delisted for Atrazine after 20+ years of local watershed group effort.

