

NRCS Conservation Programs in Nebraska

Brad Soncksen

*Assistant State Conservationist for
Programs*

Lincoln, NE

brad.soncksen@ne.usda.gov

www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov

FY2017 EQIP Fund Pools



FY2017 Local Fund Pools

- Cropland – 23 Total
- Grassland – 23 Total
- Local Work Group Initiated

FY2017 Area Fund Pools

West (2 areas, 1 North {UNW, MN, UL, NP} and 1 South {SP, TP, UR, MR})

- Cropland – BFR/SD
- Grassland – BFR/SD

Central (2 areas, 1 North {LN, UE, LL, CP} and 1 South {UBB, TB, LB, LR})

- Cropland – BFR/SD
- Grassland – BFR/SD

East (2 areas, 1 North {L&C, LE, LPN, Papio} and 1 South {LPS, LBB, Nemaha})

- Cropland – BFR/SD
- Grassland – BFR/SD

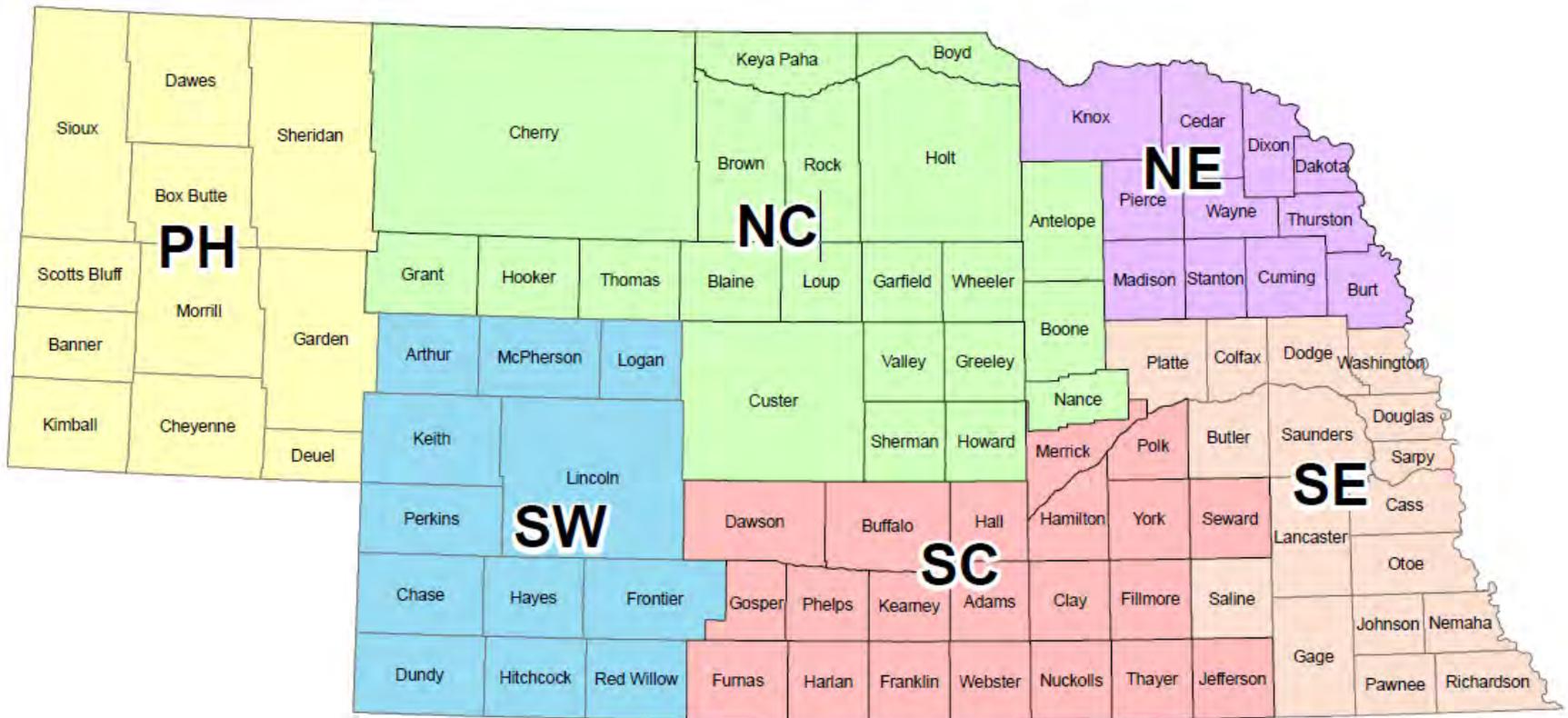
FY2017 STATE FUND POOLS

- **Special Initiatives - Nebraska**
 - Wildlife
 - Forestry
 - Seasonal High Tunnel
 - Animal Feeding Operations
 - Organic
 - Energy
 - Tribal

FY2017 STATE FUND POOLS

- **Special Initiatives – Nebraska (cont.)**
 - Conservation Activity Plans
 - Monarch Butterfly
 - Nebraska Water Quality Initiative
 - Long Pine Watershed
 - Shell Creek Watershed
 - Drought Initiative (Pending)
 - Soil Health – Demo Farm (6 fund pools)
 - Working Lands For Wildlife
 - Grassed Waterway & Buffer (Ephemeral Control)

Areas for Soil Health Demonstration Farms



Nebraska Water Quality Initiative



**Middle Niobrara NRD
Long Pine Watershed
State Water Quality
Initiative**



Niobrara River

United States Highway 183

Sand Draw

Bone Creek

JOHNSTOWN

United States Highway 20

AINSWORTH

United States Highway 20

Willow Creek

LONG PINE

Long Pine Creek

**MIDDLE NIOBRARA
Natural Resource District**

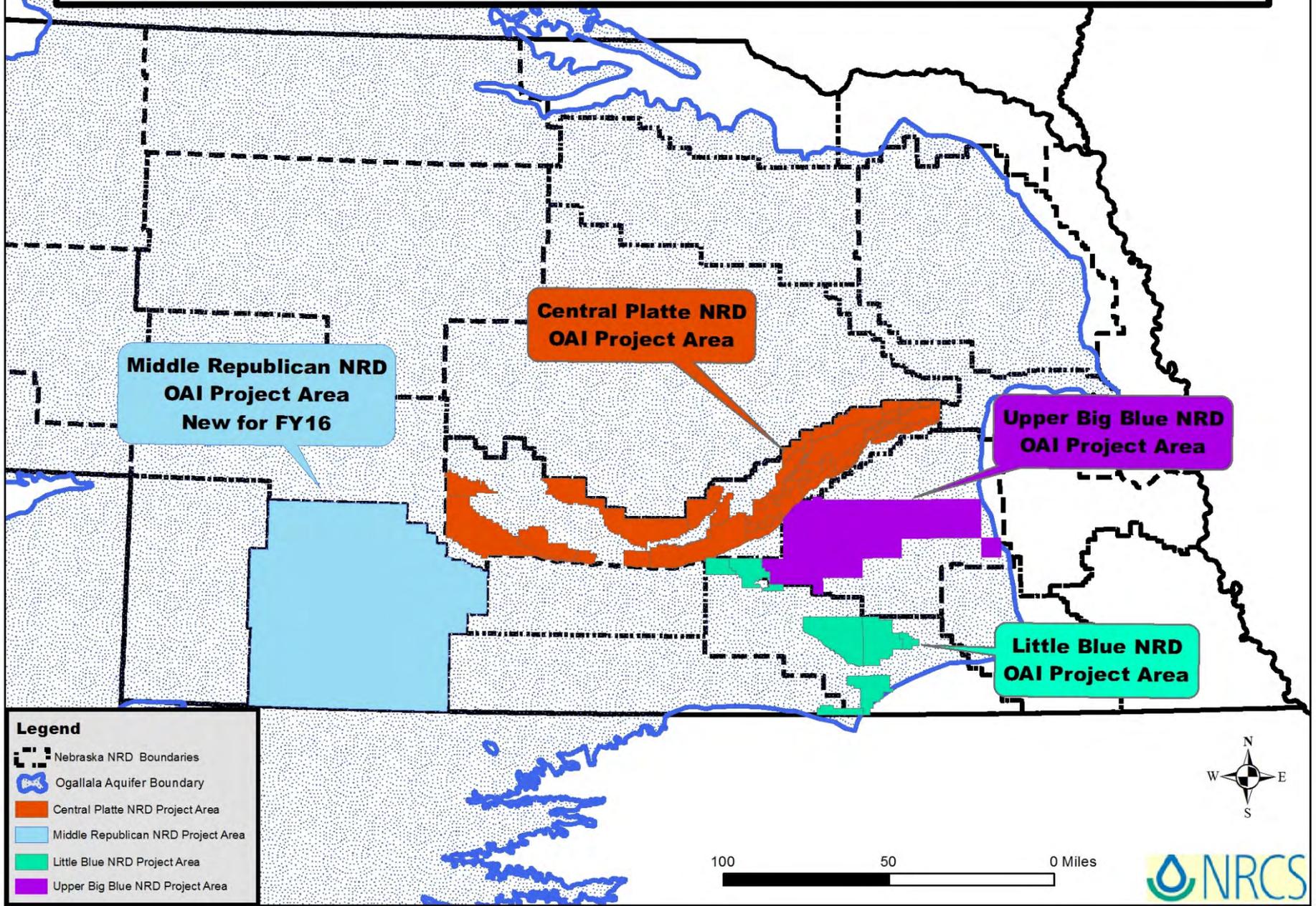
Ogallala Aquifer Initiative



2017 State Fund Pools

- **Special Initiatives – National**
 - **Ogallala Aquifer Initiative**
 - **Landscape Initiative - 2008 Farm Bill**
 - **Implemented 2009**
 - **225,000 square miles across 8 States**
 - **112 million acres – 15.1 million Irrigated**
 - **30% of all groundwater used for Irrigation in US**
 - **Withdrawals outpace recharge = water level declines**
 - **Water quality degradation – Nutrient & Pesticides**

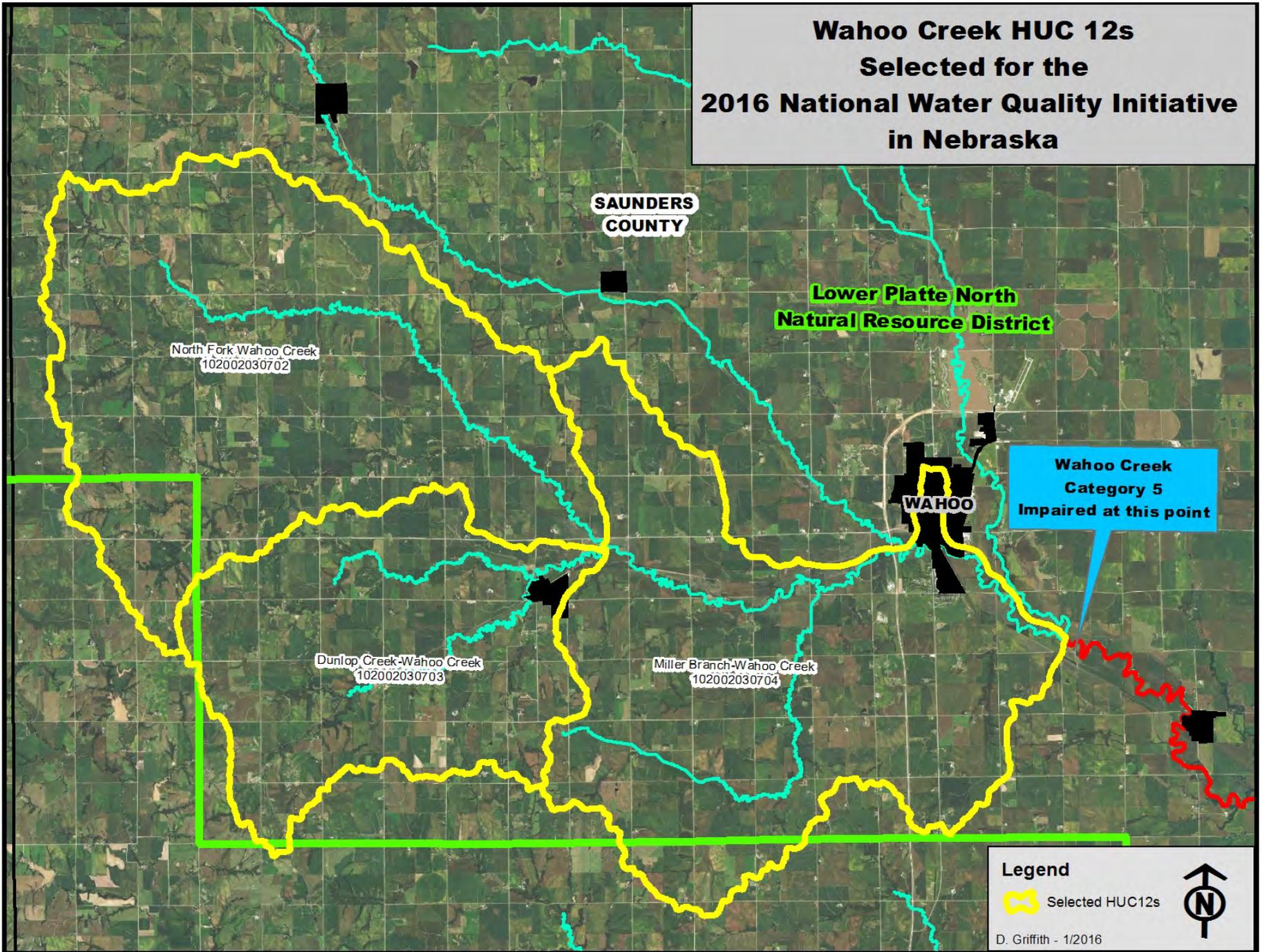
NEBRASKA 2016 OGALLALA INITIATIVE AREAS



2017 State Fund Pools

- **Special Initiatives – National**
 - **National Water Quality Initiative**
 - Wahoo Creek - Saunders
 - Bazile Creek – Antelope, Pierce, Knox
 - Big Sandy Creek – Little Blue NRD
 - NWQI Pilot – TA only

Wahoo Creek HUC 12s Selected for the 2016 National Water Quality Initiative in Nebraska



SAUNDERS
COUNTY

Lower Platte North
Natural Resource District

North Fork Wahoo Creek
102002030702

Dunlop Creek-Wahoo Creek
102002030703

Miller Branch-Wahoo Creek
102002030704

WAHOO

Wahoo Creek
Category 5
Impaired at this point

Legend

 Selected HUC12s

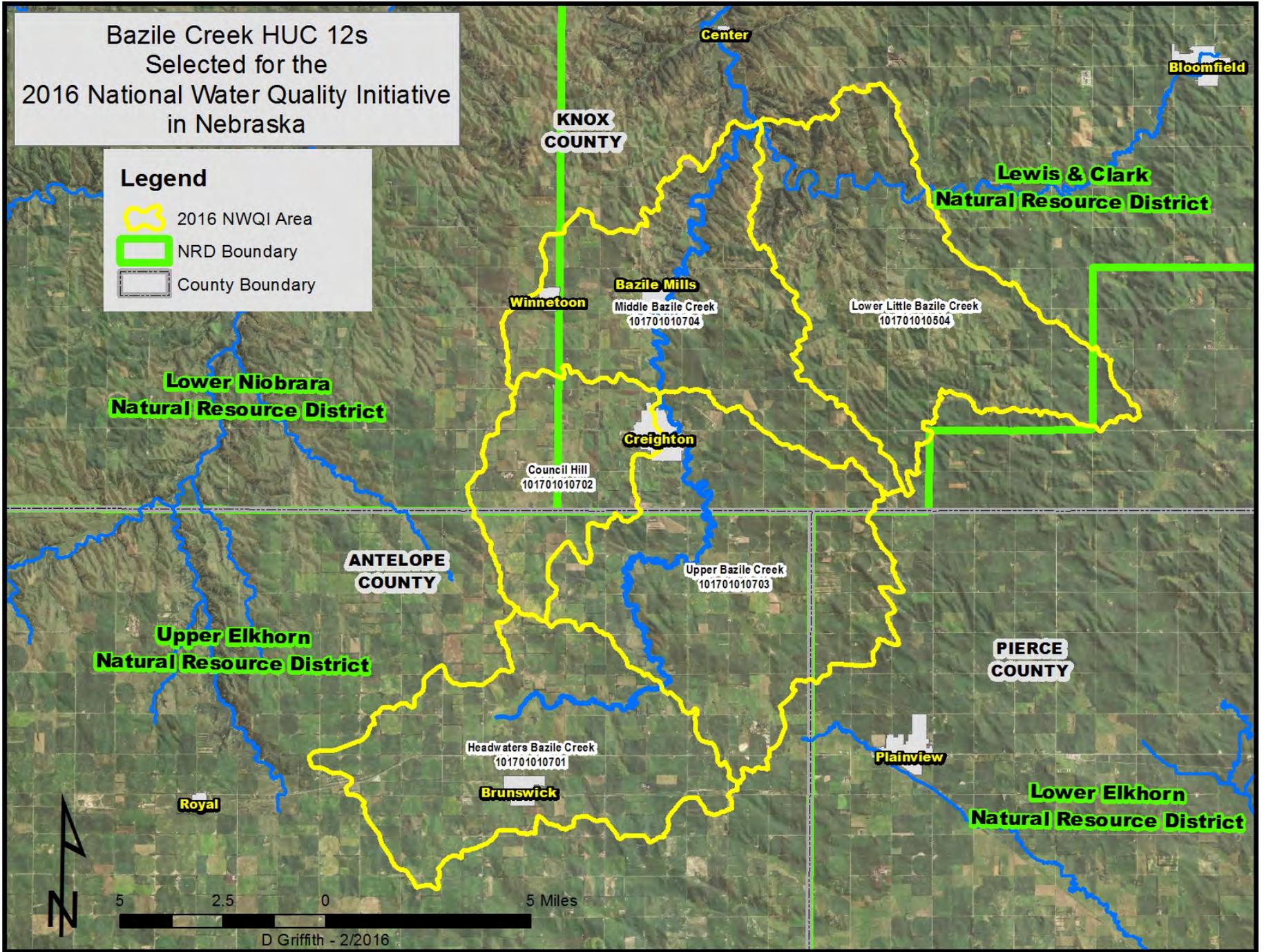
D. Griffith - 1/2016



Bazile Creek HUC 12s
Selected for the
2016 National Water Quality Initiative
in Nebraska

Legend

-  2016 NWQI Area
-  NRD Boundary
-  County Boundary



EQIP Fund Allocations in 2017



EQIP Fund Allocations in 2017

- EQIP – National Initiatives \$3.6 million
 - Ogallala SI \$ 2.4 million
 - 4 Focus Areas: UBBNRD, LBNRD, CPNRD, MRNRD
 - NWQI \$ 1.2 million
 - 2 watersheds: Bazile Creek, Wahoo Creek
- EQIP General \$ 22.0 million
 - EQIP General Distribution
 - State Initiatives \$ 4.8 million
 - Historically Underserved & BFR \$ 2.2 million
 - Balance to LWG Fund Pools \$ 15.0 million

EQIP Fund Allocations in 2017

– State Initiatives

• Forestry	\$ 500,000
• Wildlife	\$ 1,102,750
• Monarch Butterfly	\$ 100,000
• Tribal	\$ 100,000
• AFO	\$ 1,000,000
• NE WQI	\$ 550,000

EQIP Fund Allocations in 2017

– State/National Initiatives

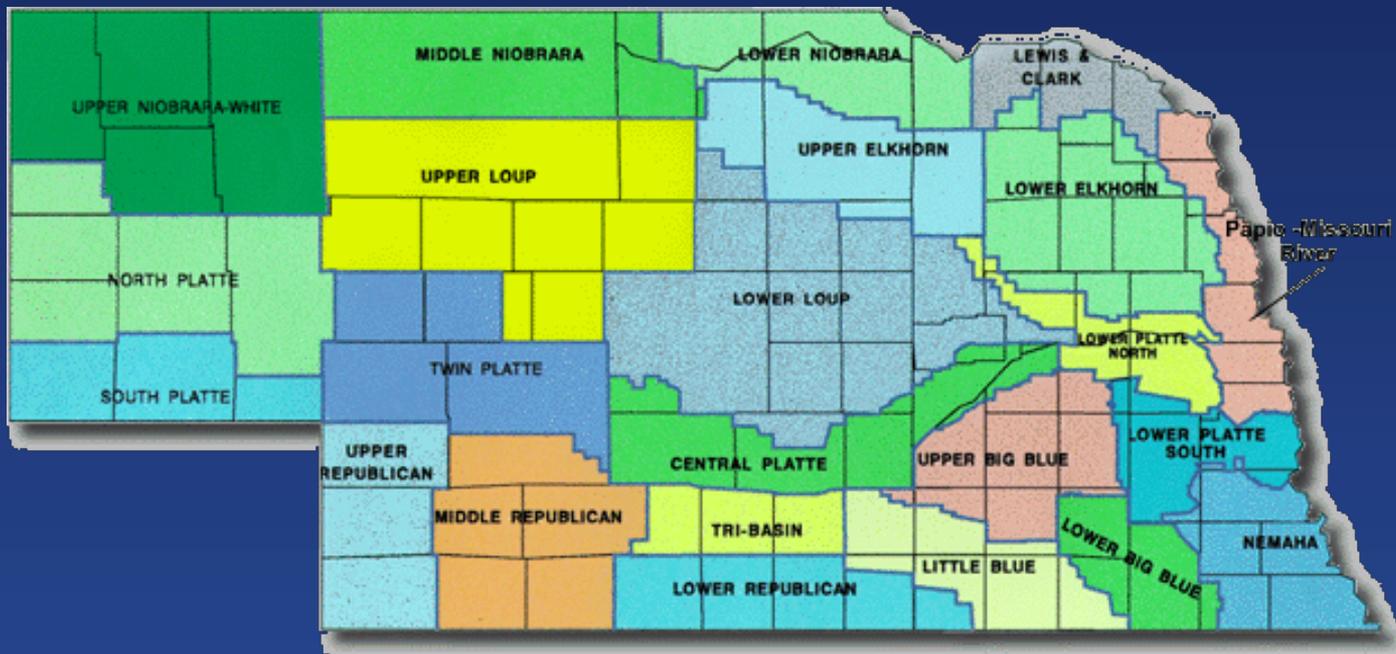
•Organic	\$ 200,000
•Energy	\$ 25,000
•High Tunnel	\$ 100,000
•CAP-CNMP	\$ 200,000
• Drought (Pending)	\$ 200,000
• Soil Health Demo Farms	\$ 500,000
• Grassed Waterway-Buffer	\$ 150,000
•Working Lands For Wildlife	\$ 100,000

EQIP – FY2017 Time Lines

- Local Work Group Meetings – Feb/March

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

- Local Work Groups



EQIP – FY2017 Time Lines

- Practice Payment Schedule
 - Submit scenario recommendations – March
 - Final Changes to Practices & Costs – April
 - Final practice/scenario selections – July
 - Complete payment % / Final cost – August
- Ranking Tools Completed – September
- Application Cutoff – October 20th

FY2017 State Policy

- State Subcommittee Recommendations
- Meeting dates TBD – May/June
 - EQIP
 - Forestry
 - Wildlife
 - Soil Health
 - CSP
 - Easements

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)



RCPP Funding

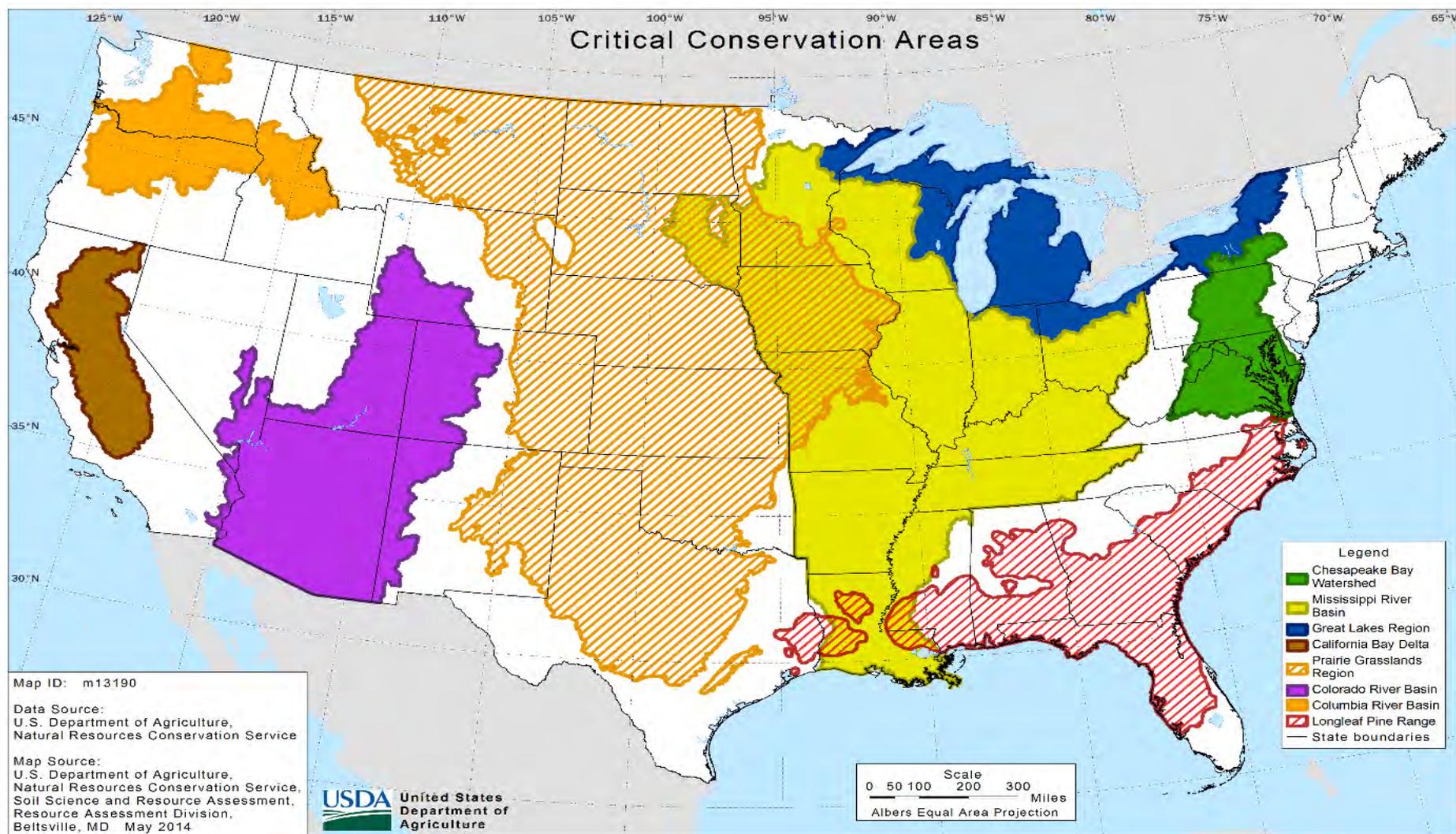
Available Funding - National

- \$100 Million of Direct RCPP funding each year
- 7% of funds from the four covered programs (ACEP, CStP, EQIP, HFRP) reserved annually through April 1st

Allocates funding by:

- 40% for projects based on a national competitive process;
- 25% for a state competitive process administered by the State Conservationist, and;
- 35% for projects in critical conservation areas.



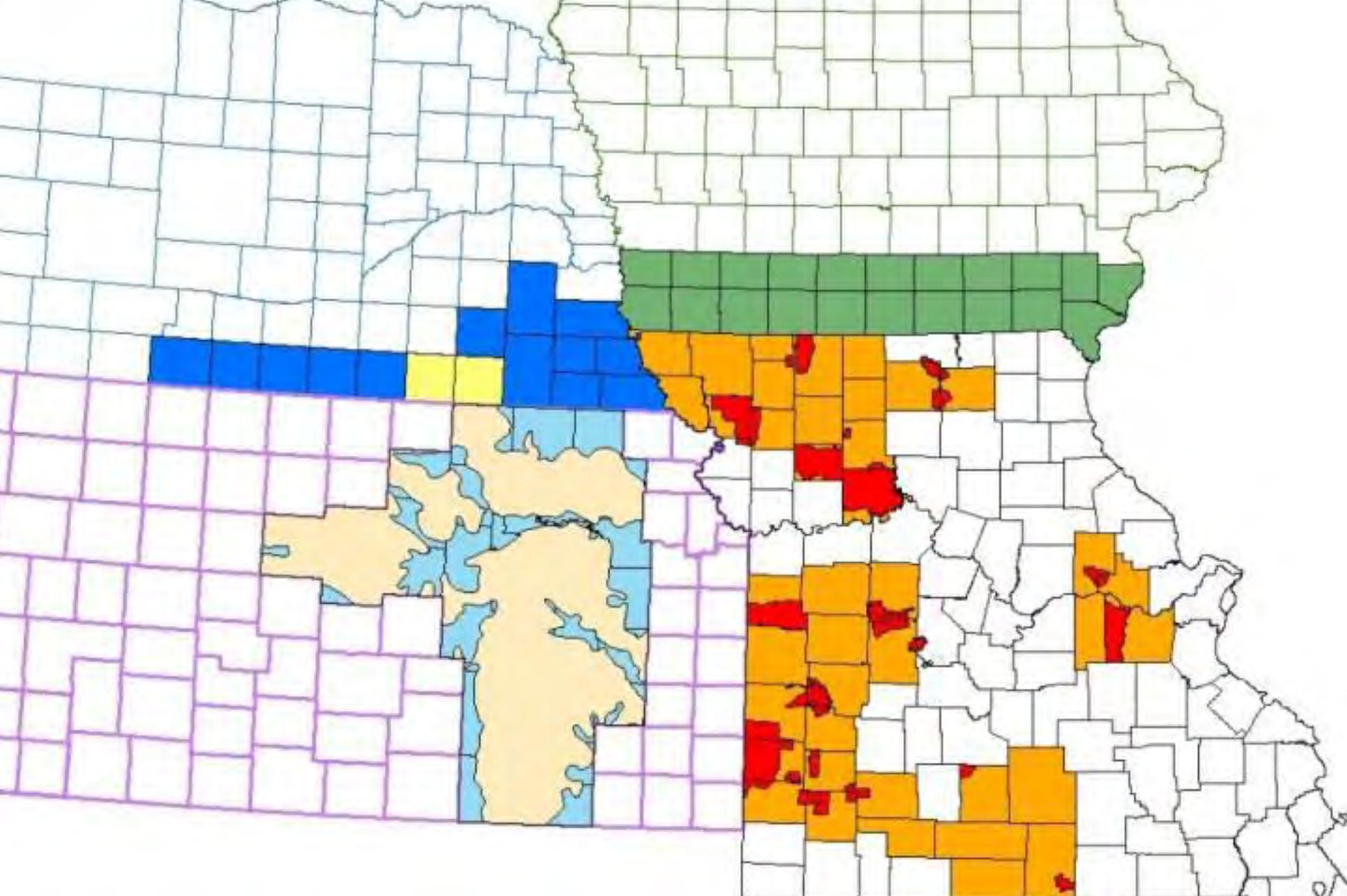


FY15 RCPP Approvals - Nebraska

- **State Fund Pool**
 - **Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery (5 Years, 2015 – 2019)**
 - CPNRD, TPNRD, TMID, SCC, CDC
 - \$ 1.7 million

FY15 RCPP Approvals - Nebraska

- **National Fund Pool**
 - **Regional Grassland Bird & Grazing Enhancement Initiative (5 years, 2015 – 2019)**
 - Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa
 - \$ 885,000 (Nebraska allocation)



 Kansas Focus Area	 Missouri Focus Area	 NE Quail Focus Areas	 Iowa Eligible Counties
 Kansas Eligible Counties	 Missouri Eligible Counties	 Nebraska Eligible Counties	

2

FY16 RCPP Approvals - Nebraska

- **State Fund Pool**
 - **3 Proposals Approved**
 - **Cropland Cover for Soil Health and Wildlife – NGPC**
 - \$700,000
 - **Lower Elkhorn Water and Soil Conservation Project**
 - \$400,000
 - **Republican Basin Conservation Partnership – LRNRD**
 - \$2.1 million

FY16 RCPP Approvals - Nebraska

- **National Fund Pool**
 - **2 Proposals Approved**
 - **Midwest Ag Water Quality Ptnshp – Iowa Dept of Ag**
 - IA, IL, NE
 - \$9.5 million
 - **Innovative Tribal Conservation and GHG Mgt**
 - SD, NE, OK, NM, AK
 - \$1.8 million

RCPP APF Timeline – FY17

- **March 14, 2016:** Announcement of Program Funding (APF) through grants.gov.
- **May 10, 2016:** Pre-proposal applications due
- **Week of July 18, 2016:** Announcement of selected pre-proposals.
- **September 19, 2016:** Full proposal applications due.
- **December 2016:** Announcement of projects selected for funding.
- **Once agreements are signed, partnership activities and obligations may begin.**

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program



FRPP



GRP



WRP

ACEP – Agricultural Conservation Easement Program

- ACEP has 2 components
- Agricultural Land Easement Component (ALE)
 - Combines purposes of FRPP and GRP
 - Functions like FRPP
- Wetland Reserve Easement Component (WRE)
 - Retains purpose and function of WRP

A CEP – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE)

ACEP-ALE - Implementation

- FY 17 ALE Allocation = \$1.1 million.
- ALE Application Cutoff Date = December 31, 2016
- Eligibility and Ranking Due Date = March 15, 2017

ACEP - Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE)



Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

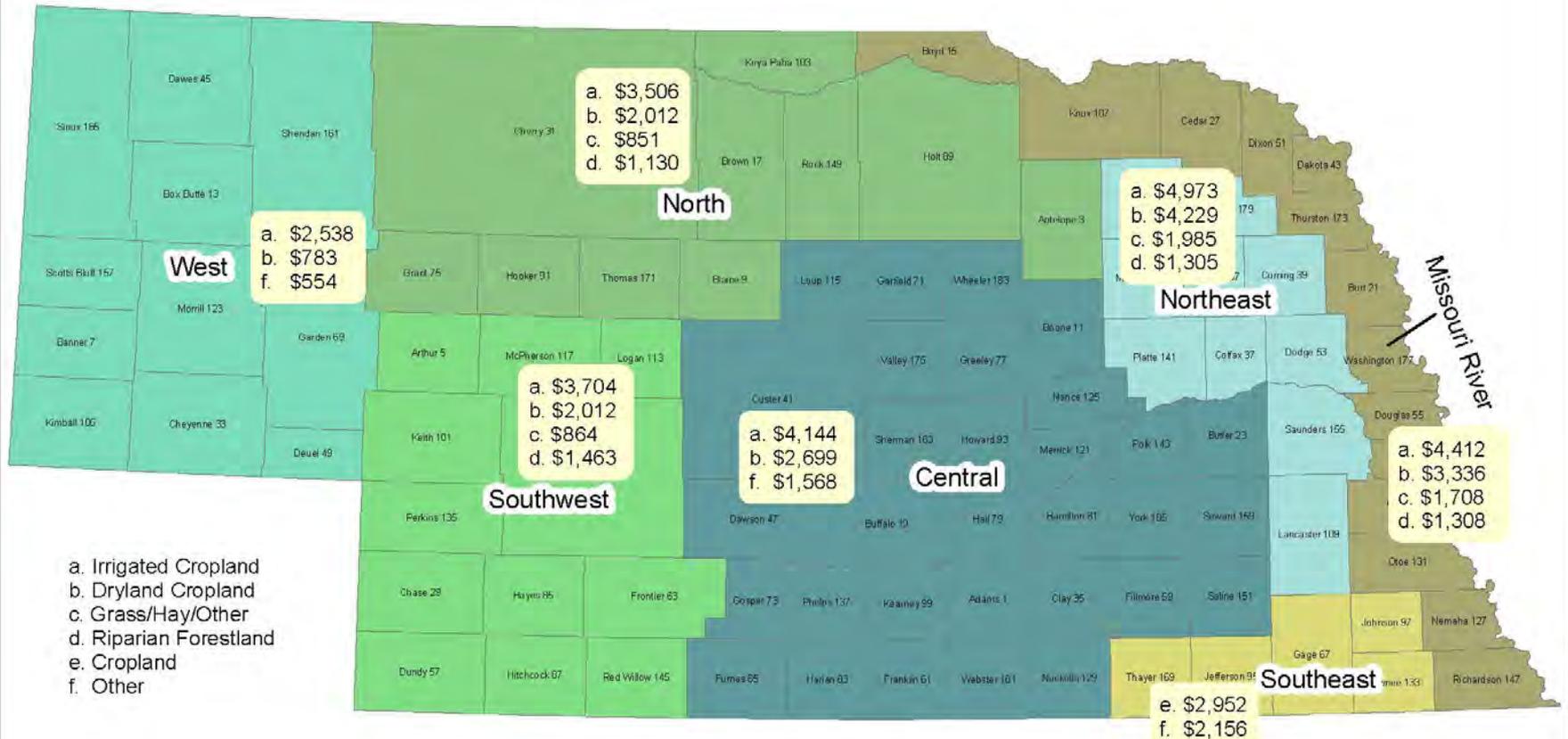
- Enrollment Options
 - Permanent Easement
 - Reserved Grazing Rights Easements
 - Must be in a landform where grazing can sustain habitat
 - 30-year Easement
 - 30 year contract with Indian Tribes
 - ✓ *Note: WRE eliminates 10-year restoration cost-share only agreements.*

FY2017 WRE Allocations

- WRE Advisory Allocation = \$ 4.7 million
- WRE Application Cutoff Date = December 31, 2016
- Eligibility and Ranking Due = March 15, 2017

Nebraska Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Wetlands Reserve Easements (ACEP-WRE)

Proposed Geographic Area Rate Caps (GARC) Boundary for FY 2017



Conservation Innovation Grants

- Competitive Grants Program
 - Stimulate development and adoption of innovative approaches and technologies for conservation on agricultural lands
 - Grantee provides 50% of total cost from non-federal matching funds and TA
- National CIG
 - Regional, multi-State, Nationwide
- State CIG
 - Farm based, multi-county, Statewide
 - Nebraska – No 2017 APF

- National CIG

- 2017 CIG Announcement for Program Funding (APF)
- Application Period Open Through January 9, 2017
- Funding Opportunity #: USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIG-17-01
- Award Ceiling \$2.0 million – 50% match Non Federal
- Multiyear Projects NTE 3 years
- CIG Categories for FY2017
 1. Historically Underserved
 2. Data analytics for natural resources conservation
 3. Pay-for-success models to stimulate conservation adoption
 4. Precision conservation approaches
 5. Projects that demonstrate the cost effectiveness of leveraged public and private impact investments in working lands conservation
 6. Water management technologies and approaches to maximize agricultural production efficiency and minimize off-site impacts

Questions?



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.