

Wachiska Audubon Society 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Wachiska means “stream” or “creek” in the languages of indigenous people of eastern Nebraska, the Omaha and Ponca.

The Mission of the Wachiska Audubon Society is to bring people together to preserve and restore tallgrass prairies and other natural ecosystems, promote birding, support native wildlife, provide nature education, and advocate for sustainability of our natural community.

PLANTS FOR BIRDS

WACHISKA AUDUBON SOCIETY, NEBRASKA

The Wachiska Audubon Society was formed in 1973 and serves 17 counties in southeast Nebraska. Our vision is to share the experience and love for nature and help protect its diversity.

We implement Plants for Birds through:

- Prairie Tours
- Urban Habitat Tours
- Prairie Pines Nature Preserve

Wachiska currently preserves over 1,000 acres of prairie through direct ownership and conservation easements. Over 97% of Nebraska is privately owned, so hosting prairie tours allows communities to experience native habitats that support birds.

Prairie Tours

Urban Tours

Prairie Pines Nature Preserve

We host a yearly free event in Lincoln, Nebraska, during which homeowners showcase native plantings in their backyard to about 100 visitors.

The Prairie Pines Nature Preserve, donated to Wachiska by a founding member, has 145 acres of native prairie habitat, replanted prairie, community crops gardens, wetlands, and forests. These diverse habitats support bird populations just outside Lincoln and introduce native habitat and conservation to the community.

wachiskaaudubon.org



WACHISKA COMES FROM AN INDIGENOUS WORD
MEANING 'LAND OF MANY STREAMS'

2025 Board

Theresa Pella - President
Ann Briggs – Vice President
April Stevenson - Secretary
Carol Bodeen – Treasurer
**Ross Scott – Conservation Committee
Chair**
**Tim Knott – Education/Outreach
Committee Chair**

Directors
Ethan Freese
Kris Powers
Dakota Altman
Andrea Faas
Doug Campbell
Stu Luttich
Roxanne Smith
Tom Lynch



Wachiska Operations

Staff:

- Mark Brohman, Executive Director
- WJ Bantam, part-time Office Administrator/Social Media

Administrative/Management Partners:

- Rediger & Company, LLC - CPA and Bookkeeping support
- Stingray Technologies - IT Support
- Northern Prairies Land Trust – manage work on WAS owned prairies
- Prairie Legacy Inc. – manage work to improve conservation easement lands
- Zulkoski Weber - legislative relations
- Prairie Pines Partners – joint management of Prairie Pines Nature Preserve

Members and supporters in 2025

- **368 Wachiska Audubon Society Friends**
- **647 National Audubon Society members (many are also Friends)**

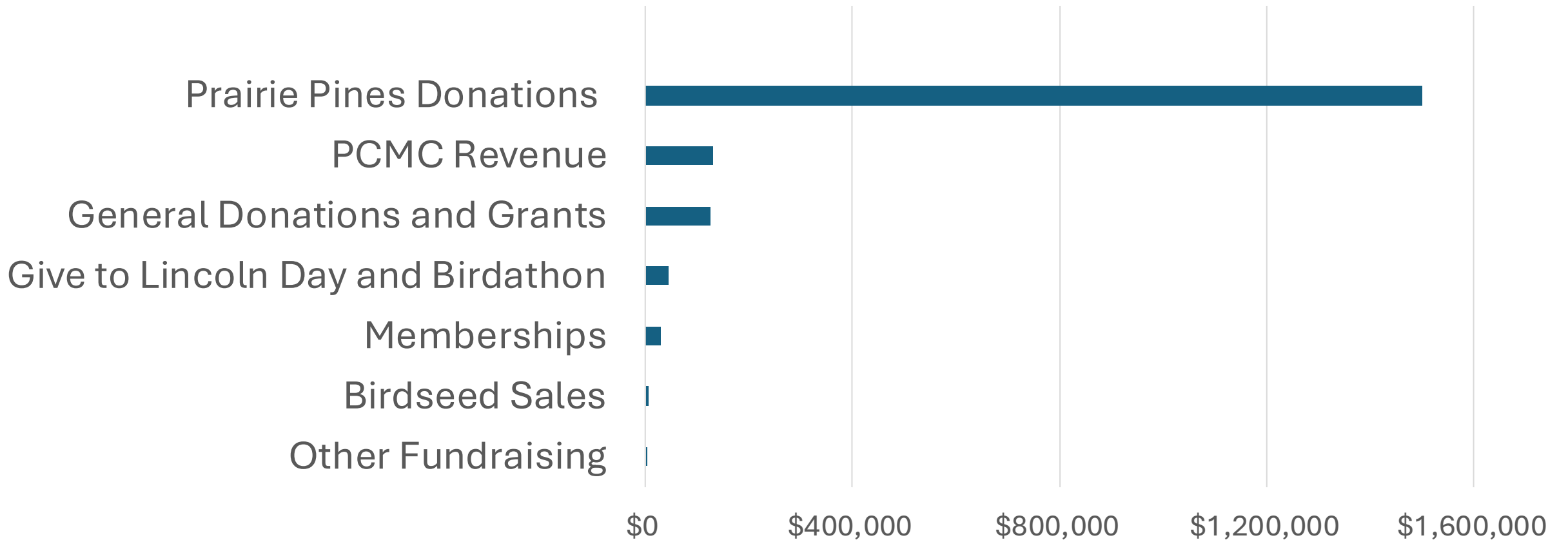
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- **449 donations <\$100 – increase of 11% from 2024**
 - **240 donations \$100 to \$499 – increase of 34%**
 - **34 donations \$500 to \$999 – increase of 143%**
 - **22 donations \$1,000 and above - increase of 69%**

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- **Uncountable hours of volunteer work by many!**



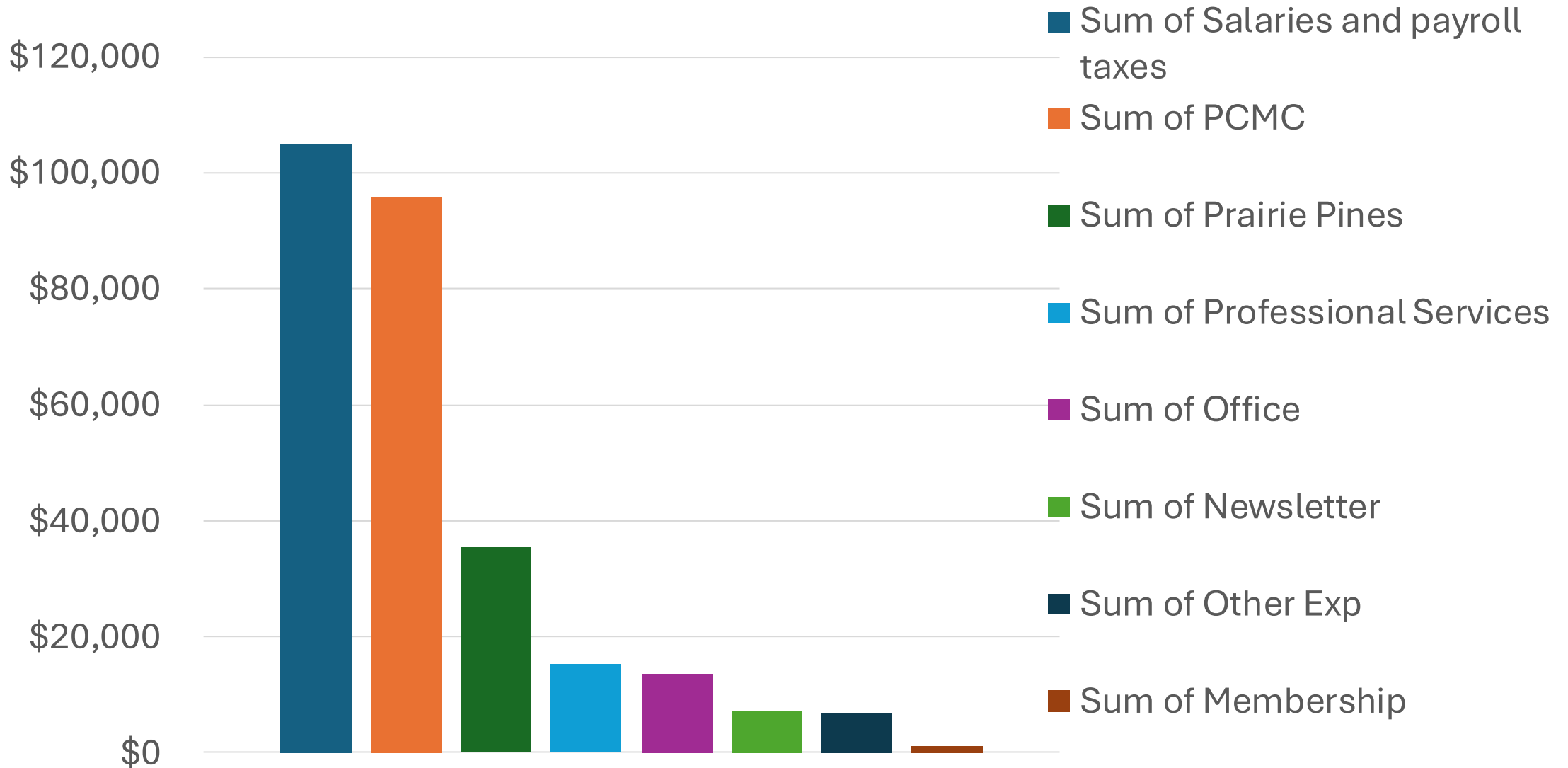
2025 Revenue categories

TOTAL - \$1,839,645

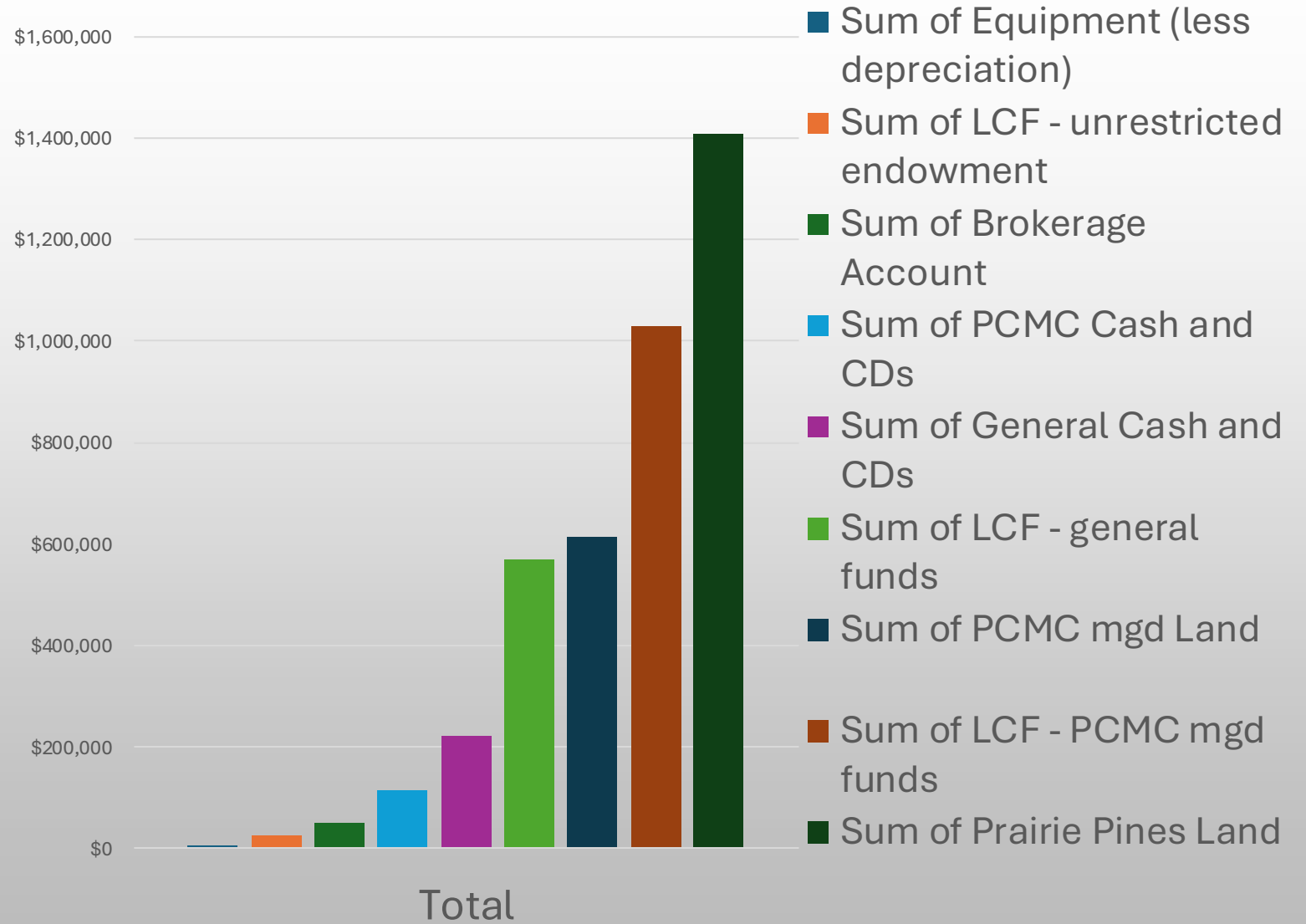


2025 Wachiska Audubon Society Expenses

Total \$292,848



2025 assets
total
\$3,923,751



Notes regarding 2025 revenue, expenses and assets

1

Prairie Pines Nature Preserve (PPNP) revenue includes donated land assessed for \$1,407,800

2

The PPNP endowment fund is connected to the land, so Wachiska does not control the fund

- LCF is fund manager; Wachiska receives annual payout dedicated to PPNP - Current estimate is \$19,000/year

3

Prairie Conservation and Management Committee (PCMC) revenue includes reimbursements of \$67,953 from a Nebraska Environmental Trust Grant

2025-2029 Strategic Plan's Three Focus Areas and priorities for FY 2025

1) Continue movement to solid, smooth operating organization

- Priority – implement the 2025 fund development plan
 - Worked with a contractor to identify individual, foundation and corporate prospects



2) Have in place a sustainable long-term plan for owned prairies and conservation easement properties

- Priority - Build on relationships contractor has with 23 easement owners and address maintenance issues on each as necessary
 - Approved for three-year (June 2025-June 2027) Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) Grant to support continuing work
 - Focus on invasive species control, removal of brush and trees on more than 20 acres, burned 450 acres, fencing at Klapka Prairie
 - Prairie Legacy, Inc.'s efforts to develop relationships with conservation easement landowners is encouraging some to take positive actions on their lands
 - Very few are still nonresponsive



2) Have in place a sustainable long-term plan for owned prairies and conservation easement properties, cont.

- Wachiska took ownership of Prairie Pines Nature Preserve in December 2024
 - Formed the Prairie Pines Nature Preserve (PPNP) Management Committee with representatives from Wachiska, Prairie Pines Partners, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District and neighboring landowner
 - Committee responsible for identifying near term improvements and recommendations for long-term use
 - Wachiska's office was moved to PPNP in Jan. 2025
 - Continued agreement with Community Crops
 - Continued cooperation with Nebraska Forest Service on research plots
 - Continued cooperation with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on hunter education program

3) Become a known entity throughout southeast Nebraska where any individual or group can come to learn about the importance of tallgrass prairies and become advocates to protect this rare ecosystem

- Priority – Identify ways PPNP can help in educating individuals, students and groups about tallgrass prairies
 - Music in the Pines attended by 250 – most who never heard of Wachiska or Prairie Pines Nature Preserve
 - Visitor numbers increased as a result
 - Other activities at Prairie Pines included
 - OLLI Garden Group Tour
 - Volunteer workday
 - Continue to build partnership with Otoe-Missouria by providing space to grow indigenous crops
 - Fall migration survey
- Executive Director worked with other conservation org reps to draft comment letters on relevant legislation and identify potential for PPNP buffer land
- Joined the Nebraska Grassland Alliance – a public/private group dedicated to saving grasslands across the state

3) Become a known entity throughout southeast Nebraska where any individual or group can come to learn about the importance of tallgrass prairies and become advocates to protect this rare ecosystem, CONT.

- **Education through Outreach**

- Prairie Discovery Days at Dieken and Knott Prairies for 4th graders – 155 attended
- Family Nature Nights at 5 elementary schools – 1,223 attended
- Return of the Thunderbirds sponsored by Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center – 200 attended
- Earth Day – 400 attended
- Arbor Day – 150 attended
- Horning Farm open house – 250 attended
- Prairie Pines Nature at Night – 125 attended
- Tour the Wild Side – 345 visits to 6 sites



Grantors

- Nebraska Environmental Trust
- Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (NRD)
- Lower Platte North NRD
- Nemaha NRD
- Papio-Missouri River NRD
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
- Aspegren foundation
- Nebraska Arts Council
- Lincoln industries

Events sponsors

- Wild Bird Habitat Store
- Midwest Natives Nursery
- Nebraska Nursery
- Schrader Landscape Design
- Les Pollinator Program
- Union Bank & Trust
- U-Stop
- Runza
- Pepe's Bistro
- Isles Pub and Pizza
- Russ's
- The Printer
- Home Depot
- Hy-Vee
- Costco
- Walmart
- The Coffee Roaster

2026 board strategic plan focus areas

Continue movement to become a solid, smooth operating organization

- Continue to develop and implement steady pipeline for board members
- Develop a staffing plan that can withstand changes in people

Have in place a sustainable long-term plan for owned prairies and conservation easement properties

- Make recommendations to Board for the 23 current easements
- Continue to improve the systematic process used to evaluate property and easement offers
- Determine appropriate level of owner endowment for each new prairie or easement offered to was

Become known source for those wanting to learn about tallgrass prairies and advocate to protect the ecosystem

- Identify opportunities for more effective community engagement and diversity
- Do policy work to educate about the connection between birds, wildlife, and prairies

Remembering friends who passed in 2025

- Peg Fletcher
- Bruce Kennedy
- Sam Welsch
- Melvin Wieben

