
PLATTE RIVER RESILIENCE FUND

*Saving the Platte River for
People and Wildlife*



The importance of the Platte River to the state of Nebraska cannot be overstated.

It is one of the most important tributary systems in the watershed of the Missouri River, draining a large portion of the central Great Plains in Nebraska and the eastern Rocky Mountains in Colorado and Wyoming. The Platte River provides water for five million people across three states and is critical for irrigating 3.5 million acres of farmland, vital to the economies of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming.

The Platte River is essential habitat for the survival of many bird species including the endangered Whooping Crane and Least Tern, the threatened Piping Plover, and the sandhill crane. The largest gathering of cranes in the world feeds on the Platte River for four to six weeks each spring in preparation for their long journey north to their nesting grounds. This great migration has become a significant draw for thousands of tourists each spring, bringing more than \$25 million dollars annually to the local economy.

THE CHALLENGE



The historical Platte River provided rushing water and sediment from spring thaws in the high Rocky Mountains that slowed and spread out

into braided channels and sandbars on the Nebraska plains. These large magnitude flows came all at once, with energy capable of scouring the river channels of permanent vegetation.

Today, dams and water diversions for urban, industrial, and agricultural needs have re-timed flows, bringing water to the river channels all year long. This has altered a long established water-sediment balance and allowed for permanent vegetation, including invasive plants such as Russian Olive and phragmites to move in. This unchecked growth chokes the river, increasing the danger of flooding and consuming water that is essential to people and wildlife.

Efforts to maintain a flowing river are enormous and ongoing. Partners from state, federal, county and city agencies and conservation groups work tirelessly to clear the river—a \$600,000 annual endeavor. It is a constant struggle to find funding, but without these consistent efforts, the open flowing river will soon be lost, causing damage to property, economies and wildlife.

- Partners have treated approximately 42,500 acres on the Platte River from 2008 to 2019
- River capacity has doubled in the past 15 years due to work done to date
- Without annual efforts all gains made will likely be lost in 3 years
- Stable funding from a variety of sources is critical to the ability to continue this work



OUR VISION

In June 2020, the **Platte River Resilience Fund** was established to develop a perpetual source of funds to ensure the Platte River will continue to thrive and support the thousands of people and species that depend on it. The genesis for the Fund was a USDA-funded Water for Agriculture project that convened a diverse team of local stakeholders to identify and address water and agriculture issues important to the community. The Fund is led by a cooperative group of conservation-minded private and governmental local organizations and individuals and is an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation.



Our vision will be accomplished by growing the Fund and using it to:

- Treat phragmites and other invasive vegetation where needed
- Mechanically remove undesirable vegetation from the river channel as necessary
- Maintain or increase the capacity of the river to move water

To do this, we are focusing our efforts on building an endowment, an important tool that will sustain this important work long into the future.

What is an endowment?

An endowment is a forever savings account. All contributions to the endowment are invested. A portion of the income earned by the endowment may be used annually to support river conveyance projects and other emerging needs. Meanwhile, the principal remains and grows, providing a steady stream of financial resources for years to come.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

The Platte River Resilience Fund will ultimately have a tremendously positive impact on the whole state of Nebraska. People for generations to come will reap the benefits of a river that flows with wide shallow channels and provides water for agriculture, our communities, and our natural treasures.

Together we can protect this river that is critical to our lives today and to Nebraska's future. We ask that you consider making a financial commitment to the Platte River Resilience Fund to help create a better future for the Platte River, a vital Nebraska asset.

CONTACT

Tim Tunnell | tunnellt@headwaterscorp.com | 308.237.5728

LEARN MORE AND SUPPORT OUR WORK

<https://www.nebcommfound.org/give/platte-river-resilience-fund/>

Platte River Resilience Fund is an affiliated fund of Nebraska Community Foundation.