

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force
Annual Report
June 30, 2017**

(Submitted by Nebraska Department of Agriculture on behalf of Task Force)

Task Force Overview and Status

The Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force (RVMTF) was created in statute to bring multiple partners and stakeholders together to address the concern of invasive plants obstructing Nebraska’s river basins. The passage of LB 1038 by the Nebraska Unicameral on April 12, 2016, and signed into law by Governor Pete Ricketts on April 18, 2016, created the framework for the Task Force to address the riparian needs of the state and continue the efforts started by LB 701 by the Nebraska Unicameral on April 26, 2007.

Sections 3 and 4 of the legislative bill addressed the requirements for the Task Force, including the requirement for an annual report. An annual report shall be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by June 30 each year with the first report due on June 30, 2017. The report submitted to the Legislature shall be submitted electronically. Sections 1 and 2 of the legislation created a separate grant program for management of riparian vegetation and tasked the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) with management of this program.

During the course of the Task Force’s existence, the group has met two times.

Meeting dates and locations:

March 8, 2017.....Kearney, Nebraska
May 31, 2017.....Alda, Nebraska

Seven work groups were created during the May 2017 meeting to assist the Task Force in identifying the fundamental needs to carry out the goals and objectives of the legislation. These groups will solicit input from non-Task Force members. However, any recommendations will be delivered by the Task Force.

The work groups include:

- Goals, Objectives and Reports
- Vegetation Management and Treatment
- Survey and Monitoring
- Education and Awareness
- Funding and Incentives
- Streambed Ownership
- Vegetation Water Use

Grant Program

As noted earlier, sections 1 and 2 of LB 1038 created a grant program for management of riparian vegetation and placed the responsibility for this program with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. This serves as a natural administrative location for the grant program as NDA already has an existing structure in place in association with its authority over the state Noxious Weed Program.

As per LB 1038A, the Legislature appropriated a total of \$1,000,000 general funds each year (FY2016-17 and FY2017-18) for grants to manage invasive plants in and near rivers and streams. Of the \$1,000,000, \$975,000 was for aid and \$25,000 for administrative costs. Funds were only to be disbursed to weed management entities, local weed control authorities and Natural Resources Districts. During FY2016-17, NDA awarded grants for eight projects totaling \$668,799.

During the 2017 Legislative session, LB 22 reduced the funding for aid to \$675,000 and \$15,000 for administrative costs. Due to state budget shortfalls, the Legislature authorized \$475,000 in grants for FY2017-18. The call for proposals was disseminated on June 6, 2017.

Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force does not have any recommendations at this time. As the group continues to meet it will discuss and develop specific recommendations in the future as information is gathered.