



TO: Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Donlynn Rice, Senior Administrator, Curriculum and Instruction  
Rich Katt, NDE State Director of Career and Tech Ed  
Harris Payne, NDE Director of Social Studies

SUBJECT: Authorize the Commissioner to accept a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust

**Proposed Board Action:**

Authorize the Commissioner to accept a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust focusing on soil conservation using the power of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

**Background Information:**

This grant entitled "Educating the Next Generation of Nebraskans About Soil Conservation Using the Power Of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)" will provide Nebraska classroom teachers with tools and information to help Nebraska's youth understand the importance of soil conservation. NDE's primary involvement in the project will be to lend expertise to and facilitate workshops. NDE staff involved will be James Blake, Director of Science, Harris Payne, Director of Social Studies and Robin Jirovsky, Agricultural Career Field Specialist/State FFA Advisor. Soil conservation is found in the standards for agriculture, earth science and geography. Teachers from all three content areas will be invited to attend the workshops which be held in various locations across the state. In addition to providing the most up to date information, this will also be an excellent example of interdisciplinary learning.

During three consecutive summers, teachers at five locations across the state will attend two-day workshops where they will learn about soil conservation and will visit rural and urban sites that employ successful soil conservation techniques. The teachers will take photos and gather information first-hand about soil conservation. The workshop will teach teachers how to take the information from the field and utilize Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to create a computer document called a story map. Each story map will link photos of soil conservation to an interactive map and narrative about conservation practices. During the next school year, the process of creating story maps will then be taught by the workshop's teachers in classrooms across the state. The end result will be classrooms visiting sites in their local community and creating story maps that help young people to understand the successful soil conservation practices that are used to safeguard one of the nation's most valuable resources-soil.

The Grant Committee of the Nebraska Environmental Trust has recommended that the grant be funded. Final approval for funding will be voted upon by the board on April 1st, and funds for the grant are contingent upon approval by the Unicameral.

**Estimated Cost:**

None - The Nebraska Department of Education will recieve \$29,627 per year for three years - a total of \$88,881.

**Supporting Documentation Included:**

04.07.14 State Board of Education Work Session	2.11-1
Note 04.08.14 State Board of Education	& 7.8-1



**For Additional Information on this item:**

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