

**“Whiskey is for drinkin’;
Water is for fightin’”**

Chuck Schroeder, Executive Director

April 4, 2014



Conference Preamble

- “Drought has shaped how the people of the Great Plains think of themselves and their region and influenced their culture, literature and art. Today it raises concerns about whether the region will have sufficient water for its future.”



NU Says...

Rural Matters

- Economically
- Socially
- Culturally
- Environmentally



Drought and climate change have had, and promise to have tremendous impacts in all these areas

The Vision...

The RFI will be an **internationally recognized leader** for increasing **community capacity** as well as the **confidence of rural people** to address their challenges and opportunities, resulting in resilient and sustainable rural futures.



Objective...

To support, encourage and build **local leaders** who envision communities that are **vibrant economically, socially, culturally**, and provide a legitimate choice for young adults seeking the **BEST place to launch careers, build families, and be active citizens** in an environment where they can make a difference.



Rural Nebraskans Know and Care

- At least two-thirds of rural Nebraskans have experienced: loss of wildlife and wildlife habitat (75%), voluntary decrease in water usage (73%), decreased farm production (69%) and wildfires (69%).
- The majority of persons with occupations in agriculture have experienced loss of business income as a result of last year's drought.



- 2013 Nebraska Rural Poll

Rural Nebraskans Know and Care

- Nearly 80% of rural Nebraskans (43%) are concerned about groundwater levels in Nebraska.
- Most rural Nebraskans (69%) feel they understand global climate change issues fairly well or very well.
- Most rural Nebraskans think global climate change is definitely happening or somewhat happening

- 2013 Nebraska Rural Poll



Rural Nebraskans Know and Care

- One-half of rural Nebraskans are somewhat or very worried about global climate change
- Most rural Nebraskans (60%) think change is required to solve global climate change



-2013 Nebraska Rural Poll

RFI Grant Programs

- Research and Engagement- \$150,000 maximum
 - Address critical challenges and opportunities
 - “Seed grants”
 - Support transdisciplinary work
- Teaching and Engagement- \$25,000 maximum
 - Foster civic engagement in both students and community partners
 - Involves students working with communities



Objective: Drought-Ready Communities

- Model developed in a collaborative effort among:
 - National Drought Mitigation Center
 - Oklahoma Climatological Survey
 - Illinois State Water Survey
 - Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance
- Community Capitals model
 - NDMC
 - Heartland Center for Leadership Development
- RFI role: Prepare and support community leaders who can effectively engage in implementation



Reverse “Grapes of Wrath?”

- Will urban life, particularly on the coasts, become less secure in the wake of climate change?
- Will rural communities that have developed strong collaborative models for preparedness and community problem solving related to water, food and energy become especially attractive?



The RFI is about...

Impacting Hope!

- Hope Matters
- Hope is a Choice
- Hope can be Learned
- Hope can be Shared



-- from 'Making Hope Happen' by Shane J. Lopez, Ph.D.