



STATEHOUSE OBSERVER

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Don't Forget Wildlife at Tax Time

For most people, filling out your state income tax form is little cause for excitement. However, you might make filing state taxes a little more joyful by contributing all or a portion of your refund to the state nongame and endangered species program.

Proceeds from the nongame tax check-off (*line 13 on your state income tax form*) is the principal means of funding for the more than 2,000 species of birds, fish, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, and plants that are not hunted or fished. Many of these species are exceedingly rare or experiencing serious declines.

Although voluntary contributions to the check-off peaked at \$120,000 in the mid 1990's, in recent years donations have declined to less than \$80,000. The decline in check-off funding may be due in part to smaller refunds or because fewer individuals prepare their own taxes. Whatever the reason, the decline in funding is making it more difficult for the Game and Parks Commission to conserve nongame species.

Since the inception of the check-off, projects benefiting dozens of nongame species have been completed. One of the higher profile projects was the reintroduction of river otters to Nebraska. Once completely eliminated from the state, river otters are now known to occur in six of Nebraska's thirteen river basins. If their population continues to increase, river otters may



one day be removed from the state endangered species list. The success of this project is a tribute to the generosity of those who have contributed to the check-off program.

Other projects funded by the nongame tax check-off program include the successful reintroduction of peregrine falcons, a flying squirrel nest box and monitoring program, development of a partnership to monitor birds in Nebraska's shortgrass prairie, a study of the ornate box turtle, the start-up of a prairie restoration cooperative, a survey of the Topeka shiner and numerous other projects.

For the first time this year, individuals may make their donation on-line by using the Game and Parks Commission secure server. Donations can be made by credit card by visiting the following the Commission's web site at www.ngpc.state.ne.us/wildlife/programs/nongame/ngdonate.asp. For more information about the nongame check-off contact Mark Humpert, Wildlife Diversity Program Manager, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (402)471-5438 or by e-mail at mhumpert@ngpc.state.ne.us



Nebraska Tourism Publications Available

Free copies of The *2004 Nebraska Travel Guide* and *2004 Nebraska Festivals Guide* are available from the Nebraska Division of Travel and Tourism. The publications include hundreds of attractions, festivals, lodging facilities and outdoor outfitters to help you plan your next great adventure throughout Nebraska.

“We’re confident that travelers will be impressed with the variety of attractions and events that Nebraska has to offer, be it for a day, a weekend, or an extended stay,” said Mary Ethel Emanuel, public relations director for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development’s (DED) Travel and Tourism Division.

The cover of the 160-page, four-color *2004 Nebraska Travel Guide* features Lewis and Clark reenactors silhouetted against the vivid colors of a setting sun, as they stand before the Missouri River. Nebraska factors heavily into the Bicentennial Commemoration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, hosting one of a handful of national “signature events” in 2004. The Nebraska event, called First Tribal Council, will be held in Fort Calhoun and Omaha on July 31 – August 3.

The four-color cover of the 48-page *2004 Nebraska Festivals Guide*, beckons travelers to enjoy events across the state.

Call toll-free 877-NEBRASKA, (402) 471-3796, or e-mail: tourism@VisitNebraska.org, for your copies of these free guides.

And for even more information about Nebraska tourism, go to: www.VisitNebraska.org





Annual Food Drive

The annual Employee Food Drive will begin this year on April 5 and run through April 23. Our annual drive represents approximately 10% of the annual donations to the Food Drive. This is certainly a reason to be proud.

The Food Bank of Lincoln serves 15 Nebraska hours. Last year they served about 80,000 people on a monthly average.

If your location would like to participate this year and has not in the past be sure to call the DAS-State Personnel office to arrange to add you to the contributors. (402) 471-4112.

This drive is both a meaningful and fun service project involving State Employees at their finest. Let's do what we can to have another successful year!



Invest in Savings Bonds

It's been a year since National Bond and Trust became the vendor for State Employees to use for United States Savings Bond deductions. Please save this information if you are interested in receiving bonds via payroll deduction now or at some point in the future.

NBT currently offers I Bonds to employees. They also offer an optional bond continuation plan to provide for future bonds for dependants in case of your death—a type of life insurance. For more information about National Bond and Trust, you can visit their web site at: www.nbtco.com

If you would like information on Savings Bonds, you can visit the Federal Government's web site for Savings Bonds at: www.savingsbonds.gov.

How do I sign up for bonds?

Usually you can sign up for bonds during the bond drives that are held periodically across the state. If you prefer, you can call National Bond and Trust directly at (800) 321-8024. In either case, be sure to give one copy of the paperwork to your payroll staff and keep another copy for your personal records.

What if I need to make changes or stop my bond deduction?

Changes are also handled by the NBT Central Office. You can request changes by contacting them at: (800) 321-8024. This number can also be used if you have other questions about your Savings Bond deduction.



World Day on the Mall

The committee for the annual World Day on the Mall has begun preparations for this year's celebration.

World Day is an opportunity to share, experience and value other cultures through ethnic food, music, entertainment, and information on our global society.

We celebrate the diversity of cultures in Nebraska and honor the daily contributions of Nebraska State employees.

We strive to increase the awareness, understanding, and appreciation of individuals of all cultures.

If you would like to join in the planning of this project contact:

Rod Moore
HHSS
rod.moore@hhss.state.ne.us
(402) 471-6081

or
Charles Roberson
DAS-State Personnel
croberso@notes.state.ne.us
(402) 471-3678



IIF

The next Interactive Informational Forum for State of Nebraska Human Resource Professionals will be held Tuesday, March 16 at the Lancaster County Extension Building, 444 Cherrycreek Road.

These sessions are held quarterly to update State HR staff on current trends and topics relating to personnel issues. For more information on the Forums contact Karolyn Husa of DAS-State Personnel at (402) 471-4121 or khusa@notes.state.ne.us.

DAS-State Personnel links

State Personnel has a wealth of information online for use by employees and agencies. Make the internet your first stop when seeking information.

Employee Information

- **Benefits Information and Forms**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/benefits/>
- **State Holiday Schedule**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/holidayschedule.htm>
- **State Suggestion System** (online form)
<http://www.wrk4neb.org/idea/>
- **Training Opportunities**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/nkn/>

Newsletters

- **Affirmative Action Quarterly**
http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/aa_newsletters.htm
- **Statehouse Observer**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/observer.htm>

Job Hunting

- **Apply for State jobs online**
<https://www.wrk4neb.org/jobapp/>
- **Current vacancies**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/personnel/nejobs/per.htm>

Classification

- **Job Specifications**
<http://www.das.state.ne.us/emprel/JobSpecs/>
- **Nebraska Classified System Personnel Rules**
<http://das.nol.org/personnel/nerules/>

Mark Your Calendar!

January

- 1 New Years Day
State Holiday
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
State Holiday

February

- 16 President's Day
State Holiday

March

- 1 Nebraska Statehood
- 16 **IIF**
*Lancaster County Extension Bldg
444 Cherrycreek Road.*

April

- 30 Arbor Day
State Holiday

May

- 31 Memorial Day
State Holiday

July

- 4 Independence Day
- 5 *State Holiday **

September

- 6 Labor Day
State Holiday

October

- 11 Columbus Day
State Holiday

* When a holiday falls on the first day of an employee's weekend, it shall be observed on the preceding day. When a holiday falls on the second day of an employee's weekend, it shall be observed on the following day. A weekend is two consecutive days off, whether they be Saturday/Sunday, Tuesday/Wednesday, Friday/Saturday, etc. If you are covered under one of the bargaining unit contracts, please ask your Agency Personnel Contact about holiday leave for your position.

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