



Nebraska Master Naturalist and Nebraska Statewide Arboretum Trial Merger FAQs

Why is a merger being considered?

The NMNP can no longer be administered by the School of Natural Resources after July 1, 2023. Throughout the last several months the NMNF and NMNP boards have been working diligently to evaluate the options. At this time, becoming a stand-alone organization is not feasible so merging with another organization is the best option.

How has the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA) been identified as the possible organizational home for the NMNP?

The NSA approached the NMNF board when they heard we were looking for an organization to work with. They believe in the strength of the NMNP and want to see it be successful. The NSA has a more than 40 year history of working statewide to support communities in understanding and improving their environmental resiliency. Both organizations have determined that joining together would be a natural fit.

What's the timeline?

Both the NMNF board and the NSA board as well as UNL have already approved the trial period which began on November 1, 2022 and will end March 31, 2023. In March, a date will be determined by which all involved will make a final decision about the merger. If the merger moves forward, it would take effect on July 1, 2023 which is the beginning of NSA's fiscal year.

What are the metrics for success?

We've set both tangible and intangible metrics for success. First, we must prove that we can raise \$100,000 for the NMNP before the NSA will absorb the program. That was set by the NSA board as they seek to protect the fiscal integrity of the organization. Most importantly, the trial will help to ensure that the missions and program direction of each organization matches and that we are all on the same page moving forward.

What happens if you don't raise the \$100K?

If the funds aren't raised then the merger will not move forward. Any funds raised during the trial period will still be accessible by the NMNF for their use for the program moving forward.

What will happen if there is no merger?

The NMNP will leave UNL on July 1, 2023. So, if there is no merger with NSA the foundation and program boards will work together to determine next steps.

Will I still be able to log my CE and Volunteer hours?

At this time no changes are being made to how you log any of your hours. If the merger moves forward, you will see a change in how you log your hours. We will work hard to make it a smooth transition and offer as much technical support as possible.

Will all the requirements for me still be the same?

None of the CE and volunteer hour requirements are changing at this time.

Will there be a membership fee introduced?

No.



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How are you raising the money?

We have put together an extensive fundraising plan with strategic goals throughout the next five months. We plan to seek both individual and organizational donations, as well as work with our program partners to seek program buy-ins. You will have the opportunity to participate in peer-to-peer fundraising campaigns on social media (like GoFundMe). Also, before the end of the year you will receive a letter asking you to consider the NMNP in your end of year giving. We hope you will think about giving whatever amount you find appropriate.

Where did we used to get our money?

The NMNP has been funded in the past by Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) grants as well as by grants from other foundations and individual gifts. The funding priorities for NET have changed, as you might be aware, and it is no longer a stable or dependable source of funding for any environmental organization in Nebraska. This was an abrupt change which has not allowed much time for us to find alternative sources of funding as quickly as we needed to.

Will we always be pushing to raise \$100K this quickly if the merger goes through?

No. Essentially we're squeezing what would normally be a 12 month campaign into 5 months. If the merger moves forward the NSA annual budget will increase by at least \$100,000 which means the board and staff will be responsible for increasing annual fundraising by that amount. After this year we will work on an annual fundraising plan to include individual and corporate giving as well as grants to create a more sustainable funding base for the NMNP.

What will happen to the NMN staff?

Throughout the trial period nothing is changing for the staff. If the merger moves forward, the NMNP staff would transfer to NSA. Since NSA is part of the University system, this would be a departmental transfer and the staff won't see any interruption to pay or benefits. Matt would continue in his current position and role.

How will the NMN program benefit from the merger?

The program will benefit from the merger in many ways. The NSA is well respected state-wide organization with a history of successful programs and fundraising. They are confident in their ability to support the NMNP and continue to grow the membership. Since NSA is part of the University system it would also mean that all the NMNP supplies would transfer with the program, something that is not possible if the NMNP leaves the University. The NSA has a team of professionals focused on communications, event planning, membership services, fundraising, grant writing, and organizational management. The NMNP would benefit from having a team of professionals working to support and promote the program.

What changes will I notice?

During the trial you likely won't see too many changes. If the merger moves forward, the NMNP would become a program of NSA so you will see changes in branding and communication.