

NEBRASKA CEDAR CRISIS

The uncontrolled spread of cedar trees has reached a crisis state. It is reducing range quality, altering woodlands and decreasing wildlife habitat.



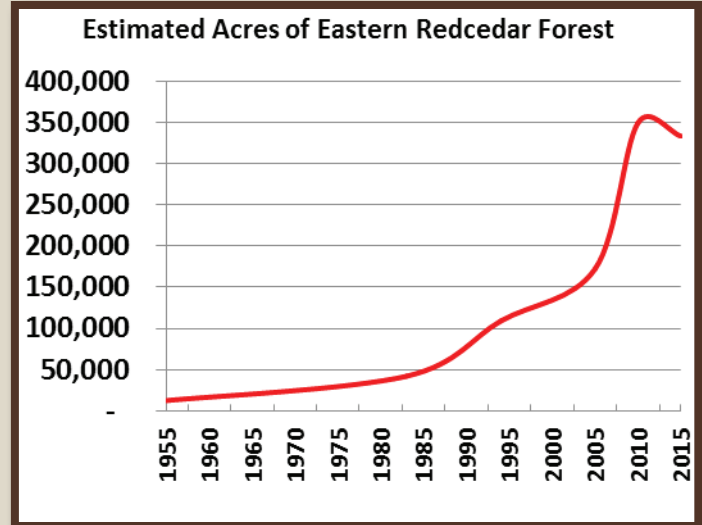
Eastern red cedar (cedar) is a native tree that has always been a fixture on the Nebraska landscape, providing valuable wood products, wind and soil protection, and habitat for a variety of species of wildlife. However, the rapid spread of cedar is an increasingly serious ecological and economic issue with substantial impacts statewide. Addressing the spread of cedar poses challenges of a magnitude that dwarfs the capacity and resources of any one agency or organization.

Cedar is spreading in part due to its adaptability to a wide range of conditions, the lack of fire on the landscape (both prescribed fire and wildfire), changes in farm and grazing practices, drought, lack of grassland and forest management, changes in land ownership patterns, and conservation plantings as a seed source.



THE TIME TO ACT IS NOW

- Other Great Plains states have aggressively tried to control the spread of cedar trees, but no state has successfully prevented conversion of large areas to cedar dense woodlands. It may not be too late for Nebraska, but the time to act is now.
- The uncontrolled spread of cedar is costing not only landowners, but also the taxpayers; essentially affecting everyone in the state.
- Cedar also poses a serious wildfire risk to life and property in many areas of Nebraska, which could cost millions of dollars for firefighting.
- At the present time, control methods are insufficient to prevent Nebraska from becoming a cedar forest unless scaled up significantly. Winning the war on cedar requires active management. At a cost of \$600/acre, it would cost \$23 million/year to mechanically clear 38,000 acres of cedar forest just to stay even with expansion that was observed during 2005-2010.
- Addressing the spread of cedar poses challenges of a magnitude that dwarfs the capacity and resources of any one agency or organization.



Historic expansion of cedar forest acres in Nebraska.

Needed Action

- Developing a market for cedar products in addition to control and reduction methods should be pursued.
- Expand cedar mechanical and prescribed fire removal and management cost-share and technical assistance programs.
- Better define the problem and identify priority geographic areas for action.
- Identify alternative species for windbreaks and educate landowners about those alternatives.
- Conduct targeted research in pursuit of developing non-seed bearing cedar trees.
- Conduct extensive education and outreach activities.