



## Fall Newsletter – October 2023

### From the Director – Dr. Paul Hanson

Greetings from Lincoln, Nebraska!



This has been another spring and summer at The Great Plains CESU! We continue to experience growth amongst our ranks and we finally witnessed us returning to more normal routines as we transitioned out of 'pandemic mode'. The GP CESU presently has 23 academic institutions as well as three non-governmental organizations amongst our non-federal partners. Coupled with our 13 federal partner agencies, the GP CESU constitutes a broad representation of individuals and organizations focused on researching ecosystems throughout the Great Plains.



### 2023 CESU Network Meeting

In July of 2023, Director Paul Hanson and Research Coordinator Brandon Gerig attended the National CESU Meeting in Shepherdstown, WV. Program Coordinator Barb Biffle attended the meeting remotely. This meeting was particularly noteworthy for several reasons. This was the first assembly of the national CESU network since COVID-19 disrupted our usual activities. In addition, this year marked the 25th anniversary of the authorization of the CESU Network by Congress in 1998. Happy Anniversary to the CESU Network!

Meeting attendees included those in the national CESU office, members of the regional CESU offices, and representatives from our federal and non-governmental organization partner institutions. Highlights of the meeting were presentations by attendees who gave an overview of their activities and plans for the future direction of the CESU network. It was enjoyable to have shared our collective visions and plans for the involved organizations moving forward.

### GP CESU Graduate Student Award Nominations

Each year we award a deserving individual with our GP CESU Graduate Student Award. Nominations for 2023 have closed, but **REMEMBER**...nominations are on-going for next year, so don't wait until the last minute to submit a recommendation for a worthy student. Details and the nomination form are on our website: <https://gpcesu.unl.edu/opportunity/studentaward.aspx>

## GP CESU Staff Updates



The GP CESU welcomes Dr. Brandon Gerig who is serving as our Acting Research Coordinator. He is an ecologist for the National Park Service, and he also coordinates the Great Rivers CESU. Dr. Gerig's academic home is the School of Natural Resources at the University of Missouri.

Barb Biffle joined us as Program Coordinator in April of 2023. She was an art and geology major at Northwest MO State University and has a background in marketing, administration, radio, web and social media. She previously worked for the State of Nebraska with the Department of Banking & Finance, and the Transportation Department.



Finally, we extend a huge thank you to Dr. Tanya Shenk (photo on left) who retired as our GP CESU Research Coordinator. Dr. Shenk served the program from 2015-2023, and to Ms. Kirsten Licht (photo on right), our previous Program Coordinator. Their impact on our program has been profound and will undoubtedly continue into the future.



## GP CESU YouTube Channel

We are very pleased to announce our newest endeavor—the [GP CESU YouTube Channel](#) and our new video series entitled “Take a Moment”. This new undertaking is inspired by our desire to remind us of the beauty and wonder of the Great Plains. We drew inspiration from multiple sources, including the Nature Awareness program initiated by National Park Service employees.



So far, we have created four short videos that feature picturesque locations in Nebraska and Kansas. Our video features are an invitation to “Take a Moment” from a busy day and relax with the beauty of the Great Plains. Check them out, turn up your sound, relax and enjoy! Then think of something beautiful in your portion of the Plains and send us a video at [gpcesu@unl.edu](mailto:gpcesu@unl.edu) and we'll do the rest.

## REMINDERS

- We are always seeking information about projects funded through the GP CESU, such as field work photos or students in action. So, feel free to send any project updates on to us!
- Also, we would like submissions of videos to be included in our *Take a Moment* series. Feel free to send in what you have and discuss how we can use it. Submit materials or questions to: [gpcesu@unl.edu](mailto:gpcesu@unl.edu)
- Please make sure we have your updated contact details by sending new staff info to [gpcesu@unl.edu](mailto:gpcesu@unl.edu).