

For Immediate Release

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**GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION INAGURATES NEBRASKA PRAIRIE CHICKEN FESTIVAL and
DECLARES the 2012 Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival to be held at Calamus
Outfitters/Switzer Ranch
Festival celebrates Nebraska's Sandhills and wildlife, discusses important policy
considerations**

BURWELL, NE MARCH 15, 2012—Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman has signed a proclamation that formally designates April 20-22, 2012 as the dates for the newly inaugurated Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival. At a recent state capital ceremony in Lincoln, representatives of Calamus Outfitters and the Gracie Creek Landowners, the hosting parties of the upcoming festival, met with the Governor and discussed the significance of this first annual festival that celebrates the grassland grouse species.

“We’re so pleased that Governor Heineman acknowledges the potential impact of the festival. Not only will this event celebrate these iconic bird species, it will also educate a wide range of participants about realistic conservation measures that will ultimately benefit a large suite of grassland birds. In addition, the festival will provide an economic boost for our rural area,” stated Sarah Sortum, coordinator of the festival.

The festival will be held at Calamus Outfitters near Burwell, NE which is located in the Nebraska Sandhills. Sue Switzer of Calamus Outfitters was also on hand for the proclamation ceremony. “We have seen a lot of people with renewed interest in the Sandhills because of the recent issues surrounding the proposed Keystone XL pipeline route. People are interested in seeing some of the species that helped make the case to reroute the pipeline out of this sensitive area.” Switzer also noted that the festival aims to draw both local and out of state participants to the celebration.

The festival will feature lek tours to view the Greater Prairie Chicken and Sharp-tailed Grouse mating displays, educational speakers, additional birding excursions, discussions pertaining to state and federal conservation programs, ranch tours, cultural demonstrations and live entertainment. For registration information, to view the festival program or to download a

printable brochure visit www.calamusoutfitters.com or call Calamus Outfitters at 308-346-4697.

The actual text from the proclamation signed by the governor is reflected below:

State of Nebraska Proclamation

Whereas, The Greater Prairie Chicken historically occupied the great grasslands of America. Their majestic courtship displays and unique “booming” sound echoing across the prairie made a lasting impression on grassland cultures and continues to inspire the hearts of those who are blessed to witness these native birds; and

Whereas, In recognition of the Greater Prairie Chicken and the grasslands upon which they rely, a Prairie Chicken Festival has been inaugurated. This festival will highlight the beauty of this resident bird, its contribution to the past and present grassland culture and disseminate research and knowledge that will help ensure the continued vitality of this at risk species in Nebraska; and

Whereas, The 2012 Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival will be held at Calamus Outfitters/Switzer Ranch, which is situated on the Greater Gracie Creek Landscape Important Bird Area in the Sandhills of Nebraska. Calamus Outfitters/Switzer Ranch has become a destination for birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts from around the world to witness the spectacular display of the Greater Prairie Chicken during the spring courtship season, raising awareness about this species while bringing in much needed tourism dollars to this rural area. The contribution of this family owned entity to the local and state economy was recognized in 2010 when it was awarded the “Nebraska Outstanding Nature Tourism Entity” by the division of Travel and Tourism; and

Whereas, The 2012 Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival will foster a deeper appreciation for the Greater Prairie Chicken and other grassland birds while highlighting the relationship the species has had with the prairie throughout time. The Festival needs and appreciates the support of local and state leaders and citizens; and

Whereas, The 2012 Nebraska Prairie Chicken Festival will be held April 20-22, 2012 at Calamus Outfitters/Switzer Ranch. This event will prove to be a significant contribution to the conservation of this grassland bird species, the grasslands of Nebraska, the economy of rural Nebraska and the citizens of the state.

*Now, Therefore, I, Dave Heineman, Governor of the State of Nebraska, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM the days of April 20-22, 2012 as the **NEBRASKA PRAIRIE CHICKEN FESTIVAL** in Nebraska, and I do hereby urge all citizens to take due note of the observance.*

Calamus Outfitters is partnering in sponsorship of the festival with The Loup Rivers Scenic Byway, Nebraska Humanities Council, Nebraska ARTS Council, Nebraska Bird Partnership, Audubon Nebraska, World Wildlife Fund and The Nature Conservancy. The Festival was initiated by the Gracie Creek Landowners in cooperation with Calamus Outfitters. The Gracie Creek Landowners is a project of the Loup Basin RC&D.

Please see attached photo below.



Proclamation signing event: Governor Dave Heineman with festival coordinator Sarah Sortum.
