

NFS Director

Number: F_260069

Website: <https://employment.unl.edu/postings/100959>

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Director of the Nebraska Forest Service

Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln invites applications and nominations for a visionary, collaborative, and dynamic leader to serve as the Director of the Nebraska Forest Service and State Forester.

Nebraska holds a unique and proud place in forestry history. As the birthplace of Arbor Day and home to the nation's largest hand-planted forest, innovation, development, and stewardship are woven into our state's forestry identity. The Director will lead a premier, 21st-century conservation agency embedded within a world-class land-grant university. This distinct structure allows the Director to seamlessly bridge cutting-edge research, extension education, and statewide operational impact. The ideal candidate will be an elite blend of an administrator, a public agency executive, and a passionate champion for natural resources. The successful candidate will be a strategic leader ready to champion forest health, pioneer climate-resilient landscapes, and protect communities from wildland fire threats across a diverse and beautiful geography.

The Role & Strategic Mandate

The Director provides leadership for a multi-faceted statewide organization with offices across the state. Managing an agile team of professionals and a complex budget comprising state, federal, and private funding, the Director will oversee key program areas:

- Wildland Fire Protection: Partner with rural fire districts to provide training, equipment, and fire suppression strategies.
- Community Forestry & Sustainable Landscapes: Partner with communities to elevate urban canopy through training, funding, and outreach. Overseeing PlantNebraska (formerly the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum), a member-based nonprofit organization.

- Rural Forestry: Assist private landowners with forest management, wildfire mitigation, agroforestry, and wood product utilization.
- Forest Health: Diagnose and mitigating threats to forest health.

Key Responsibilities

- Administrative Leadership: Provide strategic direction, operational management, and financial stewardship for the agency's personnel, facilities, and diverse funding portfolio.
- Partnership & Advocacy: Cultivate deep, trusted relationships with the U.S. Forest Service, Council of Western State Foresters (CWSF), the National Association of State Foresters (NASF), Natural Resources Districts (NRDs), state legislators, commodity groups, and private landowners.
- University Integration: Align NFS goals with the broader research, teaching, and Extension missions of IANR and the School of Natural Resources.
- Public Voice: Serve as the primary advocate and public face of the Nebraska Forest Service.

Qualifications & Characteristics of Success

We are seeking an authentic, collaborative peer in the conservation community who possesses:

Required Qualifications

- A Master's degree.
- A Degree in Forestry, Natural Resources Management, Fire Science, Public Administration, Environmental Sciences, or a closely related field.
- Demonstrated administrative experience within a forestry, natural resources, or public agency.
- A proven track record of managing and operationalizing substantial budgets, including grants and cooperative agreements.
- A proven track record of leadership experience managing people, resources, and complex projects across multiple programs or divisions.
- Demonstrated experience advocating for agency priorities, funding, and/or policy support.

Preferred Qualifications

- A Master's degree in forestry.
- A Ph.D. in forestry, fisheries and/or wildlife, or closely related field.
- Proven experience working in forestry, wildland fire, or forestry-related professions.
- Proven leadership in a public service agency, including transparency, accountability, and responsible stewardship of resources.
- Demonstrated excellence in communicating with internal and external audiences.

- Experience setting and carrying out the strategic direction for an organization.
- Demonstrated ability to lead employees in a way that supports and encourages professional growth and career advancement.
- Demonstrated success securing external funding and developing strategic partnerships to advance organizational priorities, expand capacity, and support long-term sustainability.
- Demonstrated ability to manage complex budgets and distributing resources to accomplish strategic goals.
- Experience leading organizations through crisis situations, emergency response, or complex operational challenges.
- Demonstrated understanding of National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards, Incident Command System (ICS) principles, and interagency wildland fire management practices.
- Experience working in an academic institution.

Application Process

Review of applications will begin August 10, 2026, and continue until the position is filled or the search is closed. To view details of the position and create an application, go to <https://employment.unl.edu>, position F_260069. Click “Apply for this Job” and then “Faculty Application.” Complete the application and attach the following required documents:

1. A letter of interest that describes your qualifications for the job.
2. Your curriculum vitae.
3. Contact information for three professional references.
4. A statement describing your philosophy and approach to:
 - a. Budget and resource management.
 - b. Addressing current and emerging challenges in Forestry and Natural Resources.
 - c. Establishing intermediate and long-term goals for the Nebraska Forest Service.
5. A statement describing your experience working in teams or groups and your anticipated contributions to environments where every person and every interaction matters (2 page maximum). See <https://go.unl.edu/ianrguide> for guidance in writing this statement.

Please combine the statements (items 4 and 5) into a single document for upload.

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