

**LOWER PLATTE SOUTH
NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT**



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Salt Creek Updates in NRD Budget Plan

LINCOLN (NE) August 17, 2016 – The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District Board of Directors approved a budget Wednesday that provides flood protection updates, continued mapping of ground water supplies, restoration of a rare saline wetland, new trail development and more. The approved Fiscal Year 2017 Budget totals \$26,089,912 or about \$6.5 million less than the NRD's first budget draft earlier this year. Some items were cut or deferred as a result of directors keeping the district's property tax requirement (\$9,257,354) unchanged from last year.

The NRD, with the help of a contracted engineering consultant, will continue to assess needs for upgrading structures along Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee, prioritize those projects and develop designs and cost estimates (\$495,000). The process, called a System Wide Improvement Framework Plan overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is meant to keep the more-than-50-year-old Salt Creek Levee reliable in protecting part of the city from flooding. These projects are in addition to routine operation and maintenance of the levee and are expected to take several years to complete.

The NRD will continue to participate in aerial geological mapping (\$421,000) through its association with the Eastern Nebraska Water Resources Assessment, a coalition of six NRDs in eastern Nebraska. Helicopter flights to gather data were expected to be completed in mid-August over parts of Lancaster, Cass and Saunders counties. The scanning technology provides much useful geological data, including

the locations of secondary aquifers. Continued help for the communities of Davey, Elmwood, Hickman, Pleasant Dale, Union, Valparaiso, Weeping Water/Otoe RWD #3 and the Lower Salt Creek area from Waverly to Ashland to reduce elevated nitrate levels in ground water is in the FY 2017 Budget and the NRD will continue its administration of ground water allocations, rules and regulations in the Dwight-Valparaiso-Brainard Special Management Area.

Planned FY 2017 activities related to the NRD's Integrated Management Plan for surface water and ground water, adopted in 2014, include an inventory of available water (\$460,000). The NRD's participation in the Lower Platte River Basin Water Management Plan Coalition, a group of central and eastern Nebraska NRDs and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, will also continue. The Coalition helps member NRDs better plan and manage water resources in their individual districts by monitoring water supply and use on a more regional scale.

A newly-formed consortium of three NRDs, including the Lower Platte South, and other entities plans to study long-term water supplies available to the lower Platte River basin, to enhance streamflows or aquifer storage to support public water systems. The Lower Platte South is the lead agency for the Drought Contingency Study and much of the \$460,000 budgeted for the study will be reimbursed by the other partners.

Restoration will continue at the NRD's Marsh Wren, a 150-acre site along North 40th Street, just south of Interstate 80, in Lincoln, that was once a pristine saline wetland (\$840,200). Saline wetlands form when artesian salt water flows to the surface and salt accumulates in the soil until primarily only salt tolerant plants and animals can live there. The phenomenon occurs in only a few places on earth. Erosion and other factors have deteriorated many saline wetland acres over time in Lancaster and Saunders counties, but the NRD has had great success in their restoration.

The new budget has \$1.2 million set aside to help landowners with projects that improve the quality of surface water throughout the district and in specially targeted areas above public access lakes. These projects include the installation of terraces, waterways, sediment basins and more.

The completion of Havlat Dam (\$216,000), a road structure dam under construction in partnership with Seward County, just south of Pleasant Dale, will improve flood control in that area. The budget also includes the operation and maintenance of 180 dams throughout the district.

Construction of another segment of the Salt Creek Levee Trail (\$408,500) in Lincoln, from 14th Street to 23rd Street and Cornhusker Highway is in the budget. The new segment will be an extension of a trail segment that was officially opened earlier this Haymarket Park to 14th Street.

Other important NRD activities provided for in the budget include:

- continuing to work with the Nebraska Department of Roads and Cass County to extend the MoPac East Trail to the Lied Platte River Bridge at South Bend
- construction of a trail underpass at Rosa Parks Way and Salt Creek, in Lincoln
- continued study of endangered species and the control of invasive plant species along the Platte River
- continued assistance for landowners in surface water quality and flood control practices
- participation in an ice jam agreement to help control flooding along the Platte River
- and continued efforts to keep District residents informed about NRD conservation programs and how they can help.

The NRD's fiscal year began on July first and development of the annual budget starts in April, with multiple opportunities for public input throughout the process. A link to the complete budget is available at lpsnrd.org.