



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district



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NRD

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts Making the Good Life Better Since 1972

SUMMER 2017



No Seat/No Problem - This remote-controlled mower is being used this summer to mow Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee. The NRD is responsible for maintaining the 13-mile levee system and mowing it several times each year makes it easier to inspect drainage structures and easier to monitor the levee during high water events. Using the remote-controlled mower reduces the likelihood of someone being injured mowing the steep slopes.



2017 BUDGET INPUT

by NRD Board Treasurer
Jeremie Kerkman

I am honored to serve as Treasurer of the LPSNRD Board of Directors in 2017. Since becoming a board member in 2015, I've learned weighing the protection of our natural resources against fiscal responsibility is among the most important tasks an NRD director faces and guidance from the public is always helpful. Inside this newsletter is a schedule of times the public may address the full Board about the many budget decisions we face between now and mid-August. I encourage everyone to take advantage of these opportunities and to let their thoughts be known to the Board. If you prefer, use information at LPSNRD.org to contact your Board representatives one-on-one. There is always more we can do to lower the risk of flooding, maintain waterways, learn more about our ground water and provide recreation. Public input helps the NRD be a true reflection of the people it serves.

Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future

CORPS REPAIRS LEVEE NOW, MORE WORK TO COME

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is picking up the tab for repairs of damage in two spots along Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee. Work was expected to begin in June on a site across from the Teresa Street Water Treatment Plant, just upstream (south) from Cornhusker Highway and on a site just upstream

continued on page 3

PROGRESS ON DMR PLAN

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), the City of Lincoln (City) and the NRD continue to plan a flood risk reduction project at the lower end of Lincoln's Deadmans Run (DMR) watershed. The LPSNRD Board of Directors is expected to consider a cost waiver for the project when it meets June 21st. One recent cost projection is \$23 million. Regardless

continued on page 4

GROUND WATER LEVELS UP

The NRD measures wells in its district-wide network each spring and fall to track the availability of ground water. Spring 2017 measuring results are outlined in the chart, compared to year-ago levels,



continued on page 2

GROUND WATER LEVELS UP

continued from page 1

and averaged for each of the district's recognized ground water reservoirs and the Remaining Area. The results represent measurements of 150 wells by the NRD this spring and indicate ground water is more abundant in most areas of the district than it was a year ago. Measurement figures are in feet.

A three-year period of ground water allocations for irrigators in the Dwight-Valparaiso-Brainard area of the district ended in 2016, and was extended another three years in all but the eastern-most of three specific areas. The NRD imposed the allocations due to wildly fluctuating ground water levels during extreme drought and we continue to monitor closely.

In monitoring ground water quality, the NRD sampled 239 different wells for a variety of pollutants. Nitrates are the most prevalent pollutant and the NRD has stepped-up cost-sharing opportunities and certification requirements (Phase II and Phase III) for agricultural operators who apply nitrogen fertilizer in seven community water system protection areas, including Valparaiso, Pleasant Dale, Hickman, Davey, Otoe County RWD #3/Weeping Water, Union and Elmwood.

| Ground Water Reservoir | Spring '16 to Spring '17 |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Crete-Princeton-Adams | 0.09 |
| Dwight-Valparaiso | -0.29 |
| Lower Salt Creek | 0.26 |
| Missouri River | 1.73 |
| Platte River | 0.21 |
| Remaining Area | 0.90 |

A positive number means more water is now available. A map of NRD ground water reservoirs is available at LPSNRD.org. Click on Programs.

Special requirements due to nitrates also remain in force for operators within a corridor generally along Highway 6 from Waverly to Ashland. Our ground water annual review also makes note that the NRD Board approved guidelines in 2016 for ending a Phase II or Phase III designation. While the NRD has not yet used the new procedure, its creation is an encouraging sign landowner cooperation is making a difference in some of these areas. The complete "Ground Water Management Plan 2016 Annual Review," an explanation of NRD Phase II and Phase III designations and a map of district ground water reservoirs are available at LPSNRD.org. Click on Programs



HEGY TO RETIRE

NRD Operation and Maintenance Coordinator Jeff Hegy is celebrating a career that spans 32 years and four NRDs this summer. Hegy will retire August first. He enrolled in a work-study program with the Twin Platte NRD, based in North Platte, in 1985 and was also employed at

the Papio-Missouri River NRD in Omaha and the Upper Big Blue NRD in York, before coming to the Lower Platte South 26 years ago. Hegy coordinates the NRD's operation and maintenance staff and is responsible for all inspections, operations and maintenance of Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee. He said the continual increase in NRD responsibilities for preserving and protecting natural resources through the years has been most impressive during his tenure. Hegy and his wife, Mary, have two sons and are looking forward to spending more time with their family and canoeing. Jeff's work here will be missed.

BOARD MOURNS PASSING, FILLS VACANCY

The NRD was saddened by the passing of Subdistrict 8 Director Larry Hall in March. Hall had served on the Board of Directors since 2005, chairing the Information and Education and the Land Resources subcommittees. His commitment to preserving and protecting natural resources was truly an inspiration.

Dan Steinkruger was appointed in May to fill the board vacancy. Steinkruger served on the NRD Board from 1995 to 2009 and is a former Board Chair. Because he was appointed, Steinkruger's term will end in December, 2018. Subdistrict 8 includes much of the area in Lincoln between "O" Street and Pioneers, from 33rd Street to 84th Street. A detailed map of the subdistrict is available at LPSNRD.org.



Dan Steinkruger

CORPS REPAIRS LEVEE NOW, MORE WORK TO COME

continued from page 1

from Rosa Parks Way. Damage at both sites, according to NRD Operation and Maintenance Coordinator Jeff Hegy, “occurred during storms in the spring of 2015 and could allow water to seep through the levee, damaging it further if not corrected.” TCW Construction, of Lincoln, was low bidder on the project at just over \$500,000 and the Corps will pay the entire cost under the federal PL84-99 rehabilitation program.



This portion of the Salt Creek Levee, near Rosa Parks Way, is one of two areas to be repaired this year by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The NRD is eligible for the federal program thanks to its participation in the Corp’s System Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) program through which the NRD will update the levee over the next fifteen years. The NRD is the local sponsor of the levee and began working with the Corps and JEO Consulting Group in 2015 to develop a multi-year plan and priorities for completing numerous updates to the 13-mile levee system, which reduces the risk of flooding in Lincoln neighborhoods, and business districts. The NRD’s District Engineer Devin Biesecker said, “A final SWIF plan has been submitted to the Corps for approval. In it, the NRD commits \$500,000 per year for the next 15 years toward improvements.” The public can keep up with our progress and get insight on the project by visiting saltcreeklevee.jeo.com.

MOM’S DAY RIDE

May 12th was a perfect day for the annual “Friday Before Mother’s Day Ride 2017”. About 70 horses and riders made their way along the NRD’s Oak Creek Trail, from Valparaiso to Loma and back. The event has grown in popularity since the Nebraska Horse Trails Committee completed an equestrian trail from Valparaiso to Brainard, within the Oak Creek Trail corridor, in 2005.



BUDGET TIME

Public comments on any NRD project or activity are always welcomed by our Board of Directors. That’s especially true as the board and staff assemble a Fiscal Year 2018 Budget. Here are several opportunities in coming weeks to address the board about the budget:

• **Wednesday, June 21, 6:00 PM** – Board of Directors Meeting and Public Input Session

- **Wednesday, July 19, 7:00 PM** – Board of Directors Meeting and tentative budget approval
- **Thursday, August 10, 7:00 PM** – Public Hearing on Budget and on Budget Level
- **Wednesday, August 16, 7:00 PM** – Board of Directors Meeting and Budget Approval

All meetings are at the LPSNRD office, 3125 Portia Street, Lincoln. You may also personally contact your subdistrict representatives on the board. Contact information is available at LPSNRD.org. Click on About Us.

PROGRESS ON DMR PLAN

continued from page 1

of the cost, the Corps can only furnish \$10 million. The rest is up to the City and NRD; the two local sponsors of the project; and the cost waiver commits both to funding the balance of the project.

If the project, as currently planned, is completed, the DMR channel would be wider between 48th Street and Cornhusker

Highway, there would be new bridges at 48th, 38th and 33rd streets, an area west of the Fleming Fields sports complex would be a detention basin, and many properties would be removed from the floodplain, along with other improvements. The plan had the best benefit-to-cost ratio of four possibilities outlined by the Corps at a public meeting in January. Watch LPSNRD.org for details about future public meetings.



Lincoln's Deadmans Run drains an area from approximately 82nd and Van Dorn streets to near Cornhusker Highway at 27th Street and has a history of severe flooding.

NRD'S 45TH

Nebraska's NRDs will celebrate their 45th year, starting July 1st. Each of the state's 23 NRDs is making its own plans to commemorate and the Lower Platte South plans a special event on Tuesday, June 27th, during the weekly Nacho Ride along the MoPac East Trail from Lincoln to Eagle. Look for us at the 84th Street Trailhead that evening to get a free T-shirt! You may want to wear it as you pedal to Bailey's Local in Eagle for nachos. The Nacho Ride has become a popular MoPac East Trail summertime tradition. Each Tuesday evening, bike riders parade to Eagle and back, enjoying the trail, the comradery and the cuisine.

The Nebraska Legislature enacted laws in 1972 combining 154 special purpose entities into Natural Resources Districts. Some of our accomplishments since then include the Weeping Water and Stevens Creek watershed projects; operation and maintenance of Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee; development and operation of more than 180 flood control dams; the Antelope Valley Project; MoPac East, Oak Creek, Homestead and Salt Creek Levee trails; ground water monitoring; and the restoration of several saline wetlands.



MARSH WREN NEARLY READY

The finishing touches are being installed on a system the NRD hopes will restore its Marsh Wren property to the pristine saline wetland it once was. By excavating a bank along Little Salt Creek to allow more frequent flooding and by installing two salt water production wells and a distribution system, it's hoped the 150 acres near 40th Street and Arbor Road will soon start reclaiming the rare saline wetland characteristics that were once common in northern Lancaster and southern Saunders counties. Study and planning began in 2014 and the \$1.1 million cost is covered, in-part, by a Nebraska

Environmental Trust grant to the City of Lincoln, through the Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership. The nearly-completed project also includes a public parking area and a shaded observation deck.

Saline wetlands are a result of artesian salt water rising to the surface and depositing salt into the soil until only salt tolerant and dependent plants and animals can survive there. There are only a few places on the planet where the phenomenon occurs and the NRD hopes one of those places; Marsh Wren; is about to be restored.



SUMMER CONSERVATION

May 1st marked the start of our Summer Conservation season, after recent improvements in the program. Landowners should consult their local NRCS office about how to take advantage of increased LPSNRD incentives for improving soil and water conservation practices during expanded summer months. Our cost-share rate is 10% higher, not to exceed 85% and the cost-sharing limit is increased from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

SEEDLING SALES

Approximately 250 landowners planted more than 30,000 seedling trees and shrubs in the district as a result of the NRD's 2017 sale. Orders for planting in 2018 will begin in November and landowners should watch LPSNRD.org at that time for details. About 30 species, specially selected for windbreaks, wildlife habitat and other uses, are sold in bulk each year.



PLATTE RIVER AGREEMENT EMERGES

An agreement that updates operations of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (Alliance) was being considered for approval by the Alliance's three NRDs and six other agencies in late May. The plan establishes a 12-member Alliance board consisting of two representatives from each of the three NRDs and one member from each of the six agencies. Membership consists of the Lower Platte South, Lower Platte North and Papio- Missouri River NRDs, the NE Dept. of Environmental Quality; NE Dept. of Natural Resources; NE Dept. of Health and Human Services; NE Game and Parks

Commission; the NE Military Department; and UNL School of Natural Resources, Conservation & Survey Division & NE Water Center.

The Alliance board would meet quarterly under the agreement and a subcommittee made up the NRD representatives would first review all proposals and make recommendations to the full board. The agreement also reorganizes Alliance funds. The Alliance was created in 1996 to promote the understanding and protection of the unique resources of the Lower Platte River. Learn more at lowerplatte.org.

WEB OR PRINT?

You can have a link to an electronic version of this newsletter, which includes convenient web links to interactive maps, more detailed information about the NRD and more, delivered right to your inbox! All you need to do is visit our newsletter subscription page, at

lpsnrd.org, under Publications, to sign up. The NRD will not share your email address. Look for the printed newsletter in District newspapers in February, June and October.

NRD PROJECT UPDATE

Ash Hollow Dry Dam, Waverly: completion expected this summer to control flooding in town and remove 90 properties from the floodplain. Construction cost, \$1.2 million; 50% Waverly, 50% NRD.

Beal Slough Erosion Protection: repairs and excavation to control erosion south of NE State Penitentiary along Beal Slough channel. Construction bids from contractors were opened June 8th.

Oak Creek Weir Repair: repairs, excavation, grading and stabilization work on Oak Creek at 1st Street, Lincoln. Construction bids were to be opened on June 15th.

Salt Creek Levee - Rosa Parks Trail: Permit pending to do test boring for future trail segment. 80% NE Department of Roads, 20% NRD.

Salt Creek Levee Repairs: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

has hired TCW Construction, of Lincoln, to repair damage caused by 2015 storms near Cornhusker Highway and near Rosa Parks Way. Cost: \$500,000; 100% Corps. Completion by the end of this year.

Deadmans Run Flood Risk Reduction: proposal being considered to improve DMR channel below 48th Street, including channel widening, bridge replacements, a detention basin and more to remove many properties from the floodplain. Estimated cost, \$23 million; \$10 million Corps, remainder split between City of Lincoln & NRD.

Marsh Wren Restoration: excavation and installation of salt water irrigation system to restore saline wetland near 40th & Arbor Road, Lincoln. Completion expected this summer. Estimated cost, \$1.1 million; partially covered by NET grant through Saline Wetlands Partnership.