



## LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

3125 Portia Street | P.O. Box 83581 • Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-3581 | P: 402.476.2729 • F: 402.476.6454 | [www.lpsnrd.org](http://www.lpsnrd.org)

### MEMORANDUM

Date: July 11, 2023

To: Board of Directors

From: Will Inselman, Resources Coordinator and Trent Henry, Operation & Maintenance Technician

Subject: 2023 North American Prairie Conference

The North American Prairie Conference took place in Des Moines, IA this year, June 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>. This conference brought over 600 prairie enthusiasts, researchers, and managers from all over the continent together for a week of learning, sharing, and networking. The event consisted of three days filled with various talks that ranged from rigorous, science-based experiences to anecdotal and observational experiences.

#### **Will Inselman**

One of the biggest takeaways from the conference was the importance of managing prairies, both restored and reconstructed prairies. The viewpoints on management techniques varied greatly among researchers, but ultimately the best techniques contained various combinations of management tools, with controlled burning being the most discussed.

It was interesting to hear the varying perspectives on how cattle grazing impacts on native prairies. Perspectives here varied different from a state like Nebraska where cattle are plentiful and using cattle to manage prairies has been an approach since the bison disappeared. Similarly, there was great discussion on the importance of native, local-ecotype prairies in combating issues related to climate change. There was a consensus for the need of local-ecotype plantings and maintaining high diversity in future restorations/reconstructions.

One full day during the conference was dedicated to field trips to learn more about prairies across Iowa. The trip that Trent and I went on focused on an area near Des Moines that had the same approach to protection and restoration as our Prairie Corridor project. The area was an approximately 11,500-acre reconstruction that stretches nearly 10 miles along the South Skunk River. Managers talked about the process of how this came to be from the acquisition of properties to the various

difficulties of management, multiple use recreation, etc. Overall, it was a great field trip and our group saw a lot of unique species of plants and wildlife.

### **Trent Henry**

The reoccurring theme that I encountered at the North American Prairie Conference was the topic of insects, and the one of the main points that I took home was how to use insects to assess how prairie restorations are coming along. Up until now, I have only been paying attention to a handful of insects while I am out working on the District's properties, but the presentations that I attended that discussed how to use insects as a metric to measure the success of a prairie restoration inspired me to pay more attention to all of the insects that I see when I am walking around our prairie restoration sites that we are responsible for.

While at this conference, I also really enjoyed learning about the STRIPS (Science-based Trails of Row crops Integrated with Prairie Strips) program and how effective this practice is at cutting down topsoil erosion along with keeping fertilizer runoff to a minimum. This was the first time that I had heard about this program, and we had the opportunity to sit in on a presentation that was given by the co-founder of the project at Iowa State University. This presentation was very encouraging to me because it focused on the research being done to effectively counteract these negative side-effects of row-crop agriculture by combining agriculture with prairie conservation.



## LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

3125 Portia Street | P.O. Box 83581 • Lincoln, Nebraska 68501-3581

P: 402.476.2729 • F: 402.476.6454 | [www.lpsnrd.org](http://www.lpsnrd.org)

### Memorandum

**Date:** July 11, 2023  
**To:** Board of Directors  
**From:** Mark Lindemann, District Engineer  
**Subject:** Urban Subcommittee Background Information – June 2023

The Water Environment Federation (WEF) held their annual Stormwater Summit for 2023 in Kansas City, Missouri from June 27<sup>th</sup> through the 29<sup>th</sup>. The conference was attended by stormwater professionals and practitioners represented by engineers, exhibitors, and local, state, and federal agencies, all with interests in improving stormwater management and water quality.

On June 27<sup>th</sup>, I attended a pre-conference workshop that focused on the use of technology to improve the stormwater industry. Several engineers and representatives from Johnson County, Kansas, which covers southwest Kansas City, presented on what they have done and are working on to improve stormwater management and infrastructure. The Kansas City area is leading the nation in innovation and efficiencies in stormwater management at a time where stormwater infrastructure is aging and needing repair or replacement and staffing shortages continue to be a concern.

The technical sessions on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> offered a variety of topics to choose from, and I focused on sessions on the use of technology to improve stormwater management and stormwater sustainability and resiliency.

The demonstrations and presentations on how simple sensors can be used with real-time forecasting to control detention storage basins was very interesting to me. Depending on the intent of the basin, a system can be designed to store water longer to provide better flood protection and improved water quality downstream. And, if a forecast shows rain is eminent, the sensors can begin to draw down the basin to make room for the approaching rain. During a technology exhibit, a vendor was able to demonstrate in real time how these systems operate. I was impressed on how it provided the maximum benefit possible for both flood protection and water quality for the watershed downstream. There was a lot of interest and questions from practitioners on how such systems could be used in their own watersheds.

Sessions attended on Stormwater Sustainability and Resiliency presented on the use of nature-based stormwater solutions, use of flood risk maps for resiliency, and stormwater capture to enhance water sustainability. A presentation of interest was a case study of an intermodal rail park in Kansas City that used a conservation corridor in a soon to be a highly industrialized area that used nature-based engineering such as native plantings in detention cells, constructing a natural channel, and designing

wetlands to create a well-functioning stormwater system that cost less to build and requires less maintenance. This solution is also more aesthetically to view than a traditional urban stormwater project.

The knowledge, case studies, and firsthand experiences shared by stormwater experts and stormwater agencies was something I can use here at the NRD to help evaluate our own projects. I'm appreciative of the opportunity to learn and network with the attendees.

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)  
DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST'S MONTHLY REPORT  
7/14/2023**

**PERSONNEL/OFFICE**

- The Lancaster and Cass County Service Centers are under normal operations.

**LPSNRD LAND TREATMENT**

- Drought conditions impacted the installation of structural practices across the district during the fall of 2022 and spring of 2023. Currently jobs are being released on a site-by-site determination based upon a soil moisture evaluation.
- The LPSNRD currently has the following land treatment cost-share program applications:
  - Lancaster County
    - 6 Summer 2023 Structural Applications – 3 Completed Projects
    - 35 Completed Fall 2022 Cover Crop Applications
    - 13 Fall 2023 Structural Applications
  - Cass County
    - 4 Summer 2023 Structural Applications
    - 4 Completed Cover Crop Applications
    - 14 Fall 2023 Structural Applications

**USDA PROGRAMS**

- Planning staff are wrapping up contracting for all preapproved Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and EQIP-Inflation Reduction Act applications.
- Planning staff are completing CRP status reviews/site visits.
- Planning staff are planning/contracting the new CRP General and Continuous sign-up applications.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- None currently

Tom Cowan – District Conservationist