



NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES DISTRICTS



ANNUAL REPORT

2015



NARD BOARD PRESIDENT

TERRY MARTIN



The NRD System here in Nebraska is **ALIVE** and **WELL**

We know the NRD System is **ALIVE** because the health of our natural resources continues to improve year in and year out, even as we put more and more pressure on them. Our soils continue to sustain an ever-growing population, and our water is as abundant and pure as any found around the world.

We know the NRD System is **WELL** because many other states are asking us how we operate. Our natural resources are the most productive in many categories nationally and we continue to improve the wellbeing of our natural resources time and time again.

This is no coincidence. I ask you to look at the accomplishments highlighted in this year's Annual Report and think about how much human effort went into each. We are where we are because of the Nebraska people who understand natural resources and who can make good things happen.

This fabulous track record begins at the local level where most NRD employees work tirelessly to educate, promote, and implement good and workable programs. They have the local support of local communities, and the system is blessed with support at the regional and state level.

We can never say "good enough!" Our efforts must continue. Very talented people have come and gone here in the NRD System. It has been my privilege to recognize a few of them and their accomplishments. The system is made up of many, many good and talented people, and that is our strength. I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedication and tireless efforts to our cause.

Since I began as an Association Board Member, I have saved every Annual Report. Not because NRD accomplishments are forgettable, but because there have been **SO MANY** accomplishments and so much **HARD WORK** put forth by so many people as you all continue to protect lives, protect property and protect the future.

NARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The **NARD Executive Committee** consists of the NARD board officers and the chairs of the Information and Education and Legislative committees. The NARD board consists of representation from each of the local 23 NRDs. The board members meet five times throughout the year and help guide the association.

Terry Martin from the Upper Republican NRD is the current NARD President. Martin has served on the Upper Republican NRD board for fourteen years, on the NARD board for seven years and previously held the Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer positions.

Jim Bendfeldt from the Central Platte NRD is the current NARD Vice President. Bendfeldt has served twelve years on the CPNRD Board. He has served four years as an NARD Board representative. Bendfeldt previously served as the NARD Board Secretary/Treasurer.

Larry Reynolds from the Tri-Basin NRD is the current Secretary/Treasurer. Reynolds has been on the Board for three years.

NARD executive committee members, include the president, vice-president, secretary/treasurer and the following three individuals; Jim Meismer from Twin Platte NRD, chair of the Legislative Committee; Jim Johnson from South Platte NRD, chair of the Information and Education Committee, and Ted Hughes, past NARD President.



Upper Republican NRD

NARD FOUNDATION

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts' Foundation was established as a way to support youth with a desire to enter the field of natural resources. In FY 2014-15, more than \$41,000 were raised for the NARD Foundation to support programs where people of all ages can learn more about natural resources. Funds were raised through a variety of activities including the Ron Bishop Memorial Golf Tournament, a 5K run, and a live and silent auction at the Annual Conference. More than \$24,000 was dispersed in FY 2014-15 to fund the following programs:

- The Nebraska Envirothon is an agriculture, wildlife and science competition for grades 9-12. The top three teams at the state level were also provided \$3,000 to support the program at their local schools. The winning team was provided funding to compete at the National Envirothon.



Career Fair, NAYI

- The Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute (NAYI) is a weeklong conference held each July for juniors and seniors in high school to learn more about agriculture and natural resources in Nebraska and encourages them to consider careers in both.

- Ag Day on the Hill: The Foundation sponsors five Nebraska college students to attend National Ag Day in Washington D.C. The students learn about agriculture and natural resources issues.

- NARD Foundation sponsored three FFA awards in Outdoor-Recreation Proficiency, Natural Resources Chapter Award, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Career Development Event (CDE) at the Annual State FFA Convention held in Lincoln in early April. The Foundation also sponsored the Agriculture Issues Academy, an FFA program where students learn how to take a leadership role in positively promoting their ag./natural resources message.



Ag Day on the Hill

- The Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness spreads a positive agriculture message to teachers, students and parents about the importance of agriculture.

- Sponsorship of the Groundwater Foundation Annual meeting.

- Contributions to the Nebraska FFA Foundation to support the Blue Jackets-Bright Futures program. The foundation provides assistance to the FFA programs in schools throughout Nebraska.

- Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE). The camp is open to sixth through eighth graders. Students focus on learning about Nebraska's natural resources in a fun and creative way.

- The Nebraska LEAD (Leadership, Education, Action and Development) Program strives to provide young men and women with skills and experiences needed to become leaders and advocates for agriculture.

- Supporter of the Nebraska Great Park Pursuit. The Great Park Pursuit promotes active lifestyles while increasing awareness of the nature-rich outdoor recreation opportunities throughout Nebraska.



ACE Camp

- The NRD Oral History Project to record, store and disseminate interviews with early leaders about the NRDs. The program was started by Jim Baar, Dayle Williamson, Ron Fleecs and Gayle Starr. Partners in the program include NARD, The UNL Water Center and the Nebraska Historical Society

Thanks goes out to all of you that participate with NARD Foundation events to help further the efforts to encourage Nebraskans to learn more about our natural resources!

TREE PROGRAM

With just over 800,000 trees and shrubs sold through the NRD tree program this past year, the NRDs eclipsed a new milestone! Since the NRDs' formation in 1972, the NRD tree program has assisted Nebraska landowners in planting more than 95 million trees!

The association remains dedicated toward continuing and expanding this remarkable program. By continuing the Husker Harvest Days tree giveaway, creating tree marketing videos and attending a variety of tradeshow, NRDs and the Association continue to promote and marketing the tree program to as many Nebraska landowners as possible!



Tree/Shrub Planting

NRD/NARD PUBLIC RELATIONS

(Information and Education)

Major progress has been made throughout the last year as Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts continue to promote and market their districts to the public through a variety of media avenues. Several NRDs are investing their time into more public relations practices than ever before. A couple of NRDs have committed their districts to joining social media with a goal to reach a wider and younger demographic. One district has even turned its public relations outreach up a notch by hiring a part-time employee to focus solely on posting NRD news, videos, pictures and events on its social media sites daily! The number of people following the Natural Resources Districts' Facebook page has doubled in one year and the NRD Twitter feed has gained nearly 400 more followers.

The Natural Resources Districts have increased their presence on TV forums for Channel 8 KLKNTV and 10/11 News almost monthly promoting the latest NRD event, NRD message, new NRD programs available and conservation tips. A few examples include the NRDs' stance on WOTUS (Waters of the US Rule), NRD 5K Run/One Mile Walk in the Lower Platte North NRD, NRD Tree Program and Husker Harvest Days. Several NRDs continue to do weekly reports for KRVN radio to inform the public what the NRD is working on in their district and encourage conservation of the state's natural resources.



Flood Damage in Emergency Spillway in LBBNRD

This year, the NRDs received a lot of attention due to heavy rains and flooding in different parts of the state. This was the perfect opportunity for our districts affected by the rains, to promote their own positive messaging on why flood prevention structures are necessary in protecting lives and property. Newspapers, radio stations, television stations and even online bloggers reported on the millions of dollars in damage the NRD flood structures prevented with our levees and dams in place. Thank goodness for the Natural Resources Districts!

Another large media event was the announcement of the Niobrara River Agreement. This agreement made big headlines when the NRDs went public.



Niobrara River Agreement Press Conference

Erika Hill, Public Relations Director for the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, worked closely with the five NRDs involved in the agreement and two other agencies involved to develop a public relations and marketing plan that made sure to promote how the NRDs will continue to positively protect the Niobrara River for decades to come.

NARD is also proud to have stood side by side with Governor Pete Ricketts during a press conference in speaking out against the Waters of the U.S. rule (WOTUS). NARD did its part in getting its message out to the public and continues to work at keeping Nebraska's water and natural resources decisions at the local level.

NET is in the process of interviewing and shooting video for the Natural Resources Districts' hour-long program to educate the public about the history of the NRDs, conservation programs, overall mission to better Nebraska and much more. Attendees at the 2016 Legislative Conference will get a short sneak-peak of the program. It's set to air in early 2016.

Nebraska's Envirothon team from Concordia High School received 11th place out of 54 teams at the NCF Envirothon in Springfield, Missouri this year. That's the best a Nebraska team has ever ranked when competing at nationals! Congratulations Concordia!

The NCF Envirothon will be in Ontario, Canada in Summer 2016.



NCF Envirothon Team - Concordia High School

Several new videos are available to the public on the **NRD YouTube** page. The Natural Resources Districts are taking a great interest in new video capabilities and making the most out of it. So far, videos include flood prevention on the Wilber Dam, NRD Foundation video and video taken of the Niobrara River. More videos are in the process of being written and edited. Many NRDs also have big plans for future videos specifically designed for their own districts as well.

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICTS/ NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES LIASON

We've seen the headlines in the past, "High Plains States Mining Their Water", "Aquifer Pumped Dry" and so on. In last year's update, I spoke to these countless articles and I attempted to contrast the more positive situation here in Nebraska with that of a more dire situation from our neighbors. Fortunately, over the past year we've seen a surge of long overdue media coverage highlighting the success stories of our Natural Resources Districts as we continue to conserve water and our natural resources.

While other states work to catch up, Nebraska continues to push forward. This past year, we've seen even more evidence that Nebraska's approach to local control and management led by the Natural Resources Districts is an effective and successful method of water management.

Nowhere are the successes of the NRD system more understated than in the Republican River Basin. Despite being faced with nearly impossible hurdles and economically devastating consequences, Nebraska was able to utilize the local Natural Resources Districts, along with significant cooperation from the State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and most importantly, local landowners to formulate and implement projects to protect the state from failing to meet compliance with the interstate compact. Thanks to these collaboration efforts and projects such as NCORPE, the US Supreme Court ruled favorable for Nebraska. With these new projects, the court's ruling and continued cooperation in the basin, local water users have been protected and irrigated agriculture critical to the area's economy remains viable. A new basin-wide planning effort led by the



Middle Republican NRD

DNR, local stakeholders and local NRD's this past year is working to ensure the future remains protected.



Basin Tour 2015

Momentum also continued this year in the over appropriated portion of the Platte basin. Here, NRDs built further on the efforts to partner with DNR and local irrigators to implement projects for Integrated Management Plans. Continued collaboration and cooperation with many of the surface water projects in the basin allowed for NRDs and DNR to be prepared when Mother Nature dumped excess flood water in the South Platte River. The districts capitalized on the opportunities that the excess flows brought helping to mitigate flooding risks, while also retiming flows to assist in meeting requirements of the Platte River Program and the goals and objectives of the districts integrated management plans. Continued collaboration between all parties in the basin will ensure that the requirements of the Platte River Program are met and that the area can be returned to fully appropriated and yield a stable and sustainable future for water users in the basin.

Water planning efforts have also been extensively improved across other parts of the state this year. Nearly all NRDs in the state have completed, or have begun the process of completing an IMP with the DNR. Voluntary IMP efforts across the state have provided stakeholders and water users an opportunity to address concerns. The process has yielded discussions that have led to new conjunctive management opportunities. This past year also brought a lot of progress in basin-wide planning efforts. Several NRDs in the Lower Platte Basin have partnered with DNR to voluntarily pursue a basin-wide management plan. Collaboration also continues between

NRDs in the Niobrara Basin and the DNR to develop a basin-wide plan for the Niobrara Basin. These plans work to ensure standard accounting methods for supplies and demands are maintained. Planning efforts also utilize basin-wide collaboration to maximize conjunctive management opportunities, such as a September 2015 Niobrara River agreement that works to protect all water users in the basin. Other efforts in the Lower Platte Basin are working to ensure an adequate supply of water is maintained for downstream municipal purposes, while subsequently protecting existing upstream uses and allowing for managed growth. As the DNR continues to work toward adopting new rules and methods for the evaluation of fully appropriated basins, the INSIGHT tool is seeing continued improvements with



Niobrara River

the DNR and the NRDs collaborating to ensure effective accounting is utilized. These continued improvements will aid in the IMP and basin-wide planning efforts.

Despite all the progress over the past year and the many years prior, challenges continue to exist. Fortunately with Nebraska's local management system, opportunities continue to far outweigh challenges. With the NRD system, working to utilize the opportunities to improve on the challenges is a relentless effort. It'll be no surprise when next year at this time I'll be highlighting the fact that Nebraska's NRDs have put us in an even better spot than we were this year. That's what makes Nebraska's system so great; constant improvement and assurance that our state's water and the economy that relies on it, is sustainable and protected for future generations!

- Dustin Wilcox, NRD/NDNR Liason

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICTS/ NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY LIASON

The **NRD/NDEQ Liason** position was created to work collaboratively with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) and the Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) regarding environmental issues. I strive to promote the use of area-wide conservation planning at watershed, area, and basin levels and facilitate cooperation between the NRDs, NDEQ and other agencies in implementing water quality management programs. Not only do I represent the NRDs, but also the NDEQ on several committees and working groups.

The NARD hosts a number of events throughout the year and this position is responsible for assisting in coordinating the events and providing Continuing Education Unit (CEU) opportunities for NRD staff at those events. All Natural Resources Groundwater Technicians who collect water samples for the NRDs must pass an examination through the Department of Health and Human Services and maintain 12 hours of CEUs every two years. Statutory changes were made to Title 178 Water Well Standards resulting in examinations needing to be re-evaluated and updated. Currently, I'm the advisor on the board reviewing and updating the Natural Resources Groundwater Technicians Exam.

Additionally, this position will write and review grants for the



NPNRD

NRDs and the NDEQ. This year the NARD partnered with the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture and submitted a Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) Grant for Platte River Management and Enhancement. We provided a letter of support for an NET grant submitted by the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance to use LiDAR data to prioritize BMP implementation to

address impaired waterbodies. Additionally we supported an NET grant submitted by the University of Nebraska-Conservation and Survey Division to develop a centralized infrastructure for statewide hydrogeologic information.

This position has a specific focus of working on water quality issues through the state. Also, this position communicates any changes related to regulations or funding for various programs at the NDEQ to the NRDs. Other activities associated with this position include writing annual reports, assisting with Environment and Husker Harvest Days, and developing monitoring plans and quality assurance project plans.

- Jennifer Swanson, NRD/NDEQ Liason

NRD WELLNESS COMMITTEE

NARD, Work Well, Inc., and the Nebraska Safety Council offers an employee wellness program to promote a safe and healthy work environment. The wellness program provides tools and resources to NRD employees and Board members to help them be successful in making healthy lifestyle choices.

The wellness program was created as an addition to the NRD's existing Risk Pool Health Insurance Program administered by NARD. NARD Board members and NRD Managers saw the creation of a wellness program as a way to keep insurance premiums low and continue to save tax-payer dollars. NARD provides assistance to the 23 NRD wellness delegates to help coordinate individual wellness programs. The main objective is to create a fun, friendly, non-intimidating wellness program that challenges employees to meet their district wellness goals. Many programs put on toy drives, collection for local food banks and health screenings.

NARD and the NRDs offer a variety of wellness opportunities and challenges for all fitness levels. This year the Wellness Committee sponsored a 1 Mile Walk and 5K Fun Run to promote a healthy lifestyle at Lake Wanahoo. The event was open to the public and raised over \$4,200 for the NARD Foundation! The newest venture the Wellness committee created is a NRD Pinterest board! This allows staff to follow NRD boards of healthy meals, exercise routines and many more ideas on Pinterest to help encourage more people to take care of their bodies and share with others. Follow us at www.pinterest.com/nrdnet.

Participants in the wellness program have shown improvements in their health, including weight loss, increase in physical activity, healthier eating habits, increase in health screenings and flu shots. As a result of the success of the NRDs wellness program, many of the NRDs have received the Governors Excellence in Wellness Award.

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICTS HALL OF FAME



Mary Ann and Jim Wortmann

Hall of Fame inductees Jim Wortmann and Mary Ann Wortmann were nominated by the Lewis and Clark Natural Resources District. Jim served on the NRD board for 28 years, from 1974 to 2002, and was chairman for many of those years. Jim followed in his father's footsteps, Henry Wortmann, who was an original board member appointed in 1972. He also served as NARD delegate for 24 years, representing the Lewis & Clark NRD until 2002. After Jim retired, Mary Ann was elected to replace Jim on the NRD board and served in that position for 12 years, from 2002 to 2014. She also took over responsibilities as NARD delegate for those years and was chosen as the first female president of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, serving two terms in that capacity. They have been active conservationists, supporters of education, and solid voices with our legislators at the state and national level.



John Turnbull

Hall of Fame inductee John Turnbull was nominated by the Upper Republican Natural Resources District. John faithfully served our nation in the U.S. Army from 1966-69 which included flying helicopters in South Vietnam. He served 17 more years with the Nebraska Army National Guard. John joined Nebraska's Natural Resources District (NRD) system by becoming the General Manager of the Tri-Basin NRD in 1975. In 1978, Mr. Turnbull assumed the General Manager position at the Upper Big Blue NRD and is currently in his 40th year of service at Nebraska's NRDs. In 1961, there were approximately 300,000 acres of irrigated land throughout the District. Today, the District totals 1.2 million irrigated acres. Through the implementation of groundwater rules and regulations to manage the resource, the NRDs are proud to report there has been little change in the groundwater levels District-wide even after the growth of an additional 800,000 irrigated acres during Mr. Turnbull's successful tenure.



Jim Cook

Hall of Fame inductee Jim Cook was nominated by Nemaha Natural Resources District. Jim was a key attorney at the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission from 1970 - 2000, involved with helping to establish the Natural Resources Districts' system across Nebraska in 1972. As NRDs grew and programs such as the Groundwater Act, Chemigation Act, and Erosion and Sediment Control Act came along, Jim would develop templates that NRDs could use and he would review rules and regulations. His assistance saved NRDs thousands of dollars in legal assistance over the years. Small NRDs in particular greatly benefited from Jim's help. Jim also served as the Chief legal counsel for the new Department of Natural Resources until 2003. He also invested much of his time on major issues such as the Republican River Compact and Platte River Recovery Program as he protected Nebraska's interests and natural resources for more than 40 years.

NEBRASKA PROTECTING LIVES, PROTECTING PR

Middle Niobrara NRD collected 370 nitrate samples, conducted 253 chemigation inspections, sold 63,355 trees and monitored 197 static water level sites. MNNRD and NDNR both approved a six-month temporary stay on the addition of new groundwater and surface water irrigated acres following expiration of LB483. The District and the Basin NRD's are working on Voluntary IMP's.



The **Lower Niobrara NRD** began construction of a new well field for the West Knox Rural Water System. The project includes construction of two new wells, an 8 inch transmission line to existing well field and a new telemetry systems to control and monitor the entire system. The system provides clean, safe drinking water to the residents of Verdigre and Winnetoon and 222 rural residents in Knox County.

The **Upper Niobrara NRD** is a Voluntary IMP District with Resources to manage groundwater. The District allows any...



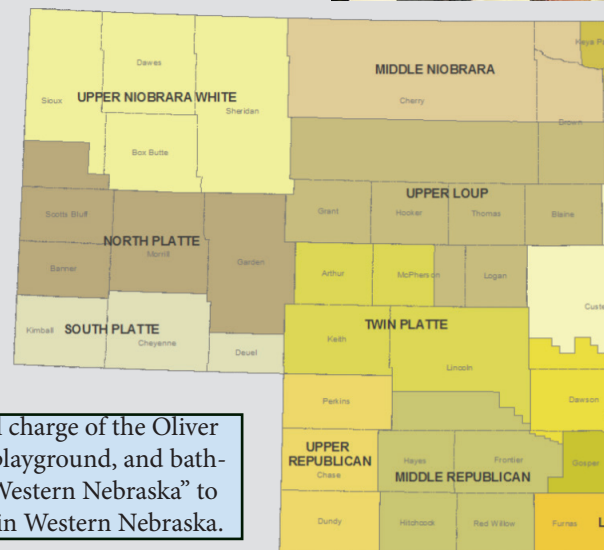
Upper Niobrara White NRD is divided into six groundwater quantity management subareas where irrigators in two of the most densely irrigated areas are adjusting to a five year, 65 inch groundwater allocation period. The District has recently secured 319 Funding for a White River-Hat Creek Watershed Project and is also in development stages with downstream Niobrara Basin NRDs of a Niobrara River Basin Plan.

Upper Loup NRD's main focus is on developing an Integrated Basin plan with the Lower Platte South Basin and the Niobrara River Basin and our own voluntary IMP. When our recycling program began back in 2010, we collected 51,400 lbs. In 2014, we collected 158,611 lbs. We are currently involved in a spatial and temporal characteristics study of the Loup River Basin and partnering with a red cedar removal project and 319 study of the south loup water shed.

The **Lower Loup NRD** is in Lincoln and Kearney Counties. The LLNRD covers the Lower Loup River Basin. The LLNRD...



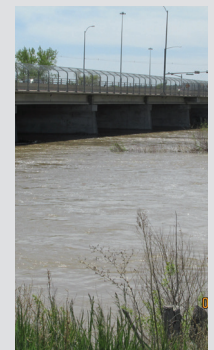
The **North Platte NRD** has accomplished much over the past year. NPNRD (1) instituted a telemetry pilot project that will provide flow meter readings that producers and staff can view through a website; (2) required flow meters in the fully appropriated area to provide additional pumping data for our model; and (3) purchased water quality testing kits for domestic well users.



This past year was the second year the **South Platte NRD** has been in full charge of the Oliver Reservoir Recreation Area with repairs and upgrades to the picnic area, playground, and bathroom areas. Work also continues with the NET grant "Hydrogeology of Western Nebraska" to gain a better understanding of the geology and ground water movement in Western Nebraska.

The **Upper Republican NRD** and other NRDs in the Republican Basin kept the State of Nebraska in compliance with the Republican River Compact by operating the NCORPE augmentation project in Lincoln County and the Rock Creek Augmentation project in Dundy County. A U.S. Supreme Court ruling in early 2015 upheld Nebraska's compact compliance methodologies and prevented a permanent irrigation shutdown on up to 500,000 acres. Kansas had also sought \$70 million for noncompliance in 2005 and 2006 but instead was awarded just 7% of its financial demand.

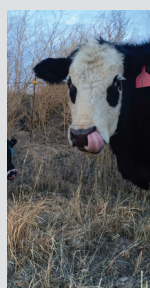
The **Twin Platte NRD** has been working with local irrigation districts diverting excess flows, and recently entered into permanent lease agreements with five irrigation districts to divert excess flows when available. The TPNRD will be conducting engineering analyses on these systems late summer/early fall 2015. The TPNRD is also moving forward with the north pipeline from the N-CORPE property. Construction is scheduled to begin late 2016. Both of these projects are moving the TPNRD closer to being in compliance with their Integrated Management Plan.



Tri-Basin Nebraska Irrigation Districts are working on a \$1 million project to acquire 1,000 acre-feet of groundwater.



The **Middle Republican NRD** is developing a calibrated transient groundwater flow model of the Medicine Creek Basin. Developing this robust tool will allow the Board of Directors to make decisions with a more science based answer. The MRNRD is also working on the Culbertson Canal Recharge Study to evaluate the aquifer recharge benefits along the Culbertson Canal between the Frenchman River diversion and Blackwood Creek.



The **Lower Republican NRD** reports water usage for the 2014 irrigation season averaged 5.58 acre inches. Conservation and Management Actions have allowed the LRNRD to maintain a positive 2014/2015 balance for Compact Compliance. The LRNRD in conjunction with the MRNRD and URNRD has applied for a 3.5 million dollar Regional Conservation Partnership Program Grant through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This grant will further enhance conservation measures in the Republican Basin.

NEBRASKA'S NRDs PROTECTING PROPERTY, PROTECTING THE FUTURE!

Lower Elkhorn NRD approved a motion in 2015 to develop a new Integrated Management Plan for the District. The NRD will partner with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and take input from stakeholders to develop a plan to manage ground and surface water for current and future uses. The NRD also suspended the 2015 acre expansion sign-up to not allow new ground water irrigated acres to be developed in 2016.

Lewis and Clark NRD and DNR are drafting an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) with input from local ground and surface water users. Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) grant funds have been awarded to establish a groundwater monitoring network. Funds from NDEQ, CSD, and LCNRD have also been used. LCNRD and three neighboring NRDs are focused on groundwater nitrate clean-up in the Bazile GWMA of south central Knox County. It is the 1st "groundwater" project funded through NDEQ using section 319 funds from EPA, Clean Water Act.

The **Lower Elkhorn NRD** is the state's largest in geographic land area, encompassing all or part of 16 Nebraska counties. The NRD continues proactive groundwater management with the recent completion of the Clearwater Groundwater Study and a second study of quality and quantity issues underway in the South Elkhorn NRD. The NRD is also conducting a study of water use and hydrology for the City of Columbus.

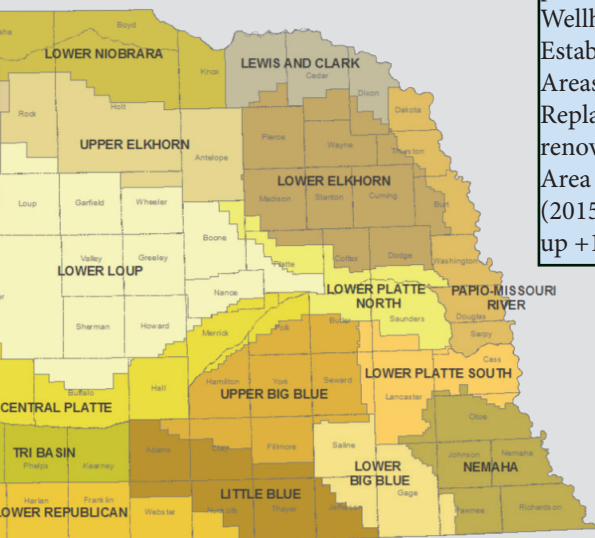


The **Lower Elkhorn NRD** continues to rebuild what was lost in the June, 2014 tornado. The Tree Distribution Center has been rebuilt and was ready for the conservation trees in the spring. The Superintendent, Leonard Boryca was moved to the lake in May, 2015 and was able to move into his new home in July.



Upper Big Blue NRD - Cooperative work on Blue River Basin Sub-Regional Model with DNR; Continued partnership w/ LBNRD on Hastings Wellhead Protection Area project; Established "High Risk Groundwater Areas"; Created Storm Damage Tree Replacement Program; \$1.2 million renovation to Pioneer Trails Rec. Area (Aurora); Sold 18, 861 trees (2015); Average groundwater levels up +1.42 feet.

The **Papio-Missouri River NRD** continued its work to offer additional flood protection to the Omaha Metro Area and other urban and rural areas within its jurisdiction. This year, the NRD opened two new flood control/recreational facilities including Kramper Reservoir at Danish Alps State Recreation Area near Hubbard and Prairie Queen Recreation Area near Papillion.



The **Lower Platte South** staff spent about two days on Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee, following heavy rains in early-May. It was the first time in at least 20 years the staff was fully mobilized to monitor the COE project, built the 1960s. The levee held-up well and the entire event brought much positive publicity to the NRD.

In 2015, the **Lower Platte North** introduced groundwater allocation in the district for the first time, in two "Special Quantity Subareas" where groundwater declines have been particularly acute. The NRD also made changes to its Phase II areas for nitrate levels, with some areas near Bellwood dropping to the less restrictive Phase I, and areas near Richland/Schuyler moving into the more restrictive Phase III.

The **Lower Platte North NRD** and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources paid Central Platte Public Power & Light District more than \$1 million to divert over 15,000 acre-feet of floodwater out of the Platte River to recharge groundwater supplies in 2015.

Central Platte NRD's Groundwater Quality Management received an update. Producers now submit one annual form, instead of both, a fall and spring report. CPNRD also received excess flow permits for the three Dawson County Canals that we've partnered with. These permits will allow CPNRD to alleviate flooding, assist with groundwater recharge, and release Platte River flows for endangered species.



Nemaha NRD - Dirt work was underway this spring to relocate a road that would have been inundated by the construction of the Duck Creek dam northwest of Peru, in Nemaha County. This project will provide flood control and public recreation. The dam should be completed by the end of 2015 with installation of recreation facilities to follow.

The **Lower Big Blue NRD** completed the last of seven flood control structures in the Lower Turkey Creek Project. The NRD put in electrical hook-ups to the Willard Meyer Recreation Area and the Big Indian Recreation Area. The NRD received grant funding for the installation of several dedicated monitoring wells across the district. In 2015, part of the district experienced storms near the 500 year rainfall frequency. Fourteen emergency spillways were tested during these storms.



Little Blue NRD - The LBNRD and TBNRD are developing the Little Blue River Basin Water Management Plan to establish a comprehensive strategy to manage surface water and groundwater quality and quantity in the Basin. The Plan provides a single coordinated strategy to identify water quality and quantity threats and needs, prioritize watersheds and areas for improvement, and identify practices and activities appropriate to address the known deficiencies in water quality and quantity.

NRD EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT PROGRAM

Thank you to the hard work of the NARD/NRD Employee Benefits Committee, the NRD Employees Retirement Program continues to grow and make improvements.

The NARD 414(h) retirement fund grew 4.3% over the past fiscal year to \$30,006,372 as of June 30, 2014. The defined contribution program allows each employee to determine their own investments, providing the flexibility for the employee to determine the amount of risk and potential rate of return they feel most comfortable with.

The voluntary NARD 457 program also grew 10.5% over the past year to \$3,190,474 as of June 30, 2014. The program allows NRD employees to set aside additional pre-tax income for retirement and has the same investment options as the NARD 414(h) plan.

Mark Geist and Jonathan Beukelman with UBS Financial Services provide the Nationwide investment platform for the plans. Since they have been involved, the NARD investment levels have increased almost four-fold.

Benefit Plans Inc., of Omaha provides the reporting and compliance work for the plans.

NRD EMPLOYEE YEARS OF SERVICE!

CONGRATULATIONS to Natural Resources Districts Board members and staff on 20, 25, 30, 35 and 40 plus years of service! Your hard work and dedication to conserving Nebraska's natural resources is truly appreciated!

NRD BOARD MEMBERS - Jim Meismer - TPNRD (30), Lyle Heinrichs - LBNRD (20), Gene Thomas - LBNRD (20), Larry Reynolds - TBNRD (30), David Nickel - TBNRD (25), Phyllis Johnson - TBNRD (20), Marty Graff - MNDRD (20), Steve Sandberg - UNWNRD (25), Arden Uhler - LNNRD (25), Larry Moore - UBBNRD (40)

NRD STAFF - Bill Carhart - TPNRD (25), Don Caouette - UENRD (25), Beth Walsh - UENRD (25), Dean Krull - CPNRD (35), Marilyn Schumacher - LCNRD (35), Glenda Cushing - UNWNRD (40), Vivian Frasch - LNNRD (40), Peggy Griffin - LLNRD (25), Phyllis Knobbe - LENRD (35), Kathy Dohmen - LENRD (20), Danny Johnson - LENRD (20), Carey Teijkl - LENRD (20), Rod DeBuhr - UBBNRD (40), John Turnbull - UBBNRD (40), Jackie Bishop - NPNRD (20), Connie Hansen - LPSNRD (25), Jean Ulrich - LPSNRD (30), John Albert - LPSNRD (25), Cindy Spilinek - LPSNRD (25), Jill Breunig - LPNNRD (25), Robert Merrigan - MRNRD (20), Mike Nesbitt - URNRD (35)

NARD CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS 2015

Director of the Year - Bill Vasey

Nominated by Central Platte Natural Resources District

Outstanding Tree Planter - Steve Schumacher

Nominated by South Platte Natural Resources District

Educator of the Year - Mike Kozeal

Nominated by Lower Loup Natural Resources District

Outstanding Grassland Award - Doug and Theresa Keller

Nominated by South Platte Natural Resources District

Outstanding Community Conservation - Big Indian Archers

Nominated by Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District

MASTER CONSERVATIONIST AWARD WINNERS 2015

Community Award - City of Omaha Stormwater Team

Nina Cudahy and Andy Szatko

Agriculture Award - Kermit, Janice, Alan and Clويد Smith - Eustis, Nebraska

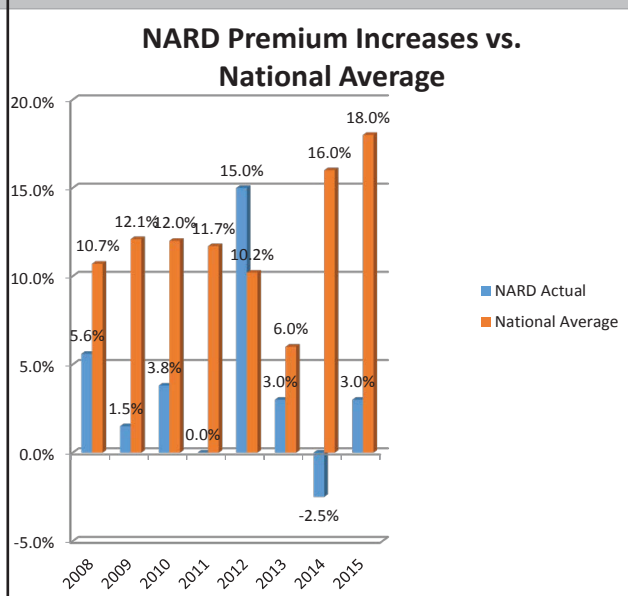
NARD HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts has operated a licensed health risk pool for NRD employees since FY 2006-07. The program is governed by the NARD Risk Pool Board of Directors, which are the same as the NARD board members. The NARD Risk Pool Stop/Loss Committee meets four times a year to review details of the program and suggest changes to the program. This committee is made up of the NARD Risk Pool Board and 13 NRD employees representing all areas of the state.

Over the last nine years of the program, the average annual health insurance premiums increases have been 3.68% while the national annual averages have been 12.9%. This is very rare in the insurance industry. If the premium changes followed national averages, the premiums would almost be double what they are today. In FY 2014-15, premiums were decreased by 2.5% as the previous fiscal year netted a \$1.2 million gain and the board targeted a break-even year. After year-end adjustments, the program showed loss of just over \$100,000, close to the break-even goal.

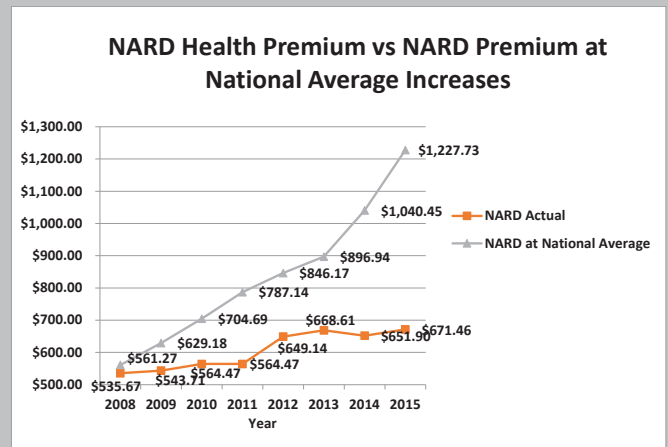
The NARD Risk Pool Stop/Loss Committee and Rick Pool Board set rates again this year targeting a break-even year. The rates changes for FY 15-16 are set at a 3% increase for health and no change in the dental rates. The national average increase for health insurance is 18% this year. The national average increase for 2015 is 18%. The NRD employee's involvement in wellness activities and programs reduces health care cost to local NRDs and taxpayers.

Chart 1 shows the NARD insurance premium increase compared with the national premium average for the past several years.



Under ObamaCare, there will be premium taxes that have to be paid to the federal government based on the number of employees and family members under the plan. These taxes will be almost \$60,000 in 2015-16. The NARD Risk Pool Board is paying the taxes out of the reserves rather than assessing each employee or district for the tax.

Chart 2 shows the actual NARD insurance premium cost compared to what the NARD insurance premium would be with the national average increases.



The program worked as it was set up to do – work off reserves built up in the “good years” to cover losses in the “bad year”. The program has built reserves of \$4.7 million to allow for annual premium changes to be limited. Mid-American Benefits provided the third-party claims processing. Milt Willnerd, Willnerd and Associates, works with NARD to make sure all state and federal reports are filed correctly and in a timely fashion.

The program is audited annually by independent auditors. In addition, the program is audited by the Nebraska Department of Insurance (NDOI) every four years. The program has been audited twice by the NDOI, most recently in July of 2013. There were no recommendations for changes from the NDOI audits.



*NRD 5K Run/ One Mile Walk
Lake Wanahoo - LPNNRD*

LEGISLATIVE RECAP 2015

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) worked together with the Natural Resources Committee and other state senators during the 2015 Legislative Session to protect the future of Nebraska's natural resources. Senators approved and the Governor signed fourteen bills that NARD was involved in. The following provides just a few of the key bills enacted this year.

LB 95 - Provide for operation and regulation of electric-powered bicycles. Smith.

Governor Pete Ricketts signed LB 95 into law on February 26th. On February 20th, Senators gave final approval to LB 95 on a 48-0-1 vote. The bill adds to the definition of bicycle to include a device with two or three wheels, fully operative pedals for propulsion by human power, and an electric motor with a capacity not exceeding seven hundred fifty watts which produces no more than one brake horsepower and is capable of propelling the bicycle at a maximum design speed of no more than twenty miles per hour on level ground.

The definition follows federal definitions and clarifies that such bicycles would not be required to be licensed and would also allow their use on local trails.



Nebraska Capitol

LB 106 -- Adopt the Livestock Operation Siting and Expansion Act and change powers of counties relating to zoning. Watermeier.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 106 into law on May 27th. Senators gave final approval to LB 106 on May 21st by a 44-2-3 vote. The bill creates a matrix for county zoning boards to use for siting livestock operations.

On General File a compromise amendment, AM 1099, was adopted to the bill that creates a matrix system for counties to use

for livestock zoning but makes it optional for counties to use it. All of the original provisions of the bill were eliminated and other pending amendments and motions were withdrawn. The amendment was adopted on a 39-0-10 vote.

The original bill required the Department of Agriculture to create a matrix for livestock zoning and require all counties to use it. The bill also proposed to create a Livestock Operation Siting Review Board. The review board would handle appeals from individuals that were denied a permit by the county. The mandatory use and review board were eliminated by the compromise amendment.

Under AM 1099, which became the bill, the Director of Agriculture would be required to appoint a committee of experts, not to exceed ten persons, to advise the Department of Agriculture on the development of the assessment matrix. The experts would include representation from county board members, county zoning administrators, livestock production agriculture, the University of Nebraska, and other experts as may be determined by the director.

In the development of the assessment matrix, the department shall:

- a) Consider matrices already developed by the counties and other states;
- b) Design the matrix to produce quantifiable results based on the scoring of objective criteria according to an established value scale.
- c) Assure the matrix is a practical tool for use by persons when completing permit applications and by county officials when scoring conditional use permit or special exception applications.
- d) Provide for definite point selections for all criteria included in the matrix and provide for a minimum threshold total score required to receive approval by county officials.

Criteria in the matrix which could include factors referencing the following:

- a) Size of operation;
- b) Type of operation;
- c) Whether the operation has received or is in the process of applying for a permit from the Department of Environmental

Quality, if required by law;

- d) Environmental practices adopted by the operation operator which may exceed those required by the Department of Environmental Quality;
- e) Odor control practices;
- f) Consideration of proximity of a livestock operation to neighboring residences, public use areas, and critical public areas;
- g) Community support and communication with neighbors and other community members;
- h) Manure storage and land application sites and practices;
- i) Traffic;
- j) Economic impact to the community; and
- k) Landscape and aesthetic appearance.

In developing the matrix, the Department of Agriculture shall consider whether the proposed criteria are:

- a) Protective of public health or safety;
- b) Practical and workable;
- c) Cost effective;
- d) Objective;
- e) Based on available scientific information that has been subjected to peer review;
- f) Designed to promote the growth and viability of animal agriculture in this state;
- g) Designed to balance the economic viability of farm operations with protecting natural resources and other community interests; and
- h) Usable by county officials.

The bill, as amended, requires the committee to develop the matrix within a year after the bill becomes law, review the matrix annually and recommend to the department any changes needed.

The accompanying appropriations bill, LB 106A, was given final approval on a 46-2-1 vote. It provides \$24,000 from the General Fund for FY 2015-16 to the Department of Agriculture to aid in carrying out the provi-

LEGISLATIVE RECAP 2015

sions of the bill.

LB 142e – Create the Aquatic Invasive Species Program and provide funding. Schilz.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 142e into law on March 5th. On February 27th, Senators gave final approval to LB 142e on a 46-1-2 vote. The bill included the emergency clause and became law immediately following Governor Ricketts signature. The bill creates the Nebraska Aquatic Invasive Species Program to be used by Game and Parks to prevent and mitigate damage caused by aquatic invasive species such as the zebra mussel, silver carp, and other such species. These species have proven destructive to the ecosystems and usability of surface waters in surrounding states, and the program is designed to prevent their establishment in Nebraska.

The program will be funded by fees on boats as established by the NGPC. For resident boats, the fee would be not less than \$5 and not more than \$10. For out-of-state boats that are used in Nebraska waters, the annual fee would be not less than \$10 and not more than \$15. If the fees are set at the minimum level of \$5 for resident boats, and \$10 for non-resident boats plus a \$2.00 issuance fee, the estimated annual revenue is \$218,172. This is based on 34,176 resident boat registrations each year and 3,941 non-resident boats. If the fees are set at the maximum level the estimated annual revenue increases to \$408,757.

The accompanying appropriations bill, LB 142Ae, also approved by a 46-1-2 vote and signed by Governor Ricketts, appropriates \$330,000 from the State Game Fund for FY2015-16 and \$330,000 from the State Game Fund for FY2016-17 to the Game and Parks Commission to aid in carrying out the provisions of the bill. If the Commission sets the fees below the level necessary to generate \$330,000, the shortfall will be made up with matching grants and partnerships according to the Fiscal Note on the bill. Total expenditures for permanent and temporary salaries and per diems from funds appropriated are capped at \$157,191 for FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17.

The bill outlines the funds shall only be used for aquatic invasive species activities created under the bill which include monitoring and sampling waters of the state for aquatic invasive species, hiring personnel, purchasing equipment to inspect and decontaminate conveyances, providing additional enforcement, education, and research relating to aquatic invasive species, and conducting aquatic invasive species projects as needed.

LB 164 – Provide a biennial budgeting option for natural resources districts. Friesen.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 164 into law on March 18, 2015. The Legislature gave final approval to the bill on March 12th by a 44-0-5 vote. The legislation allows natural resources district the option to adopt either annual or biennial budgets. The legislation improves long term planning for natural resources districts to plan out two years and provide more certainty to taxpayers.



NARD Board Meeting 2015

Currently there is a period of budget uncertainty between the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1 and the availability of the valuations on August 20 and the filing deadline of September 20 when the District is expending funds based upon a yet to be approved budget. This time period is important since it is the prime construction season. With a biennial budget, this uncertainty would be partially alleviated, at least in the second year of the biennial.

Further, projects undertaken by natural resources districts are often multi-year projects. Often the funding from grants and other sources are multi-year. A biennial budget would assist in project and fiscal planning.

Biennial budgeting is allowed for cities and villages. Prior to passage of the bill, natural resources districts could only adopt an annual budget.

LB 206 -- Change the Erosion and Sediment Control Act. Schilz.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 206 into law on May 26th. The Legislature gave final approval to LB 206 on May 20th by a 47-0-2 vote. The bill updates the Erosion and Sediment Control Act to address: 1) sheet and rill erosion and 2) ephemeral gully erosion. The intent of the bill is to address excess erosion in excess of the applicable soil-loss tolerance level which causes or contributes to an accumulation of sediment upon the lands of any other person to the detriment or damage of such other person.

Last year the same bill (LB 896) was advanced out of committee on an 8-0 vote but time ran out in the short session to advance

the bill further. The NARD worked with the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) to address an issue that came up during the interim relating to irrigation diversions and facilities covered under other laws. An amendment was offered at the hearing, which became the Committee Amendment AM 170, to address those concerns. The amendment exempts activities related to the operation, construction, or maintenance of industrial or commercial public power district or public power and irrigation district facilities or sites when such activity is conducted pursuant to state or federal law or is part of the operational plan for such facility or site. The NPPD supported the bill with the clarifying amendment. The Natural Resources Committee advanced the bill out again this year on an 8-0 vote. On General File, senators adopted AM 170 by a 35-0-14 vote.

The NRDs will work with the Natural Resources Commission, the USDA NRCS, and other appropriate state and federal agencies, to develop a template for each NRD to use to update their erosion control programs. Once the new template is developed, each NRD would then need to update their respective plans to the new requirements.

The updated program would follow the existing statutory reasonable and attainable requirements to include: 1) The soil-loss limits tolerance level for the various types of soils in the state; 2) State goals and a state strategy for reducing soil losses on all lands in the state to an amount no more than the applicable soil-loss tolerance level; 3) Guidelines for establishing priorities for implementation of the program at the state and local levels; 4) Types of assistance to be provided by the state to districts, cities, and counties in the implementation of the state and local erosion and sediment control programs; and 5) Such other elements as the director of the Department of Natural Resources deems appropriate in accordance with the objectives of the Erosion and Sediment Control Act.

The bill adds the authority to each district to petition the district court for a cease and desist order on an owner or operator if the district determines that the erosion is the result of an activity not normally associated with tillage, seeding, or cultivation of farm land and the immediate discontinuance of such activity is necessary to reduce or eliminate damage to neighboring property. This provision applies only after the refusal of the landowner to discontinue an activity causing the erosion and to establish a plan and schedule for eliminating excess erosion under the act. The order would be lifted once the excess erosion can be brought into

LEGISLATIVE RECAP 2015

conformance with the soil-loss tolerance level or sediment resulting from excess erosion is prevented from leaving the property.

The bill eliminates the exemption for owners and operators from the provision of compliance to the Erosion and Sediment Control Act if there is not at least ninety percent cost-sharing assistance for the installation of permanent soil and water conservation practices which are required in an approved farm unit conservation plan or are required to conform agricultural, horticultural, and silvicultural practices to the applicable soil-loss limit. In some cases landowners have requested their neighbors to file a complaint so ninety percent cost share has to be provided.

The bill would allow each district to provide any level of cost-share to the owner or operator to comply with the Act. However, the lack of available cost-sharing assistance would not offset the requirement that the owner and, if appropriate, the operator of such land comply with the terms of an approved plan of compliance or an administrative order.

LB 207 -- Change provisions relating to civil penalties under the Nebraska Chemigation Act. Schilz.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 207 into law on March 18, 2015. The Legislature gave final approval to the bill on March 12th by a 44-0-5 vote. The bill amends the Chemigation statutes to mirror the civil penalty language in the Nebraska Groundwater Management Act of a civil penalty of not less than \$1,000/day and not more than \$5,000 for each day a violation takes place. The bill also allows the district to recover the costs of the action should a civil penalty be awarded under the new section.

Chemigation is used to inject fertilizer or pesticides into the well discharge to apply the product with the irrigation water on the field. Proper training and safety equipment is required to prevent the chemicals from back-flowing into the groundwater if the system fails.

The NARD had worked with Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation on an amendment to the bill to address concerns about first time violators which became the Committee Amendment AM 194, which was adopted on General File on a 35-0-14 vote. The amendment limits the fines in the bill to \$1,000/day per site for the first offense. For subsequent violations, the penalty range remains \$1,000 to \$5,000 each day, and at each site, where a violation occurs. The Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation testified in support of the bill with the compromise amendment.

There are very few violators under the Chemigation program. However, there are a few across the state that chemigate without permits and proper equipment because the fine is cheaper than the cost of the equipment. Under the previous law, fines accessed by the courts were \$100 total.

LB 310 – Change provisions of the Niobrara Scenic River Act. Davis.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 310 into law on May 26th. The Legislature gave final approval to LB 310 on May 20th by a 49-0 vote. The bill makes several changes to the Niobrara Scenic River Council. The changes have been worked on over the interim by the council and Senators Larson and Davis.

First, the bill requires that the representatives from the four County Boards (Brown, Cherry, Keya Paha and Rock) be County Commissioners and not a representative of the County Board.

Second, the bill requires that the regional director for the National Park Service or his or her designee and the regional director for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service or his or her designee are the representatives and eliminates the Governor appointment of these two seats.

Third, the bill requires that before the federal representative can vote on matters before the council they have to notify the council and the Governor in writing that they plan to change from non-voting to voting members.

Fourth, the bill eliminates the requirement that a council member may not participate or vote on any matter on which he or she participated or voted on as a member of a county board, county planning commission, or natural resources district board. Under current law, when the council member was present and could not vote, the member was not to be counted in attendance for purposes of determining whether quorum or vote requirements have been satisfied.

LB 413 -- Provide for the evaluation of permits issued to political subdivisions by



Niobrara River near Spencer Dam

the Department of Environmental Quality regarding water quality. Mello.

The Legislature gave final approval to LB 413 on April 23, 2015 on a 45-0-4 vote. Governor Ricketts approved the bill on April 29, 2015. The bill, as amended, makes several changes to the Department of Environmental Quality permit requirements for political subdivisions under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

First, when requested by the political subdivision, the bill allows the department to evaluate and make a determination of the necessity of specific permit terms and conditions to achieve water quality objectives. Such determination may affect the level of water treatment or pollution control, the length of time necessary for compliance, or both. Any political subdivision may request this evaluation and determination from the department in the issuance or reissuance of its permit.

Second, the evaluation will have to include, but is not limited to, consideration of the following factors in making its evaluation and determination:

- (a) The financial capability of a political subdivision to raise and secure necessary funding at a reasonable cost;
- (b) The affordability for ratepayers for implementation of pollution control options available to a political subdivision using the most appropriate methodology and measurements for the political subdivision in making such affordability determination;
- (c) The future growth potential and projections of a political subdivision and whether its infrastructure is sufficient for projected needs;
- (d) The overall costs and environmental benefits of control technologies;
- (e) Other environmental improvement investments made by a political subdivision; and
- (f) Any other relevant economic and social concerns or environmental conditions.

Finally, the bill allows the department to provide grants or an additional interest subsidy on loans for municipalities if the project contains a sustainable community feature, measurable energy use reductions, low impact development, or if there are any special assistance needs as determined in the act.

LEGISLATIVE RECAP 2015



Managers Retreat - UNWNRD 2015

The Committee Amendment, AM 566, adopted on General File provides the department with more flexibility to determine the needs of the individual communities, rather than requiring the same evaluation for every community. The amendment also requires the political subdivision to submit an application fee and creates a fund into which such fees will be placed. The language further allows the department to create a tiered fee schedule in cases of financial hardship.

The accompanying appropriations bill, LB 413A, was also given final approval April 23, 2015 on a 43-2-4 vote. Governor Ricketts approved LB 413A on April 29, 2015. The bill provides \$79,181 from the Environmental Infrastructure Sustainability Fund for FY2015-16 and \$75,556 from the Environmental Infrastructure Sustainability Fund for FY2016-17 to the Department of Environmental Quality to aid in carrying out the provisions of the bill.

LB 657 - Appropriate funds for state government expenses. Speaker Hadley at the request of the Governor.

Senators gave final approval to the mainline appropriations bill, LB 657, on a 49-0 vote. The bill provides appropriations for the next two fiscal years. The bill was approved by Governor Ricketts on May 20th.

The major changes to the budget include: 1) Increasing State Aid to Schools by 40.1 million (4.3%) in FY 2015-16; 2) Increasing the Property Tax Credit Fund by \$64 Million per year to \$204 Million per year; 3) Increases the budget for the Department of Correctional Services by 11.2% (\$20.3 million) in FY15-16; and 4) A general 3% increase for the University of Nebraska, State Colleges, and Community Colleges.

Notable Changes for the Department of Environmental Quality

Litter Reduction and Recycling Aid – The appropriation includes the agency request to increase cash fund aid appropriation by \$400,000 in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 to allow grants of available funds from the litter reduction and recycling grant program.

Waste Reduction and Recycling Aid – The

appropriation includes the agency request to increase cash fund aid appropriations by \$1,000,000 in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 to allow grants of available funds from the waste reduction and recycling grant program.

Superfund Cost Share Aid – The appropriation includes the agency request to increase cash fund aid appropriation by \$100,245 in FY 2015-16 and \$1,245,601 in FY 2016-17 to allow the agency to utilize previously paid cost share refunds recently made available to Nebraska in the form of refunds by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Increased revenue is available because EPA is returning a portion of the state funding allocated for cleanup at the ASARCO site in Omaha and settlement money from the ASARCO bankruptcy. The funds in the cash fund are used to pay future 10% cost share aid to the EPA for current Superfund projects and completed Superfund projects turned over to the state for operations and maintenance management.

Superfund Cost Share Operations – The appropriation includes the agency request to increase cash fund operations appropriation by \$406,520 in FY 2015-16 and by \$823,448 in FY 2016-17. Increased revenue is available because EPA is returning a portion of the state funding allocated for cleanup at the ASARCO site in Omaha and settlement money from the ASARCO bankruptcy.

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) Grants – The appropriation includes the agency request to increase federal fund aid appropriation by \$1,800,000 in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 to allow increased clean water SRF grants so that each year's five year federal grant is fully disbursed within two years of the award.

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) Grants – The appropriation includes the agency request to increase federal fund aid appropriation by \$2,500,000 in FY 2015-16 to allow increased drinking water SRF grants so that each year's five year federal grant is fully disbursed within two years of the award.

Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF) Match – The appropriation includes the agency request to increase cash fund aid appropriation by \$464,000 in FY 2016-17 to allow use of repayments to the drinking water SRF program to be used to provide part of the 20% state match required for new SRF grants, reducing the need for bond proceeds providing the 20% match.

Notable Changes for the Department of Natural Resources

Nebraska Resources Development Fund – Program Completion – The appropria-

tion includes \$6,187,825 for FY 15-16 and \$6,187,825 for FY 16-17. For each fiscal year, this breaks down to \$3,140,325 in General Fund plus \$3,047,500 in transfers of Cash Funds from a reduction in funding for the Water Sustainability Fund. There is also intent language that \$3,140,325 in General Funds be appropriated for the program through FY 2018-19 which would provide total funding for the program over four years of \$18,656,300 to finish out the six existing projects under the program. The unexpended General Fund balance is re-appropriated.

Interrelated Water Management Plan Program – Program Completion – The bill calls for the program to be discontinued as the funding for such has been transferred to the Department's general operating programs.

Water Sustainability Fund – Appropriation Reduction – The recommendation includes a reduction of \$3,000,000 cash fund authority in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 for additional funding to the Nebraska Resources Development Fund. The program total is \$8,004,518 for FY 2015-16 and \$8,007,960 for FY 2016-17. The unexpended Cash Fund balance is re-appropriated. There was \$21,000,000 cash fund authority appropriated to the Water Sustainability Fund program in FY 2014-15.

Soil and Water Conservation – Reduced Commission Costs – The appropriation includes a \$22,950 General Fund reduction in FY 2015-16 and FY 2016-17 to remove a one-time FY 2014-15 appropriation for the introduction of new commissioners to the Natural Resource Commission as provided by LB 1098A (2014).

DNR Operations -- The Appropriations Committee also re-appropriated unexpended FY 14-15 funds for the Integrated Water Management studies, Water Resources Cash Fund, and Interstate Compacts and Decrees.



Basin Tour 2015 - Central Platte NRD Canals



NARD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEAN EDSON

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) staff is honored to be working for the NRD directors and staff while celebrating the 43rd anniversary of the NRDs. The NARD staff is dedicated to providing assistance to the NRDs with legislation, tree programs, water management, youth programs, benefit programs and public relations. For the 19th year in a row, the NARD has balanced its budget and added to the reserves. This is thanks to member involvement from the NRD Board members and staff. To all of you, thank you very much!

The NARD manages the Health Insurance Risk Pool and Retirement Programs for the benefit of NRD staff. The NARD also manages the retirement program which continues to grow even in a sluggish economy.

The NARD also manages the NARD Foundation which has grown significantly over the past 14 years. What started out as a small foundation in 1997 with \$4,100 in assets, and helped fund only one program, has grown to more than \$351,000 in assets that provides funding to ten educational programs, a NRD Building at Husker Harvest Days and participation in the new Ag Experience Building at the Nebraska State Fair. The fundraisers at the annual meeting and member involvement help grow the program each year. With the help of 21 NRDs, the foundation will provide funding for a hour-long Nebraska Educational TV (NET) program on the history and successes of the NRD system.

There will be more challenges for NRDs in the future. However, the local districts are poised to handle them. Major water infrastructure has been built and rehabilitated by the local NRDs. Thanks to the Republican Basin NRDs and Twin Platte NRD, the N-CORPE project, a \$125 million project was completed in less than three years in the Republican Basin, kept Nebraska in compliance with the Republican River Compact and protected irrigation in Southwest Nebraska. The Central Platte NRD worked out agreements with four irrigation canals in Dawson County to protect irrigators in the area. So far the CPNRD provided \$15 million to finish the projects on three of the four canals. The last canal project was completed in 2015.

The latest historical development is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was developed in the Niobrara Basin, led by the NRDs. Under the agreement, the NRDs in the Niobrara Basin will purchase the NPPD Spencer Hydro facility and water rights and work with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in a collaborative manner to achieve sustainable water supply within the Basin for the residents of the Basin and all Nebraskans. All parties involved in the MOU recognized the importance of the Niobrara River to the Basin and the State of Nebraska and desire to safeguard sufficient water for the long-term integrity of the Niobrara River that will protect the water in the Basin for all users and uses.

That's just a few of the accomplishments of the NRDs. The NARD staff is proud and excited to assist all of the local NRDs to protect lives, protect property and protect the future.

EVENTS HOSTED BY THE NARD

- ~ Annual Conference
- ~ NARD Board Meetings
- ~ NRD Managers Meetings
- ~ Legislative Conference
- ~ I&E Meetings
- ~ Basin Tours
- ~ Washington D.C. Conference
- ~ Public Relations Trainings
- ~ Technician Trainings

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