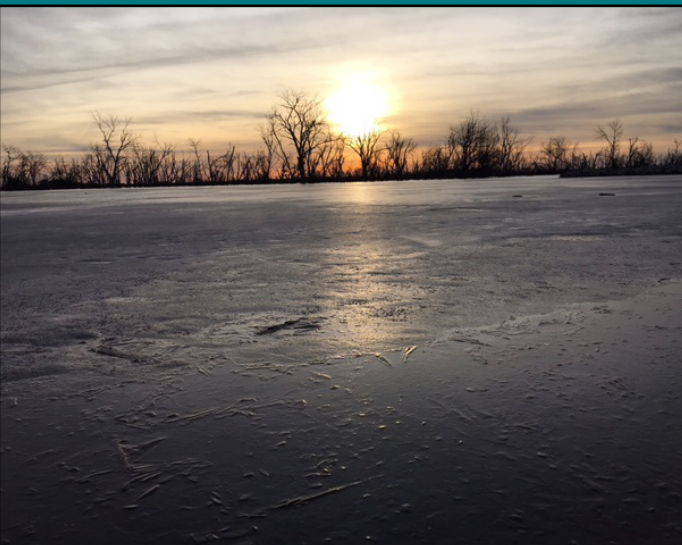


# Nebraska Association of Resources Districts

## *Annual Report 2017*



### ***Highlights:***

**A Message from the President**

**Making an Impact Moving Forward:**  
Envirothon High School Competition Grows as We Look to 2020

**Giving Back:** Youth Benefit from NARD Foundation

**Hard Work Pays Off:** Hall of Fame and Award Winners

**Where are they now?** NRDs Protect Lives, Property and Future

**NARD Legislative Recap**



# A Message from the President

## Happy 45th Anniversary to Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) work tirelessly to protect our bountiful state's lives, property and future. We see the NRD system working day in and day out to conserve our natural resources; to continue to offer our friends and foes, sons and daughters, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and the generations that follow, clean water to drink and nutrient-rich soil to grow food for all.

I have never been more proud to serve as the President of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. The NRD system has made tremendous strides this past year as we help numerous water management programs blossom into major success stories other states would love to imitate. I see water quality programs charge forward with determination to make a difference, and I applaud ongoing outreach efforts to educate the public about our vital cause for sustainability. It is evident time and time again our NRDs have the support of our local communities.

During my not so few years serving on the NARD board and CPNRD board, I've seen many truly great NRD leaders and staff accomplish so much in their careers. As they retire I want to thank each and every one for their efforts. Their strategic thinking to get where we are today puts the NRD system in the history books yet again. Today, I'm looking at the future with just as much anticipation. I see a fresh energy and determination from so many as I know they're taking this one-of-a-kind system to ever new resource management concepts.

The number one thing I've learned in my tenure as your President is that Nebraska and its people benefit because of the hard work and efforts of those that make up the NRDs. They are the reason the System is working. It's one of Nebraska's biggest success stories as many other states look to us for help and guidance because our system works. I am personally grateful that myself, my children, my grandchildren, and all those to come after me live a better life because of the NRDs. And in closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity you've given me.



Jim Bendfeldt

## NARD Executive Committee

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (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.

Jim Bendfeldt from the Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD) is the current NARD President. Bendfeldt has served 14 years as a director on the CPNRD board. He has served six years as an NARD board representative. Bendfeldt previously served as the NARD Vice-President and NARD Secretary/Treasurer.

Larry Reynolds from the Tri-Basin NRD is the current Vice-President. Reynolds has been on the board for five years. Reynolds previously served as NARD Secretary/Treasurer. He has served 32 years on the Tri-Basin NRD board.

Shane Rippen from Middle Republican NRD serves as Secretary-Treasurer for the NARD. Rippen has been on the NARD board for one year. He's been on the MRNRD board for three years.

Terry Martin from the Upper Republican NRD is the current NARD Past President. Martin has served on the Upper Republican NRD board for 16 years, on the NARD board for nine years and previously held the President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer positions.

Jim Meismer from Twin Platte NRD, serves as the chair of the NARD Legislative Committee.

Jim Johnson from South Platte NRD, serves as the chair of the NARD Information and Education Committee.

# Making an Impact Moving Forward

## Nebraska's Envirothon Competition Grows as NRDs Look to Host 2020 International Competition

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) along with the Nebraska Natural Resources (NRDs) Districts are looking forward to hosting the National Conservation Foundation (NCF) Envirothon in 2020. This is an extremely competitive competition between high school students from around the world who have an interest in studying natural resources. Topics include Soils, Wildlife, Forestry, Aquatics and a Current Environmental Issue (State competition also includes Range and Policy).



An expected 300 plus students, advisors, educators and volunteers from around the world will unite at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln for this natural resources competition. What an amazing opportunity for the NRDs to promote our unique water management system to our youth and the future of our great nation! The NRDs are currently putting committees together to begin planning and coordinating the event.

The Natural Resources Districts are the primary sponsor of the competition, but there's still a lot of fundraising to do. Committees are in the process of being formed. They include staff and board members from NARD, staff and board members from the NRDs and staff from other ag and natural resources agencies and organizations also supporting the local and NCF Envirothon.

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Envirothon Advisor/Teacher Training

In Nebraska, the state Envirothon program is seeing major growth and interest from students and teachers alike. Since 2014, the entire program has grown 22%. These numbers are in thanks to the Nebraska Envirothon's wonderful regional coordinators and volunteers who help organize testing days, assist with the state competition and promote the program. We continue to take steps forward. In early 2017, with the help of several NRDs, the NARD put on a Nebraska Envirothon Teachers Training to grow additional interest in the program. More than 20 teachers attended the event and are already requesting to attend the next one in 2018.

Concordia High School won the 2017 Nebraska Envirothon competition this year. The team includes (pictured left to right) Abby Sharp, Gabby Minneman, Grace Trembath, Bridget Backer and Aubrey Grasz. Their advisor is Concordia High School Science teacher, Mike Ellis. The team received 21st out of 54 teams at the NCF (international) Envirothon competition in Maryland.

If you'd like to volunteer, we'd love to have you! Call the NARD office at 402-471-7670.



Nebraska Envirothon



Nebraska Envirothon



## Giving Back: Youth Benefit from the NARD Foundation

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Foundation mission is to provide natural resources awareness, education and leadership opportunities for Nebraskans through partnerships with other organizations, foundations and the private sector. The priority is to improve the positive image of NRDs by providing funding for natural resources awareness, education and leadership opportunities for Nebraskans. The NARD Foundation provides the conduit for funding those opportunities that have state-wide audiences and participants. Your contribution to the NARD Foundation will help provide support and opportunities for students to continue their education in natural resources. The programs also provide paths to career opportunities in this rewarding field.

In FY 2016-17, over \$38,000 dollars were dispersed 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, a live and silent auction at the Annual Conference, and contributions from local NRDs. Below and on the next page is a sample of programs that have been funded:

- Nebraska Educational TV History of the NRDs program called: "Keeping Nebraska Local; A unique approach to resources management". The hour-long program aired eleven times on NET2 that explains how the NRDs were created, how they evolved and how they continue to protect lives, property and the future for all Nebraskans. The program continues to be aired on NET in 2017. The program is also available online at <http://netnebraska.org/nrd> and on the NARD website at [www.nrdnet.org/videos](http://www.nrdnet.org/videos).

Continue to next page...



# Giving Back: Youth Benefit from the NARD Foundation

- The Nebraska Envirothon, an agriculture, wildlife and science competition for grades 9-12 is designed to test students' knowledge in seven areas of ag and natural resources studies. 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 also provided funding to compete at the National Envirothon.
- The Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute is a week-long conference held each July for high school juniors and seniors to learn more about agriculture and natural resources in Nebraska.
- Ag Day on the Hill. The foundation sponsors five Nebraska college students to attend National Ag Day in Washington D.C. learning about federal policy, trade, agriculture and natural resource issues.
- Sponsored Annual State FFA Convention held in Lincoln, providing assistance for the natural resources programs.
- The Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness to spread a positive agriculture message to teachers, students and parents about the importance of agriculture.
- Sponsorship of the Nebraska Groundwater Foundation which provides educational and community-based action programs to protect and conserve groundwater.
- 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 and focused on exploring and learning about natural resources. The camp consist of four days of outdoor fun at Halsey 4-H Camp.
- 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 at twenty NGPC and NRD recreation sites across Nebraska.



NE Foundation for Ag. Awareness



FFA Awards

In 2020, Nebraska will host the NCF Envirothon which will have the top students from all 50 states, Canada, China and more. This is a great opportunity to showcase Nebraska. Thanks to the local NRD assistance, the Foundation will only need to raise another \$90,000 by 2020 to finance the event.

Thanks goes out to each of you that participate with the NARD Foundation events to help with the mission to provide natural resources awareness, education and leadership opportunities for Nebraskans through partnerships with other organizations, foundations and the private sector.

## Thank You for Your Dedication and Years of Service

### Board of Directors

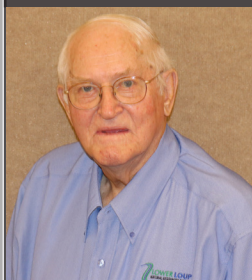
20 Years: Doug Stack – TPNRD, Barry Obermiller – CPNRD, Linda Luebbe – UBBNRD, Gary Eberle – UBBNRD, Alan Petersen – LLNRD, John Burke – UNWNRD, Curtis Gotschall – UENRD, Dale Wiles – UENRD, Don Jacobson – LPSNRD, Marcel Kramer - LCNRD  
 25 Years: Diane Weiseler – LCNRD, Rich Tesar – Papio NRD, Bill Christensen – LCNRD  
 30 Years: James Adams – LLNRD (both employee and director), Ted Hughes – UENRD, Henry Thoene – LLNRD  
 45 Years: Don Kavan – LPNNRD, James Nelson – LLNRD, Dean Rasmussen - LLNRD

### NRD Employees

20 Years: Jo Lene Kohout – Papio NRD, Ann Dimmitt – TPNRD, Mark Czaplowski – CPNRD, Lynn Webster – UNWNRD, Mary Tidyman – MRNRD, Dean Edson - NARD  
 25 Years: Jason Schnell – Papio NRD, Terry Schumacher – Papio NRD, Marty Thieman – Papio NRD, Duane Woodward – CPNRD, Marie Herbek – LBNRD, Tomas Chale Ake – NNRD, Shirlee Poyser – LRNRD, Kristi Heft – LRNRD  
 30 Years: Jack Brummett – ULNRD, Marge Stark – Papio NRD, Dave Slattery – TPNRD, Marie Schmeits – LLNRD  
 35 Years: Bob Hilske – NNRD, Jane Kuhl – NNRD, Nancy Brisk – UBBBRD, Dan Schulz – LPSNRD  
 40 Years: Mike Onnen – LBNRD, Ken Feather – UBBNRD, Beverly Smedra - LLNRD  
 45 Years: Rita Goldfish - LLNRD

# Hard Work Pays Off

## Natural Resources Districts Hall of Fame



Dean Rasmussen

Hall of Fame inductee, Dean Rasmussen was nominated for the Natural Resources Districts Board member category by the Lower Loup Natural Resources District (LLNRD).

He's been a member of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District Board of Directors since 1972. Rasmussen served as Board Vice-Chairman from 1972-1974, as Board Chairman from 1975-1982, and as Board Treasurer from 1986-1993. He represents the LLNRD as one of the 23 Directors of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD). He also represents the LLNRD as a representative on the Loup Basin RC&D Council.

Rasmussen has served Valley County as a member of the County Hospital Board of Directors, a member of the North Loup Lions Club and a guiding force in the annual "Pop-corn Days" celebration in North Loup.

Rasmussen received the "Director of the Year" Award from NARD in 2004 and special recognition from NARD after his retirement from the NARD Board after 24 years of service.



Ron Fleecs

Hall of Fame inductee, Ron Fleecs was nominated for the Natural Resources Districts Staff member category by the Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District (LBBNRD).

Fleecs started his conservation work in the Nebraska Panhandle in 1959 and worked as a Watershed Specialist for the Natural Resources Commission from 1963 to 1972. He was instrumental in the development of the NRD system and was the first NRD manager for the LBBNRD for 32 years until his retirement in June, 2004.

Since Fleecs became Manager, the LBBNRD has constructed 67 Flood Damage Reduction Dams, five Grade Stabilization Structures, seven County-NRD Road Structures, installed 3,384 miles of terraces and 6,177 acres of grass waterways. It's because of Fleecs's work that the LBBNRD is referred to as "The Watershed Capitol of the World".

He also prevented a Compact Call on the Big Blue River by timing the release of water from District watershed dams. This action was a one-million dollar benefit for water users who would have otherwise been unable to irrigate.



Gayle Starr

Hall of Fame inductee, Gayle Starr, was nominated for the Natural Resources Districts Individual Outside the Natural Resources Districts System category by the Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District (LBBNRD).

Starr grew up on a farm near Edgar, Nebraska. He has a Bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and Master's degree in Agricultural Economics.

He worked as an ag. economist for the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Commission in 1965. He joined the staff at what became the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission. That's where he worked with the Nebraska Legislature and the Governor in assuring and developing a meaningful plan to make creating the NRDs possible.

He played a key role in working with the Nebraska Legislature and the Governor to ultimately create the NRDs in 1972.

Starr moved into the position of Division Head for the Commission and worked with NRD managers/staff on a variety of projects. He retired in 2006.

## Nebraska NRD Conservation Award Winners



Director of the Year:  
 Jim Johnson – SPNRD  
 Nominated by South Platte NRD



Outstanding Grassland Conservation Award:  
 Waits Ranch of Tryon, NE  
 Nominated by Twin Platte NRD



Educator of the Year:  
 Dennis Mottl of Palmer, NE  
 Nominated by Lower Loup NRD



Community Conservation Award:  
 Western Nebraska Community College, Sidney, NE  
 Nominated by South Platte NRD



Tree Planter of the Year:  
 Scott Trost of Sidney, NE  
 Nominated by South Platte NRD



Outstanding Soil Stewardship Award:  
 Ben and Paula Sue Steffen of Humboldt, NE  
 Nominated by Nemaha NRD



Agriculture: Dennis and Imogene Wacker  
 Nominated by: Lower Elkhorn NRD



Youth: Grand Island Senior High Success Academy  
 Nominated by: Central Platte NRD



# Workshops Connect NDEQ & NRDs with Water Quality Message

Groundwater is important to Nebraska. About 80% of the state's drinking water and nearly all of its private water supply are from groundwater resources. Additionally, Nebraska leads the nation in total irrigated acres which is primarily pumped from groundwater and vital to Nebraska's productive agricultural economy. So it is imperative we manage and protect our groundwater resources.

Groundwater quality is a primary concern for drinking water users. The main contaminant of concern in groundwater is nitrate because it has negative impacts to human health. Since everyone depends on groundwater to live, managing this resource can be complex and challenging to make sure everyone's needs are met. Tension can rise between individuals, communities and producers when dealing with contaminated drinking water.

To better assist with Nitrate management across Nebraska, NDEQ is hosting a total of five Risk Communication Workshops across the state. Risk communication is a science-based approach for communicating complex technical information involving factors of risk. Risk communication is also a very helpful tool to minimize or avoid public outrage or undue concern associated with other relevant issues shrouded in emotionally charged situations, such as environmental, health, safety and security issues. The workshop will familiarize participants and provide practice in the use of scientifically-proven communication techniques that help to build and convey: trust and credibility; competence and expertise; honesty and openness; and carrying and empathy. Those attributes are mandatory for establishing trust and credibility on emotionally charged issues and to quell controversial situations. It is my hope we can continue to offer these workshops to NRDs to better assist with managing complex issues.

As the NRD/NDEQ Liaison it is my mission to help support the NRDs and work collaboratively with the NDEQ regarding water quality issues. I strive to promote the use of area-wide conservation planning at the watershed and basin levels and facilitate cooperation between the NRDs, NDEQ and other agencies in implementing water quality management programs.



~ Jennifer Swanson, NRD/NDEQ Liaison

## Planning to Protect Water Resources

Benjamin Franklin once said "if you fail to plan, you're planning to fail," it's also often said that "a goal is merely a wish without a plan to carry it out." Both sayings hold true for natural resources management. Fortunately for Nebraska, 45 years ago our Legislature had the foresight to implement a system of natural resources management that enabled local leaders to set goals for local priorities and granted them the tools necessary to develop plans for the protection of our natural resources.

Today the locally led Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) continue to expand on those planning efforts by partnering with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR). These state and local partnerships have worked to engage local stakeholders to produce goals, plans and action items necessary for the protection of local economies and the long-term sustainability of our state's integrated water resources. Working to ensure these partnerships are strengthened remains a priority for the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD).

This past year brought a milestone in integrated water planning with all 23 NRDs now partnering with NeDNR on implementing and/or working to develop Integrated Management Plans (IMP). With variable supplies, changing demands and evolving science, the process of planning is never complete and continuous improvement is critical. The NARD remains committed to working with the NRDs & NeDNR to annually evaluate and improve these integrated management plans.

Partnerships are also underway to facilitate water management planning discussions on the basin-wide level. From the Upper to the Lower Platte, the Niobrara to the Republican, over the past year the Association has supported the NRDs and NeDNR in expanding the efforts of engaging stakeholders to identify priorities across each basin. The Lower Platte Basin is in the final stages of completing their first increment plan with a committed focus on protecting existing uses while working to facilitate future growth. In the Upper Platte, local districts have worked with NeDNR to meet and exceed goals of initial planning efforts developed nearly 10 years ago. This past year brought significant progress in efforts focused on planning for the second increment.

These planning efforts have continued to protect Nebraskans in creating a sustainable future. At the Association, we remain committed to partnering with NRDs, NeDNR, partner agencies and all stakeholders to expand and ensure local planning efforts are successfully implemented.

~ Dustin Wilcox, NRD/NDNR Liaison

# NRD Communications Efforts Reel In Results



Information & Education Committee Promotes NRDs on NTV at Nebraska State Fair.

Positive public relations and communications efforts are imperative for the Natural Resources Districts (NRD) System as we continue living in the digital age. We must continue to tell our story to the public, to the media and to each other. If we fail to do so, you can guarantee someone else without the facts is telling it wrong. As the Public Relations Director for the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD), I'm pleased to see more NRDs taking steps to incorporate media strategy into their new projects and programs, and put an increased amount of money and resources into their social media sites as they continue to see successful results.

Video production has tripled as NRDs are finding new ways to get their message out. The NARD continues to create informational videos for all NRDs to use and is assisting the Information and Education (I&E) committee with video trainings to advance our skillset even further state-wide. We hope these trainings assist NRDs with yet, another tool in promoting your conservation cause.

The media is changing. Many times, stories can be selected based by how many clicks news outlets receive on the topic on their website. Or they can choose a story based on how visually interesting it is. The NRDs are adapting to these changes and must continue to build relationships with reporters and editors across the state. Through using its resources and relationships, the NARD has earned more than \$13,000 in earned media (free media coverage) in the 2016 – 2017 year in TV and radio coverage alone and thousands more from newspapers.



Basin Tour 2017

Basin tours and NRD tours have been a wonderful way of informing the public, board members and legislators about the importance of our projects, open discussions with the community are happening all of the time as the NRDs show transparency, and efforts to get to know our local senators are paying off as they see and learn the value of what the NRDs do as we continue to protect lives, protect property and protect Nebraska's future.



Our education programs are also seeing growth as NRDs find new ways to promote them and build relationships with teachers, schools and FFA advisors. Media coverage of these events has also increased.

We're here to assist all 23 NRDs with media coverage, press releases, media strategy and crisis communications.

~ Erika Hill, Public Relations Director, Nebraska Association of Resources Districts



Earth Wellness Festival, Lincoln, NE

## NRDs Push Conservation Tree Program in New Ways



LBNRD Tree Planting

The Natural Resources Districts Tree Program continues to be a valuable resource for Nebraska's landowners. This past year NRDs assisted landowners by providing and planting more than 700,000 trees and shrubs across the state. While economic factors have brought a decrease in large tree plantings and windbreaks, many NRDs continue to see an uptick in shrub plantings for wildlife and tree plantings for acreage owners.

Since the NRDs' formation in 1972, the NRD tree program has assisted Nebraska landowners in planting more than 96 million trees and shrubs. Working closely with NRDs and our partners at the Nebraska Forest Service and Bessey Nursery, the Association continues efforts to promote and expand the positive impact of this remarkable program. Check out our new NRD Conservation Tree Program website page at [www.nrdnet.org/tree-program](http://www.nrdnet.org/tree-program).

The Natural Resources Districts hand out 3,000 Colorado Blue Spruce tree seedlings to the public every year at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island. The promotion is becoming very popular.



More and more high school students are entering our building, learning about the NRDs and taking "selfies" with us for extra credit at school!



# Where are they now?

## Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts Protect Lives, Property and Future

The Upper Niobrara White NRD received a Nebraska Environmental Trust Grant for a new 10-foot No-Till Drill which is rented out to landowners for private seeding projects across the District. In addition to the annual youth events, the District reconvened its Citizens Advisory Committee and hosted five Adult education events across four counties on a variety of topics from Forestry, Water Conservation and Range Utilization to Soil Health.

This past year, the Middle Niobrara NRD has moved into its new location at 303 E HWY 20 in Valentine. The MNNRD hosted a landowner field day that showcased BMPs for the Long Pine Creek Watershed, that utilized woody biomass. Also, the district, a member of the Niobrara River Basin Alliance (NRBA) has continued individual and basin planning conversations that include the acquisition of the Spencer Hydro facility. The MNNRD has continued its efforts on conservation throughout the district by planting 33,512 trees, conducting 184 static water level checks, and taking 410 nitrate samples.

This year the Upper Loup NRD successfully completed the implementation of Voluntary Integrated Management Plans. The district also drilled 3 new monitoring wells.

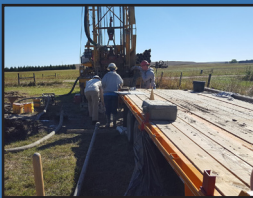
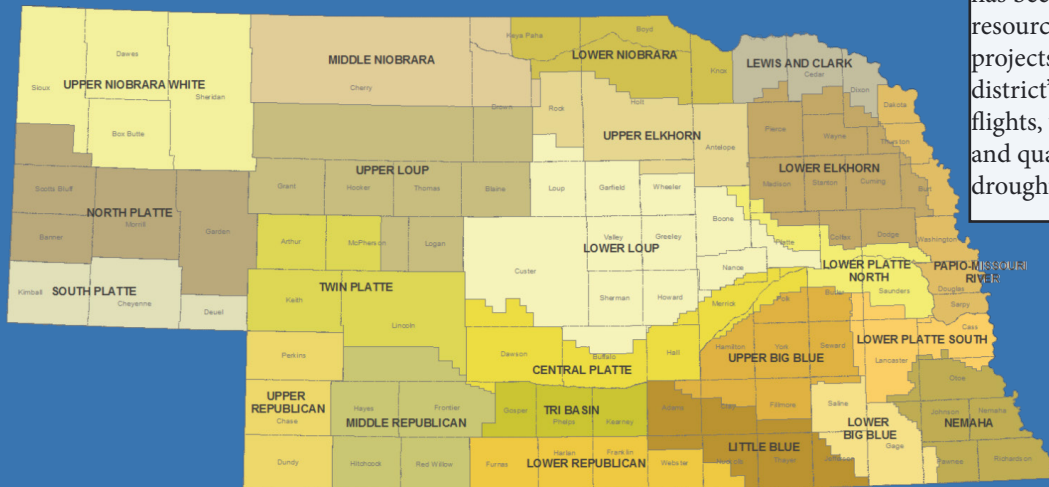
The Lower Niobrara NRD is nearing completion of the Districts Acre Certification and has decided to continue the stay on new irrigated acres. Water levels continue to rebound from the 2012 drought, but are being stress this year with the lack of rain in much of the District. The West Knox Rural Water System continues to grow and has 210+ rural customers and the villages of Verdigre and Winnetoon.

The Lewis and Clark NRD flew an Aero-Electro Magnetic (AEM) Survey of the sub-surface geology in southern Cedar County to assist in management of groundwater resources and the recharge areas that impact local aquifers. The District also initiated studies to determine how to best expand capacity at the Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project which serves high quality drinking water from a surface water treatment plant to 4 communities and more than 880 rural connections in Northeast Nebraska.

The North Platte NRD has instituted a pilot fall tree planting program to determine if survival rates for conservation tree seedlings increase in the fall as opposed to spring planting. Last year, approximately 2000 trees were planted, with a high number surviving this spring. The NPNRD is looking to expand its fall planting to provide every advantage we can for conservations trees in a dry climate.



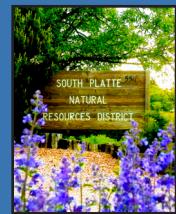
The Twin Platte NRD has been busy developing a pipeline that will help the TPNRD be in compliance with its IMP. This 10 mile pipeline will move offset water from the NCORPE project in southern Lincoln County to the Platte River when necessary. The TPNRD has also been working with local irrigation districts to also provide offset water to the Platte River.



The Lower Loup NRD has filed an instream flow application for rights to the remaining unappropriated water in the Loup River from the Genoa diversion to the confluence of the North Loup and Middle Loup Rivers. The LLNRD has completed renovations at Pibel Lake Recreation Area in southwest Wheeler County and continues work at Davis Creek Recreation Area in southern Valley County.

The Lower Elkhorn NRD has returned \$1,414,471 in cost-share funds to communities and landowners across the 15-county district through their projects and programs. An additional \$1,200,000 has been used for water resources management projects, including the district's AEM helicopter flights, water quality and quantity, and the drought mitigation plan.

The Upper Elkhorn NRD belongs to various Coalitions and Alliances to evaluate water resources within the Platte, Elkhorn and Niobrara River Basins. The Lower Platte River Basin Coalition will be evaluating a Final Report on the Elkhorn-Loup Model (ELM) from the USGS that should be completed in 2017. The UENRD is also involved with the Lower Platte Basin River Coalition and consulting firm HDR which has been evaluating the availability of ground and surface water in the Platte River Basin. This report should also be available in 2017. The UENRD is also a member of the Niobrara River Basin Alliance which involves future management of the Niobrara River Basin which involves the Spencer Hydro Plant.



The South Platte NRD, with the city of Sidney, has made significant progress on their East Sidney Watershed Project; working on restoration and enhancement projects at Oliver Reservoir; administering its Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations (quality and quantity); and working with the Nebraska DNR on IMP (Integrated Management Plan) and 2nd Increment basin-wide Planning Development.



The Papio Creek Dam Site 15A is near completion and will officially open in the Spring of 2018. The Papio-Missouri River NRD continues to actively pursue additional flood protection within the Papillion Creek Watershed in the Omaha metro area. The District is wrapping up Federal permitting requirements and will begin work in 2018 on the Missouri River Levees south of Bellevue in Sarpy County. These levees (R-613 & R-616) protect Offutt Air Force Base, Omaha's Shell Creek Watershed, which has led to Shell Creek being the first water course in Nebraska to be de-listed for pollution due to atrazine. LPNNRD has also completed the process of irrigated acre certification in 2017 with the information being the foundation for the district's new Master Database.



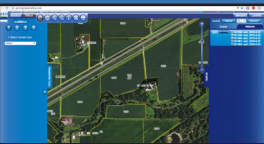
The Lower Platte North NRD has made significant efforts to improve water quality in the 330,000 acres of the Shell Creek Watershed, which has led to Shell Creek being the first water course in Nebraska to be de-listed for pollution due to atrazine. LPNNRD has also completed the process of irrigated acre certification in 2017 with the information being the foundation for the district's new Master Database.



The Lower Platte South NRD has completed Ash Hollow Dry Dam protecting the City of Waverly and restoration of Marsh Wren, a rare saline wetland. Lower Platte South continues its multi-year updating of Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee and continues to seek federal flood protection help for Lincoln's Deadmans Run watershed.



The Upper Republican NRD has been updating its Groundwater Management Plan, with focus on the Nitrate Program. Also, a pilot project intended to pave the way for real-time water usage information on all irrigation wells in the district began and groundwater modeling efforts to inform future water management decisions were initiated.



The Central Platte NRD developed a website for producers to submit their annual water quality crop report, view certified irrigated acres, and use online tools to determine potential water transfers. Users may also select specific layers to print off maps for stream depletion, groundwater levels, over-appropriated areas, sub-irrigated areas and more. Visit: [cpnrd.gisworkshop.com](http://cpnrd.gisworkshop.com).

The Little Blue NRD Board of Directors took action on February 14, 2017 to delay the deadline for certifying irrigated acres. The new deadline is January 1, 2019. District staff will continue mailing certification forms and taking appointments to help producers certify their acres. There are no limitations on the addition of irrigated acres at this time. All active high-capacity irrigation wells must still be equipped with a fully-functional flow meter by March 31, 2017.



The Lower Big Blue NRD drilled 40 dedicated monitoring wells and completed the installation of pumps and data loggers so readings could begin this year. The NRD began working with the town of Wilber on a possible lease of an NRD structures near the high school, that would be rehabilitated to provide a fishing pier, picnic shelters, trails and an outdoor classroom. The storm shelters completed last year at the Big Indian and Willard Meyer Recreation areas provided shelter during June storms that overturned camper trailers.

The Upper Big Blue NRD was awarded a \$50,000 NACD grant to begin a new program called Project GROW: "Growing Rotational crops On Wellfields" for the York wellfield. It was the only award in the State of Nebraska. Funds will be used to plant cover & rotational crops, berry shrubs, a business-sponsored community garden, and a pollinator habitat. The goals are to improve soil health, erosion control, non-leaching of nitrogen into the water table, and increasing water holding capacity in the soil to protect York's water quality.



At the Nemaha NRD, work continues on the Duck Creek Recreation Area near Peru in anticipation of a spring, 2018, opening. Interior roads, RV pads, parking areas, a well, water lines, and electricity were all added during the past year.

The Tri-Basin NRD and Lower Republican NRD are working closely together to make the Platte-Republican Diversion Project a reality. This project will enable both districts to utilize excess flows from the Platte to augment flows in a Republican Basin tributary, assuring compliance with integrated management plan requirements.

NCORPE should finish up constructing the North Pipeline to the South Platte River by late September 2017. It's opened up more land for public hunting with over 8,000 acres for outdoor fun.

The Lower Republican NRD in partnership with Tri-Basin NRD and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District has begun the planning process that would divert excess flows from the Platte River to the Republican River. The next step in the process is an application to the Department of Natural Resources for a transfer permit.



1870      1920      1930      1940      1950      1960      1970      1980      1990      2000      2010      2017

In 1872, Nebraskan, J. Sterling Morton creates Arbor Day; the first holiday devoted to natural resources conservation.

In 1935, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service is established to assist farmers and help foster a new conservation ethic across the country.

Devastating floods during the 1950's cause massive property damage and spur major flood control projects across Nebraska.

In 1972, Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts form and begin taking action to address a wide variety of natural resources challenges.

Because of its value to farmers and urban centers, groundwater is commonly recognized as the state's most precious natural resource.

NRDs continue to play a leadership role in addressing local natural resources concerns.



# 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 five times a year to review details of the program and suggest changes. This committee is made up of the NARD Risk Pool Executive Committee and 13 NRD employees representing all areas of the state.

Over the last ten years of the program, the average annual NARD health insurance premiums increases have been 4.1% while the national annual averages have been 12.2%. 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. The board used those additional reserves to keep premium increases down and pay claims in 2015-16 and 2016-17. At the end of FY 2015-16 the program showed loss of just over \$600,000, using more than half of the profits from 2013-14. The NARD Board set the rate for FY 16-17 with a goal to break even, rely on reserves and ended up with a profit of \$303,793.

The NARD Risk Pool Stop/Loss Committee and Risk Pool Board set rates again this year targeting a break-even year. The rate changes for FY 17-18 are set at a 5.0% increase for health and a 2.9% increase in the dental rates. The national average increase for health insurance is 10.0% this year, which is double the rate increases for the NARD plan. The NRD employee's involvement in wellness activities and programs reduces health care cost to local NRDs and taxpayers.

Under ObamaCare, there will be federal premium taxes that must be paid based on the number of employees and family members under the plan. These taxes will be almost \$60,000 in 2017-18. The NARD Risk Pool Board is paying the taxes out of the reserves rather than assessing each employee or district for the tax.

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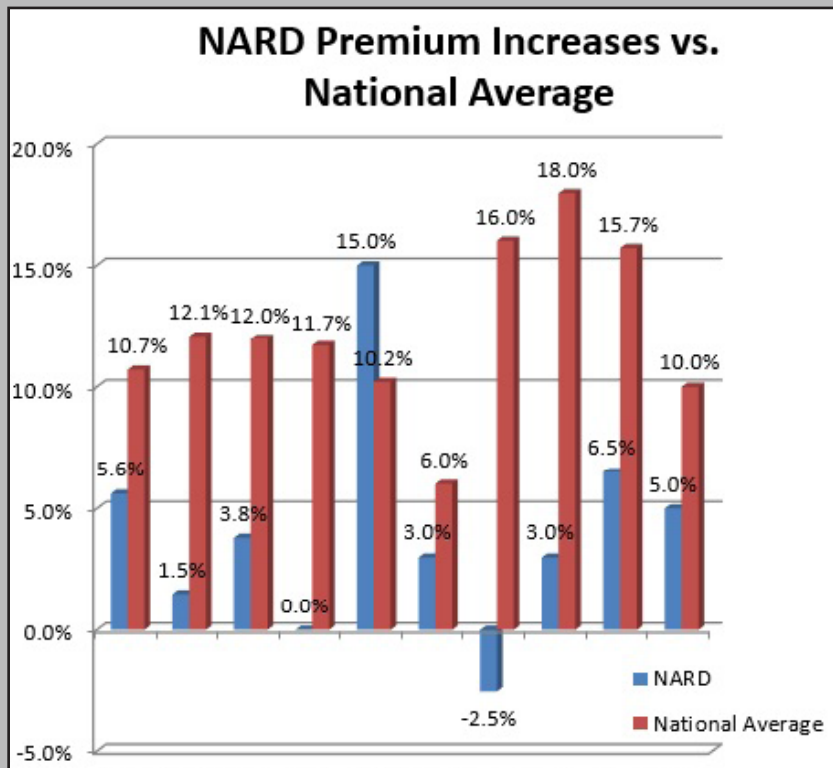


Chart 1 shows the NARD insurance premium increase compared with the national premium average for the past several years.

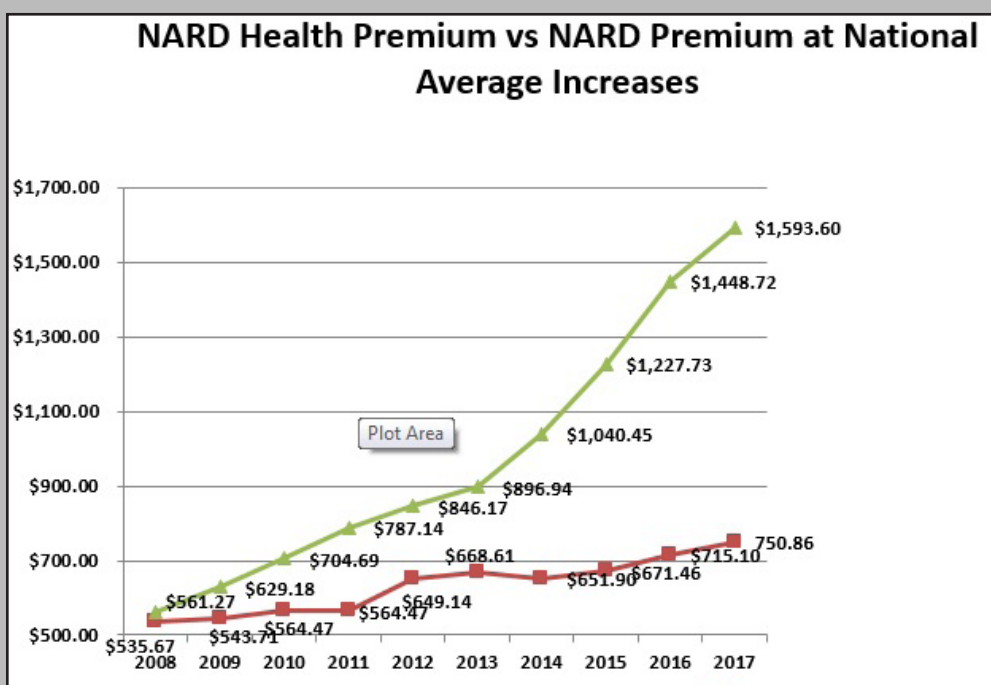


Chart 2 shows the actual NARD insurance premium cost compared to what the NARD insurance premium would be with the national average increases.

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 \$4.6 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 Employee Retirement Program



Platte River, TBNRD

Thanks to the hard work of the NARD/NRD Employee Benefits Committee, the NRD Employees Retirement Program continues to grow and make improvements. The program is governed by the NARD Board of Directors. The NRD Employee Benefits Committee meets four times a year to review details of the program and suggest changes in investment options to the NARD Board. This committee is made up of the NARD Executive Committee and 13 NRD employees representing all areas of the state.

The NARD 414(h) retirement fund equity grew to \$34,165,150 as of June 30, 2017. 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 equity grew to \$3,629,978 as of June 30, 2017. 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 Wellness Program

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 NRDs' existing Risk Pool Health Insurance Program administered by NARD. NARD Board members and NRD Managers saw the creation of a wellness program 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's wellness goals.

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 Haymarket Park Trail in Lincoln. The event was open to the public, brought in more than 100 runners and walkers and raised more than \$6,000 for the NARD Foundation.

Many of the local district wellness programs promote community involvement through a variety of activities including: a toy drive, collection for local food banks and health screenings.

The NARD Risk Pool became an official Corporate Member for the NE150 Challenge, which is a state-wide, year-round, web-based wellness initiative which offers motivation for achieving walking/running/biking miles, exercise minutes, race participation and usage of public trails and state parks. The NRDs set up their web-based office group, and NARD set up a statewide group, where participants log their activity in the various categories, earn virtual badges for their achievements and measure their progress against other Nebraskans, including the first family. The NRDs were recognized (groups with 350-999 employees) for total mileage, by recording 9,8882 between January 1 – April 30th.

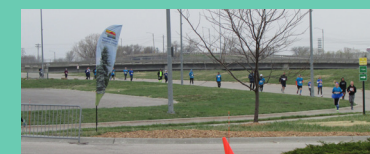


Participants in the wellness program have shown improvements in their health, including weight loss, increase in physical activity, healthier eating habits, increase in health screenings and flu shots. As a result of the success of the NRDs wellness program, many of the NRDs have received the Governors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

~ Jeanne Dryburgh, NARD Office Manager



5K Run/1 Mile Walk



Kids Dash



Race Volunteers



Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) worked together with the Natural Resources Committee and other state senators during the 2017 Legislative Session to protect the future of Nebraska's natural resources. One of our major issues was to get the levy authority extended for districts that are determined to be fully or over-appropriated. Thanks to the hard work from Senator Curt Friesen we came close. Another major issue for next session is LB 218, which would force the sale of NCORPE property as proposed by Senator Groene. These issues are alive for the 2018 session as follows:



*North Pipeline, NCORPE*

LB 98 - Extend certain levy authority for natural resources districts. Friesen. Speaker Priority Bill.

On May 2nd, Senator Friesen came within two votes to gain cloture on LB 98 which would have ended debate and allowed for a simple majority vote on advancement of the bill. The vote was 31-9-9. A cloture vote to end a filibuster requires 33 votes.

The bill proposes to extend the maximum 3-cent levy authority for fully or over-appropriated districts from FY 2017-18 to FY 2025-26 so current successes can continue and future programs can be developed to improve water supplies. The levy can only be used to implement ground water management activities and integrated management activities under the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act.

Failure to gain cloture does not kill the bill, but it drops it to the bottom of the list of bills to be discussed. A similar bill will have to be introduced next session.

A "yes" vote on cloture is to end debate (33 votes required). The cloture votes follows:

- Voting YES (31): Albrecht, Baker, Blood, Bolz, Bostelman, Brasch, Brewer, Chambers, Crawford, Ebke, Friesen, Hansen, Harr, Hughes, Kolowski, Kolterman, Larson, Lindstrom, Linehan, McCollister, Morfeld, Quick, Scheer, Smith, Stinner, Vargas, Walz, Watermeier, Wayne, Williams and Wishart.

- Voting NO (9): Clements, Erdman, Geist, Groene, Halloran, Hilgers, Kuehn, Lowe, and McDonnell,

- Present and not voting (9): Briese, Craighead, Hilkemann, Howard, Krist, Murante, Pansing Brooks, Riepe, and Schumacher.

Please take time to thank the senators for voting "yes", especially Senator Friesen who sponsored the bill. Senators Hughes, Watermeier, Williams and Stinner helped out tremendously.

The following provides a summary of what the 3-cent levy means to the local economy.

- The 3-cent levy authority is commonly used as matching funds for grants from the Environmental Trust, The Water Sustainability Fund, and other grants and funds. Providing matching funds allow districts to leverage the local tax dollars to keep taxes in the district as low as possible while still accomplishing the edicts in LB962.

- The successful partnership has annually provided an estimated 9.78 billion to 39.12 billion gallons of water benefit to the Platte River and 13.04 billion to 16.3 billion gallons of water benefit to the Republican River. At the same time, irrigated acres have been preserved to protect the local economy and the state economy.

- Eliminating the 3-cent levy does not remove an NRD's obligations, rather it forces irrigators to take the full brunt of groundwater management program funding by increasing occupation taxes and increasing regulations.

- Without the 3-cent levy authority, NRDs will be forced to use occupation tax dollars to fund necessary programs. Occupation tax dollars are only paid by a district's irrigators, who will see an exponential tax increase relative to the existing levy. If the shift occurred an average sized farm in Central Platte NRD, for example, could expect to see an approximately 115% increase in their taxes with total obligations increasing from \$1.60 per acre to \$3.43 per acre.

- If the 3-cent levy sunsets, regulations may be required that force irrigated acres to be retired. If this occurs, property taxes would increase for all others in the district. As the number of irrigated acres shrinks, because regulations require additional irrigated acres be retired to maintain sustainability, land values will fall and the property tax levy must rise to compensate. Retiring irrigated acres will also result in an economic downturn for that region, resulting from the lack of activity on un-farmed acres.

- When LB962 was passed in 2006, it set out very particular requirements for districts that had been designated as over or fully appropriated (i.e. using too much water). The levy authority was put in place to help those districts find ways to maintain sustain-

ability within their districts by reducing water use and putting water back in the river.

- Proper regulation of water resources affects more than the irrigators of this state. Every day, Nebraskans use the state's groundwater and surface water resources when they turn on a tap, run their washing machine or dishwasher, or water the lawn.

- Our state's water belongs to all Nebraskans. Water managed by these projects in western Nebraska recharge municipal wellfields downstream all the way to Omaha.

LB 218 - Provide for installation of ground water pumps by public entities. Groene.

The Natural Resources Committee accepted testimony on LB 218 on February 15th. The bill proposes to place restrictions on the use of land and water used for augmentation projects for interstate compacts. The bill would also require the sale of the land used for augmentation projects. The bill directs the Department of Natural Resources may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to implement the proposal.

At the hearing on the proposal, Senator Groene mentioned the NCORPE project may have kept Nebraska in compliance with the Republican River Compact, but the project should be stopped, sold and restored to crop land. However, the bill would allow the water rights to be held by the NCORPE after the land is sold, essentially ending the right to use groundwater under the overlying land.

Don Blankenau, legal counsel for NCORPE provided testimony in opposition pointed out the consequences and risks associated with selling the land, creating monumental problems and a major change in Nebraska water law. Blankenau pointed out that under the bill, the pumping rights could be retained which severs the groundwater from the land which counters current Nebraska water law. Nebraska water law is founded in common law that ties the volume of water that can be withdrawn to the amount of land that you own. There is no water right in Nebraska that allows or guarantees the ability to pump a volume of water in excess of a volume that can be reasonably used on the amount of land that you own. Separating the land and water creates a risk that an adjoining land owner could seek an injunction to limit the volume to the land area owned.

What that means is the more land a person owns, the more water that landowner may withdraw and put to beneficial use. In the case of NCORPE, it was necessary to be able to pump a large volume of water when needed to provide important protection for all water users within the Republican River Basin, Platte River Basin, and Nebraska taxpayers generally. The need for a large volume of water required NCORPE to own large tracts of land.

While the Legislature has modified the common law over the

years, it never fully abrogated the core legal principle by severing the right to access ground water from title to the land. Blankenau pointed out they didn't do so for one over-arching reason: doing so would open the door to a host of interwoven legal issues that could result in significant disruption to water management programs and to investment backed expectations. This is an important issue for all large water users like augmentation projects and municipal suppliers.

As an example, if the water was separated from the land, a situation is created where Denver could buy a small parcel of land and install large capacity wells and pump as much water as they want.

Jasper Fanning, Manager of the Upper Republican NRD, presented testimony in opposition to the bill on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. The NCORPE project is Nebraska's primary tool chosen to comply with the Republican River compact and to assist with the Twin Platte's compliance with their IMP and the Platte Cooperative Agreement. The project pumps water in water short years and remains idle during other normal or wet years and the groundwater levels in the area are allowed to recharge.

Fanning noted the alternative to NCORPE would be to shut down 174,000 irrigated acres in the rapid response area basin-wide and increased administration of surface water. Because there is no immediate benefit to the river, this action would only yield about 15,000 acre feet of water, if surface water was also regulated, it might not even be enough for compliance. In three years, the number could grow to 45,000 which might get closer to compliance, but those acres - both ground and surface water sources - would have to remain non-irrigated well into the future.

Kent Miller, General Manager for the Twin Platte NRD, also pointed out that if NCORPE and other projects were not undertaken in the Twin Platte NRD, about 50,000 irrigated acres would have to be shut down in Lincoln and Keith counties to meet the obligations of the first increment of the Platte River Recovery Program.



*Finished Pipeline, Twin Platte NRD*



# NARD Legislative Recap 2017

Senators approved and Governor Ricketts signed several bills that NARD was involved in. The following provides just a few of the key bills related to natural resources enacted this year.

LB 182 - Change powers and duties of the Department of Environmental Quality under the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Act. Hughes. Natural Resources Committee Priority.

The Nebraska Legislature gave final approval to LB 182 on April 24th by a 49-0 vote. Governor Ricketts signed the bill into law on April 27th. The bill was the Natural Resources Committee Priority Bill which amended the Nebraska Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Act to allow for public water supply systems that serve populations of 10,000 or less, and operated by political subdivisions, to be eligible for low interest loans and grants for the development, treatment and distribution of drinking water supplies.

Prior law only allowed the program to be used by political subdivisions of 10,000 population or less. Even though they serve less than the population threshold, most NRD rural water systems and some County operated rural water systems were not ineligible because the population of the entire subdivision must be counted which takes them over the population threshold.

The Natural Resources Committee accepted testimony on LB 182 on January 25th and advanced the bill to General File on January 27th with no amendments. Senators advanced the bill to Select File on March 28th by a 38-0-11 vote.

At the committee hearing, Annette Sudbeck, Manager of the Lewis and Clark NRD, testified in support of the bill on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. Sudbeck reviewed the Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project, which is operated by the Lewis and Clark NRD. The project serves 875 rural hook ups and the communities of Crofton, St. Helena, Fordyce and Obert in Northeast Nebraska. The estimated total population served is 3,200.

The area has very limited groundwater supplies. The system includes a treatment plant located in the bluffs of the Devil's Nest Region along Lewis and Clark Lake. Surface water is pumped from the lake to the plant and treated water is distributed to rural customers and communities along 400 miles of service line. It is about 40 miles from the plant to the farthest point of service.

There are fifteen systems operated by NRDs, only the Lower Niobrara NRD has a population of less than 10,000 (6,985) and has a system serving a population of approximately 1,800. Eight other NRDs operate fourteen systems serving populations of 150 to 6,000. All eight of these NRDs have district populations of more than 10,000. Even though they serve less than the population threshold, most NRD rural water systems and some County operated rural water systems are ineligible because the population of the entire subdivision must be counted which takes them over the population threshold.

The rural water systems are very beneficial for rural customers and small communities. By hooking up several communities and residents in-between, we can gain some economies of scale to provide clean potable water at a reasonable cost. The systems are paid for by fees on the rural water customers, not the general property taxes.

LB 154 - Change provisions relating to certain dam filing fees. Geist.

On May 4th, Senators gave final approval to LB 154 on a 48-0-1 vote. Governor Ricketts signed the bill into law on May 10th. The bill eliminates the filing fee charged by the Department of Natural Resources when the entity that owns a new or reconstructed dam files for a completion certificate.

Under prior law, no impoundment by the dam can occur until the Department approves the completion certificate and issues an approval to operate.

The committee hearing was held on January 26th. Jeff Fassett, Director of the Department of Natural Resources, testified in support of the bill. He noted it costs more than \$10 to collect the fee and the department would prefer to just eliminate it. There was no opposition to the bill. The committee advanced the bill on January 30th without any amendments.

LB 176 - Eliminate obsolete provisions related to milldams. Bostelman.

On May 4th, Senators gave final approval to LB 176 on a 47-0-2 vote. Governor Ricketts signed the bill into law on May 10th. The bill eliminates the statutes that provide governance over dams built for milling, sawing grist or any machinery to be propelled by water.

The committee hearing was held on January 26th. It was noted in testimony the statutes are over 90 years old and used to govern flour mills and other mills of the time. Currently, only Champion Mill is still in existence. However, it is a museum and not in operation. Other statutes exist to regulate the dam at the mill. There was no opposition to the bill. The committee advanced the bill to General File on January 30th without any amendments.

LB 327e - Appropriate funds for the expenses of Nebraska State Government for the biennium ending June 30, 2019. Speaker Scheer, at the request of the Governor.

Senators gave Final Reading approval to LB 327e on a 36-12-1 vote on May 9th. Governor Ricketts line item vetoed \$56.6 million out of the bill which was sustained by the Legislature. Governor Ricketts veto message on LB 327 can be found at: <https://governor.nebraska.gov/press/gov-ricketts-vetoes-565-million-spending-protect-budget>.

On Select File, Senators advanced LB 327 to Final Reading on a

28-18-2-1 vote after adopting committee amendments AM 1277, 1279 and 1193. The amendments make adjustments and transfers to address the additional revenue shortfall of \$55 Million as projected at the April meeting of the Nebraska Economic Forecasting board.

Previously, on April 26th Senators advanced LB 327 to Select File on a 36-1-12 vote after adopting the Committee Amendment (AM590) on a 46-1-2 vote. The committee made several structural changes to the budget to address the projected \$895 million budget shortfall.

The bill, as amended, does increase funding for some programs. These include:

- \$62.4 million for the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA);
- \$35.6 million for Medicaid;
- \$20 million a year totaling \$224 million annually to the Property Tax Credit Fund;
- Maintain the State Cash Reserve Fund with a \$369.1 million unobligated balance;
- \$15.4 million for staffing, programs and equipment for the state Department of Correctional Services; and
- \$11.4 million for the courts under the Justice Reinvestment Act.

The major reductions include:

- \$24.7 million to state agencies;
- \$13 million to the university system; and
- \$9 million in foster care contracts with private providers of kinship placements for state wards.

Key changes for natural resources programs include:

- Reduction of funding for the Riparian Vegetation Management program by \$500,000 to a funding level of \$475,000 annually.

• A \$926,480 annual reduction of research and data collection functions for the Department of Natural Resources. The Appropriations Committee recommendation reduces the agency's funding to procure contractual services and temporary staff to conduct research in support of initiatives planned and/or underway for the Integrated Water Management and Interstate Water Agreements functions.

• A \$200,000 reduction annually in funding for stream gauging, information technology and other equipment for the Department of Natural Resources.

• A \$436,669 annual reduction in funding for the Soil and Water Conservation Fund. The funds are allocated to NRDs annually to provide cost-share to landowners to implement conservation programs and practices.

LB 415e - Change provisions relating to certain retirement plans as prescribed. Kolterman. Nebraska Retirement Systems Priority Bill.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 415e into law on May 23rd. The bill included the emergency clause so it takes effect immediately upon the Governor's signature. Senators gave Final Reading approval to LB 415e on May 18th by a 48-0-1 vote. On May 5th, Senators advanced the bill to Select File by a 39-0 vote after adopting the Retirement Systems Committee amendment (AM 923). As amended, the bill includes provisions from seven different bills dealing with retirement programs for public employees, judges and the state patrol.

Related to natural resources, the amendment included provisions of LB 110, which will end the annual reporting requirement for political subdivisions that operate defined contribution retirement plans. The last report will be on December 31, 2017. The bill proposes to maintain annual reporting for political subdivisions that operate defined benefit plans. The NARD operates a defined contribution plan.

LB 432 - Eliminate provisions of the Nebraska Budget Act relating to allowances for delinquent taxes and anticipated litigation. Erdman. Senator Erdman Priority.

Governor Ricketts signed LB 432 into law on April 27th. The bill included the emergency clause so it takes effect immediately upon the Governor's signature. The Nebraska Legislature gave final approval to LB 432 on April 24th by a 49-0 vote. The bill eliminates the allowance for delinquent taxes and pending or anticipated litigation in a political subdivisions budget.

The Government Committee advanced LB 432 to General File on March 17th with Committee Amendment (AM 289) by a 7-1 vote. Senators advance the bill to Select File on March 29th by a 32-1-16 vote after adopting AM 289.

The amendment (AM 289) keeps the authority of political subdivisions to make allowance for delinquent taxes as specified in their biennial budget statement, but qualifies it as only existing when the prime rate established by the Federal Reserve is 10% or more. The bill is Senator Erdman's priority bill for the session.



Regional Landjudging Competition, Tri-Basin NRD



# Natural Resources Districts Proud of 45 Years of Accomplishments

## 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 45th 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!



*Dean Edson*

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

The NARD also manages the NARD Foundation which has grown significantly over the past 15 years. What started out as a small foundation in 1997 with \$4,100 in assets, and helped fund only one internship in Washington, DC, has grown to more than \$38,000 in funding in 2017 to eleven educational programs reaching thousands of individuals in Nebraska. The NARD Foundation owns the NRD Building at Husker Harvest Days which greatly enhanced the visibility of the NRDs at the event. The foundation also provided funding to the new Ag Experience Building at the Nebraska State Fair which is a great public showcase for Nebraska agriculture and natural resources.

The fundraisers at the annual meeting and member involvement help grow the program each year. With the help of the NRDs, the foundation provided funding for an hour-long Nebraska Educational TV program on the history and successes of the NRD system. The program has been aired on NET2 23 times since May, 2016. The project has opened more doors for the NRDs with NET with the sponsorship of Husker Baseball, Softball and Big Red Wrap-up which are aired on both NET and NET2. Sponsorship allows for additional positive messaging about Nebraska's NRDs.

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 300,000 irrigated acres Southwest Nebraska. The Twin Platte NRD will finish the Platte Basin portion in 2018.

The Central Platte NRD agreements with four irrigation canals in Dawson County to continue to protect irrigators in the area while keeping Nebraska in compliance with the Platte River Recovery Program. The Papio Missouri River NRD and Lower Platte South NRD have built several successful flood control structures that continue to protect lives and property in Nebraska's two largest communities.

The latest historical development led by the NRDs is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was developed for the Niobrara Basin. 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 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 the local NRDs to protect lives, protect property and protect the future.

### Contact the NARD:

Nebraska Association of Resources Districts

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NRD Tree Program Website: [www.nrdnet.org/tree-program](http://www.nrdnet.org/tree-program)

NRD Recreation Area Website: [www.nrdnet.org/recreation](http://www.nrdnet.org/recreation)

“LIKE” Us on Facebook and Twitter @nebrnd

### 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 Outreach
- Technician Trainings