

An aerial photograph showing a wide, muddy river channel. In the foreground, a concrete bridge spans across the river. In the background, a large, rectangular concrete dam structure is partially collapsed, with debris and sand scattered around it. The surrounding landscape is flat and appears to be covered in sand and silt, with some sparse, bare trees. The sky is clear and blue.

Nebraska Association of Resources Districts ANNUAL REPORT

2019

The collapse of the 29-foot-high Spencer Dam March 14, 2019, unleashed a wall of water 11 to 15 feet high, leaving destruction downstream. According to Jason Lambrecht, U.S. Geological Survey, flows in the Niobrara River just below the dam measured up to 40,000 cubic feet per second, which was about 27 times the normal flow of 1,500 cubic feet per second, just before the dam failed.

A new channel of the Niobrara River was created by the flood, which washed away more than a quarter-mile of U.S. Highway 281. The skeleton of the structure (background), along with the vast fields of sand, is an iconic image of the 2019 flooding.



Larry Reynolds, President
Lexington, Nebraska
Represents Tri-Basin NRD

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

This year has been a challenge for all involved in the stewardship of our natural resources. As Mother Nature confronted us with unprecedented scenarios, my respect for the Natural Resources Districts' staff and directors across the state has only increased.

In many areas, Districts' investments

and commitments to protect lives and property did exactly that. The raw power of nature showed us areas where future, difficult decisions will need to be made. The NRD system remains uniquely positioned to make decisions because we can provide local solutions in partnership with state and federal agencies,

which is the envy of many nationally and worldwide.

It is my deep, heartfelt honor to serve as your president on the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts board. Let us move forward with conviction as we continue to protect lives, property and the future.

COMMUNITY CORNER

Check out Nebraska NRD employees engaged with their communities across Nebraska to spread the word about conserving our natural resources!



Shane Young, Upper Loup NRD resource technician, explains how to plant trees during the forestry session at ACE Camp in Halsey June 17.



Left: McKenzie Barry, Lower Platte South NRD environmental education/communications coordinator, shows off a salamander at the Sustainable Living Festival in Lincoln.

Below: Lower Big Blue NRD hosts a fishing derby at the Willard Meyer Recreation Area. The day included a visit from the Nebraska National Guard via helicopter.



Connie McCarthy, Lower Niobrara NRD programs assistant, teaches students about erosion during the Nebraska State Fair. NRD volunteers spent a week at the State Fair teaching the public about their local Natural Resources District.



Above: Students learn about soil at the Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival hosted by Central Platte NRD. This year, the festival received a statewide education award from the Grand Island Izaak Walton League of American.

Right: FFA students grab a free tree from the NRDs at Husker Harvest Days.



MEET THE NARD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The NARD executive committee includes the NARD president, vice president, secretary/treasurer, past president, and chairs from the Legislative and Information & Education Committees. The NARD board of directors includes representation from each of the 23 NRDs, and meets five times annually to help guide the association.

NARD President Larry Reynolds has served on the Tri-Basin NRD board 34 years and on the NARD board seven years. Reynolds

served in the U.S. Air Force eight years and in the Nebraska Air National Guard 18 years. He currently farms and helps manage the family's cow-calf operation near Lexington.

NARD Vice President Jim Eschliman has served on the Lower Loup NRD board 14 years and on the NARD board since 2016. Eschliman operates a family dairy with his wife, Deb, in Wheeler County near Ericson. Eschliman also serves on the local cooperative board and the Cattlemen's

Beef Board.

NARD Secretary/Treasurer Milt Schmidt has served on the Lower Platte South NRD board since 2012 and on the NARD board since 2016. Schmidt retired from Goodyear after 35 years and went on to work for Lincoln's United Way five years. He continues to volunteer his time for many charities in the Lincoln community.

NARD Past President Jim Bendfeldt has served on the Central Platte NRD board 16 years, currently chair, and on the NARD board seven years.

In 2011, Bendfeldt was awarded the NARD Director of the Year Award. He also serves on the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program board as a land acquisition member.

James Meisner of the Twin Platte NRD serves as the Legislative Committee chair, and Jim Johnson of the South Platte NRD serves as the Information & Education Committee chair.

A new NARD executive committee will be elected in March 2020.



Larry Reynolds
President



Jim Eschliman
Vice President



Milt Schmidt
Secretary/Treasurer



Jim Bendfeldt
Past President



James Meisner
Legislative Chair



Jim Johnson
I&E Chair

MEET THE NRD MANAGERS COMMITTEE

The NRD Managers Committee includes managers and assistant managers from all 23 districts. The committee meets five times annually to coordinate NRD activities with state and federal agencies, conservation partners and other parties

to protect natural resources.

Upper Big Blue NRD Manager Dave Eigenberg is the chair and Lewis & Clark NRD Manager Annette Sudbeck serves as vice-chair.

The committee elects a new chair at the March meeting.



Dave Eigenberg
Chair



Annette Sudbeck
Vice-Chair

FLOODING: ONE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND OUR MISSION

It is safe to say the 2019 Nebraska news cycle has been dominated by weather.

From the Bomb Cyclone to statewide flooding, Nebraskans couldn't catch a break. These weather events allowed NRDs to express the importance of the work in their districts. This includes tree lines protecting cattle during blizzards and flood control projects holding back water to protect lives and property.

Many district managers and assistant managers were featured on TV and in newspapers updating Nebraskans on flood infrastructure.

In addition, an entire issue of the Municipal Water Leader featured Nebraska's flood recovery efforts.

The magazine is sent to every municipal water provider in all 50 states with an annual budget over \$10 million, and mailed to every governor, member of congress and state legislator.



The magazine features Gov. Pete Ricketts, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, Papio-Missouri River NRD General Manager John Winkler, Lower Platte South NRD General Manager

Paul Zillig, NARD Executive Director Dean Edson and State Sen. Brett Lindstrom.

Districts should be proud of the work they are doing, and seize the opportunity to talk to the media and local citizens about these successes.

Midwest floods have left an impression on Nebraska communities, which means future educational opportunities will continue to center around the importance of flood and erosion control.

Out of saturated soil and soggy basements, there is an opportunity to spread the mission of the NRDs – protecting lives, property and the future!



Central Platte NRD Assistant Manager Jesse Mintken discusses the importance of the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Creek Flood Protection Project with NTV News. The project was nearly completed when March floods came through, and held back an estimated 1.5 billion gallons of water from Grand Island.



The Nebraska National Guard rescues a family from their flooded home near Arlington.

Photos courtesy of Gov. Rickett's Office



Papio-Missouri River NRD General Manager John Winkler informs citizens about flooding on KETV Omaha News. Raising the levees at Offutt Air Force Base has been in the works for eight years; unfortunately, they weren't completed in time for the March floods.



Vice President Mike Pence, Sen. Ben Sasse, Rep. Don Bacon and Gov. Ricketts meet with first responders during Nebraska's historic March floods.



Chalkrock Wildlife Management Area northeast of Crofton in the Lewis and Clark NRD took a hit during the Bomb Cyclone and March flooding. The road to Chalkrock was severely eroded, and sheets of ice were pushed ashore out of the 44-acre lake.



Heavy rains swept through central Nebraska July 8-9 causing flash flooding, swollen streams and a rising water table. This aerial photo in Kearney County shows North Dry Creek outside its banks flooding cropland.



Offutt Air Force Base sits in a pool of water after March flooding.



The intersection of 41 Road and C Road in Kearney County becomes a lake after heavy rains swept through central Nebraska July 8-9.



Months after ice carried by floodwaters collided with Spencer Hydro Dam, the building and spillway sit idle. Ice on the river measured 18-24 inches thick before the collapse, which came amid a local blizzard followed by more than 2 inches of rain.



Heavy rains in July caused a substation to flood on the west side of Holdrege in Phelps County.



Willow Creek State Recreation Area, southwest of Pierce in the Lower Elkhorn NRD, held back more than 18,000 acre-feet of water during the historic March floods totaling more than 5.86 billion gallons of water.



On Aug. 23, Hastings was hit with 4-6 inches of rain, 70 mph winds and hail. The High Hazard Dam managed by the Upper Big Blue NRD diverted stormwater away from Hastings and reduced flooding.

BOMB CYCLONE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF TREES

As wind and snow beat down the Midwest, cattle with their new baby calves huddled behind tree lines clinging to the safe haven created by shelterbelts. Many shelterbelts and windbreaks have been lost in recent years, as livestock producers looked to use all of their land for production to earn a profit. Now, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent, livestock producers are re-evaluating the importance of placing strategic trees and shrubs to increase protection for their animals. Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts continue to advocate the importance of the Tree Program for windbreak installations as well as erosion control.



Cattle gather behind a windbreak in the sandhills. Photo courtesy of Mike Murphy, Middle Niobrara NRD.

TREE PROGRAM SALES STALLED BY FRIGID TEMPS

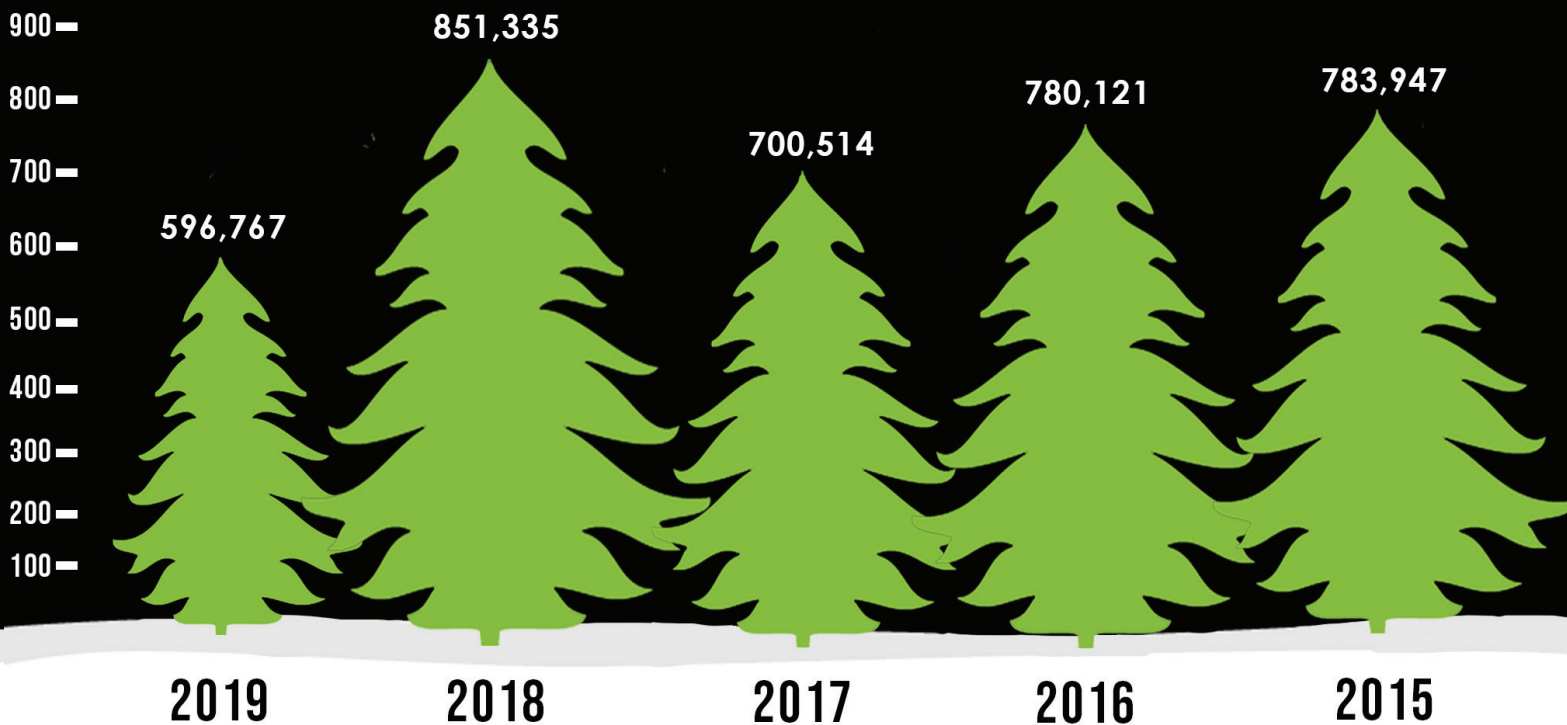
The seemingly never-ending winter took a toll on NRD Tree Program sales in 2019.

"As weather warms, landowners consider ordering trees from the NRDs," said Dustin Wilcox, NARD water resources specialist. "This year they were busy battling adverse weather up until it was too late to order trees."

Although tree sales were down, the weather was an eye-opening experience on the importance of trees in protecting livestock and wildlife. Sales in 2020 are expected to rise, as livestock producers look for low-cost options to protect their herds.

All NRDs administer tree planting programs to provide trees and

shrubs for windbreaks, erosion control, wildlife habitat and other conservation purposes. Each NRD program varies, but possible tree program services include: planting; weed barrier installation or weed control; and drip irrigation. Trees can be ordered from your local Natural Resources Districts.



2019 Loup Basin tour participants make a stop at Pibel Lake near Ericson, in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District June 10.



BASIN TOUR FEATURES TREASURES OF THE LOUP

The Loup Basin welcomed more than 50 NRD board members and staff June 10-11 for the 2019 Basin Tour.

The tour started in Ord and wound through central Nebraska with visits throughout Upper and Lower Loup NRDs including:

- Davis Creek Rec Area
- North Loup Scenic Overlook
- St. Paul Flood Damage
- Pibel Lake
- Bartlett Bronze Statues
- Lake Ericson
- Bessey Nursery
- Upper Loup Recycling
- Milburn Dam



Tyler Naprstek, Lower Loup NRD assistant general manager, discusses recent improvements to Davis Creek Recreation Area including cement RV pads, electricity, fish cleaning station and wifi.



Anna Baum, Upper Loup NRD general manager, explains their unique recycling program. Upper Loup NRD provides service to Hyannis, Mullen, Seneca, Theadford, Dunning, Brownlee, Halsey, Bessey National Forest and the State 4-H Camp.

Right: The Basin Tour included a stop at Bessey Nursery, where a majority of NRD trees are grown. From left, Bessey Nursery Manager Richard Gilbert, NRD Director Marcel Kramer, NRD Director Scott Berndt, and Tri-Basin NRD General Manager John Thorburn show off Blue Spruce trees for Husker Harvest Days.



BASIN TOUR | JUNE 2020
PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NRD

WELCOME NEWEST NRD HALL OF FAME INDUCTEES

NRD Board Member

Nominated by the Lower Loup Natural Resources District, Jim Nelson has been on the board of directors since the District's inception in 1972.

His 47 years on the Lower Loup NRD board make him the only director in the state to have been part of the NRD system from day one. Nelson was a key participant in many difficult decisions, including a district-wide moratorium on new irrigation wells and a halt on the expansion of irrigated acres.

"Jim serves on multiple committees within the NRD, which means extra meetings and the devotion of additional time and energy to the District," said Russ Callan, Lower Loup NRD general manager. "His knowledge of the Loup River system [his home is built on the banks] is unmatched, and he is always willing to offer a guided tour on his airboat."

Nelson is quick to thank his family for allowing him to serve for so many years.



*James Nelson
Cairo, Nebraska*

NRD Employee

Former general manager of the Lewis & Clark Natural Resources District, Tom Moser retired in 2016 after 43 years but the impact of his management decisions continue to be felt in northeast Nebraska.

In the 1970s, Moser coordinated flood-control construction along the Aowa Creek. The project included 50 watershed dams, control of 55,350 drainage acres and two multi-purpose structures, which all reduced flood impacts to communities and landowners during March flooding.

Moser was also responsible for the development of the Cedar Knox Rural Water Project. Today, that project has grown to serve more than 890 rural customers and four communities in northern Cedar and Knox counties.

"Tom is a highly-respected member of the community and District and is recognized for his commitment to his family, faith and career," said Annette Sudbeck, Lewis & Clark NRD general manager.



*Tom Moser
Hartington, Nebraska*

NRD Supporter

Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District General Manager Dave Clabaugh believes Tom Pesek's leadership, character and personality enables him to bring people together.

In 1975, Pesek participated in the review of the Maskenthine Lake Project near Stanton, Nebraska, which was the first project to receive funding assistance from the Nebraska Resources Development Fund. Since then, Pesek helped on 72 local water resources projects receiving monetary support from the development fund. After 32 years as an advocate for conservation, Pesek retired from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources in 2006.

"True passion for water conservation like Tom's comes not from a job, but a desire to preserve and protect Nebraska's natural wonders long into the future," Clabaugh said.



*Tom Pesek
Brainard, Nebraska*

NRD CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED



Steve Kelley
Director of the Year

As a water superintendent for the City of Beatrice, Steve Kelley provides a unique perspective on groundwater quality and quantity concerns.



Doak Nickerson
Tree Planter of the Year

Doak Nickerson has been a forester for the Nebraska Forest Service since 1979. He works tirelessly to improve the health and longevity of our forest ecosystem in western Nebraska.



Madison High School: Patrick Kratochvil & Suzy Foley
Educator(s) of the Year

In Summer 2011, the Taylor-Union Watershed Team was started at Madison High School to introduce minority students to fieldwork in science and demonstrate classroom concepts as careers. Students have gained an understanding of how land and water conservation apply to real-world situations.



Schulte Family
Grassland Conservation

Fourth-generation farmers/ranchers Tim Schulte and Jeremy Schulte of Pleasanton are the sons of Robert and Darleen Schulte. The family is known for their excellent management techniques in improving their Buffalo County rangeland where they manage a cow-calf operation.



Niobrara High School: Sharla Hanzlik
Community Conservation

The Niobrara community was being taken over by Purple Loosetrife, which was diminishing wildlife. The community realized that something had to be done and with the help of Sharla Hanzlik's Purple Loosetrife Program, they are seeing progress.



Rose & Nick Keller
Soil Stewardship

The Keller Family are one of the pioneers of no-till conservation practices in Boyd County. Now, with more than 25 years of no-till farming, it's their way of life.

MASTER CONSERVATIONIST WINNERS

The Master Conservationist program was established in 1983 to recognize those who excel in soil and water conservation and protection. Current awards focus on recognition of excellence in water management and conservation, and are awarded in three categories: agriculture, youth and community.

Agriculture Master Conservationist

Dan Gillespie
Battle Creek, Nebraska

Youth Master Conservationist

Omaha Northwest High School
Outdoor Environmental Classroom

Community Master Conservationist

Spring Lake Park Project Team



UNIQUE CAMPING EXPERIENCE TAKES SHAPE AT LOWER PLATTE NORTH NRD



Left: Lower Platte North NRD Water Resources Specialist and Lake Wanhoo Recreation Supervisor Bret Schomer drives Jane Kuhl, Nemaha NRD, middle, and Marcia Lee, Central Platte NRD, to Pork Chop Island. The island on Lake Wanhoo near Wahoo offers a unique primitive camping experience.

Right: Lower Platte North NRD General Manager Eric Gottschalk, left, gives the I&E Committee a tour of camping sites on Pork Chop Island. The island is accessible only by boat or kayak.



UBB HOSTS MANAGERS RETREAT

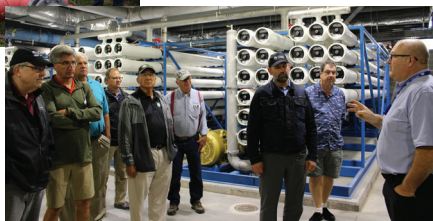
The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District hosted the NRD managers retreat Aug. 26-28. The retreat included tours to Hastings Utilities to learn more about preventing nitrates in drinking water and Sen. Curt Friesen's farm in Henderson to learn about subsurface drip irrigation.



Subsurface drip irrigation is the topic of discussion in Henderson at Sen. Curt Friesen's farm. NRD managers learn how the irrigation method saves water by using drip tubes and reducing evaporation.



NRD managers visit Hastings Utilities to learn about their unique process for treating the city's drinking water, which has high nitrate levels.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

20 YEARS

- Curtis Armstrong, Lewis & Clark (director)
- Kathy Barger, Middle Republican
- Kandis Bremer, Lower Loup
- Douglas Bruns, Upper Big Blue (director)
- Chris Dierks, Upper Elkhorn (director)
- Jeanne Dryburgh, NARD
- Kevin Fornoff, Middle Republican (director)
- Gary Howey, Lewis & Clark (director)
- Terry Julesgard, Lower Niobrara
- Marcia Lee, Central Platte
- Ray Naprstek, Lower Niobrara (director)
- Roger Nelson, Lower Republican (director)
- Tom Pleiss, Papio-Missouri River
- Scott Sobotka, Lower Big Blue
- Aaron Stalder, Nemaha
- Nelson Trambly, Lower Republican (director)
- Valissa Tegeler, Lower Elkhorn
- Joe Wahlgren, Twin Platte (director)

25 YEARS

- Deb Hayes, Upper Republican
- Lyle Heinrichs, Little Blue
- Rita Hoblyn, Upper Big Blue
- Phyllis Johnson, Tri-Basin (director)
- Rich Karre, Middle Republican
- Bob Lorenz, Lower Big Blue (director)
- Donna Reid, Lower Platte South
- Rebecca Spady, Upper Republican
- Keith Stafford, Central Platte (director)
- Julie Wragge, Lower Elkhorn

30 YEARS

- Kathy Dohmen, Lower Elkhorn
- Dick Hadenfeldt, Lower Loup (director)

35 YEARS

- Jim Becic, Papio-Missouri River
- Tom Backer, Central Platte
- Keith Butch, Papio-Missouri River
- Bernard Jorgensen, Lower Niobrara
- Jim Keller, Upper Elkhorn (director)
- Bob Petersen, Twin Platte

40 YEARS

- Dave Clabaugh, Lower Big Blue
- Rod DeBuhr, Upper Big Blue
- Sandy Noecker, Central Platte
- Paul Zillig, Lower Platte South
- Wilma Zimbelman, Upper Republican

45 YEARS

- Marlin Petermann, Papio-Missouri River

NARD FOUNDATION HIGHLIGHTS YOUTH EDUCATION

Foundation's meager start in 1997 has blossomed the last 22 years

The NARD Foundation builds partnerships to engage young Nebraskans to learn more about natural resources. Through these educational programs, your commitment and generosity inspires and grows the next generation of Nebraska naturalists.

In FY2018-19, \$16,500 was dispersed to support multiple educational programs.

Special thanks goes out to each of you that participate in NARD Foundation events and partner with other organizations, foundations and the private sector.

Keep reading to learn more about just a few of the programs supported by the NARD Foundation.

Nebraska FFA

The Foundation sponsors multiple areas of FFA including: Natural Resources Speaking Leadership Development Event, Building Communities Chapter Award, Environmental & Natural Resources Career Development Event, Outdoor Recreation Proficiency

Award, and State Officer Development.

We continue to work to encourage interaction between local FFA chapters and their NRD to promote educational opportunities.

Nebraska Envirothon

St. Paul High School took first place in the 2019 Envirothon at Lake Pibel near Ericson. The five-member team went on to compete in Raleigh, North Carolina at the NCF-Envirothon.

ACE Camp

Congratulations to Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) on their 10th year of hosting campers. Campers continue to flock to Halsey to learn more about the environment during this three-day camp.



Larry Schultz, Lower Loup NRD information and education coordinator, helps ACE campers launch water rockets.

NAYI

Annually, the Foundation supports the Nebraska Agriculture Youth Institute and participates in their career fair. This is a great opportunity to discuss potential areas of environmental study and related careers.

Nebraska LEAD

The LEAD program provides young adults with skills and experiences needed to become leaders and advocates for agriculture. Many LEAD graduates go on to serve on NRD boards.

Ag Day on the Hill

Five Nebraska college students attend National Ag Day in Washington, D.C. to learn about federal policy, trade, agriculture and natural resources.

The Great Park Pursuit

This program, hosted by Nebraska Game & Parks, encourages active lifestyles and increased awareness of outdoor opportunities at recreation areas across Nebraska.

Focus shifts to National Envirothon

Planning is in full swing for the NCF-Envirothon 2020. The international competition will be hosted in Lincoln July 26-31, 2020.

We expect more than 500 people from 46 states, Canadian provinces and China to be in attendance.

We look forward to this exciting opportunity to connect so many to Nebraska's beauty and allow them to learn more about Nebraska's NRDs.

Thanks to NRD commitments, a \$20,000 commitment from the NARD Foundation and pledges for the remaining funds, the finances are in place for a successful 2020 competition.



St. Paul High School competes at the NCF-Envirothon in Raleigh, North Carolina, Aug. 2, 2019.

PROGRAMS THAT MAKE A *difference*

UPPER NIOBRARA WHITE

In the last year, the District tested 42 domestic wells for nitrates and bacteria at no cost after March flood events. The District is currently working on a Basinwide Integrated Management Plan with downstream NRDs.

NORTH PLATTE

NPNRD is using the Western Water Use Management Model to simulate and estimate future aquifer conditions and the effects of groundwater withdrawal in specific District areas to accomplish water management goals. The NPNRD is promoting the reduction of consumptive water use through the Encouraging Producer Innovation through Conservation (EPIC) program, which provides an incentive payment to landowners to renew their expiring federal conservation program participation and grants to landowners who propose innovative agricultural practices to save water.

SOUTH PLATTE

The District formed the Joint East Sidney Watershed Authority with the city of Sidney to protect properties at the lower end of the Sidney drainage. Vegetated bioswales and bioretention ponds slow and filter water before it is redirected into Lodgepole Creek. In order to recharge groundwater during times of excess flow in the South Platte River, the District expanded the number of reuse pits in Deuel County near the Western Irrigation District's canal. Repairs to the Oliver Reservoir spillway were completed this summer to maintain the integrity of the dam.

UPPER REPUBLICAN

In 2019, the District received applications for 110 soil moisture probes on approximately 14,000 acres for their cost-share program. For the 2015-2019 Republican River Compact compliance period, there is a 16,000-acre-foot positive balance. Over the last several years, Nebraska has exceeded its compact allocation by 9,300-acre-feet.

MIDDLE REPUBLICAN

The District took great strides with cutting-edge technology from soil moisture monitoring to innovative remote meter reading transducers in the majority of the monitoring wells. Engineering Hydrologist Alex Boyce is installing new monitoring wells with help from a Nebraska Environmental Trust grant and the University of Nebraska.

MIDDLE NIOBRARA

To expand groundwater monitoring, MNNRD is installing new monitoring wells and purchasing sampling equipment to make better management decisions based on water quality and quantity. To update the goals and objectives of the Basinwide Voluntary Integrated Management Plan, the District is working with the Department of Natural Resources to host stakeholder meetings for the Niobrara River Basin Alliance.

UPPER LOUP

Upper Loup will complete its five-year hazard mitigation update, which includes any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and property from natural hazards. The district is also in year two of a three-year project researching the drought resiliency of groundwater springs in the South Loup River. Enhanced understanding will lead to more informed water management decisions.

LOWER LOUP

Along with Central Platte NRD, the District is determining the potential impact of crops on offseason groundwater recharge. A two-year study will measure deep percolation through sensors on a field planted with corn. The District also designated a town in Deuel County as its first Groundwater Quality Protection Area because nitrate levels have been well above trigger levels for multiple years.

TRI-BASIN

Tri-Basin NRD established the Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP), which is designed to ensure sustainability of District groundwater supplies and protect streamflow diminishment from groundwater pumping. Participants in the program sign a five-year agreement to voluntarily limit irrigation water use on enrolled acres. In exchange for their participation, landowners will be paid for the equivalent of one acre-inch of water credit up to \$5 per acre per year, with the opportunity to sell additional credit to the NRD at a set price.

LOWER REPUBLICAN

Currently the only NRD offering grain bag recycling, Lower Republican collected 600 bags (300,000 lbs.) that will be recycled into plastic pellets and processed into other plastic products. The project prevents polluting the Republican Valley from other disposal methods, such as burning or burying the grain bags.

LOWER NIOBRARA

In March, flooding pulled apart under Ver... service to half of Lo... NRD staff was able... to restore service wi... been replaced along... to bypass the creek...

2019 NRD PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

NIORBARA

caused an 8-inch main line to Niobrara Creek cutting off water from Niobrara's rural water system. To complete a temporary repair within 10 hours. The pipe has now been replaced with the addition of two hydrant risers if needed.

The districts are growing cover to reduce soil erosion. This multi-year program in the soil with a cover crop. The partnership in Wheeler Quality Sub-Area, will help to reduce erosion above the

UPPER ELKHORN

As part of the Groundwater Management Plan, the Upper Elkhorn began new Phase III controls effective February 2019 with Phase III activities to begin in fall 2019 in the northeastern portion of the district. In 2019, the District welcomed three new board members.

CENTRAL PLATTE

CPNRD has built more than 40 flood-control projects to protect homes, businesses and land. These structures were put to the test during March flooding. The B-1 Reservoir, the largest of seven structures in the Buffalo Creek Watershed, filled to capacity for the first time since it was built in 1983. The Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Project (near completion) held back floodwater protecting 23,000 acres south of Highway 2 and east of Highway 281 in Grand Island.

LITTLE BLUE

The District is working on groundwater recharge projects, including instream weirs on Sand Creek near Holstein. A similar project was constructed on 33-Mile Creek near Ayr, and an oxbow reconnection project was completed near Davenport. The District plans to complete the projects by fall/winter. Monitoring wells will be installed to measure if the projects will aid in groundwater recharge.

LEWIS & CLARK

The District is furthering the understanding of the area's hydro-geological framework by using airborne electromagnetic (AEM) surveys. The results will be integrated with other geological data to define groundwater flow throughout the district. An improved understanding allows the District to better protect groundwater in an area made more complex by glacial deposits.

LOWER ELKHORN

The District expanded Phase II and III Groundwater Management Areas in Pierce & Madison Counties working to improve groundwater quality. The Bazile Groundwater Management Area received a grant to continue best management practices in the three-county management area with high nitrates in drinking water. LENRD is also developing a groundwater model to protect our natural resources.

LOWER PLATTE NORTH

In August, the District opened a unique primitive camping site on Pork Chop Island within Lake Wanahoo near Wahoo. The island features two compost outhouses and five primitive campsites only accessible by boat, kayak or canoe. LPNNRD hopes to complete their 2,400 sq. foot-education center, which allows additional programming opportunities, by year end.

UPPER BIG BLUE

Due to historic excess fertilizer application, several areas of the District show elevated nitrates in the water. District regulatory programs and educational efforts are ongoing to encourage and educate farmers and the general public on the proper management of nitrogen fertilizer and irrigation. The District is in the second year of Project GROW (growing rotational crops on wellfields) to protect water quality in York.

LOWER BIG BLUE

LBBNRD has installed 44 new monitoring well sites equipped with data loggers and small pumps to provide better groundwater quantity and quality data. This data will assist the District in managing and maintaining sustainable groundwater supplies. Responsible for the maintenance of more than 260 flood control and grade stabilization structures, the District is working to cost-effectively repair and maintain these aging structures.

PAPPIO-MISSOURI RIVER

The District, encompassed by a third of the Missouri River and bordered by the Elkhorn and Platte rivers, endured record-high water levels from all three rivers this spring. With no robust levee system along the Platte and Elkhorn, several levee systems overtopped and at least two breaches occurred. Fortunately, inside the Omaha metro area and Papillion Creek Basin Watershed, the District's dams and levees performed flawlessly. The District started work in August to raise the levee system that protects Offutt Air Force Base.

LOWER PLATTE SOUTH

The District is currently working on a project in Lincoln to reduce flooding in the lower portion of Deadman's Run Watershed, which will remove more than 500 homes from the floodplain. In addition, LPSNRD is updating the 13-mile Salt Creek Levee, which uses drainage pipes to move stormwater runoff from neighborhoods and business districts into the Salt Creek. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates the levee has saved \$90 million in flood damages since it was built in the 1960s.

NEMAHA

The District began an invasive tree removal project at Iron Horse Trail Lake during the winter to remove tree species that were crowding out oak, walnut, hickory and other desirable trees. Federal Wildlife Restoration funds combined with local NRD funds are paying for the \$49,000 project. Work is expected to conclude October 2019.

MANAGING LOCAL WATER IN A SHIFTING CLIMATE

Integrated planning partnerships give Nebraskans confidence in resource management



Dustin Wilcox
NARD Water Resources
Specialist

It's often said, if you don't like the weather, just wait a few minutes. That certainly can hold true here in Nebraska, where quickly advancing weather fronts can swing our atmosphere into a different season, seemingly in a blink of an eye. As Nebraska's seasons have also historically demonstrated, if you don't like the climate pattern, just wait a season. While it may not be just a few minutes, Nebraska's climate changes relatively quickly, it always has and seemingly always will.

It's these variable climate patterns that drive the status of our integrated water supplies. In just the last seven years, a relatively short climate period, Nebraska has experienced both ends of the climatic spectrum. Likely still

fresh in everyone's mind, 2012 brought a dry spell that yielded extreme drought conditions, with many areas seeing water levels at record lows. Now, just seven years later, we've experienced an extreme wet period, with water levels in many areas exceeding record highs.

For water users and those working to protect water users, it's these variations in climatic conditions that present the greatest challenges. However, it's also these variations that yield the greatest management opportunities. Recognizing both these challenges and opportunities, Nebraska implemented a locally-led planning process that encourages stakeholder engagement to develop local solutions.

Thanks to the leadership of Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts and their partners at the Department of Natural Resources, the state is nearly covered

with integrated water management plans that work to protect water users. These plans have led to advancing science and a better understanding of the hydrology across the state. Implementation of the plans also continue to yield many unique projects that have helped the state navigate the variations in annual climate.

Augmentation projects, like N-CORPE and Rock Creek, set aside acres and wells with high recharge rates and keep them fallow during wet climate periods like 2018-2019. When the next dry climatic period yields water-short conditions, the water stored from wet periods is then available to pump to offset shortages.

Other innovative recharge projects have also been implemented to balance water supplies during climatic variable periods. In parts of the state, acres irrigated by surface water are being converted to more efficient groundwater irrigation and old

irrigation canals are being repurposed for groundwater recharge. In other areas, NRDs are partnering with irrigation districts to utilize existing canals to divert excess water away from the river during times of excess flows. These diversions mitigate flooding impacts while also allowing for the diverted water to infiltrate and recharge groundwater supplies. These recharge projects allow for water to be retimed to drier climate periods.

While we've come a long way, there's no doubt our always variable climate and changing demands will present future challenges. But Nebraskans should also have no doubt that the NRD system and the integrated planning partnerships with NeDNR will allow for the development of local solutions to address these variable conditions and protect our water supplies for future generations.

NEW CHALLENGES FACED WITH HISTORIC FLOODING

“Water is the driving force of all nature.” -Leonardo da Vinci



Jennifer Swanson
NRD/Dept. of Environment
& Energy Liaison

I think we can all agree water can be serene but also ravaging. This year was a prime example of how destructive water can be but also a reminder of how vital it is for life.

All-time record flooding occurred in Nebraska early this spring when heavy rains fell on frozen ground covered in snow pack resulting in record runoff. As a result of the widespread flooding, natural resources managers faced new challenges that had never been seen before. In eastern

Nebraska the water rose so quickly there was not a lot of time to prepare for the flood, instead many resource managers were responding by working around the clock to protect the public, monitor flood-control structures and levees, and make critical decisions.

Flood waters threatened the drinking water quality of many private wells by potentially contaminating them with bacteria. Drinking water contaminated with E. coli can cause diarrhea, vomiting, cramps, nausea, headaches, fever, fatigue and in some cases death. It was critical for any well that was inundated by floodwaters to be tested for bacteria contamination before drinking from it.

With many roads and bridges being destroyed by flooding there were

challenges associated with getting private wells sampled and analyzed. The EPA assisted select areas of Nebraska by deploying mobile labs to test private drinking water wells. In areas that did not have access to the mobile labs, the NRDs stepped in to assist private well owners by analyzing their well water for bacteria. With resources being stretched thin, partnerships between local, state and federal agencies were critical in responding to and assisting everyone affected by the flooding.

There is no way to prepare for such a catastrophic event like the flooding of 2019, but one thing is evident, partnerships are critical when dealing with natural disasters. With local, state and federal agencies coming together it allowed

us to leverage our resources, play on each other's unique strengths, and provide creative solutions for all Nebraskans. For a partnership to succeed, common goals and clear communication is essential, and we were all working for the common good of Nebraska.

In my role as a liaison between the NRDs and the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, I've learned how valuable it is to work together and communicate effectively in order to work toward a common goal to protect our state's water resources. My goal is to focus on building strong partnerships with the NRDs and other state and federal agencies in order to better protect and manage our water resources across the state.

DEQ MERGES WITH ENERGY, RECEIVES NEW MONIKER

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality merged with the Nebraska Energy Office July 1. The new agency, led by Jim Macy, is now known as the Nebraska Department of Environment & Energy. The new acronym for the merged state agency is NDEE. A new building for the agency is being constructed in northwest Lincoln in the Fallbrook neighborhood.

FIRST SESSION OF 106TH NEBRASKA

The first session of the 106th Legislature adjourned sine die May 31, the 84th day of the scheduled 90-day session.

Labeled the year of property taxes, senators did not reach an agreement on property tax relief, failing to secure 33 votes to invoke cloture and vote on the bill.

The NARD tracked multiple bills during the 2019 legislative session.

Senators approved and the Governor signed seven bills that NARD was monitoring. The following provides a list of key bills enacted this session.

LB 48: Change provisions relating to sufficient cause for nonuse of a water appropriation (Stinner)

The Legislature gave final approval to LB 48 by a 43-0-6 vote March 15, and Gov. Ricketts signed the bill into law March 21. The bill changes provisions relating to finding of sufficient cause for nonuse of a water appropriation.

The bill requires that sufficient cause for nonuse be deemed to exist for up to 30 years if the land subject to the appropriation is

under an acreage reserve program or production quota or is otherwise withdrawn from use as required for participation in any federal, state, or natural resources district program, or such land was previously under such a program but currently is not under such a program and there have been not more than five consecutive years of nonuse on such land subsequent to when that land was last under such program.

“ *It certainly was not all blue skies.* ”
—Speaker Jim Scheer

Under previous law, sufficient cause for nonuse for similar programs is limited to up to 15 years.

LB 103e: Change provisions relating to property tax requests (Linehan)

The Legislature gave final approval to LB 103e by a 47-0-2 vote on March 7, and it was signed by the Governor March 12.

The bill requires the property taxes collected to be no more than the previous year. The

new law requires the county board of equalization to adjust the rates when valuations have changed to assure the taxes collected are not more than the previous year.

If the governing body of a political subdivision seeks to set its property tax request at an amount that exceeds its property tax request in the prior year, it may do so after holding a public hearing and by passing a resolution or ordinance after the

hearing.

A public notice will be required to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the area of the political subdivision at least five days prior to the hearing.

LB 177: Change a termination date for bonding authority of natural resources districts (Lindstrom)

Senators gave final approval to LB 177 by a 35-8-6 vote May 2, and it was signed by the Governor May 8.

The bill extends the authority of the board of directors of a natural resources district encompassing a city of the metropolitan class, upon an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the board of directors, to issue negotiable bonds and refunding bonds of the district, entitled flood protection and water quality enhancement bonds. The bill extends the authority from Dec. 31, 2019, to Dec. 31, 2024.

LB 243e: Create the Healthy Soils Task Force (Gragert)

The Legislature gave final approval to LB 243e on a 43-0-6 vote April 11, and it was signed by the Governor April 17. The bill established the Healthy Soils Task Force within the Ag Department.

The Healthy Soils Task Force will be required to do the following:

- Develop a comprehensive healthy soils initiative for the State of Nebraska
- Develop a comprehensive action plan to coordinate efforts to carry out such healthy

LEGISLATURE ADJOURNS EARLY

soils initiative using standards for organic matter, biological activity, biological diversity, and soil structure as measures to assess improved soil health.

- Identify realistic goals and timelines through voluntary partnerships among growers and relevant state, local and private entities.

- Review the provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill and identify funding opportunities for the purpose of soil health.

The required action plan will include:

- Issues related to providing farmers and ranchers with research, education, technical assistance, and demonstration projects;
- Options for financial incentives to improve soil health; and
- The contribution of livestock to soil health.

The committee amendment provides up to \$10,000 in funding from the Fertilizers and Soil Conditioners Act to cover the costs of the Task Force. The Task Force will be required to file a report electronically to the Governor

and Agriculture Committee by January 1, 2021. The task force will terminate on that date as well.

Budget Bills

For natural resources programs, the budget highlights include:

- Water Resources Cash Fund: The budget extends the 3.3 million transfer for four more years, FY 19-20 through FY 22-23.

- Water Sustainability Fund: The budget maintains the \$11 million transfer to the Water Sustainability Fund in each fiscal year.

- Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund: The budget maintains current levels of funding at \$1,806,112 for both FY 19-20 and FY 20-21.

- Nebraska Resources Development Fund: The budget includes no additional appropriations; however, unexpended balances existing on June 30, 2019, will be reappropriated.

- Department of Natural Resources Operations: The budget includes a 22.9 percent increase in FY 19-20, which



Larry Reynolds, NARD president and Tri-Basin NRD director, introduces Sen. Deb Fischer during the annual NRD Washington D.C. Conference.

includes a one-time \$4 million appropriation resulting from a settlement with the State of Colorado over the Republican River Compact.

- Wastewater Revolving Fund: The budget includes a \$600,000 reduction in cash fund spending authority based upon the agency recommendation of historical use.

- Safe Drinking Water Fund: The budget eliminates the \$1.732 million in cash fund spending authority based on agency recommendation. The cash fund has not been used in eight years.

- Environmental Trust: The bill includes a 2.5 percent increase in appropriations for FY 19-20 and FY 20-21, bringing the total to \$20.6 million per fiscal year.

LB 302e: Merge the State Energy Office with and rename the Department of Environmental Quality (Hughes at the request of the Governor)

The Legislature gave final approval to LB 302e by a 45-0-4 vote March 15, and the Governor signed the bill into law March 21.

The bill merges the State Energy Office and the Department of Environmental Quality to create the Department of Environment and Energy. The director of the Department of Environmental Quality becomes the director of Environment and Energy.

LB 307: Change provisions relating to certain Department of Environmental Quality Funds (Albrecht)

The Legislature gave final approval to LB

106TH LEGISLATURE

Continued from page 18

307 by a 45-0-2 vote March 7, and the Governor signed the bill into law March 12.

The bill makes several changes to the Safe Drinking Water Act. First, the bill updates statutes to define the Safe Drinking Water Act as the act existed on Oct. 23, 2018. Second, the bill extends the loan term for systems from 20 years to 30 years. The loan term would be extended from 30 years to 40 years for disadvantaged communities.

The bill also makes minor changes to transfers and reserves from the Wastewater Treatment Facilities Construction Loan Fund to the Drinking Water Facilities Loan. It allows the director to move dollars between the funds to match demand while also maintaining a minimum balance in each fund. The director would be required to identify any such transfer in the intended use

plan presented to the council for annual review and adoption.

LB 319: Change provisions relating to notices, rules, and regulations of Department of Natural Resources (Moser)

The Legislature gave final approval to LB 319 by a 43-1-5 vote March 15, and the Governor signed the bill into law March 21.

The bill eliminates mail as the only method of providing notification of any hearing to consider the adoption, amendment, or repeal of minimum standards for local flood plain management regulation to all cities, villages and counties, which might be affected. The bill also eliminates the requirement for the Department to adopt and promulgate rules and regulations governing matters coming before it and makes it permissive to do such.

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS

2019 interim studies of interest to NRDs

LR 114

Sen. Hughes introduced the resolution to examine the necessary conditions under which the board of directors of the Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement Project (N-CORPE) and the Rock Creek augmentation project may dispose of any of the real property each entity owns related to augmentation projects.

The study shall consider the benefits of conveyance of the real property as well as any associated risks. As the N-CORPE and Rock Creek projects are of significant economic and legal importance to the State of Nebraska, to the local natural resources districts that own the property where the augmentation projects are located, and to the local economies, a collaborative process is necessary to ensure all interests are represented.

The study may result in recommendations for statutory changes, if any, to

allow the affected NRDs to convey their real property while ensuring the uninterrupted operation of the augmentation projects for interstate river compact compliance.

LR 138

Sen. McDonnell introduced the resolution to look at flood control opportunities in eastern Nebraska. The resolution purpose is to identify for adoption by the Legislature three to five infrastructure project opportunities in eastern Nebraska of sufficient size and scale to provide flood control, a stable and reliable drinking water supply, power generation, climate change mitigation, recreation and to attract and retain a workforce to foster regional and economic growth.

LR 143

Sen. Albrecht introduced the resolution to examine the laws for accounting and financial reporting in political subdivisions to determine a more



The N-CORPE outlet drains into Medicine Creek. N-CORPE is a cooperative project with NRDs in the Republican River Basin.

uniform method of reporting. The study shall obtain information on financial reporting being used by cities, villages, counties, and school districts across the state and those that have changed from the cash basis to an accrual or modified accrual method. The study shall determine the process, the cost, and any savings, including any impact on debt or bond ratings, resulting from changing from the cash basis to an accrual method.

LR 154

Sen. Groene introduced the resolution to examine statutes related to augmentation projects in relationship to the Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement (N-CORPE) interlocal project in Lincoln County. The resolution calls for an examination of existing statutes pertaining to integrated management plans and augmentation plans related to groundwater. It further calls for examination of opinions of the Nebraska Supreme Court and Nebraska Court of Appeals

in reference to the relationship between land ownership and groundwater use for augmentation or transfer.

LR 211

Sen. Stinner introduced the resolution to examine alternatives for funding the Nebraska Tree Recovery Program, which is administered by the Nebraska Forest Service at the University of Nebraska.

The Tree Recovery Program is a matching grant program that funds tree removal, disposal, and replacement costs for municipalities, counties, state agencies, civic groups, tree advisory boards, and other entities that are responsible for the upkeep of government owned real property.

Due to severe weather conditions, diseases, and invasive species, the state's political subdivisions are experiencing a rise in tree mortality. Most subdivisions have been unable to act decisively due to insufficient funds to remove, dispose of, and replace trees situated on public land, presenting a liability and safety

problem.

The interim study shall identify the availability of and eligibility requirements for funds through the federal Emergency Management Agency's Resilience Administration and strategies to leverage additional financial resources for the Tree Recovery Program.

LR 218

Sen. Halloran introduced the resolution to review the resources of the Department of Agriculture and state government to respond to natural disasters and catastrophic weather events with respect to the loss of agricultural assets and infrastructure serving the agricultural sector. The study shall examine the catastrophic flooding and winter weather events occurring in March 2019 as a case study to identify potential means of increasing preparedness and response capabilities and shall identify regulatory or statutory provisions that may impose unnecessary costs or restrictions that impede the resiliency of agriculture to recover from catastrophic

events.

LR 241

Sen. Pansing-Brooks introduced the resolution to develop an environmental action plan for the state, including assessments of vulnerability, risks, economic impacts, and mitigation strategies. The resolution outlines that the state has experienced devastating, costly, and historic floods in the last 10 years and an increase in highly destructive weather events. Developing an effective plan to meet the challenges posed by extreme weather events would enable the state to take advantage of opportunities resulting from adaptation and mitigation strategies. Such strategies have the potential to attract new businesses and investments to Nebraska and to reduce the negative impacts of extreme weather events on the environment.



Sheets of ice litter a road near Fullerton after the Bomb Cyclone.

NRD WELLNESS PROGRAM PROMOTES HEALTHY LIVING

NARD, WorkWell Inc. and the Nebraska Safety Council offer 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 existing Risk Pool Health Insurance Program. 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 aids the 23 NRD wellness delegates to 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 one-mile walk and 5K fun run to promote healthy lifestyles in the Nemaha NRD. Unfortunately, the event was canceled due to spring flood events.

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

Participants in the wellness program have shown improvements in their health, including weight loss, increased physical activity, healthier eating habits, increased health screenings and flu shots. Because of the success of the NRD wellness program, many of the NRDs have received the Governor's Excellence in Wellness Award.



GET THE SCOOP: EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT PROGRAM

Thanks to the hard work of the NARD/NRD Employee Benefits Committee, the NRD Employee Retirement Program continues to grow and make improvements. The NRD Employee Benefits Committee meets four times annually to review details of the program and suggest changes in investment options to the NARD board, which governs the program. The committee includes the NARD executive committee and 13 NRD employees

representing all areas of the state.

As of June 30, 2019, the NARD 414(h) retirement fund equity grew to \$39,050,734.60. The defined contribution program allows each employee

to determine their own investments, providing flexibility for the employee to determine the amount of risk and potential rate of return they feel most comfortable with. Because it is a defined contribution program and not a defined benefit plan, there is no financial liability to the local NRDs or the NARD.

As of June 30, 2019, the voluntary NARD 457 program equity grew to \$4,549,154.55. 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 of UBS Financial Services provide the 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.



NARD HEALTH INSURANCE RATES REMAIN LOW

NARD has operated a licensed health risk pool for NRD employees since FY 2006-07. The program is governed by the NARD Risk Pool board, which includes NARD board members. The NARD Risk Pool Stop/Loss Committee meets five times annually to review details of the program and suggest changes. The committee includes the NARD Risk Pool executive committee and 13 NRD employees representing all areas of the state.

During the last 12 years, the average annual NARD health insurance premium increase has been 4.4 percent while the national average has been 11.7 percent. This is very rare in the insurance industry. If premium changes followed the national average, premiums would almost be double what they are today. In FY 2014-15, premiums decreased by 2.5 percent since the previous fiscal year netted a \$1.2 million gain. The board used additional reserves to keep premium increases down and pay claims in FY 2015-16 through 2017-18. At the end of FY 2015-16, the program showed a loss of approximately \$600,000, using more than half of the profits from FY 2013-14. The NARD Board set the rate for FY 2018-19 with a goal to break even ending with a profit of \$377,218.

The NARD Risk Pool Stop/Loss Committee and Risk Pool board set rates again this year targeting a break-even year. The change for medical for FY 2019-20 is a 5% increase for all coverages. There will be no change on dental premiums until Jan. 1, 2020. After that date, the maximum annual benefit will increase from

\$1,500 to \$3,000 to match the calendar year deductibles. The premium change to provide that additional benefit will be 14.9% for all coverages.

The 2019 national average increase for health insurance is 9.9%, which is just shy of double the rate increase for the NARD plan. The NRD employee involvement in wellness activities and programs reduces healthcare costs to local NRDs and taxpayers.

As part of the Affordable Care Act, there is a federal premium tax based on the number of employees and family members enrolled in the plan. These taxes will be more than \$30,000 in FY 2019-20, and the NARD Risk Pool Board has opted to pay it from reserves rather than assess each employee or district for the tax.

The program operated as it was set up to do – working off reserves built up in the “good years” to cover losses in the “bad year.” The program has built reserves of \$5.6 million to allow for annual premium changes to be limited. Mid-American Benefits provides the third-party claims processing, and Milt Willnerd of Willnerd and Associates works with the NARD to ensure 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 three times by the NDOI, most recently in May 2018. There were no recommended changes from NDOI.

CHART 1

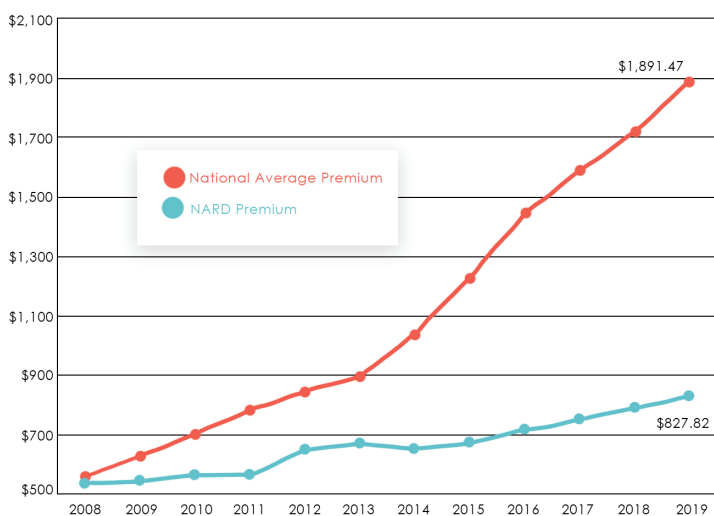
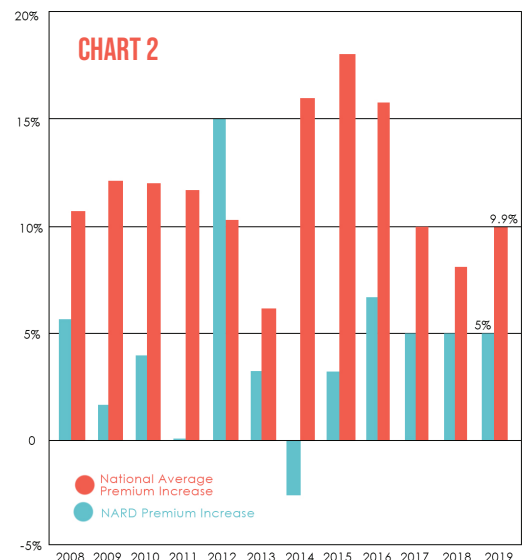


Chart 1: Shows the actual NARD insurance premium compared with the national average.

Chart 2: Shows the NARD annual premium increase (percent) compared to the national average premium increase.



A GLIMPSE OF ACTIVITIES IN THE *natural resources districts*



LEAD 37 visits Claas in Harsewinkel, Germany, during the international study travel seminar in January. Megan Grimes, NARD, and Kyle Anne Hopkins, North Platte NRD, graduated from the LEAD Program in March.



Left: Papio-Missouri River NRD's Austen Hill, education programs supervisor, and Kaylyn Kelley, natural resources educator, let the public get up close and personal with wildlife at the District's World O! Water event hosted at Chalco Hills Recreation Area Sept. 7.



Right: Middle Niobrara NRD staff hand out trees at Husker Harvest Days. From left, Zach Peterson, assistant office manager; Dana Krueger, natural resources supervisor; Kyle Temple, natural resources technician; and Wendy Tillman, administrative assistant.

Below: Lower Platte South NRD Water Resources Specialist Dick Ehrman works with Mitch Wallman of EA Engineering, Science, and Technology Inc., PBC (background) to conduct shallow soil sampling near Greenwood.



Nolan Little, Tri-Basin NRD water resources manager, checks an observation well at Funk Waterfowl Production Area (WPA) near Funk. Excess flows from the Platte can be diverted to the WPA for recharge.

Below: In March, the NARD Board met in Lincoln to coordinate statewide programs. Following the board meeting, several directors and NARD staff toured Robber's Cave on the west edge of Lincoln near Highway 2.



Above: Deb VanMatre, Central Platte NRD board member; Dalton Refior, Tri-Basin NRD land resources technician; and Patt Nott, Tri-Basin NRD water resources technician, prepare trees for Husker Harvest Days.

Above: Joe Hergott, retired farmer and former Little Blue NRD board member, left, and Duane Woodward, retired Central Platte NRD hydrologist, volunteer at the Nebraska State Fair NRD booth.

Right: Sydney Norris, Twin Platte NRD media & communications coordinator, left, practices reeling in a kite at Lake Wanahoo with Joanna Pope, NRCS, and Abby Pope, during an I&E Committee outing.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) staff is honored to work for NRD directors and staff by aiding with legislation, tree programs, water management, youth programs, benefit programs and public relations.

For the 22nd consecutive year, the NARD has balanced its budget and added to the reserves, which is a testament to involvement from NRD board members and staff. The NARD manages the health insurance risk pool and retirement programs, which continue to grow and benefit NRD staff.

The Association also manages the NARD Foundation, which has grown significantly during the last 22 years thanks to annual fundraisers and member involvement. What started out as a small foundation in 1997 with \$4,100 in assets funding only one internship in Washington, D.C., has grown to more than \$16,000 funding 11 educational programs that reach thousands of individuals in Nebraska.

Water Infrastructure

Thanks to the Republican Basin NRDs and Twin Platte NRD, N-CORPE – a \$125 million Republican Basin project – was completed in less than three years, kept Nebraska in compliance with the Republican River Compact and protected 300,000 irrigated acres in southwest Nebraska. The Twin Platte NRD finished the Platte Basin portion in 2018.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) in the Niobrara Basin, which included a plan to purchase the NPPD Spencer Hydro Dam and water rights and work with the Nebraska Game and Parks to achieve a sustainable water supply for Basin residents is being evaluated. The March 2019 flood destroyed the dam but did not destroy the water rights that can be transferred to protect residents and wildlife in the Basin.

Flood Control

The March 2019 Bomb Cyclone tested Nebraska's will and lost. While the storm's impact

was devastating, Nebraska's determination to survive and rebuild will prevail. Countless volunteers and local communities rallied to help those in need. Homes and communities are being restored, and roads and bridges are being rebuilt.

Areas where no flood control structures existed were severely damaged by the storm event, while areas where structures were in place were protected.

The Papio-Missouri River NRD and Lower Platte South NRD built several successful flood control structures that continue to protect lives and property in Nebraska's two largest communities. The Central Platte NRD flood-control structures saved Grand Island at least twice in 2019. The Lower Big Blue NRD aptly nicknamed "The Watershed Capitol of the World" had structures in place to handle the Bomb Cyclone event. The Lower Elkhorn NRD also protected Norfolk thanks to flood-control structures.

Nearly 900 watershed



Dean Edson
Executive Director

dams statewide have benefited more than 1.6 million acres in Nebraska. Benefits include significant savings in soil erosion, conserving water, reducing road and bridge damage, creating wetland/upland wildlife habitat and most importantly, saving lives and property. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Nebraska's flood-control benefits exceed \$80 million annually.

What the 2019 Bomb Cyclone taught us is to continue to preserve and build for the future through infrastructure, water supplies, windbreaks and water quality/quantity. There will be more challenges for NRDs in the future, but it's clear local districts are poised to handle them.



Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts

Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future

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SAVE THE DATE – 2020 EVENTS

Jan. 8, 2020 | 60-day Legislative Session Begins

Jan. 27-29, 2020 | NRD Legislative Conference (Lincoln)

March 14-18, 2020 | Washington, D.C. Conference

April 1-3, 2020 | FFA State Convention (Lincoln)

April 29, 2020 | Nebraska State Envirothon (Lake Wanahoo - Wahoo)

June 8-9, 2020 | Basin Tour, Papio-Missouri NRD (Omaha)

June 7-10 2020 | Adventure Camp About the Environment (Halsey)

July 26-31, 2020 | NCF-Envirothon Nebraska (Lincoln)

Sept. 27-29, 2020 | NRD Annual Conference (Kearney)

nrdnet.org

