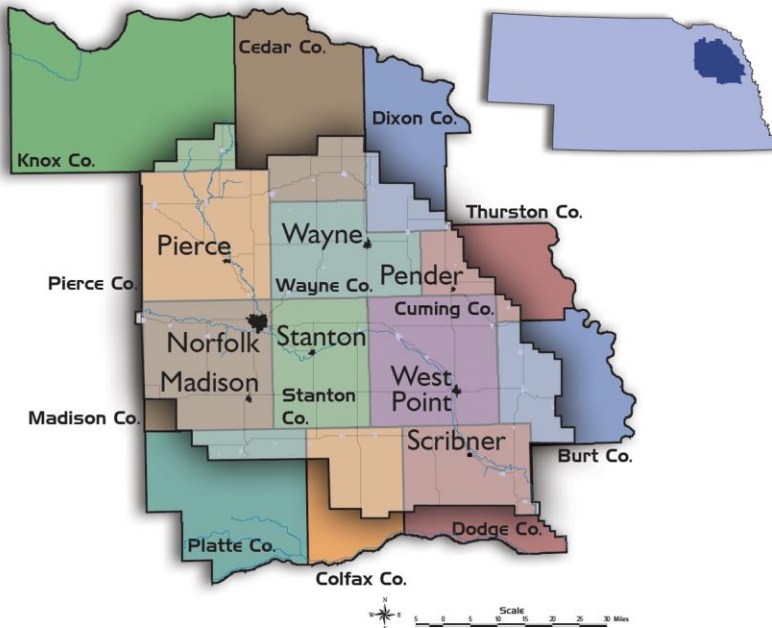


# KNOW YOUR NRD



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

Summer/Fall 2009



LOWER ELKHORN NRD

## LENRD QUICK FACTS:

The Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District (LENRD) serves the people in all or parts of 15 counties in northeast Nebraska, and is governed by a 15 member Board of Directors elected by the people of the district.

### Our Mission:

“Strive to improve the quality of life for all citizens of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District by promoting and demonstrating sound methods of stewardship which conserve, develop and manage all natural resources.”

## Protecting Lives - Protecting Property - Protecting the Future

### Flood Control Structures

Protecting communities and rural areas from flooding is a top priority for the LENRD. Working with towns, cities, villages and partner agencies, the LENRD has constructed major flood control dams across the district - *Maskenthine Lake* - protecting the city of Stanton; *Willow Creek State Recreation Area* (Pierce) - providing protection as far downstream as Norfolk; *Pilger Recreation Area* - protecting the Village of Pilger; and the *Maple Creek Recreation Area* (currently under construction) - protecting Maple Creek Watershed landowners and the Village of Leigh.

The LENRD has also provided flood control levees for the communities of Pender, Scribner, Howells, Wakefield, and Winslow.

### Conserving our soil & water

Protecting and conserving our precious soil and water are statutory responsibilities of the LENRD.

The **Wild Nebraska** program is a partnership between the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and the NRDs. It provides incentives to landowners to convert marginal cropland to grass and woody vegetation, which provides necessary wildlife habitat while it conserves our soil.

The **Nebraska Buffer Strip** program, funded by ag-chemical registration fees, offers contracts of 5-10 years to establish and maintain grass strips between cropland and streams. Payments are based on average rental rates and these “buffer strips” provide valuable wildlife habitat while they are

keeping sediment out of our streams.

**Corners for Wildlife** is a partnership between Pheasants Forever and the NRDs, which seeks to establish good wildlife habitat on non-productive center pivot corners. These 5 year contracts are paid with a combination of public and private funds.

### Groundwater Monitoring & Management

Protecting groundwater for future generations is vital to Nebraskans.

NRDs in the Lower Platte River Basin (Basin) are working together with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to conserve groundwater and surface water supplies, as well as to protect

*(Continued on back)*

## Groundwater Monitoring & Management

*(Continued)* - current ground and surface water users.

LB 483, which was passed by the Nebraska Legislature earlier this year, instructs the NRDs and DNR to maintain a non-fully appropriated status in the Basin by limiting new irrigation. In response to this, the LENRD approved rules to limit new irrigation to no more than 10,000 acres over the next four years where ground and surface water are hydrologically connected, which covers approximately 34% of the LENRD.

The LENRD will achieve this limitation through a variance process, and will accept applications for developing new irrigated acres once each year. Each application will then be ranked according to its depletive effects on streamflow, its impact on other ground or surface water users, and its suitability to be irrigated. Those applications with the highest scores will be allowed to continue, averaging 2,500 acres per year.



A similar system to manage irrigation growth will be used in the non-hydrologically connected area of the LENRD. The LENRD chose to regulate this area (which covers 66% of the district) to protect several small areas that have seasonal groundwater declines. Another reason the LENRD chose to limit this area is because any new irrigated acres in this

area will be used in the DNR's evaluation of hydrologically connected water supplies, which has an impact on the appropriation status.

*In December of 2008, the DNR made a preliminary determination that the Basin was Fully Appropriated. The NRDs in the Basin performed an independent review of the preliminary determination, and (as a result of initial miscalculations) the DNR reversed their preliminary determination in April of 2009.*

### Soil Moisture Monitoring

In today's environment of fluctuating input costs and increasing regulation, you need all the tools available to you to insure that you are utilizing your dollars efficiently and practicing good stewardship of our valuable natural resources.

The LENRD has a new program available that will offer financial assistance to promote the use of soil moisture monitoring equipment to assist producers with irrigation scheduling. Maximizing the use of the water stored in the soil could help you eliminate irrigation events during the growing season. The soil moisture monitoring equipment can help improve your skills in determining when or when not to start that irrigation well. The direct impact will be that you have saved dollars by not pumping irrigation water but you will also be conserving the valuable groundwater resource as well.

## Recreation trails across Nebraska

The Willow Creek Trail, constructed in three phases, connects the town of Pierce with the Willow Creek State Recreation Area, which is owned by the LENRD. The 9.5 mile trail also loops around the 700 acre reservoir, protecting the users and connecting them with all of the facilities of the State Recreation Area. The LENRD recently celebrated Willow Creek's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at a public dedication ceremony. Senator Cap Dierks and Senator Mike Flood were there to congratulate the agencies involved for working together to make a difference in Northeast Nebraska.



## More LENRD Facts:

- The LENRD has distributed over 3.5 million trees to customers across our 15 counties.
- 72 road structures have been constructed since 1972 to replace old, worn out bridges.
- The LENRD has sold 1,423,593 feet of weed barrier through the Conservation Tree Program, which equals approximately 270 miles.
- Rural Water Systems provide a reliable supply of quality drinking water to a large number of rural customers and small communities. The LENRD has worked with various local, state, and federal agencies to provide area and regional water supply systems for people across the district. The Logan East Rural Water System (Oakland) - reaches over 1,000 customers. The new Wau-Col Regional Water System (Wausa-Coleridge) - is still in the planning stages.
- The LENRD requires the installation of a flow meter on all new high capacity wells. Cost-share is available.

Concerned about your natural resources? So are we. Give us a call or stop by our office. We have programs to fit both urban and rural lifestyles. Our staff and directors are here to serve you - we're your *local* voice for natural resources management.

Find out more about  
Nebraska's NRDs at  
[www.nrdnet.org](http://www.nrdnet.org) and  
[www.lenrd.org](http://www.lenrd.org)