



Education is for Everyone
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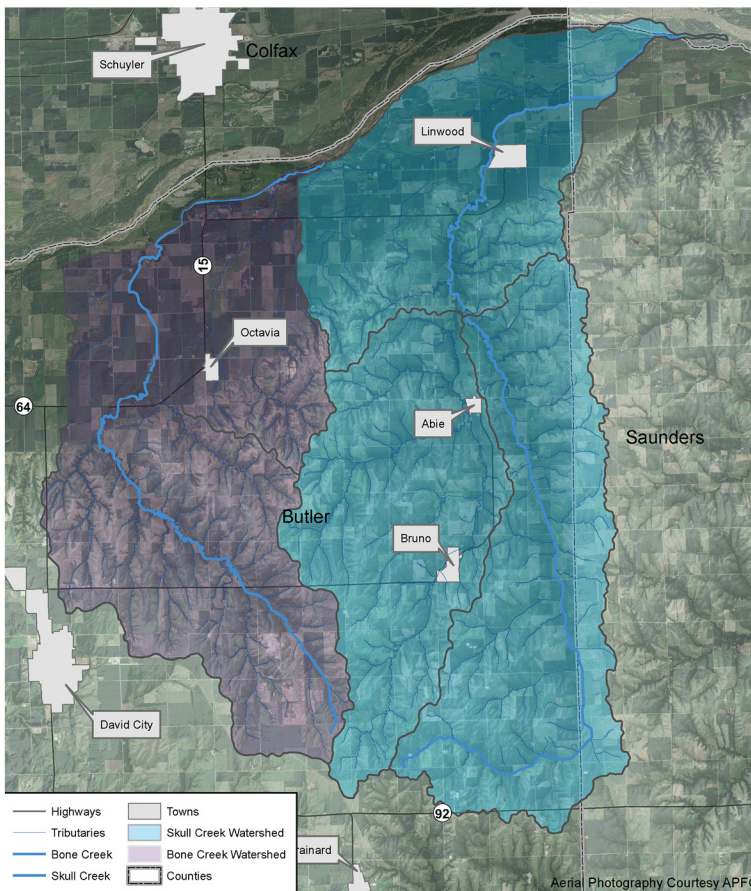
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Lower Platte North Natural Resources District
Summer 2024



Map highlighting the Skull Creek and Bone Creek in Butler County.

Request Submitted for Skull Creek and Bone Creek Watershed Assistance

Portions of Butler County are being considered for improvements within the Skull Creek and Bone Creek Watersheds. In 2023, Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD) requested financial and technical assistance for flood reduction activities within the Skull and Bone Creek Watershed. State USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff conducted a site investigation in April along with LPNNRD Directors, staff, and area landowners. This request along with documentation is currently awaiting national approval.

If the request is approved, a two- to four-year planning process will evaluate alternatives and include opportunities for local input. The planning process is followed up with an estimated two years of engineering and a final design of the preferred alternative before construction can begin. LPNNRD is looking forward to collaborating with Federal partners to provide opportunities for flood damage reduction to Eastern Butler County.

Conservation Practices Eligible in Shell Creek Watershed

The Shell Creek watershed encompasses more than 304,000 acres in northeast Nebraska. Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD) continues conservation efforts with the Shell Creek Watershed Improvement Group (SCWIG), USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Nebraska Environmental Trust, and Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy to protect surface water from non-point source pollution.

Cost-share assistance for conservation programs and best management practices are currently available to

producers and landowners in the Shell Creek Watershed. The practices include but are not limited to: grassed waterways, terrace and underground outlets, cover crops, irrigation management, no-till, alternative water supply, livestock fencing, streambank stabilization, rain gardens, septic system upgrades, and buffer strips. To sign up and discuss various project eligibility, please contact Bill Bos at the Platte County NRCS office in Columbus by calling 402-564-0506. Additional information will be sent out to producers within the Shell *Shell Creek, continued on page 3*

Lower Platte North NRD
Board & Staff

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Board Member..... | Subdistrict |
| Lon Olson, Fremont | 1 |
| Kelly Thompson, Fremont (Chairman)..... | 1 |
| John Goldsberry, Fremont | 2 |
| Bill Saeger, Fremont..... | 2 |
| Dave Saalfeld, North Bend..... | 3 |
| Andrew Tonnies, North Bend | 3 |
| Chris Yosten, Schuyler..... | 4 |
| Matt Bailey, Schuyler | 4 |
| Mark Seier, Newman Grove (Treasurer)..... | 5 |
| David Lawrence, Columbus..... | 5 |
| Joe Birkel, David City..... | 6 |
| Robert Hilger, David City | 6 |
| Ryan Engel, Fremont..... | 7 |
| Ryan Sabatka, Weston (Vice Chairman) | 7 |
| Jerry Johnson, Wahoo | 8 |
| Vacant, Wahoo..... | 8 |
| Duane Johnson, Mead | 9 |
| Robert Meduna, Wahoo (Secretary) | 9 |
| Thomas McKnight, Fremont | at large |

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Staff Member..... | Position |
| Sydney Abbott..... | Education Coordinator |
| Daryl Andersen..... | Water Resources Manager |
| Kaitlyn Bargaen | Lake Wanhoo Supervisor/Water Specialist |
| Jill Breunig | Bookkeeping Dept. Head/Admin. Assistant |
| Will Brueggemann | Water Resources Specialist |
| Ryan Chapman..... | Assistant Manager |
| Sean Elliott | Projects/Rural Water Manager |
| Eric Gottschalk..... | General Manager |
| Bob Heimann..... | O & M Manager |
| Dave Moore | O & M Technician |
| Russell Oaklund.... | Lead Water Resources Specialist |
| Karen Rezac..... | Dept./Admin Assistant |
| Lacey Sabatka | Information Coordinator |
| Jon Speichinger | O & M Technician |
| Jacob Stover..... | Water Resources Specialist |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| NRD/NRCS Field Office Assistant..... | County |
| Kimberly Piitz | Butler County |
| Kristin Miller | Colfax County |
| Jessica Marty | Dodge County |
| Marla Milliken..... | Saunders County |

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LOWER PLATTE NORTH
Natural Resources District
www.lpnnrd.org | 402-443-4675

protecting lives | protecting property | protecting the future

From the Desk of the General Manager

Tax Dollars



Eric Gottschalk

If you gather a group of two or more people over a cup of coffee, the discussion usually goes like this... the weather, your health, the economy and yes, TAXES. The past few years have been very difficult, the price of gas, food and nearly all everyday items have increased at an incredible rate requiring all of us to tighten our belts and do more with less.

Here at the Lower Platte North NRD, we have been tightening our belts and being more and more prudent with your tax dollars for years. The biggest example of this is the fact that LPNNRD's tax asking, from our local taxpayers, has remained the exact same for the past eight years...You read that correctly, our tax asking has remained at \$ 3,480,715 since 2017! We have been able to aggressively attack our operations and assigned conservation efforts without asking a penny more from our local taxpayers.

Keep in mind, tax asking is much different than tax levy. Some taxing bodies will report their levy has reduced over the years without mentioning the fact property valuations have increased. Focusing solely on a decreasing levy does not show the entire picture as potential tax-asking can increase even with a levy percentage decrease. Lower Platte North Natural Resources District has been able to do both, lower our levy AND keep our tax requirements exactly the same. Following is an example of LPNNRD resident's property taxes paid over the past eight years based on \$100,000 of property value: 2017 - \$38.28; 2018 - \$37.18; 2019 - \$ 36.31; 2020 - \$35.51; 2021 \$33.83; 2022 - \$33.46; 2023 - \$31.40 and this current year 2024 - \$28.65. Our current levy of .028652 is just 52% of our maximum possible levy of .055.

An example of how our district is leveraging Federal, State, and outside grant funding against our local taxes to assist in our programs and projects is the fact our current operating budget is \$8,763,960, of which \$3,480,715 is coming from local tax dollars. Your local dollars represent just 39.7% of our overall operating budget, something our directors, staff and constituents can and should be proud of.

I believe you will find it hard to name another political subdivision or municipality operating with a level tax asking for eight straight years, keeping its tax levy nearly one half the allowed maximum and leveraging less than 40% local tax dollars to federal, state and other funding. While I can't promise Lower Platte North NRD's tax asking will not increase in years to come, I can promise you this...Our directors and staff will continue to be prudent and fiscally responsible when it comes to spending your tax dollars while continuing our mission of Protecting lives, protecting property, protecting the future, through Conservation, Preservation and Restoration of our natural resources.

Eric Gottschalk, LPNNRD General Manager

Scholarships Awarded to Local Students

Congratulations to the Shell Creek Watershed Student Monitoring Group scholarship winners! Lower Platte North Natural Resources District awarded four scholarships to seniors who have participated in the Shell Creek Watershed Monitoring Program and plan to pursue higher education relating to science or natural resources. From Lakeview Community Schools, **Hannah Ogan**, from Newman Grove High School: **Christyan Anderson, Trenton Patzel, and Austin Wiese.**

The locally-led grassroots group of producers and residents that comprise SCWIG was established in 1999 to identify and promote priority conservation practices. Historically, landowners and partners collectively spent more than \$3.7 million on land and water conservation practices since SCWIG was formed. In celebration



Aerial view of the Shell Creek and Union Pacific bridges rebuilt in 2021 during the recent heavy rains.

of 25 years of SCWIG, there will be project tours and presentations at a special event to be held near Schuyler on September 12. The event will include project tours, demonstration with the Shell Creek student watershed monitoring group, and other demonstrations. Full details about the celebration will be released on lpnrd.org once the agenda is finalized.



Completed drainage project in the Shell Creek Watershed

Education is for Everyone

At the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD), our Information and Education department strives to provide opportunities for anyone ages 1 to 100, focusing on our mission of conservation, preservation and wise use of our natural resources. Along with promoting place-based education, where the learning we supply is all about what's happening in our own backyards, we also focus on creating partnerships with people and organizations that reside in our local communities.

Lake Wanahoo was host to nearly 500 area students in the month of May with the annual Spring Conservation Sensation event, and other field trips focusing on soil, trees, water resources and nature education. Additionally, LPNNRD staff assisted UNL Extension Educators with Ashland-Greenwood middle school students in water quality and quantity

exploration. Education Coordinator, Sydney Abbott, traveled to multiple area schools for classroom presentations. The monthly Coffee, Lakeside is held at the Clint Johannes Education Building, where topics range from plants and animals to gardening and more. These monthly meetings are held on the first or second Thursday of every month at 9:00 am.



Field trip students exploring insects on a nature walk.

For a full list of upcoming events, please visit our website, Facebook or X pages. To join the education listserv and receive email updates on future events, please send an email request to sabbott@lpnrd.org.

First Phase of Hazard Mitigation Plan Update



A trickle of water during 2023 drought conditions.

The first phase of the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District's (LPNNRD) update of the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is progressing with the assistance of JEO Consulting Group. The HMP is a community-guided document that identifies threats and potential vulnerabilities from both natural and man-made disasters. The goal of the plan is to reduce risk and vulnerability to lessen impacts to life, the economy, and infrastructure by identifying mitigation actions and strategies.

This plan examines regional and local vulnerabilities including but not limited to flooding, severe winter storms

severe thunderstorms, hazardous materials release, and drought. HMPs must be updated and approved every five years. The LPNNRD last updated their HMP in 2020. Throughout the planning process, local jurisdictions such as communities, counties, fire districts, drainage districts, and others are invited to participate by attending public meetings and providing information for the plan.

Meeting information, the 2020 HMP plan and other useful resources can be found at jeo.com/lpnrd-hmp

Local jurisdictions are required to attend a meeting in order to participate in the plan. Once a community, county, or district (School District, Fire District, Drainage District, etc.) is part of an approved plan, they become eligible for up to 75% cost-share from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for a variety of mitigation projects listed in the plan.

Progression of Wahoo Creek Dams

The Wahoo Creek Watershed Project is a Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD)-led effort to reduce flood damages within the Wahoo Creek watershed. The plan calls for nine flood reduction dams to be constructed in the upper reaches of the watershed.

Recently, multiple meetings between partnering agencies to develop the biological assessment for the first phase of the plan were successful. The agencies are working to make a

plan to adhere to the programmatic agreement set for Platte River depletions and the potential impacts on threatened and endangered species.

Additionally, recent efforts have focused on securing the first set of land right easements necessary for the construction of the structures, water storage, and wetland mitigation. Construction on the first three structures located south of Prague is set to begin this fall.



Groundwater Management

Assessing Groundwater Quality and Quantity Concerns

One of the primary responsibilities of the Natural Resources Districts under Nebraska state law is the development, management, utilization, and conservation of groundwater and surface water. The Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD) established a Groundwater Management Plan (GWMP) in 1985 to describe the goals, objectives, and actions that address existing and future groundwater quality and quantity concerns within the district's borders. The most recent updates and modifications to the original GWMP plan were completed in 1995.

Since the last plan update, the LPNNRD has completed a Hydrogeologic Assessment which provides a significant amount of dataset and maps to support the revised Groundwater Management Plan update. The assessment included data from AEM (Airborne Electromagnetic Survey) flights conducted by LPNNRD between 2008–2018 along with current geological data from monitoring wells and test holes drilled by the NRD. All of the data will be considered for updating groundwater quality and quantity information in developing geological regions. LPNNRD has been working with LRE Water to provide technical assistance throughout the process of reviewing and potentially updating the current policies. The primary goal of this process is to meet standard requirements for Groundwater Management Plans while providing a tool

for the LPNNRD staff and Board of Directors when making decisions for the long-term management of groundwater quality and quantity throughout the district.

Furthermore, a requirement for the progression of the GWMP update is obtaining input from stakeholders. These stakeholders will work closely with the LPNNRD and LRE Water to voice concerns and provide guidance and input for updates to the current plan. LPNNRD has held Stakeholder Group meetings based on geographic locations in Platte Center and Wahoo in June.



John Mor with LRE Water discusses the district's subareas with stakeholders and landowners during a public meeting in Wahoo.

There are two public open houses scheduled: August 26 at 6 p.m. at the Platte Center Auditorium in Platte Center; and August 27 at 6 p.m. at the Clint Johannes Education Building at Lake Wanhoo near Wahoo. The additional information and any substantial changes requested from the public will be reviewed by the Stakeholder Group and the LPNNRD Board. The stakeholder group input, comprised of producers, landowners, industrial workers, city and village representatives, partner agencies, and interested citizens is critical to the development and long-term success of the GWMP.

For additional information about the GWMP updates and planning process, please contact Daryl Andersen, LPNNRD Water Resources Manager at dandersen@lpnnrd.org or call 402-443-4675.

Extraordinary Rain Hits Saunders and Butler Counties

Record-setting rainfall occurred throughout Saunders and Butler Counties in late May with total amounts ranging from 4-10 inches and beyond. Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD) staff checked 30 dams in the Sand, Duck, Cottonwood, Wahoo, Skull and Bone Creek Watersheds. The auxiliary spillways at 6 of the dams observed had low flows with no indication of any substantial damage. When the waters receded, staff returned to examine the structures and clear debris.

The auxiliary spillway is an earthen portion of the dam that is used to pass additional water beyond designed capacity to keep the structure from over-topping and failing.

The water levels at the Lake Wanhoo dam reached several feet higher than in March of 2019. Houston Engineering observed the Wanhoo spillway shortly after the

event and concurred that levels were approximately at the 200-year elevation frequency. The flood control benefits provided by the dam functioned as designed to reduce flow rates on Sand Creek from greater than 23,000 cfs to approximately 8,500 cfs, significantly reducing downstream flood impacts.

Damage occurred to the spillway but the extent is unknown until the basin can be pumped down to perform a thorough review.



LPNNRD staff monitor the inundation of rainwater through Lake Wanhoo's spillway on May 21, 2024.