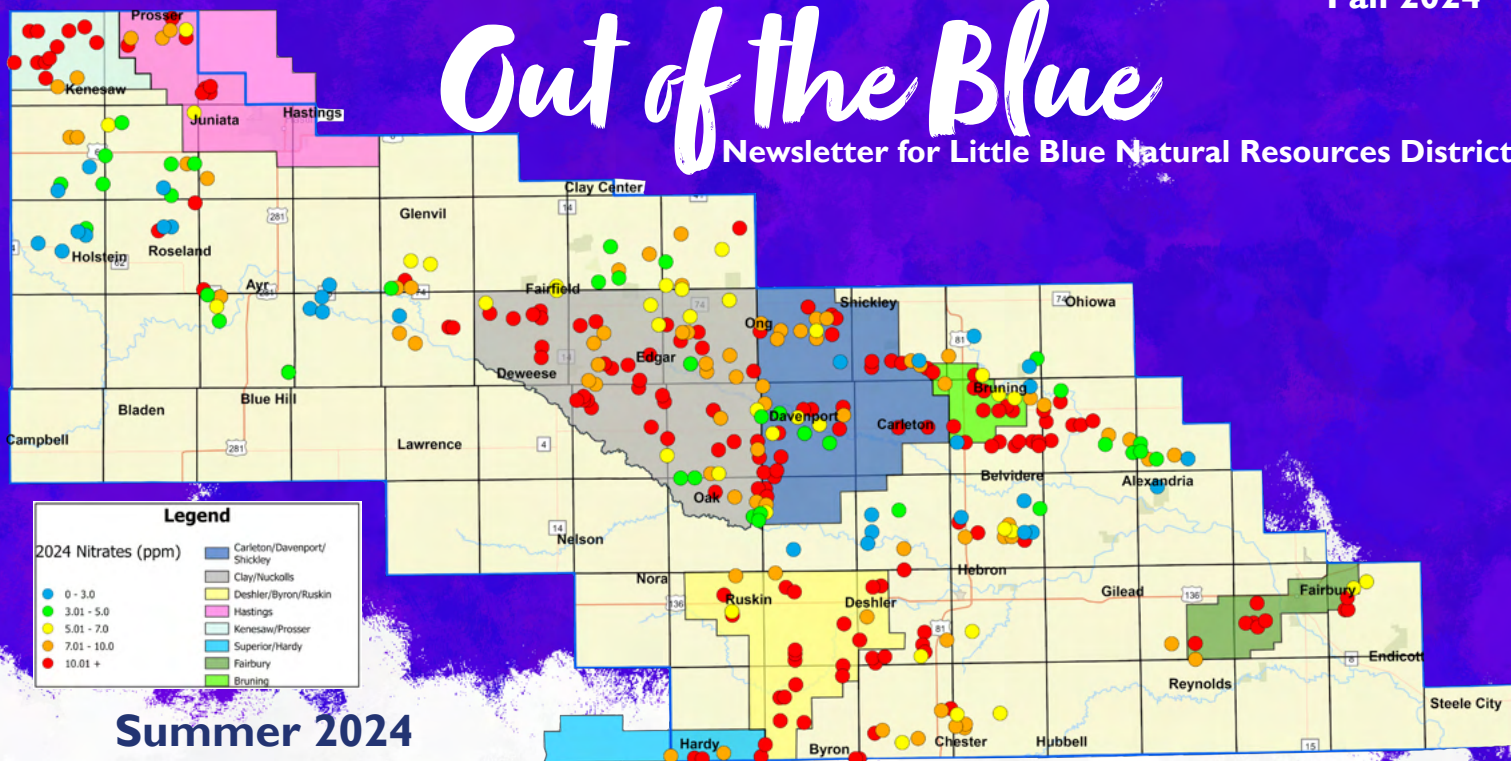


Out of the Blue

Newsletter for Little Blue Natural Resources District



Summer 2024 Nitrate Testing

The Little Blue Natural Resources District (LBNRD) sampled 338 irrigation wells for nitrates in July and August.

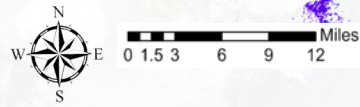
Nitrate results were variable throughout the district, with nitrates within LBNRD’s Water Quality Sub-Areas (sub-areas) expectedly testing higher than places outside those areas. Average nitrates throughout LBNRD’s sub-areas can be seen in the table below. Ten parts per million (ppm) is considered to be the safe maximum contaminant level (MCL) regarding drinking water, and you can see that all sub-areas tested above that level.

Farmers irrigating with nitrates present in their irrigation water should be thinking about the nitrogen credit they are receiving through their water. One ppm of nitrate in water is equal to .23 lbs. of nitrogen for every inch that is applied. As an example, if you have 10 ppm of nitrates in your water, you are applying 2.3 lbs. of nitrogen for every inch you irrigate. If you irrigate ten inches with 10 ppm of nitrates, you are putting 23 lbs. of nitrogen on your crop with your water alone. If LBNRD tested your well this year, you should have received a postcard from us telling you what your well tested at.

There are several high nitrate areas not currently in sub-areas, such as south of Hwy. 136 and west of Hwy. 81 between Deshler and Hebron, and also south and east of the Bruning sub-area. The Board of Directors are monitoring these areas and may vote to expand current sub-areas, or create new sub-areas in the future.

The takeaway is to be mindful of nitrates in your irrigation water when making management decisions. Doing so will help your finances and the health of the groundwater alike. If you have further questions or would like to discuss more about this, contact Tyler at 402-364-3712 or by email at tgoeschel@littlebluenrd.org.

Water Quality Sub-Areas	Nitrate Average (ppm)
Bruning	14.2
Carleton/Davenport/Shickley	10.7
Clay/Nuckolls	11.1
Deshler/Byron/Ruskin	13.4
Fairbury	11.7
Hastings	10.9
Kenesaw/Prosser	15.4
Superior/Hardy	14.6



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CONNECT WITH US

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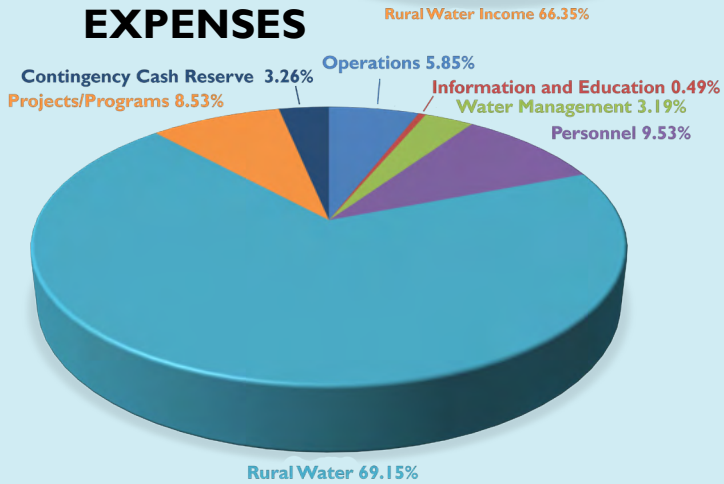
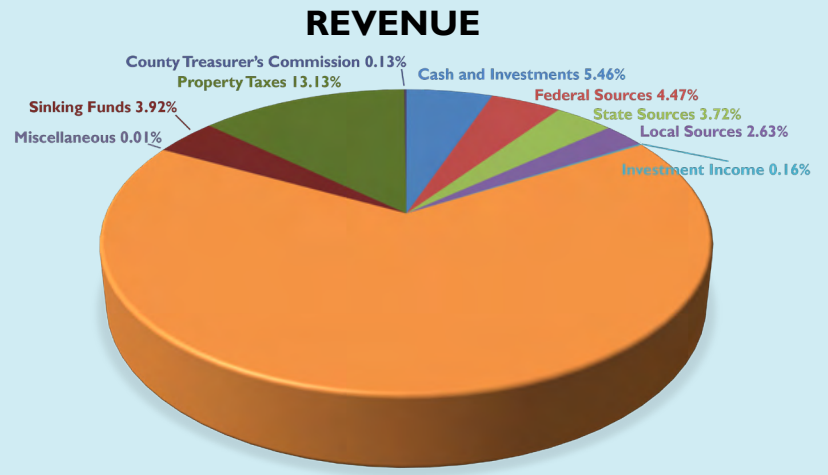


2025 Fiscal Year Budget

The Little Blue NRD's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget is \$15,338,007, by far, the largest in Little Blue history. This is primarily due to a 3.9 million-dollar Water Sustainability Fund grant (WSF) from the State of Nebraska and a 2.7 million-dollar federal grant from USDA Rural Development (USDA-RD) which will help fund a 10 million-dollar Little Blue Public Water Project (LBPWP). This project involves the construction of two new municipal supply wells and 14 miles of new water main pipe construction in the Fairbury area.

The FY 2025 tax levy is 0.019037. This equates to just over \$19 for every \$100,000 of property value.

The Little Blue NRD continues to maintain existing watershed dams and dikes, public lands, and recreation areas which protect property and enhances opportunities to enjoy the good life of Nebraska.



Farming For The Blue River

The Farming for the Blue River project is a partnership between the Little Blue Natural Resources District (NRD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Nature Conservancy.

The goal of this project is to co-learn with farmers to develop nutrient management plans to reduce nitrogen losses and improve nitrogen use efficiency.

Project partners will work with farmers to create a nutrient management plan in line with the plant's nitrogen needs, provide farmers technical assistance in adopting precision nutrient management, and participation in a peer-to-peer learning network to scale practices regionally. Optionally, a farmer can include satellite based nitrogen recommendations as part of this project, such as those provided by Sentinel Fertigation.

Farmers can enroll up to 160 acres per year, up to three years, and will receive \$10/acre per year for each acre enrolled in the program. Additional financial assistance is available for annual soil sampling throughout the timeline of the project to inform the revised nutrient management plan. Additionally, the Farming for the Blue River partners encourage farmers to layer additional cost-share incentives by enrolling in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) with NRCS.

Interested parties can contact Tyler Goeschel at Little Blue NRD at tgoeschel@littlebluenrd.org or call at 402-364-3712. Signing up is easy and I'll happily assist you!



32-Mile Creek Watershed Flood Reduction Plan

A two-year planning phase for a flood reduction plan involving the 32-Mile Creek Watershed near Juniata and Kenesaw is nearing completion. JEO Consulting Group has concluded that there are not enough benefits to justify the cost of flood improvements involving the Village of Juniata. Kenesaw, however, has the benefits needed for additional work to formulate a plan. Currently, the plan involves improvements to the K-Dike and K-Dam. Drainage improvements on the west side of town involve constructing a series of ditches and construction of a "dry" flood water detention cell. Another major component of the plan would be upsizing drainage culverts under Holstein and Smith Avenues. A public meeting is being planned for early 2025 to share information and receive feedback before any further work is conducted.



Elections

The Little Blue NRD's programs and policies are directed by a seventeen-member, locally elected, Board of Directors. The public elects these directors for a four-year term of office. Elections are held on even-numbered years with the terms of office staggered so half of the Board Members are

elected at one time.

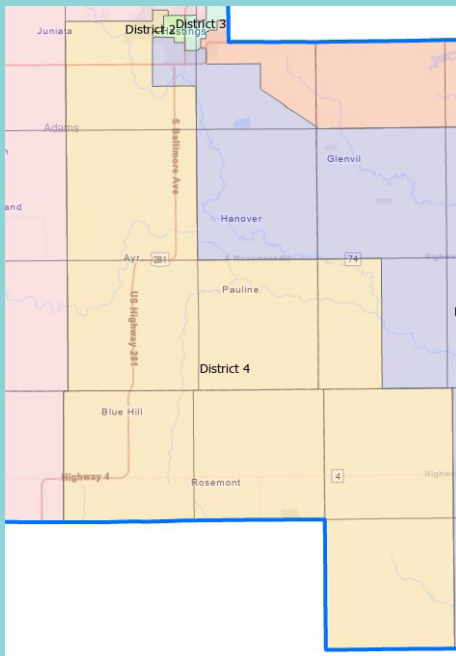
The Board's vision is to be recognized as a leader in natural resources policy and management based on sound science with a mission to provide leadership in the promotion and enactment of cost-effective programs and projects that preserve and protect natural resources for all future uses.

Board member duties include setting policies and priorities for the district,

providing guidance for the General Manager, serving as representatives of both rural and urban interests, and working to serve the common good. The Board meets monthly on the second Tuesday of the month at the NRD headquarters in Davenport, Nebraska.

The contested sub-district's nominees descriptions are below:

Sub-District 4



LYLE SCHROER - LAWRENCE

Lyle and his wife Donna live south of Lawrence where they operate a cow/calf operation and dryland farm. He became interested in the NRD about 10 to 15 years ago as he began noticing a decrease in spring flows in our pastures as well as a decrease in the volume of water flowing in area rivers and creeks.

Lyle says, "Nitrates in our water is another problem that needs to be addressed. If the local NRD's are not able to reverse the upward trend of nitrate levels through regulation and controls, my fear is the state will have to become involved. This would cause a

mountain of paperwork, controls, and regulations for independent businesses and farmers."

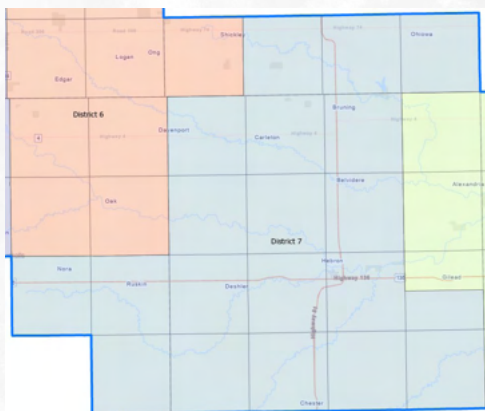
As a board member Lyle hopes to bring about a change in the direction nitrates seem to be heading, "but profits from farming operations and businesses usually take precedent over good stewardship of our natural resources."

"I encourage the residents of the LBNRD to attend board meetings to become informed. Also become involved with the NRD by running for a position on the board of directors. A new voice and opinion is always welcome," - Lyle Schroer.

SCHYLER BOHLEN - HASTINGS

We reached out to Schyler for comment and have not heard back.

Sub-District 7



ALAN WIEDEL - HEBRON

Alan has served on the LBNRD Board of Directors since 2016 and has spent the last 2 years as Chairman of the Board. He graduated from UNL with a bachelor's degree in animal science in 1977. He returned to the family farm after college and has been engaged in farming ever since.

He would like to ensure that the

control of the LBNRD remains in the hands of people who reside in the district. He also feels that we need to carefully manage the groundwater, so we can make sure that it is sustainable for future generations. He would also like to ensure that all patrons of the district are well informed on important issues concerning the use of the districts' resources.

STEWART BRINEGAR - DAVENPORT

Stewart has lived in the area all his life. He was raised on a farm near Carleton. In 2020 he had an opportunity to purchase a farm and move just south

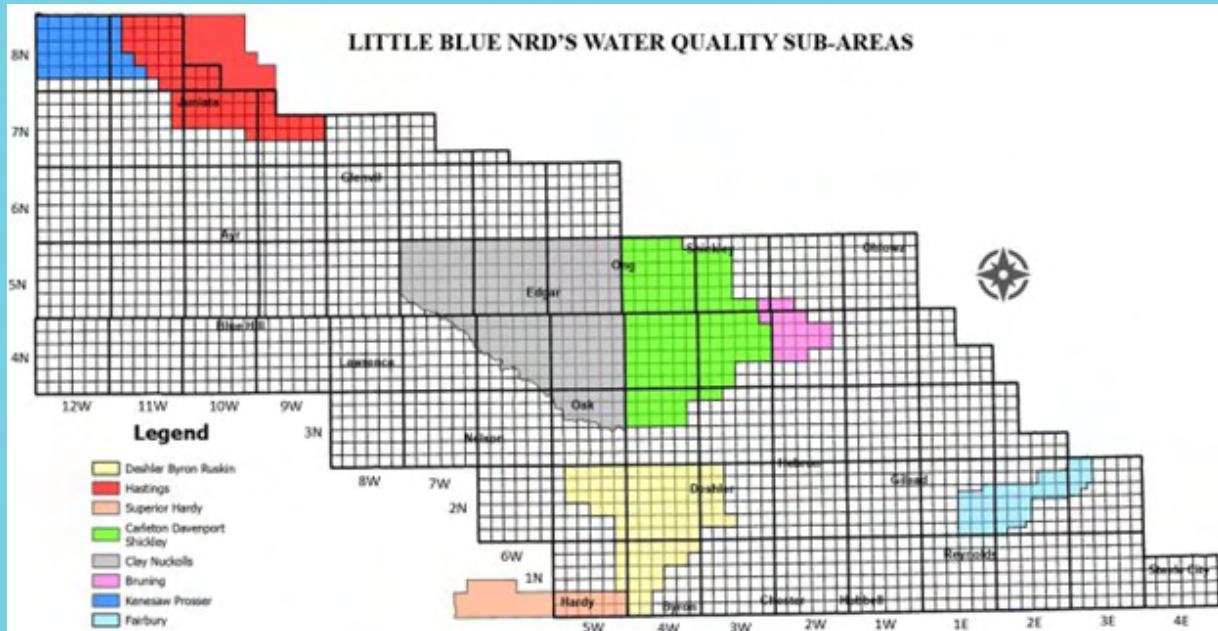
of Davenport. He started farming in 1993 after graduating from SCC in Milford with a Diesel Mechanic degree. He loves the farm life. "The older I get, the more I have become aware and concerned about water quality and quantity. We all need water to be here for years to come and the next generations. Water, to me, is our most precious resource," - Stewart Brinegar

He would like to have the opportunity to do what he can to help improve water quality and quantity. Stewart feels he could be a benefit on the board by sharing ideas and learning more about local situations and working together with others to keep the district improving and moving forward for generations to come.

Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act

The Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act (NiRIA) was passed by the legislature earlier this year. This state program aims to provide incentives to producers for reducing the use of commercial fertilizers. The requirements of NiRIA are that producers verify a reduction in nitrogen fertilizer application rates as the lesser of 40 lbs./acre or 15% of their baseline application rate. Current statewide funding for this program is one-million dollars.

Producers farming within Water Quality sub-areas (all colored areas on the map) are eligible to receive \$15/acre, while those farming outside of



those areas and certified to irrigate are eligible to receive \$12/acre. Dryland farmers can also apply and are eligible to receive \$10/acre.

Applications are due to the NRD by January 15th, 2025 and can be found on our website at littlebluenrd.org/, under the nitrogen reduction incentive act

button. Other guidance documents and further information can also be found there.

Should you need any additional information or have any questions, please contact the NRD at 402-364-2145 and ask for Tyler or Alicia.

2024 Earth Jamboree

The Little Blue NRD hosted almost 400 students from ten different schools located throughout the district at the Clay County Fairgrounds to learn more about the world around them at the 2024 Earth Jamboree.

Students rotated through twenty-minute sessions that included topics covering soil health and properties, tree identification, cover crops, composting, and more. The NRD received lots of positive feedback from all schools involved!

Nebraska Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Central Platte NRD, Upper Big Blue NRD, and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources all came together to make this event a success and the Little Blue NRD couldn't have done it without them!

New Employee - Landon Gardner



Landon Gardner joined the Little Blue NRD full-time as a Natural Resources Technician in August of 2024 after previously working for the district for two summers while still in high school. Landon just graduated from Bruning-Davenport Public school in May of this year.

Landon lives on the Little Blue River just outside of Davenport with his family and lots of chickens and has

been selling fresh eggs to fortunate co-workers!

In his free time, Landon is often at home with his four siblings cooking, cleaning, or relaxing. He also enjoys riding his motorcycle, fishing, and watching a good show. Landon is looking forward to learning new skills and continuing to contribute to the NRD's mission as he advances through his career.

Nominees By Sub-District

SUB-DISTRICT 1 - 4 YEAR TERM

Mason Hoffman - Roseland

SUB-DISTRICT 3 - 4 YEAR TERM

Jessi Hoeft - Hastings

SUB-DISTRICT 4 - 4 YEAR TERM

Lyle Schroer - Lawrence

Schyler Bohlen - Hastings

SUB-DISTRICT 5 - 4 YEAR TERM

Jesse VonSprecklesen - Clay Center

SUB-DISTRICT 6

Steve Shaw - Edgar - 4 Year Term

Kyle Knight - Clay Center - 2 Year Term

SUB-DISTRICT 7 - 4 YEAR TERM

Alan Wiedel - Hebron

Stewart Brinegar - Davenport

*Be sure to vote on
November 5th!*

LBNRD Awarded WaterSmart Grant for Irrigation Flow Meter Upgrades

The Little Blue Natural Resources District (NRD) has been awarded a \$200,000 WaterSMART



grant from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which will focus on upgrading irrigation flow meters across the district.

The WaterSMART grant is designed to promote sustainable water management and will provide the financial resources necessary for the NRD to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of its flow meters. The existing irrigation systems in the Little Blue NRD rely heavily on traditional flow meters, which can be less accurate and harder to maintain. With the grant funding, the district will

Outstanding Soil Stewardship Conservation Award

Congratulations to Keith Berns, of Bladen, Nebraska for winning the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts' 2024 Nebraska Outstanding Soil Stewardship Conservation Award.

Keith Berns combines over 25 years of no-till farming with 10 years of teaching agriculture and computer, in addition to no-tilling 2,500 acres of irrigated and dryland corn, soybeans, rye, triticale, peas, sunflowers, and buckwheat in South Central Nebraska. In 2008, brothers Keith Berns and Brian Berns started experimenting with cover crops and studying water usage on their farm in south central Nebraska. Encouraged by the results, Keith and Brian founded Green Cover Seeds in 2009. The 1500+ acre farm has been 100% continuous no till for over

10 years, and they've been working hard for the last several years to continue research and to incorporate cover crops into their no-till system. After researching cover crop water usage, cover crop nutrient content, and cover crops effects on following crops, their findings were both exciting and encouraging. Keith has a master's degree in Agricultural Education from the University of Nebraska and teaches cover crops and soil health more than 30 times a year to various groups and audiences, including this year's Regenerative Ag Conference, hosted in February, where he was one of two keynote speakers.

Image Below: Back left to right: Jessica Hedges, Martin Graff, Tyler Goeschel, Scott Nelson, and Mason Hoffman. Front left to right: Christi Berns, Brian Berns, Keith Berns and Audrey Berns.



be able to replace outdated equipment with state-of-the-art flow meters that offer better precision, durability, and data collection capabilities.

Look for more information soon as the Little Blue NRD begins implementing the upgrades to flow meters. Additional details will be shared with farmers, landowners, and the community as this initiative gets underway.

Online Submissions for Reports

You now have the opportunity to report your water usage online, even on your phone! You can see your

certified acres, water usage, attach a photo, not worry about the mail, and see your pumpage report summary as soon as the readings are verified.

THIS IS NOT MANDATORY, JUST A CONVENIENCE, IF YOU CHOOSE TO USE IT! Email aep@littlebluenrd.org if you are interested in signing up.

Friendly Reminder:
**PUMPAGE REPORTS ARE
DUE DECEMBER 15TH**



P.O. Box 100
100 E 6th Street
Davenport, NE 68335
lbnrd@littlebluenrd.org
littlebluenrd.org
402-364-2145

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sub-District 1: Mason Hoffman, Roseland
Sub-District 1: Glen Bonifas, Roseland
Sub-District 2: Brent Hoops, Hastings
Sub-District 2: Courtney Luebben, Hastings
Sub-District 3: Jessi Hoeft, Hastings
Sub-District 3: Glen Bredthauer, Hastings
Sub-District 4: Lyle Schroer, Lawrence
Sub-District 4: Warren Taylor, Glenvil
Sub-District 5: Jesse VonSpreckelsen, Clay Center
Sub-District 5: Aaron Paus, Fairfield
Sub-District 6: Steve Shaw, Edgar
Sub-District 6: Kyle Knight, Clay Center
Sub-District 7: Alan Wiedel, Hebron
Sub-District 7: Alan Kenning, Hebron
Sub-District 8: Bill Glenn, Fairbury
Sub-District 8: Jay Meyer, Daykin
At Large: Russ Ochsner, Roseland

LITTLE BLUE STAFF

Scott Nelson - General Manager
Tyler Goeschel - Assistant Manager
Marie Herbek - Office Administrator
Kathy Boysen - Administrative Assistant
Alicia Epps - Database Specialist
Jessica Hedges - Media & Communications Specialist
Kevin Orvis - Project Manager
Tim Hecke - Operations Supervisor
Landon Gardner - Natural Resources Technician
Lindsay Eichelberger - Water Resources Technician
David Bergeron - Water Resources Technician

FIELD OFFICES

Adams County NRCS Secretary - Rita Peshek - 402-462-5412
Clay County NRCS Secretary - Katie Lepant - 402-762-3569
Fillmore County NRCS - Sylvia Jividen - 402-759-4017
Jefferson NRD/NRCS Technician - Christine Zabokrtsky
Jefferson County NRCS Secretary - Vacant - 402-729-6134
Thayer County NRCS Secretary - Jessica Hynek - 402-768-6228
Webster County NRCS Secretary - Lynetta Snelling - 402-746-2268

Calendar

Oct 8th: LBNRD Board Meeting
Oct 14th: Office Closed for Columbus Day!
Nov 11th: Office Closed for Veteran's Day!
Nov 12th: LBNRD Board Meeting
Nov 28th: Office Closed for Thanksgiving!
Nov 29th: Office Closed for Black Friday!
Dec 10th: LBNRD Board Meeting
Dec 15th: Pumpage Reports Due
Dec 24th: Office Closes at Noon for Christmas Eve!
Dec 25th: Office Closed for Christmas!

“Little Blue Natural Resources District is an Equal Opportunity & Provider.”

The Little Blue NRD's Out of the Blue is a publication of the Little Blue Natural Resources District. Requests to be placed on the Out of the Blue mailing list and/or comments regarding information in this publication should be directed to Jessica Hedges, Media & Communications Specialist, 100 East 6th Street, PO Box 100, Davenport, NE 68335.