

KNOW YOUR NRD



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

Spring, 2016



Southwest Lincoln residents enjoy this breathtaking stretch of Bradford Pear trees along Coddington Avenue each spring and are reminded why Nebraska, for generations, has been called "The Tree Planter State." The trees were planted with help from the NRD's Community Forestry program that is available to neighborhood associations, churches, schools, towns, villages, service organizations and other civic groups. The NRD also sells and plants seedling trees to enhance windbreaks and provide habitat for wildlife. Learn more about NRD tree programs below.

2016 Transitions

by NRD Board Chair Greg Osborn



The NRD Board has held over all of last year's Board officers, so it is, again, my privilege to serve as Board Chair. The Board felt a need for the continuation of current officers and subcommittees

do to issues facing the district, including the pending retirement of Glenn Johnson, the NRD's general manager since 1982. The Executive Subcommittee has started the process of finding a new GM. The board also hopes for a smooth transition to a biennial budget. A legislative bill passed last session provides that option for Nebraska's NRDs, so this spring we'll develop budgets for FY 2017 and FY 2018 that maintain efficient and effective use of tax dollars. Adjustments in the second year may be necessary, but the overall planning will already be in place, creating more NRD Board and staff time for overseeing individual programs and projects for preserving and protecting our natural resources.

Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future

Repair Progress

Most of the NRD-owned portion of the Homestead Recreational Trail has been closed through southern Lancaster County, south of Saltillo Road, since severe storms last May, but the NRD expects to re-open the trail by early spring. The City of Lincoln's Jamaica North Trail, an extension of the Homestead Trail north of Saltillo Road, however, will remain closed, with storm repairs expected to begin in June. Those wanting to use Homestead from the north end are encouraged to utilize trail parking at the NRD trailhead just west of Roca, on Roca Road.

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CRP Incentive Helps Farmers, Pollinators

LPSNRD landowners have lots of good reasons to enroll or re-enroll land in the federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Besides getting higher annual payments from the USDA to convert cropland to permanent vegetation, the NRD has created a one-time incentive called the "CRP Booster Program" to help the landowner get their new CRP acres established.

A CRP sign-up period, the first in two years, began December 1st and continues until February 26th, 2016. Converting cropland to grassland improves the water

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Order Seedlings Now!

The NRD will collect bulk orders for 30 species of seedling trees and shrubs until March 25th. The cost is \$0.80 per plant for 75 or fewer and \$0.75 per plant for 100 or more and each species must be ordered in increments of 25. Online ordering is available at lpsnrd.org.



25 bundled conifers

Ordered seedlings will be delivered to the

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Maintain Windbreaks

Order Seedlings Now!

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NRD in April and stored in our custom tree cooler until picked up by the buyer in April or May. The annual sale features species especially suitable for windbreaks and wildlife plantings and has grown steadily in popularity since Nebraska's NRDs began the program in its current form about 15 years ago. In that time, over 400,000 seedlings have been sold throughout the district. NRD Forester Jay Seaton offers these interesting observations and statistics about the NRD's annual sale:

- About 80% of seedling buyers live on acreages.
- Up to 60% of buyers also ordered from the program the year before and that is why Seaton tries to offer a few varieties each year that were not offered in the previous year.
- A traditional windbreak favorite, Eastern Red Cedar is the most popular. Orders in 2015 were more than double the second most popular species, Colorado Blue Spruce.



- American Plum is also a popular choice and Seaton sees that as an indication landowners want to attract more wildlife by providing great habitat.

The NRD also offers help in planting the seedlings. Details about seedling sales and the NRD's Community Forestry Program, which helps community groups purchase and establish trees, can be found at Ipsnrd.org. Click on Programs. A free seedling planting workshop will be held on March 5th, from 9am to noon at the NRD office, 3125 Portia Street, in Lincoln. No pre-registration is required.

Paperless Board Meetings

Look for a link to our new Board Meetings webpage at Ipsnrd.org. It's in the left column, near the bottom and links to a page designed to help directors and the public prepare and follow-along during LPSNRD Board meetings. The page has access to many important documents and maps and it links to the next meeting agenda, one week prior to the meeting. The agenda will also carry links to information about each individual agenda item. The NRD Board and staff hope all will use this page to help eliminate the need for distributing board meeting information on paper.

Web or Print?

Our *Know Your NRD* newsletter is available in both printed and electronic versions. Look for the printed newsletter in District newspapers in February, June and October. You can have a link to the electronic version, which includes convenient web links to interactive maps, more detailed information about the NRD and more, delivered right to your inbox. All you need to do is visit our newsletter subscription page, at Ipsnrd.org, under Publications, to sign up. The NRD will not share your email address.

You Can Help!

CRP Incentive Helps Farmers, Pollinators

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quality of streams, lakes and wetlands, provides wildlife habitat and helps decrease soil erosion.

Landowners who enroll have to purchase new seed, then get it planted and established. The federal program pays the landowner for about half of the cost of getting their CRP acres established. The NRD's CRP Booster Program will pay landowners another one-time \$25 or \$50 per acre incentive. Acting District Conservationist for the Natural Resources



Other Pollinator Help

You don't need to have ground enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program in order to help bees, butterflies, and other pollinators recover from recent population declines (see adjacent story). Setting aside just a few square feet of your yard will help. Plants like common milkweed, sunflowers and hostas are among the best choices for attracting pollinators. Visit the UNL Extension website, <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/bees.shtml>, for a more complete list and go see the Extension office's Cherrycreek Pollinator Habitat, 444 Cherrycreek Road, in Lincoln. It's a great place to gather ideas.

Did you know...

the NRD and other partners host 3,500 Lancaster County 5th graders each March at Southeast Community College, during the Earth Wellness Festival? The festival helps students realize the role science plays in their lives and how exciting it can be. This year's festival is March 22nd and 23rd. Thanks to our many volunteers!

Conservation Service, Jeremiah Schutz said the NRD's

program will help take most of the financial burden off of district landowners who enroll in the CRP." Schutz suggests landowners, "Farm the best and CRP the rest."

Whether a landowner gets the higher NRD incentive rate depends on the type of grasses they choose to plant. The higher incentive is paid when the planted seed mix features varieties essential to the survival of honey bees, butterflies and other pollinators. NRD Assistant Manager Paul Zillig said the higher incentive for pollinator varieties, "gives landowners a way to help boost declining populations of bees, butterflies and other pollinators." Many agricultural crops, world-wide, are dependent on pollinators and their decline is having adverse economic effects.

Landowners interested in the CRP and the NRD's CRP Booster Program should contact their local USDA office.



**NRD ORAL
HISTORY
PROJECT**

So, how did Nebraska's NRDs get started in protecting lives property and the future? Some influential people tell their NRD stories on a new website titled "The Natural Resources Districts Oral History Project." Visit nrdstories.org.

Spring Storm Cleanup

Repair Progress

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) financed about 75% of the \$170,000 Homestead repair job and continues to work with the NRD on other storm repair projects:

- Upper Salt Dam 18-9, near Olive Creek Road and East 33rd Street, where the dam's overflow pipe washed out - Olive Creek Road remains closed; repairs are 50% completed, with project completion expected in the spring; \$63,443 total cost; \$47,582 by FEMA
- Debris removal from many Upper Salt and Weeping Water watershed dams and the Salt Creek Levee in Lincoln; \$37,630 total cost; \$28,222 by FEMA
- Antelope Creek bank stabilization near 40th Street and Scott Avenue - repairs to begin in the spring; \$1.14 million estimated cost; FEMA portion undetermined
- MoPac East Trail bridge damage east of Elmwood, near Fletcher Avenue - trail remains closed in that area; repairs to begin in the spring; \$208,000 estimated cost; FEMA portion undetermined



The riser that controls the level of Upper Salt Dam 18-9, near Princeton, has been replaced after it was damaged in storms last spring, but work still remains.

NRD Board

Here are your NRD Board representatives. The Board meets regularly on the third Wednesday of each month at the NRD office in Lincoln. More information is available at Ipsnrd.org, click on About Us, then Board.

Subdistrict

- 1 Don Jacobson, W Lincoln
David Potter, Valparaiso
- 2 Daryl Bohac, Waverly
Mark Spangler, Murray
- 3 Mike DeKalb, NE Lincoln
Vern Barrett, Ceresco
- 4 Larry Ruth, Walton
Joe Skopp, SE Lincoln
- 5 Greg Osborn, W Lincoln
Bruce Johnson, W Lincoln
- 6 Jeremie Kerkman, NW Lincoln
Deborah Eagan, NW Lincoln
- 7 Ann Bleed, NE Lincoln
Richard Bolte, NE Lincoln
- 8 Larry Hall, SE Lincoln
Ron Svoboda, SE Lincoln
- 9 Milt Schmidt, SE Lincoln
Larry Zimmerman, SE Lincoln
- 10 Ray Stevens, SW Lincoln
Karen Amen, SW Lincoln

At-large

David Landis, Lincoln

Vote May 10th

Primary Deadline is March 1

Voters will select eleven Lower Platte South NRD (NRD) Board members this year. Incumbents have until February 16 to file for candidacy in the May 10th Primary and non-incumbents must file by March 1st, with the Nebraska Secretary of State's office. Only races that have more than two candidates will appear on Primary ballots. The General Election is November 8th.



SWIF Website

The NRD has begun a multi-year project to update Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee and the public can follow progress on a new website created by the project consultant, JEO Consulting Group. Check out saltcreeklevee.jeo.com.

The 21 board members serve four-year terms. One seat in each of ten NRD subdistricts is up for election, except in Subdistrict 5 (west Lincoln; approximately from NW 40th to 33rd streets, between Holdrege and "A" streets), where both seats will be elected. A Subdistrict 5 board seat was appointed last May and an election for the second half of that four-year term is required under Nebraska law. The only at-large seat on the board is not up for election in 2016. Besides holding monthly meetings, board members also serve on several standing and special subcommittees, typically with eight directors each, which make recommendations to the full board.

Candidates may only represent the subdistrict in which they live. An easy-to-use online map is available, where anyone can learn the subdistrict of a specific address and see the subdistrict boundaries. Go to lpsnrd.org and click on About, Maps, then Subdistricts or contact the NRD.

Minimize Flood Impact

Few things are more unpredictable than a flood. It is the world's most frequent natural disaster, but taking some time to prepare in case of a flood can help minimize the impact a flood has on your family. First determine how much risk there is for flooding where you live. If you live near a river or other waterway, are you within the floodplain? Visit fema.gov to view floodplain maps for your area. The FEMA site also has good advice about staying informed, evacuation preparedness and other aspects of coping with a flood. The American Red Cross, at redcross.org, is another good resource. The time and thought you put into flood preparedness may provide good help when you need it most.



Residents were evacuated voluntarily from parts of Lincoln's South Bottoms neighborhood during flooding last May.

Watchfulness

Legislative Conservation

Each Legislative Session, Nebraska's NRDs identify introduced bills that may impact natural resource conservation. Our annual legislative Conference was held January 26 and 27 in Lincoln and here are some bills we're watching:

LB 380 - decrease the share of Nebraska Lottery proceeds going to the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the State Fair and increase funds to education.

LB 711 - re-create, after several years, the Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force to manage treatment of certain vegetation in the state's waterways.

LB 802 - create the Health and Climate Resiliency Task Force to develop a strategic plan for Nebraska related to the impacts of climate change on health and well-being.

LB 940 - adopt the Tax Stabilization Act to provide property tax relief and freeze property tax values, giving the Legislature time to decrease property tax reliance by school districts.

LB 1038 - allow NRDs and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to purchase and hold water rights from Spencer Dam on the Niobrara River, protect instream flows and protect all existing uses.



Zoos Honored

The Omaha Henry Doorly Zoo and the Lincoln Children's Zoo have been rearing larvae of the endangered Salt Creek tiger beetle since 2011, then releasing the larvae into saline wetlands around Lincoln, hoping to boost tiger beetle populations. The zoo's "groundbreaking" efforts were recognized in December when they received the NRD's Tributary Award.

We're Social!

Social media is a great way to monitor how the NRD is protecting lives, property and the future. Like the NRD on Facebook at LPSNRD, follow @lowerplattessouthnrd on Instagram and search lower platte south nrd on YouTube.

NRD Project Update

Havlat Seward County road structure dam - 168th Street, south of Pleasant Dale. Construction phase by B-D Construction and Mainelli-Wagner engineers. Cost \$370,000, including some road work; 75% NRD, 25% Seward County. Completion expected in July.

Rosa Parks Way Trail Project, Lincoln - Salt Creek Levee connector trail under Rosa Parks Way. 80% federal funding. Awaiting BNSF Railroad approval.

Salt Creek Levee Trail, Devaney Center to Cornhusker Hwy - Extension of existing trail. Planning and design stages. Construction expected in 2016.

Upper Salt Dam 3-A Rehabilitation - Upgrade of dam structure one mile southeast of Sprague. Design phase by Natural Resources Conservation Service. Cost \$2.3 million, 65% federal.

Cedar Creek's Platte River bank stabilization project - Construction nearly completed to protect a village street and infrastructure. JEO Consulting Group. Cost \$1 million, 50% NRD funds.

Waverly's Ash Hollow Dry Dam - Planning completed, now in landrights phase. Construction expected summer, 2016.

Homestead Trail, Antelope Creek at 39th Street, Upper Salt Dam 18-9 storm repairs - see page 1.