

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)

DISTRICT CONSERVATIONIST'S MONTHLY REPORT

12/12/2025

PERSONNEL/OFFICE

- The Lancaster and Cass County Service Centers are under normal operations.
- Lincoln NRCS Resource Conservationist - VACANT
- Lincoln NRCS Soil Conservation Technician – VACANT
- Weeping Water NRCS Soil Conservationist – VACANT
- Weeping Water NRD Field Office Secretary – Shelly Nielsen will start on 12/15/25.

LPSNRD LAND TREATMENT

- Technicians and planning staff are:
 - Processing cost-share program projects (survey, design, staking, field visits, check out, documentation, and payment processing).
 - actively communicating with producers/landowners about cost-share program opportunities
- LPSNRD currently has the following active or completed land treatment cost-share program applications:
 - Lancaster County Field Office
 - 5 Fall 2025 Structural Applications
 - 12 Fall 2025 Cover Crop Applications
 - Cass County Field Office
 - 20 Fall 2025 Structural Applications
 - 1 Fall 2025 Cover Crop Application

USDA PROGRAMS

- Technicians are completing fall projects.
- Planning staff are working on FY26 USDA program applications

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 12/25/25 – USDA Offices closed for Christmas Day Holiday
- 1/1/26 – USDA Offices closed for New Years Day Holiday
- 1/15/26 – EQIP/CSP/RCPP/ACEP Application Deadline (Extended from 11/21/25)

Tom Cowan – District Conservationist



MUELLER ROBAK

Schaefer Hruza
& Hassebrook

2026 Legislative Preview

The 2026 Nebraska Legislative Session is set to get underway January 7th and wrap up in mid-April. This session is what is known as the “short session,” meaning Senators will gather for 60 days to conduct business. It is also the second year of the biennium meaning the Legislature will have to make some budget adjustments, but the basic framework of the budget was set during the 2025 session.

Bills in the Legislature also have a two-year life cycle as well, which means the 715 total bills introduced in 2025 live on unless passed or indefinitely postponed last year. The Legislature did pass 205 total bills in 2025. And Senators get to introduce new legislation during the first ten days of the 2026 session too.

Despite the state budget passage last year, the budget adjustments necessary in 2026 will be one of the major focuses for Senators in 2026. Coming into session, the state has a budget deficit of \$471 million. The Nebraska Legislature is required to pass a balanced budget so Senators will have to figure out how to make up this amount. That number is impacted by a variety of factors: monthly tax receipts collected or expected, impacts from Congress’s One Big Beautiful Bill, previously passed income tax cuts taking effect, growing support for property tax credits and education funding, and other expenses that may have come in higher or lower than expected.

This number has not phased Governor Pillen who has said multiple times he would be seeking to cut \$500 million in the state budget in 2026. He has also indicated he intends to continue to pursue policies to broaden or increase the state sales tax base to offset property tax burdens. There are a few bright spots: the state’s rainy-day fund or cash reserve has a healthy balance of hundreds of millions of dollars, casino tax revenues continue to grow, and the One Big Beautiful bill included rural health funds, of which Nebraska is hopeful it might receive upwards of \$200M annually of for the next five years.

2026 will also be the last year of service for ten term-limited senators, as well as an election year for others. As a result, national issues like redistricting, election security, and how Nebraska allocates its electoral college votes might be elevated this year. Governor Pillen’s decision to contract with the Federal government to convert a Department of Corrections work ethic camp in McCook Nebraska into an ICE Detention Center is also likely spur legislation and emotional debate on the floor in 2026 too.

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There are several major policy proposals that have carried over from 2025 that are expected to be a significant focus in 2026 too. First, the Nebraska Legislature did not pass any medical cannabis legislation last year and with a lot of elected official and public attention on the Medical Commission slow implementation of the voter approved ballot initiative, we expect the Legislature to again turn some attention to this issue. A major tort reform package that would cap noneconomic damages and lower the statute of limitations from four years to two years for accidents involving commercial motor vehicles, among other provisions is waiting for debate on General File as a carryover bill. Tort reform efforts have been sweeping the country and conservative state senators and Governor Pillen have indicated they want to see Nebraska join the cause by passing this legislation. Finally, we expect the Nebraska Legislature to take back up a bill that would have capped annual minimum wage increases at 1.5%. That bill stalled on Final Reading due to the absence of a necessary Senator at voting time.

In the natural resources space, we expect energy generation and the need for Nebraska to produce more electricity in service to business growth to be a topic this session, although legislative solutions might take more than one session to be fully fleshed out. Several senators have mentioned their desire to work on legislation related to healthy soils and how Nebraska is managing for nitrates in our water which we would expect Natural Resource Districts to be asked to engage on. With the current state budget challenges, the existing funding in the Perkins County Canal fund may be the target of legislative conversations and certainly the monies allocated to the MoPac Trail Development will need to remain a focus for the Lower Platte South NRD through the 2026 session as well. And there continues to be legislative chatter on property tax asking caps for political subdivisions.

Short sessions are fast and furious and 2026 is shaping up to be exactly that. We look forward to representing you in the upcoming year.