

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE REPORT TO THE  
LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT  
August 26, 2021**

**PERSONNEL:**

- USDA Service Center Operations – The Lancaster and Cass County Service Centers continue to be closed to walk-in customers. Producers may contact their local office to make arrangements for an appointment, or to conduct business by alternate means, such as over the phone, electronically, or by mail.
- Nicole Strand, Soil Conservationist in Lincoln, has left the staff to become the Resource Conservationist in the Osceola Field Office. Nicole's last day was August 19<sup>th</sup>. We wish her the best of luck in her new position!
- Trevor Hinn has been hired as the Soil Conservationist in the Lincoln Field Office. He is from Chadron, NE and earned his BS and MS in Agricultural Engineering from the University of NE-Lincoln. He resided in St. Paul, MN for the past year and is happy to be back in NE. Welcome Trevor!

**NRD LAND TREATMENT:**

- The Conservation/Resources Technicians are currently working with contractors and landowners to finish all LPSNRD summer conservation projects.
- We continue to take applications for the LPSNRD Land Treatment Program. There are still sufficient funds in the budget to approve additional applications. We're hopeful to see more applications as we go into fall.
- We are currently taking LPSNRD Cover Crop Program applications. There is more interest due to the expanded eligibility area (+298,000 acres) which includes the entire Salt Creek Watershed upstream of Lincoln.

**USDA PROGRAMS:**

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program - Staff is finishing obligating 2021 funds. The LPSNRD has the following number of contracts:
  - Lancaster County – 12 contracts - \$231,438 – 587.0 acres
  - Cass County – 7 contracts - \$215,714 – 874.2 acres
- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) – All General CRP offers have been submitted for ranking by FSA. The LPSNRD had the following number of applications:
  - Lancaster County – 50 applications
  - Cass County – 12 applications

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

**Labor Day – July 4<sup>th</sup>**

***Cory Schmidt - District Conservationist***

### Connecting Land and Water for Healthy Communities

*Virtual conference presented by AWRA (American Water Resources Association), July 19-21, 2021*

--Tracy Zayac, Stormwater/Watershed Specialist

I attended the above-named conference on July 19-21, 2021, to learn more about integrating land and water planning more effectively for building resilient communities. Following is a short summary of interesting points from some of the breakout sessions, organized by session.

#### Sunday, July 18, 2021- workshop on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

This workshop included both a discussion of the history of exclusion and how to begin DEI work on a personal and an organizational level. AWRA is committing to this work.

#### Monday, July 19, 2021

##### Urban Stream Management breakout

- Most resilient model for urban streams is to create/protect high-functioning, low-maintenance streams
  - This is more of a process, rather than an end product, since stream systems are dynamic
  - High-functioning = serve multiple purposes, can handle flow extremes, maintains relatively natural flow regime outside of extremes, incorporates natural features
  - Low-maintenance = NOT no maintenance; requires regular but relatively simple maintenance over the life of the project (e.g., trimming or replanting vegetation)
- In developing such projects, important to have contributions (including and especially financial) from the development community
- Assessment phase looks at stream elements and their function—then sets goals for each function
- Community values should be an essential component, not an add-on or afterthought
- Most successful projects integrate flood protection with stream processes and social/community uses

##### Ensuring One Water Delivers for Healthy Communities breakout

- Defining “healthy waterway” is challenging
  - “healthy” means different things to different people; no standard definition
  - Depends on local circumstances, but also what’s going on upstream and downstream
  - Many aren’t sure how to incorporate such considerations into planning processes
- Stakeholder engagement should include people from outside your immediate community

#### Tuesday, July 20, 2021

##### Climate/Water/Land Use Interface breakout

- Resilience includes rethinking where and how people live, utility and transportation grids and how centralized/decentralized it makes sense to be
  - Weigh factors of grid resilience, cost, availability of backups
- Scientific, policy, and planning communities struggle with the shortness of public memory

- Once “back to normal,” people forget the need to mitigate/prepare/change
- Insurance market will drive policy-making—question is in what way
- Governance suggestions
  - Fed. government could set up incentives for states to act (at all) and insurers to act differently
  - Need for more standards on land use and water supply
  - Fed. government has a financial interest in how states manage
  - Fed., state, local levels can work on harmonizing regulatory frameworks to make it easier to do things differently than before, check more boxes

#### Institutional Culture and Adaptation breakout

- USACE is promoting the Engineering with Nature (EWN) model for its projects
  - Includes consideration of social and environmental benefits
  - More focus on green infrastructure and collaboration
  - Working with several other agencies to publish international guidelines for EWN

#### Attitudes and Practices in Land Use Planning breakout

- Survey studies assessed level of coordination between planning and water departments
- Major obstacles to coordination between utilities and planning departments
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Staff/departments in silos</li> <li>○ Lack of budget and staff</li> <li>○ Lack of education on need to coordinate, issues that should drive the conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regulations</li> <li>○ Lack of tools</li> <li>○ Concern over losing individual department’s power and status</li> </ul>
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- Planners want more knowledge and best practices examples

#### Wednesday, July 21, 2021

#### Climate Change Adaptation and Water Supply Planning breakout

- We will start making real progress in adaptation/planning when we stop talking about being in an emergency or crisis
- Instead, view the situation as “whitewater change”
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continuous</li> <li>○ Chaotic</li> <li>○ Pattern-based, not random</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Focus on response preparedness</li> </ul>
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- Stakeholder participation is important, but “participation” has never been adequately defined in the literature or in guidance documents
  - Defining what participation looks like both increases the likelihood of high-quality participation experiences and provides a benchmark against which to measure your process
- Adaptation planning efforts can take useful lessons from change management models that corporations have been using for years