




## LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

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### Memo

**Date:** November 23, 2018  
**To:** Directors  
**From:** David Potter, Assistant General Manager   
**RE:** Report #3 - Water Leaders Academy

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My last report on the 2018 Water Leaders Academy was in August. Since then, we've had our last two sessions. As stated before, the Academy is a six-session year-long interactive workshop held on a Thursday and part of Friday at different locations in the state. There were 19 participants in our Class VIII. We had representatives from NDEQ, Public Power and Irrigation District, two other NRDs, Department of Natural Resources, consulting firms, Department of Health and Human Services, law firms, Nebraska Farm Bureau, National Audubon Society, and US Fish & Wildlife Service to name a few. The Academy brings together individuals with different backgrounds and experiences for the common interest of learning about our water. Below is a recap of those last two sessions held in Valentine and Nebraska City.

Session #5 – Valentine (September 13-14) Thursday morning started out with presentations at Middle Niobrara NRD. John Heaston gave the first presentation which was “the intersection of science and policy.” Next was a group panel discussion on the “Niobrara River Valley, the past, the present, the future.” The panel participants (see photo below) were Mike Murphy with Middle Niobrara NRD, Terry Julesgard with Lower Niobrara NRD, Jesse Bradley with NeDNR, and Steve Thede with United States Park Service. They talked about the issues surrounding the Niobrara River and the designation of a National Scenic River. During lunch our project teams worked on our group projects. The presentation following lunch was on the Niobrara River Valley Geology by Matt Joeckel with the University of Nebraska CSD (see photo below, second from left). This was very interesting and provided excellent background for our canoe trip on the Niobrara River that afternoon.

The group departed around 1:00 for our canoe trip on the Niobrara. Matt Joeckel accompanied us on the trip and discussed the geologic formations, including the waterfalls. See photos below of the canoe trip, including staircase falls. What a great day to be on the river and what a great way to learn about the geology of the Niobrara River Valley. The weather was excellent and we basically had the river all to ourselves. The evening ended with a group dinner at the Peppermill Restaurant.



Friday began with a presentation from Laura Johnson with NDEQ and Phil Steinkamp, project coordinator for Bazile Groundwater Management Plan on the plan and process in developing the plan. This was a great overview of the Bazile plan. A lot can be learned from the approach taken in the project. Sam Radford, NDEQ Wellhead Protection Coordinator, then discussed Wellhead Protection in Nebraska. Water quality for community water supplies is very important and wellhead protection is a way of regulating the uses in the designated areas. NDEQ will prepare maps based on modeling, but it's up to the local jurisdiction to enforce the rules and regulations within their wellhead protection area. After break we heard from Scott Smathers with Nebraska Natural Resources Commission on water project funding. Then Mark Burbach provided a session review and closing remarks.

Session #6 – Nebraska City (November 15-16) This session had a theme of public involvement or serving on a board/commission. Mark Burbach started Thursday's session off with a review of our post leadership skills assessment. We were all asked to complete a skills assessment prior to our first session in January. We were also asked to get three to four other people to complete the assessment as a "rater" on how they saw us as a leader. Prior to this last session we were asked to do the same type of thing to see how we and our "raters" saw us as water leaders after going through the year-long course. Improvements could be found in many categories and were a direct result of the education and experience of the Water Leaders Academy.

The first presentation was by Steve Masters with Nebraska Water Balance Alliance on the future of agriculture production. The need for water in the future of agriculture is crucial, as we all know. What has been done, what's needed, and what can be done are all questions we need to continue to ask and discuss. A group discussion followed on the topic of needed or observed changes in Nebraska's Agriculture.

The second presentation of the day consisted of a panel discussion entitled "Getting Involved and Experience Serving on Public Boards." The panel was made up of Karen Amen with LPSNRD Board of Directors, Glenn Johnson who served as LPSNRD General Manager and Assistant Manager for over 40 years, and Kim Robak with Mueller Robak LLC who served as Nebraska's Lieutenant Governor. Being involved can make a difference. Serving on a board or committee, whether elected or voluntary, is a way of getting involved.

The next presentation was by Gerald Mestl with the Nebraska Game and Parks. He gave a historical overview of the Missouri River, its engineered changes, and what is now being done. The effects of channelization on the Missouri River over the years is unbelievable. Much can be learned from it.

Nick Brozovic, Director of Policy at Water for Food then gave a presentation on water economics. He used his recent travels to Africa to explain the importance and cost of water in the world. Up next was Susan Burton

with UNL Agriculture, Leadership, Education and Communication who presented on the topic of “Tapping your Motivation to Serve Every Sustaining and Compelling Drop.” This was about understanding what makes you “tick” and how to use that in being a leader. Understanding yourself and what motivates you, can help you understand others and strengthen your team, group, Board, or committee.

The last presentation of the day was by Lee Orton who presented on the topic of water resources and Nebraska’s investment yesterday, today and tomorrow. He also provided a refresher of the Academy sessions. Lee’s background and experience allows for some great conversation. He has a great knowledge of water law and history. He talked about the role of the NRDs in water and the need for a statewide water management master plan. A lot of work has been done in Nebraska. We are miles ahead of other states. More can be done. More should be done. It’s up to us as Water Leaders to make a difference.

The individual project teams then met to discuss their group projects and make final preparations. The evening ended with a group dinner in the Lied Lodge and Conference Center restaurant.

Friday began with our group presentations. Each of the four groups had about 15 minutes to present their projects. Our team designed an infographic of some water facts and posted it on the Water Leaders Academy Facebook page. The goal was to disseminate the information and analyze social media reaction for, but not limited to, the following: 1) which fact or facts are most surprising/interesting, 2) what water means to you personally or to your organization, 3) the importance of water availability, 4) what can be done to better manage our water, and 5) acknowledgement of Nebraska Water Leaders Academy.

We shared this graphic on the Water Leaders Academy Facebook page on November 12<sup>th</sup> and encouraged a specified group of “fellow water stakeholders” by email to share the post on their Facebook account, along with a note about why water is important to their organization or to them personally. The idea was to track the reach of the post as well as reactions in general, in an effort to help the Academy target audiences (consumers and potential participants) down the road. The other purpose was to promote the Academy. That Facebook page link is: [https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=1942687672479546&id=377219399026389](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1942687672479546&id=377219399026389)

As of the morning of November 19<sup>th</sup>, the post had reached 7,324 people, had 177 likes or other reactions, generated 13 comments plus a few on other posts, been shared 64 times, and led to 240 clicks to other content on the page. We think the project was a success and generated some awareness and conversation. Hopefully it also drummed up some new interest in the Academy. Prior to this post, the most people ever reached on a single post by Water Leaders Academy was around 550!

Our team consisted of myself, Andrew Pierson with the National Audubon Society, Ansley Mick with Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, Dan Egeland with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Water Well Standards Program, and Ross Montgomery with Bostwick Irrigation District. Other group projects involved research of industrial consumption of water in Nebraska, an ArcGIS story book of water use, and an interactive water resource map of Nebraska.

After the group project presentations, John Chapo with the Lincoln Children’s Zoo led a lively discussion on community involvement and leadership opportunities. His presentation and discussion centered on the zoo but could be applied to any organization. It’s important that when talking about your group to others that you know your mission and three to four things you do well. It’s not only important that your staff can identify these, but also your Board.

The class then broke down into four groups to discuss what each of us can do in terms of serving on boards or provide water leadership. Each participant presented to the class. Following the presentations, we conducted our graduation ceremony in which photos were taken and plaques were given to each class member.

Photos below (from left to right) include the panel on elected board participation, Nick Brozovic with Water for Food, and our group presentation of our final project.



I want to thank the Board of Directors for allowing me to attend the 2018 Nebraska Water Leaders Academy. It was a great experience and well worth the time. I learned a lot about our water issues and resources across the state and what is being done to protect, conserve and manage our water. I also strengthened my leadership skills and resources network by meeting 18 other individuals sharing a similar interest. I would definitely encourage others to attend the Academy.

#### 2018 GRADUATES OF THE NEBRASKA WATER LEADERS ACADEMY



#### CLASS VIII NEBRASKA WATER LEADERS ACADEMY – NOVEMBER 16, 2018

**Front row:** Matt Greenway, Lincoln; Marie Krausnick, York; Carla McCullough, Lincoln; Kate Gibson, Lincoln; Brooke Stansberry, Wood River; Dan Egeland, Grand Island; Matthew Person, Omaha; Ansley Mick, Lincoln; David Potter, Lincoln.

**Back row:** Jeremy Gehle, Lincoln; Adam Hoelsing, Scottsbluff; Patrick Farrell, Kearney; Andrew Pierson, Gibbon; Amos Lange, Ord; Lance Philben, Ainsworth; Jeff Henson, Lincoln; Travis Preston, Scottsbluff; Ross Montgomery, Red Cloud; Steve Osterbuhr, Holdrege.

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
REPORT TO THE  
LOWER PLATTE SOUTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT  
December 12, 2018**

**PERSONNEL:**

- Monica Ullman has joined the Lincoln NRCS staff as a contract employee. Monica has served as a contract employee in the Beatrice NRCS office and will assist with conservation practice design, layout, and installation. Monica began her duties in Lincoln on December 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**LAND TREATMENT:**

- Due to weather most construction is at a standstill and more than likely complete for this fall. Staff is currently working on finalizing payment documentation for projects that are finished.
- LPSNRD Cover Crop Program Update – We received 3 applications and none of the applicants were able to plant the cover crops by the November 1<sup>st</sup> planting deadline due to weather/late harvest.

**PROGRAMS:**

- EQIP – Staff is working on ranking and completing cost estimates for applications received prior to the November 16<sup>th</sup> signup deadline.
  - Cass County – 20 applications
  - Lancaster – 16 applications
- CSP – Staff is working with producers to completed 2018 annual payments. Renewal contracts for 2019 will continue to be on hold until a new Farm Bill is passed.
- CRP – FSA is not currently taking applications for CRP. It's expected they will begin to take applications when a new Farm Bill is passed.

**UPCOMING EVENTS:**

- December 25<sup>th</sup> – Merry Christmas!
- January 1<sup>st</sup> – Happy New Year!
- January 29<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> – NRD Legislative Conference

***Cory Schmidt - District Conservationist***