



LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

Know Your NRD

to conserve, develop and manage water and land resources in a six county area of southeastern Nebraska

SPRING 2018



The dry and warm fall of 2017 extended the NRD's construction season (see page 6).

Pictured: The Middle Creek Tie-Back Levee, along Folsom Street, south of Rosa Parks Way, reduces the flood risk to the neighborhood. A temporary levee along Folsom Street was recently removed. The new levee is functional and will be seeded in the spring.



2018 CHALLENGES

by NRD Board Chair Ray Stevens

Your NRD has adopted a vigorous plan for this year and is off to a fast start. The Salt Creek Levee will receive maintenance and bank stabilization to protect areas of Lincoln from flooding and we are improving high hazard dams. We are cost sharing with agriculture producers to incorporate best management practices to substantially reduce soil erosion. A new project for this year will update aging infrastructure along Dead Man's Run through UNL East Campus. This project will involve the city of Lincoln, UNL, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the NRD.

Another important project is the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor from Pioneers Park to Audubon Spring Creek Prairie, a distance of eight miles. The major players of this project are the city of Lincoln, Spring Creek Prairie and the NRD but there are approximately 20 other partners who have signed on to support this effort.

The staff of the NRD leads all these efforts and the Board of Directors greatly appreciates their professionalism and dedication.

Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future

NORTH AMERICAN ENVIROTHON COMING TO LINCOLN

Nebraska's NRDs are preparing to host 270 top high school students from nearly every state and from as-far-away-as China during the 2020 North American Envirothon, in Lincoln. The six-day event will



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ORDER SEEDLINGS NOW

Trees offer people and the environment a long list of benefits such as wildlife habitat and cleaner air. Many species provide shade during summer months, then allow sunlight to come through in the winter. Trees look nice,



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GRANT TO FUND MORE MAPPING

Six eastern Nebraska NRDs, including Lower Platte South, will benefit from additional aerial geological mapping this year, thanks to a grant from the Nebraska Water Sustainability Fund, through the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. The mapping, which has



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GRANT TO FUND MORE MAPPING

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used electromagnetic equipment to scan geological features far below the surface since 2007, has proven useful in locating possible aquifers among eastern Nebraska's complex geology. It is also helping NRDs manage ground water resources. Katie Cameron, coordinator of the Eastern Nebraska Water Resources Assessment (ENWRA), which supervises the scans said, "We expect to fly about 4,500 total linear miles over designated parts of each (ENWRA partner) NRD this summer."

The scans generate a large amount of data that needs to be compiled and analyzed. Cameron expects total completion of the project late in 2019. The Water Sustainability Fund grant will cover \$2 million of the \$3.3 million cost, with the remainder coming from the six NRDs. The Lower Platte South NRD's portion will be \$304,000.



Sensing equipment suspended from a helicopter can detect variations in geological materials and locate possible aquifers several hundred feet below the surface.

WATER LEADER



NRD Stormwater/Floodplain Specialist Kyle Hauschild spent a year learning more about Nebraska's rivers, streams, aquifers and the issues associated with them. He, then, graduated from the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy last fall. Hauschild's training took him to locations throughout the state to learn from experts in both leadership skills and water resources. Hauschild, whose responsibilities include assisting with the management of stormwater,

floodplains and erosion and sediment control, said, "The academy training helped me realize how important it is to not only understand the state's water resources, but to also communicate that importance to others." The Water Leader's Academy is a project of Water Futures Partnership-Nebraska and is funded, in part, by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

CAN'T WAIT FOR OUR NEWSLETTER?

Our printed newsletter is inserted into district newspapers each February, June and October, but you can get it earlier by subscribing to our FREE electronic version. We'll send you a link via email. The electronic version includes the same content as the printed, plus it has great web links to help you learn more about how the NRD protects lives, property and the future. Just visit our newsletter subscription page, at LPSNRD.org, under Publications, to sign up. The NRD will not share your email address.

NORTH AMERICAN ENVIROTHON COMING TO LINCOLN

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test students' knowledge in four general areas; aquatic ecology, soils and land use, forestry and wildlife. They'll also be judged on oral presentations about a local environmental topic kept secret until they arrive. Competitors and their sponsors will be housed on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus during the event.



Envirothon teams from around the world competed at the 2017 North American Envirothon, held in Maryland. The competition will come to Lincoln in 2020.

The teams of five students will have already competed successfully in their home state or area. Nebraska's NRDs have held regional and state Envirothon competitions for many years and Dean Edson, executive director of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts said, "The NRDs are anxious to bring these top students to Nebraska, where they can learn about the importance of good resource management and why our unique NRD system is working." NRDs throughout Nebraska have pledged funds over the next three years to help cover the estimated \$350,000 event budget. A committee of NRD staff and directors from around the state will begin seeking private sponsorships this spring. Any person or group interested in sponsoring can contact Edson at 402-471-7670.

BOARD ELECTS OFFICERS

Each January, the NRD Board of Directors elects officers. The 2018 slate is unchanged, with one exception: Bruce Johnson was elected as the board's alternate representative to the Board of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD). 2018 officers are:

- Chair - Ray Stevens
- Vice-Chair - Larry Ruth
- Treasurer - Jeremie Kerkman
- Secretary - Deborah Eagan
- NARD Representative - Milt Schmidt
- NARD Alternate - Bruce Johnson



STAY CONNECTED

by Environmental Education Intern
Emily Hergenrader

Want to know more about the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District? Join our over 2,100 followers on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. Our profiles allow you to connect with us directly, stay informed about what we do, and can even help you stay safe through announcements during emergency events! We feature updates on trail closings, tree seedling orders, NRD projects and programs. Feature posts include historical photos on Flashback Fridays, critter pictures on Wildlife Wednesdays, and an opportunity for you to star on Fan Photo Fridays. We host fun and interactive contests, too, so find us today and help us "Love it Back!"

Editor's Note: Emily Hergenrader, of Lincoln, is a UNL Senior, majoring in Environmental Studies.



ORDER SEEDLINGS NOW

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increase property value and they help to block the wind. It's no wonder trees are always a popular commodity. Annually, the Lower Platte South sells an average of 30,000 bare-root seedling trees and shrubs to district landowners through its Conservation Forestry program. We pool our orders with Nebraska's 22 other NRDs to keep costs low and, combined, the NRDs sell nearly 1-million trees and shrubs across the state each year.

In the Lower Platte South, each of about 30 species is sold in increments of 25 plants. The per-plant cost is \$0.85 if ordering 75 plants or less and \$0.80 if ordering 100 or more. Pre-packaged assortments of 50 trees are also available; The Small Acreage Package, Wildlife Package and Flowering Package each include five different, specially-selected species of ten trees each (50 trees per package).

Seedlings sold by the NRD are bare-root and come in bundles of 25 plants, like the deciduous seedling bundle shown.

Tree orders are delivered in early April to the NRD office, in Lincoln. The NRD will notify landowners when they can pick up their orders from our custom tree cooler. Planting early gives your trees and shrubs the best chance of survival. Most of the seedlings are between 24 and 36 inches in length, including the roots, and 100 seedlings usually fit into one easy-to-handle box small enough for any car trunk. Search "lower platte south nrd" on YouTube and look for our "Planting a Seedling Tree" video.

Orders are being taken online, at LPSNRD.org, where you can also print an order form to mail us, or you can visit the NRD office, at 3125 Portia Street, in Lincoln. Some species always sell out, so order soon. Information about most of the seedling species we offer is available at nrdtrees.org.



PRIMARY ELECTION DEADLINE IS MARCH 1

Voters will elect twelve Lower Platte South NRD (NRD) Board members this year. Non-incumbents have until March 1st to file with the Nebraska Secretary of State's office for candidacy in the May 15th Primary Election. Only races that have more than two candidates will appear on primary ballots. The primary will determine the two candidates that advance to the General Election on November 6th.

The 21 board members serve four-year terms. The At-Large seat and one seat in each of ten NRD subdistricts is up for election,

except in Subdistrict 8, where there will also be a two-year term on the ballot due to a board resignation. An easy-to-use online map is available, where users 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.

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. The NRD Board sets policy, direction and funding for soil and water conservation programs, flood control projects, ground water management, forestry programs, environmental education, recreational trails, wetlands and wildlife management areas.



LEVEE IMPROVEMENTS

Lincoln's Salt Creek Levee was tested like never before by heavy rains in the spring of 2015, and the 13 miles of protection for neighborhoods and businesses held-up well. Even so, the levee is 50 years old and needs updating to assure continued protection. The NRD, which now owns, operates and maintains the levee, has implemented a System Wide Improvement Framework (SWIF) plan administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to update the levee's infrastructure and revise procedural plans to make sure agencies are well-prepared to respond to emergencies.



A public open house on November 16th outlined progress through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's SWIF process in updating the Salt Creek Levee.

The NRD has appropriated \$500,000 annually to SWIF for the next 15 years. Most of that funding is being used to improve the levee. NRD General Manager Paul Zillig said, "SWIF will not affect the amount of flood protection, FEMA floodplain maps or requirements for flood insurance, but it will provide a long-term maintenance and improvement plan, so Lincoln can rely on the levee to reduce the risk of flooding for another 50 years." Zillig said it is important to remember there is still risk if you live in areas protected by the levee. He said, "It can still flood."

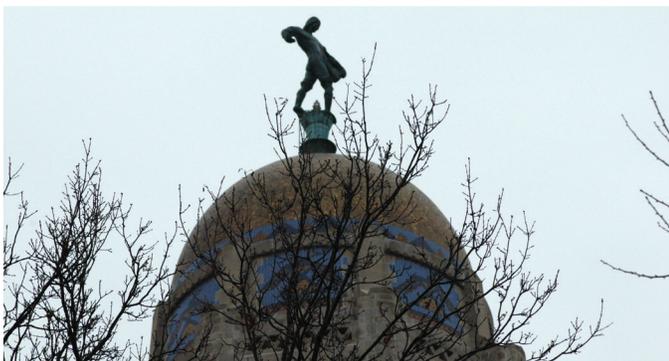
Our SWIF participation keeps the NRD eligible for federal funding of Salt Creek Levee projects in the future. Since it was completed by the Corps in 1967 at a cost of \$1 million, the levee has prevented more than \$90 million in flood damage.

AUDIO RESOURCE

In November, the NRD began posting links to audio recordings of its monthly Board of Directors meetings. If you're interested in an agenda item, but cannot attend the meeting, give our Recorded Meetings webpage a try. Users can also access meeting agendas to help them navigate through the recordings.

SEE YOU AT THE LAWN & LEISURE SHOW

LPSNRD Board members will staff the NRD's booth at the 2018 Husker Lawn & Leisure Show, March 16-18 at the Lancaster Event Center. It's a great time to chat with board members and let them know your thoughts about the management of our natural resources.



LEGISLATIVE WATCH

The NRD always tracks Legislative bills that could affect how we preserve and protect natural resources. Action on a State Budget is being watched closely during the 2018 Legislative Session. About two dozen bills on other topics also have our attention, including LB 98 and LB 758, which encourage local control to solve local problems. Nebraska's NRDs remain willing to work with the governor and the Legislature toward a balanced budget and will accept our fair share of funding reductions for natural resources programs.



This newly-repaired weir on Oak Creek, near First Street, in Lincoln, decreases the slope of the waterway to help avoid erosion.

GOOD FALL FOR PROJECTS

The warm and dry fall of 2017 allowed good progress and even completion of several NRD construction projects. A new dry dam upstream of Waverly, on Ash Hollow Creek will remove nearly 90 Waverly homes and businesses from the floodplain. The NRD and the City of Waverly shared the \$2.9 million cost equally. The NRD Board, Waverly officials, landowners and other general public gathered at the site in October to tour the completed dam. Here's some other notable construction activity that occurred before the ground finally froze just before Christmas:

Middle Creek Tie Back Levee

This re-built structure (see photo on page 1) protects properties along Folsom Street, in Lincoln, just south of Rosa Parks Way. Good weather allowed the \$450,000 project to be completely graded before winter shut-down. A temporary levee has been removed from the site. The contractor will return to clean-up and seed the project in the spring.

Salt Creek Levee Trail

The district's newest trail opened December 1st and takes users from near the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Soccer and Tennis Complex on 14th Street, to approximately 24th Street and Cornhusker Highway. Since it is on top of the Salt Creek Levee, the NRD built the trail, but it will be maintained by the City of Lincoln as part of its trail system. Federal Recreational Trails Program funds through the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission covered 80% of the \$318,000 cost.

Beal Slough Drainage

Improvements made along Beal Slough, near 14th and Pioneers, will improve drainage at the intersection. The \$173,000 project was a 50/50 cost share with the City of Lincoln.

Oak Creek Weir

An 80-year-old weir on Oak Creek, just downstream/east of First Street, in Lincoln, needed repairs and good weather allowed completion of the project in November (pictured above). The weir is 4-feet high and helps slow the stream flow to reduce erosion. The repair costs totaled \$92,000.

NRD PROJECT UPDATE

56th & Morton Streets Drainage Improvement: widen a drainage channel for better stormwater conveyance. Construction bids were opened January 31st. City of Lincoln and NRD are partners, with FEMA providing 75% of cost. Tree work being completed on site now, to comply with federal Migratory Bird Act.

Salt Creek Levee Repairs: Engineer to be selected in February to design repairs of several sections of the Salt Creek Levee, between 27th and Superior streets, Lincoln. Repairs will be part of NRD's multi-year SWIF program with Corps of Engineers.

Deadmans Run (DMR) Section 205 Study: Multi-year study of ways to reduce risk of flooding in Lincoln's DMR Watershed nearly completed. Final Public Meeting being planned for early-to-mid-March. Watch LPSNRD.org for details. Possible start of project design this fall to improve the main channel from Cornhusker to 48th Street, with bridge replacements at 33rd, 38th and 48th streets..

Oak Creek Trail Drainage Improvements: Three drainage pipe replacements completed in the Loma and Brainard areas last fall. No current projects.