



# LOWER PLATTE SOUTH natural resources district

Know Your NRD • Winter 2024

**PROTECTING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

3125 Portia St, Lincoln, NE



402-476-2729



# FALL 2024 SNAPSHOT: YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

## **High School Biology Field Trips:**

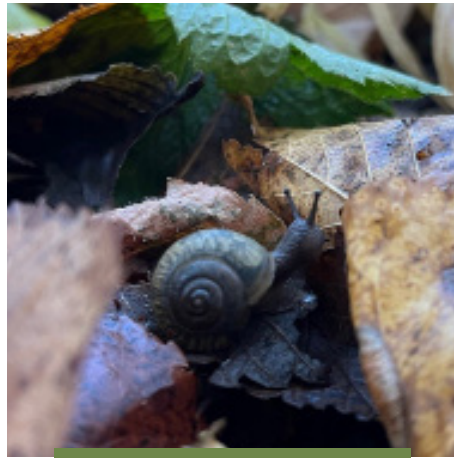
- Approximately 25 flooded “knee-high” boots
- 1 cell phone dropped in the pond
- 4 species of frogs observed
- 4 species of fish observed
- 3 snake species observed
- Other biodiversity observed; dragonfly / damselfly nymphs, scuds, back-swimmers, water boatman, water scorpions, diving water beetles, leeches, crayfish, giant water bugs, tadpoles, snails, bloodworms
- 1,235 positive experiences in nature

## **Family Nature Nights:**

- 5 Elementary Schools
- 15 Agency Partners
- 819 students and their families learning about nature together

## **Classroom Presentations:**

In addition to High School Biology Field Trips and Nature Nights, NRD Environmental Educators also took time to visit classrooms for additional NRD presentations (Environmental Education and Natural Resources Career Connections, NE Mammals, Ground Water, and NRDs 101).



## **Second Grade Habitat Field Trips:**

A new partnership has been formed between the Lincoln Children's Zoo, Lincoln Public Schools, and Lower Platte South NRD to offer enriching outdoor learning experiences for all second grade students throughout the District. Through the 2nd Grade Habitat Field Trips, over 3,000 students will explore animal habitats, learn about Nebraska's native species, and build meaningful connections with wildlife. This collaboration, which includes shared funding from LPSNRD to cover admission costs, provides students with opportunities to engage with nature in ways they might not otherwise experience.

These fall initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to foster environmental stewardship and curiosity among young learners, creating lasting connections to the natural world.

## ANNUAL NRD CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS CONSERVATION EFFORTS AND INNOVATION

Conservation leaders and experts gathered in Kearney for the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Annual Conference, held Sept. 23-24, 2024. The event unites NRD employees, directors, and policymakers to discuss advances in conservation and technology.

The conference began with the Ron Bishop Memorial Golf Tournament on Sunday, Sept. 22, raising funds for the NARD Foundation. Sessions kicked off Monday morning with updates from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, and Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

Key topics included groundwater management, water quality, forestry, and innovative technologies shaping the future of conservation. The event also recognized outstanding contributions with awards such as the 2024 Tree Planter of the Year (Michael Nissen Family, Oakdale) and the 2024 Grassland Conservation Award (Northeast Nebraska Prescribed Burn Association, Hartington).

Monday's schedule featured a silent auction benefiting natural resources education, a banquet, and the induction of three honorees into the NRD Hall of Fame: Larry Moore, Stanley Staab (posthumously), and former State Senator Dan Hughes.

Hosted by NARD with local and national sponsorships, the conference saw approximately 400 attendees, underscoring Nebraska's commitment to conservation and sustainable resource management.

## BRYCE JENSEN TAKES OVER AS LAND & FLOOD CONTROL OPERATIONS COORDINATOR

Bryce Jensen has been named Land & Flood Control Operations Coordinator for LPSNRD, following nearly a decade of dedicated service. He started with LPSNRD in 2011, working part-time on the Saline Wetlands before transitioning to full-time in 2014. Over the years, Bryce has gained valuable experience in operations and maintenance, leading to his current leadership role.

Excited about the opportunity, Bryce aims to expand his involvement in district projects and address challenges through collaboration. "I'll rely on our staff's expertise and partner agencies to navigate unfamiliar challenges," he said, emphasizing teamwork and efficiency.

In the short term, Bryce plans to ensure a smooth transition and familiarize himself with ongoing projects, while maintaining the maintenance department's efficiency and seeking improvements.

With hands-on experience and strategic problem-solving skills, Bryce is well-prepared for his new role. Outside of work, he enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife and three sons in Seward, a fondness that ties into his commitment to conservation and his work.



## WELCOME TO LPSNRD CARLA GRAHAM

We are delighted to welcome Carla as the newest member of the LPSNRD team!

Carla is stepping into the role of Field Office Secretary for the NRCS District office in Weeping Water, NE, and we are confident her skills and enthusiasm will make her a great asset to our organization.



## SHOOTS & ROOTS EVENT RECAP

LPSNRD hosted a Shoots & Roots event on September 26th at James Arthur Vineyards, focusing on beginner tree care. Attendees enjoyed an informative session led by LPSNRD Conservation Forester Aaron Clare, who provided a live demonstration on proper tree planting techniques. Each participant received a free tree seedling to take home, empowering them to apply their newfound knowledge. The event combined education with community engagement, fostering a deeper appreciation for trees and their role in environmental sustainability.



## UPCOMING LPSNRD EVENTS

February - Water Quality Trivia Night  
Early spring - Wetlands and Wildlife  
May - Prairie Corridor Tour  
June - Pollinator Parade

# PLANTING THE SEEDS OF CONSERVATION:

## *LPSNRD's Tree Program Offers Big Benefits for Landowners and the Environment*

Each year, the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD) provides Nebraska landowners with a unique opportunity to create a greener, healthier future—one seedling at a time. The Conservation Tree Program, now accepting orders for spring planting, makes it easy and affordable for landowners to enhance their properties while positively impacting the environment.

Since 1972, Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts have worked alongside landowners to plant over 101 million trees across the state. At just \$1 per seedling, the program allows participants to purchase bare-root trees and shrubs that bring a host of benefits to people, wildlife, and ecosystems alike. These trees don't just look good—they work hard. Conservation trees help reduce soil erosion, shield crops and livestock from harsh winds, provide shade, support wildlife habitats, buffer noise, and sequester carbon.

"Bare-root seedlings are a cost-effective way to plant dozens or even hundreds of trees and shrubs," says Aaron Clare, LPSNRD Conservation Forester. "They can serve as windbreaks, privacy screens, wildlife habitats, or simply enhance your property's beauty. Beyond that, trees provide cooling shade, edible fruits and nuts, and wood for crafts—all while playing a critical role in carbon sequestration."

For landowners with aging or sparse windbreaks, the program offers

an ideal solution. Clare encourages landowners to consider renovating older windbreaks or starting new plantings. Seedlings are perfect for replenishing existing shelterbelts or creating entirely new ones. Over time, these plantings mature into effective shields against Nebraska's winds, safeguarding crops, livestock, and even homes.

The Conservation Tree Program also provides significant environmental benefits. By promoting tree planting, LPSNRD contributes to healthier soil, cleaner air, and expanded wildlife habitats. Each tree acts as a small but

participants can select trees tailored to their property's specific needs and conditions. Early orders ensure the best selection, so landowners are encouraged to act quickly.

In addition to selling seedlings, LPSNRD offers a variety of cost-share programs to support tree planting efforts. The Community Forestry Program and Tree Landscape Program provide financial incentives and guidance, making it even easier for landowners and communities to invest in conservation.

For more information about the program, available species, or cost-share opportunities, landowners can contact Aaron Clare, Conservation Forester, at 402-432-6552 or visit [www.lpsnrd.org/programs/tree-programs](http://www.lpsnrd.org/programs/tree-programs).

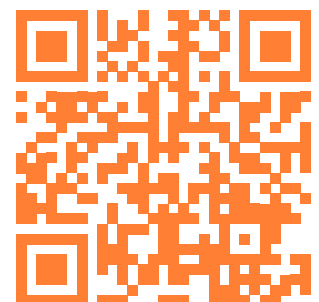
Whether you're revitalizing an old windbreak or creating a new habitat for wildlife, the LPSNRD Conservation Tree Program offers an affordable and impactful way to make a difference. A single seedling may be small, but its potential to transform landscapes—and lives—is enormous.

***"Bare-root seedlings are a cost-effective way to plant dozens or even hundreds of trees and shrubs; they can serve as windbreaks, privacy screens, wildlife habitats, or simply enhance your property's beauty."***

mighty force against the challenges of climate change and land degradation.

For those interested, the process is simple. Landowners can browse a selection of available seedlings and place their orders directly at [www.lpsnrd.org/order-trees](http://www.lpsnrd.org/order-trees). With a wide variety of species available,

SCAN  
TO SHOP





# RAY STEVENS RETIRES AFTER 12 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP ON LPSNRD BOARD

Ray Stevens, a County Commissioner Trail Feasibility Study. a long-serving director and was familiar with Ray hopes to see on the LPSNRD Board, the work of the NRD the District and City will retire from his and several of their of Lincoln continue position this January. personnel.” During his to collaborate on Ray was first elected tenure, Ray’s support for advancing sustainable in 2012, serving three NRD initiatives grew, practices and improving terms for a total of 12 as did the diversity of the community’s years. When asked projects the District e n v i r o n m e n t a l why he decided to run took on. Notably, under resilience for future for an NRD director his leadership, the NRD generations. When role, Ray shared, “I was made significant progress asked to share his encouraged to run by in flood mitigation while final thoughts, Ray Elaine Hammer, who enhancing recreational expressed his gratitude was seeking a strong o p p o r t u n i t i e s , to the LPSNRD staff advocate for trails. I particularly with the for their dedication, had previously served completion of the professionalism, and nine and a half years as MoPac East Connector guidance.

## LPSNRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

The LPSNRD is guided by a 21-member Board of Directors, elected locally for four-year staggered terms during even-numbered years. The Board typically meets monthly on the third Wednesday at the LPSNRD headquarters in Lincoln, NE.

This November, elections were held for ten director positions, resulting in three new members. We are pleased to welcome Suzanne Mealer (Subdistrict 5), Chuck Hassebrook (Subdistrict 7), and Stephanie Matejka (Subdistrict 10). We also extend our gratitude to outgoing directors Greg Osborn, Chelsea Johnson, and Ray Stevens for their dedicated service to the LPSNRD. The new board members will officially begin their terms on January 1, 2025.

### **Subdistrict 5**

- Suzanne Mealer\*
- John Yoakum

### **Subdistrict 7**

- Chuck Hassebrook\*
- Luke Peterson

### **Subdistrict 10**

- Susan Seacrest
- Stephanie Matejka\*

**\* = New Directors**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Here are your LPSNRD Board representatives. The Board meets regularly on the third Wednesday of each month at the NRD office in Lincoln.

### **SUBDISTRICT 1**

- Don Jacobson, W Lincoln
- Gary Hellerich, Valparaiso

### **SUBDISTRICT 2**

- Seth Hawkins, Plattsmouth
- Mark Spangler, Murray

### **SUBDISTRICT 3**

- Melissa Baker, NE Lincoln
- Ken Vogel, NE Lincoln

### **SUBDISTRICT 4**

- Gary Aldredge, SE Lincoln
- Larry Ruth, Walton

### **SUBDISTRICT 5**

- John Yoakum, W Lincoln
- Susan Mealer, W. Lincoln

### **SUBDISTRICT 6**

- Anthony Schutz, NW Lincoln
- Deborah Eagan, NW Lincoln

### **SUBDISTRICT 7**

- Chuck Hassebrook, N Lincoln
- Luke Peterson, NE Lincoln

### **SUBDISTRICT 8**

- Christine Lamberty, SE Lincoln
- Tom Green, SE Lincoln

### **SUBDISTRICT 9**

- Lisa Lewis, SE Lincoln
- Bob Andersen, SE Lincoln

### **SUBDISTRICT 10**

- Stephanie Matejka, Lincoln
- Susan Seacrest, S Lincoln

### **AT-LARGE**

- Dave Landis, Lincoln

# HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

The LPSNRD is nearing the completion of the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). This important planning effort is open to participation from all taxing authorities including counties, cities, villages, and school districts, as well as stakeholders such as health care facilities, chambers of commerce, utility providers, businesses, or non-profits. Your input is vital to creating strategies that reduce risks from natural disasters like flooding, wildfires, and severe storms.

The NRD encourages everyone who lives or works within Lancaster and Cass County or the surrounding areas to take the Hazard Mitigation Plan Survey. The survey is still open until December 31st and can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/4pn8n9ym>.

HMPs assess community vulnerabilities to hazards and identify projects and strategies to enhance resilience and preparedness. Having an approved HMP is also a FEMA requirement for jurisdictions seeking eligibility for hazard mitigation grants. These plans are updated every five years to remain effective and relevant.



## MOPAC STUDY UPDATE

The recommended route for the MoPac East Connector Trail Study was approved by the LPSNRD Board of Directors and Cass County following meetings of the Cass County Board of Commissioners on November 5th and the LPSNRD Board of

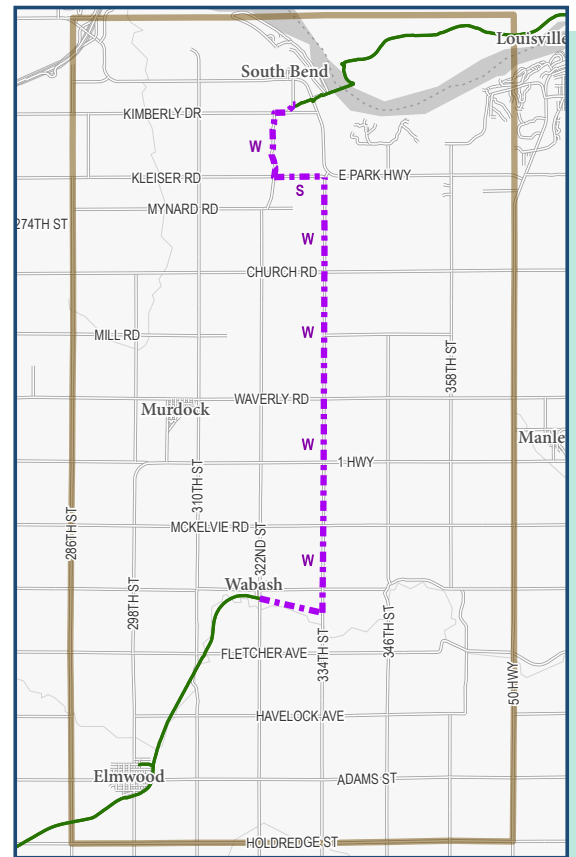
Directors on November 20th. This outcome follows the completion of a year-long study to evaluate various routes to connect the existing MoPac East Trail in the Elmwood/Wabash area with the Lied Platte River Bridge.

The decision approves Alignment D (334th St.) as the final route, primarily due to its utilization of existing public right-of-way and its strong safety profile. The route also crosses the least number of driveways, reducing the impact on residents.

The study, guided by public engagement, sought to discover the most feasible route to complete the connection. Through this targeted effort, the study team created a dedicated study website, held one-on-one small group meetings, sent out twenty newsletter updates to 670 stakeholders, held nine public meetings in the study area attended by 259 people, and received 375 comment forms.

"JEO Consulting Group and Toole Design did a tremendous job on this study and were a key reason we were able to get this passed," said Will Inselman, Resources Coordinator at LPSNRD. "We wanted to make sure this project was done differently this time around, and I believe we accomplished that with a transparent process, focused on public engagement throughout the evaluation study."

The next steps for the project will be to move into the engineering and design phase. The LPSNRD aims to have an engineering consultant hired by the beginning of 2025 to initiate this next leg of the project. It is anticipated that construction of the trail may begin in 2026 with the goal of having the trail open by 2028.



## MOPAC ALIGNMENT D

SCAN TO FOLLOW ALONG ►



# SALT CREEK FLOOD REDUCTION FEASIBILITY STUDY

The LPSNRD has a long history of partnering with the City of Lincoln in watershed master planning, water quality, streambank stabilization projects, updating floodplain and stormwater standards, and maintaining flood control. Recently, LPSNRD and the City completed the Salt Creek Floodplain Resiliency Study to identify ways to improve current flood management measures and reduce flooding impacts on infrastructure, businesses, homes, and future developments. The study revealed that actual flood risks and potential flood damage in Lincoln are greater than detailed in the current models, maps, and public information.

To address the increased flood risk, the City is updating floodplain maps for the Salt Creek watershed and its 13 sub-watersheds, covering 611 miles and 290 stream miles. This

updated information will help the LPSNRD and City improve floodplain management, better understand and communicate flood risks, and plan measures to reduce those risks.

The LPSNRD is focused on reducing flood risk within the Salt Creek corridor through sustainable strategies that maximize safety, minimize flood damage, and protect the public and our natural resources. The Salt Creek Flood Reduction Feasibility Study aims to identify and evaluate flood risk reduction measures and gather community feedback on these strategies.

Increasing civic engagement is a key goal for the LPSNRD, especially when it directly affects residents' lives. It is important that those who may be impacted have the opportunity to provide input on evaluating the flood mitigation strategies that are

best for their community. Further, community engagement is crucial as it provides for a two-way flow of information, allows for prioritization of mitigation strategies, and ensures that the process is transparent.

The LPSNRD and City of Lincoln will offer stakeholder engagement opportunities through various communication channels, including a project website, fact sheets, social media, newsletters, and community presentations. To support the development of the feasibility study, engagement will occur in three phases at key project milestones: Discovery, Alternative Analysis, and Preferred Alternative Selection. Each phase will focus on sharing information, gathering feedback, and identifying community concerns, values, and challenges. For the latest updates, visit [www.LPSNRD.org](http://www.LPSNRD.org).

LPSNRD provides a variety of cost-share programs for landowners & producers. Below is a list of some of these programs, with more cost-share opportunities to be highlighted in future newsletters. In addition, LPSNRD has community cost-share programs for forestry, trails, flood control, stream stabilization, etc. A complete list of cost-share programs, descriptions, requirements, and applications can be found at: <https://www.lpsnrd.org/programs/landowner-cost-share>.

## Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act (NiRIA)

The Lower Platte South NRD (LPSNRD) and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR) are launching a cost-share program to promote the reduction of nitrogen fertilizer use. Producers must verify a decrease in nitrogen application rates, limited to either 40 pounds per acre or 15% of their baseline rate. Eligible fields must be planted to corn in 2025. Applications are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until January 15, 2026. To qualify for payments by January 15, 2026, landowners must provide documentation of nitrogen sources, reduction methods, reported yields, and soil test results.

### Funding priority is given to:

- Priority A: Fields in designated Wellhead Protection Areas or Phase II/III areas (\$15/acre).
- Priority B: Certified irrigated acres outside designated areas (\$12/acre).
- Priority C: Dryland crop acres outside designated areas (\$10/acre).

### Application Requirements:

1. Complete the Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act Program Application.
2. Provide baseline nitrogen application documentation.
3. Submit soil test results; cost-share assistance is available.
4. Include U.S. Citizenship and W-9 forms.

### For payment, landowners must submit the following by January 15, 2026:

- Nitrogen sources used.
- Methods for reduction.
- Yield data.
- Advanced technology practices documentation (if applicable).
- Soil and manure sampling results (if applicable).

## TRAILS

- MoPac East Trail
- Homestead Trail
- Oak Creek Trail
- Lied Bridge - Platte River Connection

## WETLANDS

- Lincoln Saline Wetlands Nature Center
- Marsh Wren Saline Wetland
- Whitehead Saline Wetland

## WMAs

- Bobcat Prairie
- Cottontail
- Little Salt Fork Marsh Preserve
- Little Salt Springs
- Meadowlark
- Merganser
- Red Cedar
- Tanglewood
- Timber Point
- Wild Plum
- Wildwood

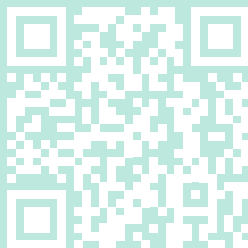
## EXPLORE YOUR NRD

With winter settling in, it's the perfect time to bundle up and discover the frosty wonders of the Lower Platte South NRD. The serene landscapes take on a new charm, inviting you to explore their beauty and tranquility in a whole new way.

Our recreational areas offer countless opportunities for winter adventures. Whether you're drawn to the peaceful stillness of snow-dusted trails, frozen wetlands, and shimmering lakes, or you're seeking the ideal backdrop for winter hiking, birdwatching, or simply a brisk walk in the fresh air, the

LPSNRD has something for everyone. Best of all, our recreation areas are open to the public—no park pass required! So, why not lace up your snow boots or grab your binoculars to experience the magic of winter in your own backyard?

The Lower Platte South NRD is dedicated to preserving the natural splendor of our district. We are continually working to maintain a sustainable environment through the conservation of land, water, and wildlife, ensuring that these beautiful outdoor spaces can be enjoyed by future generations.



SCAN TO SEE ALL OF THE  
LPSNRD RECREATION  
OPPORTUNITIES!

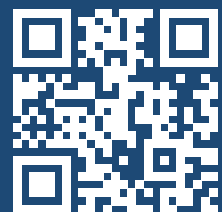
Or visit: [www.lpsnrd.org/recreation](http://www.lpsnrd.org/recreation)

## Get Digital

Know Your NRD is available in print from district newspapers and electronically by subscription through [LPSNRD.org](http://LPSNRD.org), where you can access district news and other information in a variety of languages. You can also keep up with us by subscribing to our regular email updates.

LPSNRD shall not discriminate because of race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, disability, familial status, veteran status or marital status, in any of its activities or operations.

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