



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

FALL 2018



Oak-Middle Watershed Dam 82-B - LPSNRD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will soon start making upgrades to this dam, near 210th Street and Agnew Road, in Seward County. Changes downstream, since the dam was constructed in 1963, have caused 82-B to be re-classified as a high hazard dam. The project will include installing a larger drainpipe, creating a new emergency spillway, raising the height of the dam and increasing the flood storage capacity. LPSNRD operates and maintains nearly 200 dams throughout the district.



PARTING THOUGHTS by NRD Board Chair Ray Stevens

As we near the end of my 2-year stint as chair of the LPSNRD Board, I wish to thank my fellow Directors for their support and their dedication to the mission of our NRD. Board members evidenced a keen interest in conserving natural resources and approached their

responsibilities enthusiastically and with professionalism. Their commitment of time was greatly appreciated.

As Chair, I appreciated all the input from the public concerning our natural resources and the work of the NRD, whether you attend or provide comments at one of our meetings, phone, email or talk wherever we might meet.

The LPSNRD staff is second to none! Their knowledge of their duties and their ability to research issues facing the NRD and to delineate the decisions requiring Board approval is unsurpassed. Over the last 2 years, the NRD strengthened the Salt Creek Levees System in Lincoln, inspected, and strengthened dams in our purview, cost shared with ag producers on conservation measures to reduce erosion and improve water quality, implemented a new cover crop program, and continued our commitment

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Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future

TAX LEVY REDUCED IN NEW BUDGET

Browsing the budget is a great way to find out what LPSNRD is doing to protect lives, protect property and protect the future. The Board of Directors approved a budget of just under \$30 million in August, ending a five-month budget development process that included several opportunities



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ANTELOPE CREEK DELISTING

The quality of water flowing down Lincoln's Antelope Creek has improved enough to get the creek removed from a list of impaired waterways. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) and the Environmental Protection



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CORPS APPROVES DEADMANS RUN STUDY

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) approved a 4-year study of Lincoln's Deadmans Run Watershed in August. The approval moved LPSNRD, the City of Lincoln and the Corps from a study phase to a planning phase for proposed



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CORPS APPROVES DEADMANS RUN STUDY

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improvements totaling \$25 million that would reduce the risk of flooding in an area, generally, between North 33rd and 48th Streets, just north of UNL's East Campus. Approximately 500 structures, mostly homes and businesses, will be removed from the 100-year floodplain, assuming the three partners approve the necessary agreements and the Deadmans Run Flood Risk Reduction Project moves forward. The federal approval commits \$10 million toward:

- Widening 1.4 miles of the main channel from Cornhusker Highway upstream to 48th Street;
- Constructing a concrete flume to convey stormwater under two railroad bridges west of North 33rd Street;
- Relocating a street access; and
- Planting trees and native grasses to ensure no negative environmental impacts.



The Deadmans Run Flood Reduction Project includes widening the channel, meaning this bridge at 33rd Street and others at 38th and 48th streets will need to be replaced.

LPSNRD and the City of Lincoln (City) will split the remaining cost for these improvements, totaling about \$2.5 million each.

Widening the main channel means bridges at 33rd, 38th and 48th streets will need to be replaced. Funding for these projects and construction of a stormwater detention area near Fleming Fields will come from local funds totaling \$10 million, also split evenly by LPSNRD and the City. LPSNRD

Board Chair Ray Stevens said, "This joint effort of the Federal government, City of Lincoln and LPSNRD will significantly improve the flood control capabilities of Deadmans Run and reduce the threat of flooding to homes, businesses and the UNL East Campus." The tentative schedule for the entire Deadmans Run Flood Risk Reduction Project would be to approve a Project Partnership Agreement with the Corps in 2018, complete final design in 2019, acquire land rights in 2020 and construct the project in 2021 and 2022.



WETLAND OPEN HOUSE

Informational booths line the path to the observation deck at LPSNRD's Marsh Wren Saline Wetland, on September 13th. Marsh Wren, near 40th Street and Arbor Road, is being restored. A Saline Wetlands Open House, hosted by the Saline Wetlands Conservation Partnership, drew more than 100 people who explored, learned about saline wetlands and learned about several research projects at Marsh Wren. Photo courtesy of The Flatwater Group.

TAX LEVY REDUCED IN NEW BUDGET

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for public input. Our fiscal year begins each July first. Higher property valuations across LPSNRD's six-county area have resulted in a reduced tax levy, compared to Fiscal Year 2018. The property tax requirement is 1.8% higher. Board Treasurer Dan Steinkruger said the budget, "meets specific responsibilities, goals and objectives, providing for large projects like the Deadmans Run Flood Reduction Project, as-well-as continued maintenance of existing projects and involvement in finding better ways to conserve soil and water."



Below is a list of programs and projects included in the new budget. Some are multi-year projects, so the budgeted amounts shown for FY 2019 do not indicate total project costs. The complete budget is available at LPSNRD.org/about.

- Deadmans Run Flood Risk Reduction Project (\$2.1 million)
- 56th & Morton Flood Reduction Project (\$400,000)
- Conservation cost-share programs (\$1.5 million)
- Antelope Creek, 40th & Scott Avenue, repairs (\$2 million)
- Oak Middle Watershed Dam 82-B rehabilitation (\$645,000)
- Upper Salt Watershed Dam 3-A rehabilitation (\$1.8 million)
- Aerial electromagnetic ground water mapping (\$1.8 million and \$450,000)
- Salt Creek Levee updates (\$1 million)
- Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch (\$1.2 million)
- Drought Contingency Plan by Lower Platte River Consortium (\$370,000)

SEEDLING SALES BEGIN NOVEMBER 1ST

Over 42,000 trees and shrubs were purchased in our annual seedling sale last winter! We'll start taking orders again on November first and patrons will find a better tool on our new website, LPSNRD.org/programs/trees, to help them select the species they need. The cost per plant is under one-dollar and available species are suitable for windbreaks, wildlife habitat and many more uses. Sales to LPSNRD landowners will continue into late March, with delivery by Arbor Day, in April.



NOVEMBER BALLOT

Voters in only one of 10 subdistricts will find a contested race for the LPSNRD Board of Directors on November 6th ballots, but at least two new directors will likely take the oath of office in early January. Incumbent Gary Hellerich and challenger Mechelle Sky Walker square-off in Subdistrict 1, which includes the Yankee Hill and Air Park neighborhoods in west Lincoln and an area west and north of Lincoln, including the communities of Brainard, Valparaiso, Raymond, Garland, Malcolm, Denton and Pleasant Dale.

Detailed boundaries for all 10 subdistricts can be found at LPSNRD.org/about. Click on Maps, then select the Sub-Districts map.

Two non-incumbent candidates emerged from the Primary Election in May to run for the Subdistrict 7 seat (northeast-central Lincoln), but Grady Wiedeman later refused his nomination, leaving Luke Peterson to run unopposed.

Candidates for a vacated Subdistrict 6 seat (northwest Lincoln) will need to contact the Nebraska Secretary of State before October 26th, in order to run as a registered write-in candidate. Candidates must be a registered voter living within the Subdistrict 6 boundaries. Incumbent Deborah Eagan is unopposed for the other Subdistrict 6 seat.



There are also two LPSNRD Board races on ballots in Subdistrict 8 (southeast-central Lincoln). Dan Steinkruger, who was appointed to a Subdistrict 8 seat in May of 2017, is running unopposed to serve the remaining two years of that term. Tom Green is unopposed for the four-year Subdistrict 8 term.

Other incumbents running unopposed in November include Mark Spangler, Subdistrict 2; Vern Barrett, Subdistrict 3; Larry Ruth, Subdistrict 4; Bruce Johnson, Subdistrict 5; Robert Andersen, Subdistrict 9; Karen Amen, Subdistrict 10; and At-Large incumbent David Landis. Board members serve four-year terms, with one of 2 seats in each of 10 subdistricts up for election every two years.

ANTELOPE CREEK DELISTING

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Agency (EPA) determined in 2007 the creek had dangerous levels of E. coli bacteria, probably due to fecal contamination from animals and humans, so Antelope Creek was added to the EPA's Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired waters.

LPSNRD and the City of Lincoln teamed-up with NDEQ and other scientists and engineers to try to reverse the trend. An Antelope Creek Basin Master Plan was adopted in 2012 and

water quality improvement was a main goal, unlike prior plans that focused primarily on flood control. Sources of pollution were identified and solutions were implemented. The effort also included much public involvement. As a result, Antelope Creek's removal from the impaired list will be celebrated on Thursday, October 18th, with tours, demonstrations and informational stations at Union Plaza. Visit LPSNRD.org for details!

COVER CROP COST-SHARING IS HERE

A new cost-sharing program helps landowners establish cover crops to help control erosion and make the soil more productive. LPSNRD's new Cover Crop Program pays landowners up to \$2,000 per year to plant and maintain cover crops on qualifying land.

Cover crops bring many benefits. According to a University of Nebraska Extension publication, *Cover Crops for Prevented Planting Acres*, June, 2015, cover crops, depending on the species planted, can increase carbon in soils to build organic matter, leave nitrogen behind in the soil for the next crop to use and they can reduce weeds and diseases. Some species even scavenge nitrogen from the soil and keep it from leaching into ground water. All cover crop species help to reduce erosion.



Under the new LPSNRD Cover Crop Program, a cover crop cannot be harvested, hayed or grazed and must be located in a targeted watershed, in a community water system protection area or in a designated phase two or phase three ground water management area within the district. Applications need to be submitted by October first each year. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices in Lancaster, Cass, Otoe, Seward, Butler and Saunders counties can help determine land eligibility and help with completing the application process. A map showing eligible areas is posted at LPSNRD.org/programs. Click on Landowner Cost-Share, then Land Treatment.

PARTNERSHIPS BRING BETTER MANAGEMENT

Advances in science and technology are giving us new opportunities to improve our management of natural resources and LPSNRD recognizes the importance of input from all interests toward developing meaningful and effective solutions. LPSNRD is working to complete two water management plans and a third was approved earlier this year. Here are summaries of each.

A **Water Quality Management Plan** should be considered by the Board of Directors before the end of the year. Developed voluntarily by LPSNRD, with help from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), the plan covers the entire district and identifies several priority areas for initial focus. These areas include the drainage areas above Pawnee and East/West Twin Lakes, which are near Malcolm; the Decker Creek Watershed, near Camp Kitaki; the Little Salt Creek Watershed, located north of Lincoln; and Antelope Creek; which is in Lincoln. The plan also identifies several streams and lakes as “impaired” due to pollution. The plan has had much public input and will serve as a guide for LPSNRD water quality improvement projects for the next five to 15 years.



Seven NRDs and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources have formed the Lower Platte River Basin Coalition and are implementing a plan they developed over several years and approved in May. The **Basinwide Water Management Plan** protects domestic, agricultural and industrial water supplies over a large region from the sandhills to Plattsmouth, including all of the Lower Platte South NRD. Besides protecting existing ground water and surface water uses, it allows for new water uses in the basin and applies the best science available, on a continuing basis, to monitor water demands, needs, and to look for additional water supplies.

Another water management study looks for ways to supply more water to municipalities during a drought. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Lincoln Water System, Metropolitan Utilities District (Omaha), and the Papio-Missouri River, Lower Platte North and Lower Platte South NRDs hope to adopt a **Drought Contingency Plan** next summer. The group, called the Lower Platte River Consortium, hopes to enhance stream flows and aquifer storage for use by public water systems, making the region more drought-resilient. Public cooperation through better communication is another goal.

A SITE BETTER

We launched a new LPSNRD.org in August! We think the new site shows-off our active and growing social media presence and offers easier access to a lot of information about programs and projects, so constituents can help us manage our natural resources. The new website is also compatible with multiple devices, including smart phones and tablets, and offers better security. Look around and let us know what you think. Click on About and Contact Us.

PRINTED, DIGITAL, MAYBE BOTH

Our printed newsletter is inserted into district newspapers each February, June and October. 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/publications, to sign up. The NRD will not share your email address.



SALT CREEK STABILIZATION

A stream stabilization project at the Pioneers Blvd. bridge over Salt Creek will help prevent erosion from undermining bridge supports and widening the channel. LPSNRD, the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County are partners in the project.

RAY STEVENS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to the Haines Branch Prairie Corridor from Pioneer's Park to Spring Creek Prairie. We also made giant strides forward on the Deadmans Run Watershed Flood Reduction Project, which will remove approximately 480 structures from the floodplain along the north edge of the UNL East Campus.

As responsible stewards of natural resources, the NRD Board has also been stewards of property taxes by reducing the tax levy every year for more than 10 years.

To the board, public and staff, thank you for allowing me to serve as chair.



GET READY, GET SET, IMPROVE

Fall is the preferred time of year by landowners to have improvements made to their fields that can make future yields even better. Ideally, a contractor will begin creating terraces, sediment basins or waterways on a field as soon as the crop is out, so work can be completed before the ground freezes, but that is not always the case. In fact, it is often not the case. More landowners want to have work done this time of year than there are contractors available to do the work.

To have so many landowners wanting to improve their soil and water conservation is a pleasant dilemma. The reality is it cannot all be done at one time, so LPSNRD offers a Summer Conservation Program in which we increase our level of

cost-sharing if the landowner chooses to have the work done between May first and September 15th. Contractors are more readily available during those months. Our cost-sharing rates increase by 15%, not to exceed 85% of the total project cost. The cost-sharing maximum per project also increases to \$15,000, compared to \$10,000. Limits increase even more in targeted areas of the district. Interested landowners can learn more and begin the application process by contacting their local NRCS office.

LPSNRD cost-sharing for land improvements totals approximately \$1.5 million each year and we are always proud to work with good stewards of the land.

NRD PROJECT UPDATE

Antelope Creek at Salt Creek Plunge Pool Repairs: add riprap to stabilize streambank north of Devaney Sports Center. Completed.

Upper Salt Creek Watershed Dam 18-5 Rehabilitation: replace principal spillway pipe one mile south of Hickman. Engineering and design by FYRA. Farabee Mechanical is contractor. Under construction, \$53,000.

Middle Creek Tie-Back Levee: levee protects residences and businesses near Folsom Street, south of Rosa Parks Way, in Lincoln. Engineering and design by JEO, Gana was contractor; \$500,000. Completed.

Flood Damage Repair: repair damage from 2015 flooding along Lincoln's Antelope Creek, near 40th Street. Federal funding approved by FEMA. Design phase by Olsson Associates. Approximate project cost, \$1.9 million; 75% federal/25% LPSNRD.

56th & Morton Streets Flood Reduction Project: widening of drainage channel to protect homes and businesses. Engineering and design by JEO. Contractor is K2. City of

Lincoln is lead partner on this approximately \$3.8 million project; 75% federal/25% split evenly between LPSNRD and City of Lincoln.

South Salt Creek Watershed Project #2: stream stability project through Lincoln's Irvingdale Park, near 22nd and Van Dorn streets. Engineering and design by EA, Yost is contractor. Project cost, \$440,000; 50% City of Lincoln/50% LPSNRD.

South Salt Creek Watershed Project #3: stream stabilization project by LPSNRD, City of Lincoln and Lancaster County at Pioneers Blvd. bridge. Yost is contractor, \$662,000; 50% City of Lincoln/50% LPSNRD. See page 5.

City of Plattsmouth Lincoln Avenue Drainage Project: Under construction to address drainage issues. LPSNRD Community Assistance Program-50% City of Plattsmouth/50% LPSNRD