



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

SUMMER 2018



Lincoln's 33rd Street Bridge (2600 N. 33rd) over Deadmans Run is one of three bridges that would be replaced and enlarged by the City of Lincoln and LPSNRD, if recommendations in a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study are approved. The Corps is expected to finish its Section 205 Feasibility Study of the Deadman's Run Flood Reduction Project this month and recommend a project that will remove about 480 structures from the Deadmans Run floodplain. Story below.



NEW TREASURER, NEW BUDGET

by NRD Board Treasurer
Dan Steinkruger

I am excited to have been elected treasurer of the LPSNRD Board of Directors in May. I know the entire board is grateful for the diligent service of Jeremie Kerkman, who resigned his board seat in April, upon moving from his subdistrict. LPSNRD has begun preparing the Fiscal Year 2019 Budget. Input from the public is important, too, as we seek to strike a proper balance between management of our natural resources and fiscal responsibility. The management of urban stormwater to help reduce the risk of flooding, using advancing technology to prepare for times of drought and helping producers with soil conservation are just a few of the many beneficial activities included in our annual budget.

Inside "Know Your NRD" you'll find a schedule of opportunities for public input on the budget. We hope to hear reaction from many of you when the first draft of the budget is outlined at the June 20th LPSNRD Board meeting, beginning at 6:00 PM, at 3125 Portia Street, in Lincoln.

Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future

REPORT: AREAS SHOW GROUND WATER IMPROVEMENT

The Lower Salt Creek Ground Water Reservoir (LSCGWR), an area including northeast Lincoln, Waverly, Greenwood and Ashland, became LPSNRD's first Phase II ground water management area in 2002. Nitrate levels in more than 50% of tested wells in LSCGWR were at 50% or more than the level

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PRAIRIE CORRIDOR TRAILHEAD ACQUIRED

LPSNRD is a partner in creating a trail corridor connecting Pioneers Park, Conestoga Lake and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center. Eleven acres of donated land near SW 84th Street and Old Cheney Road was officially named



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DEADMANS RUN STUDY NEARLY COMPLETE

Residents and owners of businesses in Lincoln's Deadmans Run (DMR) floodplain learned, in March, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's (Corps) years-long study to reduce flooding in the watershed is nearly completed.



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DEADMANS RUN STUDY NEARLY COMPLETE

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During an informational open house at Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, the Corps said recommendations resulting from its Section 205 Study will focus on the DMR main channel below 48th Street and the proposed measures will cost about \$15 million, including:

- Widening of the main channel upstream to 48th Street to convey runoff from a 100-year storm
- Construction of a concrete flume to convey stormwater under the existing BNSF Railroad bridge west of 33rd Street
- Relocation of a State Fair Park Drive access road
- Planting of trees and native grasses

Two-thirds of the \$15 million cost will be covered by federal funds. LPSNRD and the City of Lincoln (City) will split the remaining cost.

In addition, there will be a local project with an estimated cost of \$10 million. The City and NRD will replace DMR bridges at 33rd, 38th and 48th streets and construct a detention area west of Fleming Fields without federal funding. These components were removed from the Section 205 Study recommendations due to federal cost limitations.

The Corps planned to submit its study for approval in June. Project design could begin in the fall, if LPSNRD and the City approve study recommendations. The Corps anticipates completion of its proposed flood reduction projects by the end of 2022.



About 80 people attended an open house at NET on March 28th to provide input and learn the latest on a federal study of ways to reduce flooding in Lincoln's Deadmans Run Watershed. The event was one of three public open houses hosted by LPSNRD this spring. Two others sought input on our Water Quality Management Plan, which will guide future water quality improvement projects.

NEW HELP

Three new LPSNRD staff members are helping us protect lives, property and the future this summer:



Resource Technician Joe Peterson helps landowners install water quality improvements. He works out of the Lancaster County NRCS office and also helps in Cass County. A third technician was added recently by the LPSNRD Board in response to growing demands. Joe is a native of the Ceresco area, a UNL graduate in Ag. Business and has been a survey technician with NRCS.



He now lives in Lincoln.

Trent Henry is our new maintenance technician, keeping LPSNRD lakes, trails and wetlands up to high standards, including the control of noxious weeds. He is also responsible for seasonal monitoring of ice conditions on the Platte River. Trent is a native of Netawaka, in northeastern Kansas and is a Kansas State graduate in conservation biology.



Taylor Baker is a UNL Sophomore, majoring in Fisheries and Wildlife and serving an Environmental Education internship with LPSNRD. Taylor grew up in Lincoln and now lives in Milford. She aspires to be a conservation biologist.

REPORT: AREAS SHOW GROUND WATER IMPROVEMENT

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established as safe by the Environmental Protection Agency. A study determined nitrate levels in ground water there were being elevated by the over-use of fertilizers. Under our phased program to try and improve water quality or quantity in areas before federal regulations are triggered, we offered special land treatment incentives to LSCGWR landowners, operator certifications for applying fertilizer were required, we increased educational information and now, 16 years later, it appears LSCGWR may be among LPSNRD's first downgraded management areas.

Ground Water Reservoir	Spring '17 to Spring '18
Crete-Princeton-Adams	-0.18
Dwight-Valparaiso	0.62
Lower Salt Creek	-1.47
Missouri River	-1.98
Platte River	0.84
Remaining Area	-0.43

This chart shows the average gain or loss of water, in feet, for LPSNRD network wells measured in each of the district's ground water reservoirs and the Remaining Area this spring, compared to last spring. A positive number indicates water levels have come up. Learn more about ground water reservoirs at LPSNRD.org. Click on Programs.

Our "2017 Ground Water Management Plan Review" (Annual Review) issued in April, shows average nitrate levels of wells tested in LSCGWR have improved significantly, so the NRD is working toward officially suspending the reservoir's Phase II designation later this year. Two other Phase II areas, the Valparaiso and Hickman community water system protection areas (CWSPA), have also shown improvement and may be downgraded.

Other CWSPAs, though, are expected to remain under Phase II management, including Pleasant Dale, Davey, Otoe County Rural Water District #3, Weeping Water and Union. Elmwood remains under a Phase III designation. While NRD testing shows nitrate levels are elevated in these areas, the average nitrate levels of wells tested in each CWSPA were still below the federal regulation threshold for nitrates in 2017.

Besides well monitoring results from throughout the district, our Annual Review also contains information about the district's geology, well permitting and decommissioning, chemigation, ground water program cost-sharing, education activities and much more. The complete review is available at LPSNRD.org.



DROUGHT OPEN HOUSE

Instead of waiting until there's a drought to start looking for ways to shore-up public water supplies, the Lincoln and Omaha water utilities, the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the three lower Platte River NRDs, including Lower Platte River South, hope to get ahead of drought by developing a Drought Contingency Plan. The groups have formed the Lower Platte River Consortium (Consortium) and hired HDR to conduct a study to look at surface water storage, aquifer recharge, ground water pumping and development of a digital modeling tool, hoping to learn ways to supply more water to municipal well fields along the lower Platte River during a drought.

The Consortium will outline its progress and seek public input at a Public Open House, June 19th, starting at 5:00 PM at the North Star High School cafeteria. There will be a formal presentation at 5:30 PM and the public is encouraged to attend.

PRAIRIE CORRIDOR TRAILHEAD ACQUIRED

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the Stiefel Johnson Trailhead by the LPSNRD Board in March. The corridor will fork at that spot and users will be able to either continue between Pioneers Park and Spring Creek Prairie, or divert to Conestoga Lake. The trailhead will include a parking area.

The City of Lincoln, Lincoln Parks Foundation and Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center are the other main partners in the Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch project, which is proposed to become much more than a recreational trail. Haines Branch refers to a west Lincoln tributary of Salt Creek. The 7,600-acre, ten-mile corridor will also function as a tallgrass



This site, near SW 84th Street and Old Cheney Rd., will become a Prairie Corridor on Haines Branch trailhead.

prairie preserve and will be marketed as an ecotourism destination. Combined, the partners have secured more than 5,000 acres, but getting the remainder of the necessary

land through easements and purchases could take several years. Parts of the proposed corridor are already being restored and LPSNRD hopes to complete the trailhead this year. The Steifel Johnson Trailhead is named for two long-time friends, Judith Steifel and Lucile Johnson, whose families each owned the trailhead and other adjacent land at different times.

For more information about the project, visit <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/parks/index.htm>.

YOUR BUDGET INPUT HELPS

The initial draft of the LPSNRD FY 2019 Budget will be outlined at the June 20th Board of Directors meeting. All monthly board meetings are open to the public and, while several opportunities are scheduled this summer (below), the June meeting is the best time for the public to make their thoughts known, since it allows the board ample time to discuss and make proposed changes. The LPSNRD Board values public input on the conservation of natural resources anytime, but especially during the annual budget process.



Budget Public Input:

- Wednesday, June 20, 6:00 PM – Budget Public Input Session and Board of Directors Meeting
- Wednesday, July 18, 7:00 PM – Board of Directors Meeting and tentative budget approval
- Thursday, August 9, 7:00 PM – Public Hearing on Budget and on Budget Level
- Wednesday, August 15, 7:00 PM – Board of Directors Meeting and budget approval

All meetings are at the LPSNRD office, 3125 Portia Street, Lincoln. Contact information is available at LPSNRD.org. Click on About Us.

SCHUTZ APPOINTED

Anthony Schutz was appointed May 16th to fill the Subdistrict 6 seat vacated by Jeremie Kerkman in April. Kerkman, who was also Board Treasurer, moved out of the subdistrict. Schutz was one of three applicants for the appointment. He is an associate professor of law at UNL and will serve until the end of this year, when a candidate elected in November will take over the seat.



Any resident of Subdistrict 6, who is a registered voter, may still petition onto the November ballot or run as a write-in candidate. In either case, candidates must register with the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office. The deadline to register as a write-in candidate is October 26th. Signed petitions must be submitted to the secretary of state's office no later than September 4th and the secretary of state's office estimates the number of signatures required to get on ballots at 1,276.

Subdistrict 6 includes, generally, a portion of northwest Lincoln from just east of the airport to 27th Street and from West Alvo Road south to Cornhusker Highway. A detailed Subdistrict 6 map is available at LPSNRD.org.

LEVEE UPDATE CONTINUES



A drone capturing video of Salt Creek approaches the "O" Street Bridge from the south. The transparent map on the left tracks the drone's flight and current location.

As LPSNRD continues to update the infrastructure of the 60-year-old Salt Creek Levee and revise procedural plans, we're also just watching Salt Creek. Closely. JEO Consulting Group flew the entire levee system twice this spring with a drone; once at high altitude and again at about the eye level of a great blue heron waiting for breakfast. By themselves, the videos are mildly impressive, but we're hoping to learn more about Salt Creek and how it changes when we compare the new videos to similar ones JEO made two years ago.

The periodic video comparisons, infrastructure updates and revised plans are all part of a years-long process

administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers called a SWIF plan - short for System Wide Improvement Framework. The overall goal is to keep the levee system dependable and functioning efficiently. When SWIF is completed, the 13-mile levee system that protects Lincoln homes and businesses will not offer any more protection than it does now, but hopefully, SWIF will extend the life of the levee at least another 60 years. LPSNRD is budgeting \$500,000 for the next 15 years for SWIF. The public needs to remember the levee is not a guarantee against flooding and warnings from authorities during high water events need to be heeded to keep people safe.

NORMAL TO DRIER THAN NORMAL

In May, LPSNRD released its first "Weather/Precipitation Outlook." This report is intended to help residents and businesses in the district, farmers in particular, prepare for activities during the growing season. It utilizes precipitation and other weather forecast data focused specifically on LPSNRD! The outlook for this growing season throughout the district is "normal to drier than normal." Learn much more at LPSNRD.org.

PRINTED, DIGITAL, MAYBE BOTH

Can't wait for our newsletter? 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, under Publications, to sign up. The NRD will not share your email address.

PRIMARY VOTERS SET NOVEMBER BALLOTS

Voters in two of 10 subdistricts found LPSNRD races on their May 15th Primary Election ballots. In Subdistrict 1, which includes the Yankee Hill and Air Park neighborhoods in Lincoln and an area west and north of Lincoln, including the towns of Brainard, Valparaiso, Raymond, Garland and Pleasant Dale, Mechelle Sky Walker (1,325 votes) and incumbent Gary Hellerich (1,090) advanced to the General Election on November 6th. Mark Christensen (1,056) was also on ballots, but did not advance, according to unofficial election results.



The other Primary race was in Subdistrict 7, an area of northeast Lincoln, generally from "O" Street to north of Holdrege, between 22nd and 84th streets. Luke Peterson (1,429) and Grady Wiedeman (680) advanced to November ballots. Joseph Gruber (656) did not advance. All Primary Election vote totals are unofficial.

Only races with more than two LPSNRD Board candidates appeared on Primary ballots. Board members serve four-year terms, with one of 2 seats in each of 10 subdistricts up for election every two years. Candidates for a vacated (2-year term) Subdistrict 6 seat will need to contact the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office in order to petition onto ballots or to run as a registered write-in candidate. Dan Steinkruger, who was appointed to a Subdistrict 8 seat in May of 2017 is running unopposed for that seat. Tom Green, who is not an incumbent, is unopposed for the other Subdistrict 8 seat.

Other incumbents running unopposed in November include Mark Spangler, Subdistrict 2; Vern Barrett, Subdistrict 3; Larry Ruth, Subdistrict 4; Bruce Johnson, Subdistrict 5; Deborah Eagan, Subdistrict 6; Robert Andersen, Subdistrict 9; Karen Amen, Subdistrict 10; and At-Large incumbent David Landis. A map of LPSNRD subdistricts is available at LPSNRD.org. Click on About, then Board of Directors.



SEEDLING SALES TOP 40K

Darryl Cyr, of Martell, his daughter Cara and granddaughter Cerae are ready to plant the 225 seedling trees they ordered from LPSNRD. Darryl said the trees will be the beginning of a windbreak on a new home place near Martell. Over 42,000 trees and shrubs were purchased in our annual bulk sale, the most in many years. Annual sales to landowners begin each November 1st and continue into late March, with delivery by Arbor Day, in April. The cost per plant is under one-dollar and available species are suitable for windbreaks, wildlife habitat and many more uses.

NRD PROJECT UPDATE

Salt Creek Levee 27th to Superior: LPSNRD has approved streambank erosion control measures as part of the NRD's SWIF updates at a cost of \$310,000. The improvements will be installed over a period of several years.

South Salt Creek Watershed Project #3: stream stabilization project by LPSNRD and the City of Lincoln, with a bridge protection component by Lancaster County at the Pioneers Blvd. Bridge. Bids were opened June 5th and awarding of a construction contract by the LPSNRD Board is expected on June 20th.

Plattsmouth Watershed Dam 18-A: pipe repair south of Plattsmouth. Work will begin soon, with completion expected this summer.

56th & Morton Streets Drainage Improvement: under construction by the City of Lincoln and LPSNRD, with FEMA and NEMA providing 75% of the \$3.7 million cost. Widening of the drainage channel will reduce the threat of flooding.

Antelope Creek Outlet: repair of Antelope Creek at the confluence with Salt Creek, in Lincoln, including placement of riprap. Work by Pat Thomas Construction, of Lincoln, began in late May and is expected to be completed in June.

Oak Middle Dam 81-A: partial replacement of pipe at dam, 3 miles south of Garland, was completed in late May.