



# Insight



## NRD Winds Up a Busy 2020 Park Season

This year ended up being the busiest park season the Nemaha NRD has ever had. Everything from beaches to campgrounds at all parks were at capacity almost every weekend. This was a result of seasonable weather from April to October and the COVID-19 pandemic. NRD staff invested a considerable amount of time making certain that facilities were clean, rules were being followed, and fees were paid. With a few exceptions park users did a great job of following rules and getting along with each other. The District depends on law enforcement from local sheriff's departments and Game and Parks conservation officers to help enforce rules. We greatly appreciate their help in helping make our parks pleasant and safe.

Moving forward it will be interesting to see if the use level we experienced in 2020 will continue. The increase this

year translated into more revenue from park entry and camping fees. Increases in revenue will allow the NRD to better fund maintenance and future improvements. We get numerous positive comments about our park facilities, and our goal is to provide a quality recreation experience for our park users.

With winter approaching utilities will be shut down at all our parks by the end of November. Some campground areas at Duck Creek and Iron Horse Trail Lake will also be closed. Services and campgrounds will be reopened on April 1, 2021. Parks remain open throughout the winter with plenty of access to reservoirs. Winter park users should check ice conditions prior to accessing lakes. Motor vehicles, including ATVs, UTVs, and snowmobiles are not allowed on NRD lakes.

## District to Increase Electric RV Camping Fees

After careful review, the NRD board voted to increase daily electric RV camping fees from \$12 to \$16 beginning in 2021. Camping fees had not been increased, and the present \$12 fee was well below what other state and local areas are charging. The NRD appreciates all the cooperation we receive from campers.

Every year we receive questions regarding reserving camping pads. The District has investigated this as an option but have found it is not a cost-effective alternative

largely because of the small number of pads we have in each area. Camping pads will continue to be available on a first-come, first-served policy. Going forward we will continue to look at reservations as an option.

The NRD also gets asked about increasing the number of electric RV sites at both Kirkman's Cove and Iron Horse. We will continue to consider that; however, access to electricity particularly at Iron Horse is a major issue hindering expansion.

## Table Rock Donates Playground Equipment

The NRD would like to thank the Village of Table Rock for donating playground equipment from their park for use at one of the District's recreation areas. District staff removed the equipment, and it is presently in storage but will be installed at Kirkman's Cove prior to next summer. Although

some adults might have appreciated the steel slides and other Leave it to Beaver era equipment they enjoyed using as a child, Table Rock's generous donation will allow the NRD to upgrade to more modern playsets.



Three members of the Trail Life USA Troop 812 help plant two of the trees in the east fishing access area at Duck Creek Recreation Area.

## Free Trees for Fall Planting @ Duck Creek

Thanks to the Nebraska Forest Service and Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, 10 free trees were planted in October at the Duck Creek Recreation Area northwest of Peru. As part of the Free Trees for Fall Planting program, the District enlisted the help of youth from the Trail Life USA Troop 812 to plant some of the trees. This Omaha based youth scouting group had planned an overnight outing to the park at the same time the District was looking for help.

Despite providing a wide range of benefits, most Nebraska community forests are in steady and sometimes dramatic decline. Challenges such as extreme weather, insects, disease, and lack of diversity contribute to the decline. In an effort to increase forest resilience, the Free Trees program grants up to 10 high quality trees for tree-related educational events and community celebrations promoting trees. In the midst of a pandemic, the NRD was pleased that this youth group was available and willing to participate in this project.

Free Trees for Fall Planting is supported by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum's Trees for Nebraska Towns Initiative funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

# Area Land Judging Contest a Success

COVID-19 couldn't deter 208 high school FFA students at 13 schools from competing in the annual Land Judging Contest held on October 7th near Auburn, Nebraska. Students traveled among four soil pits and were tested on soil characteristics and recommended land treatment measures at each pit. In order to meet safety requirements, all students and adults wore face coverings and maintained social distancing. Also competitors stayed within their own school group instead of mixing with students from other schools. Schools arrived in 20-minute intervals, proceeded through the 4-station contest site, and left at the end of their school's competition. Results were not announced in a group on the day of the contest as usual but instead were sent to all schools the following week.

The contest was held east of Auburn on land owned by Lynn & Jana Rogge and was sponsored by the Nemaha NRD. Though NRCS staff could not help on the day of the contest, they helped with preparations. NRD staff conducted the contest with assistance from retired NRCS Soil Scientist, Mark Willoughby.

Schools represented at the contest included Diller-Odell, Falls City, Fairbury, HTRS,

Johnson Brock, Johnson County Central, Lewiston, Meridian, Nebraska City, Palmyra, Pawnee City, Syracuse, and Tri County. Contestants compete as individuals, but four-member teams are also formed from each school based on their scores. Locally students placing in the top ten individually included Lewiston's Masyn Arena who took first place followed by Jacob Wood of Palmyra in 6th place and Falls City's Justin Brewer and David Kuker in 8th and 9th places, respectively.

Top finishers in the team division included Tri County who claimed first place, Lewiston's team of Masyn Arena, Ty Arena, Leah Christen, and Tristen Ray in second place, Diller-Odell in third place, and the fourth place team from Falls City: Justin Brewer, David Kuker, Kyler Frederick, Havyn Ruiz. Those four teams earned a spot at the State contest that was held later in the month in York County. Individually Jacob Wood of Palmyra also qualified for the State event. Complete results are posted on the NRD's website.

Though not your typical contest, the weather was ideal; and both students and adults enjoyed the opportunity to participate. Thanks to everyone who helped make this event possible.



**Face coverings and hand sanitizer were common components of this year's Area Land Judging Contests.**



**Seeding remains to be done around the newly constructed concrete spillway through the dam at UBN 25-C.**

## Rehab Nearly Complete on Upper Big Nemaha 25-C

After just more than a year, construction is wrapping up on the rehabilitation of the Upper Big Nemaha 25-C dam near Adams, Nebraska. The \$2.5 million project involved the construction of a new, concrete spillway through the center of the dam that would result in increased flood control benefits. Maximum flow through

the structure increased from 6,000 to 15,000 cubic feet per second though the water level in the reservoir did not change. Seeding and fencing remain to be done with an anticipated finish before year end. Federal funds account for 65% of the cost with the Nemaha NRD picking up the balance.

## It's Tree Season!

With some winter-like weather already this season, thoughts turn to protecting your home, livestock, or farm from cold winter winds with a windbreak. Two or three rows of trees strategically placed make a big difference when howling winter winds move in. On the other hand, they can also provide some needed shade, wildlife habitat, or even a privacy barrier during other parts of the year.

The Nemaha NRD has a wide variety of evergreen, deciduous, or shrub species from which to pick and at an affordable price. No matter which species, all seedlings cost just \$1.20 each, plus sales tax. A couple of rules apply: you must order in batches of 25/species, and all orders must be paid in full at the time the order is placed. If you're planting your own trees, you have until March 1 to make up your mind. All trees will be available sometime in April, weather permitting, and must be picked up at the NRD's office in Tecumseh.

If you have enough room for a bigger planting, the NRD also offers a planting service for another \$1/tree. More rules: you must have your ground fall worked if it is currently in sod, and orders must be placed and paid in full by December 31. NRD staff are available to meet with you to help you decide what to plant, how many, and even where to place them. Call the office during regular business hours to make an appointment.

Seven types of conifers, nine different deciduous trees, and twelve shrubs are available this year. Check our website ([nemahanrd.org](http://nemahanrd.org)) for a complete listing, or contact the office by phone or email to request an order form.



Some sections of the Steamboat Trace will require more work than others before reopening to the public.

## District Approves Plan to Begin Opening the Steamboat Trace

The Steamboat Trace trail has been closed since March, 2019, due to flooding and the resulting damage the flood caused. Damage on the trail, which was estimated at over \$300,000, varies from very minor to areas where the entire trail base was lost. Some areas of the trail will require extensive repairs to make them safe for public use. New surfacing will eventually be required on more than half of the 22-mile long trail. Fortunately, the NRD has been approved for funding assistance from FEMA. Most of the flooding was the result of the failure of a major levee in the Peru area. The timetable for repairing the levee is unknown; and until it is repaired, portions of the trail will be subject to flooding on a regular basis, particularly in the spring.

In 2020 the NRD focused on cleaning up trees and other debris that were deposited on the trail. That work has been completed, and in 2021 the focus will be on getting portions of the trail reopened for public use. The NRD board recently approved a tentative plan for initially opening portions of the trail needing minimal repairs and eventually the entire 22-mile long trail.

Here are some of the highlights of the plan:

- Make tentative repairs to sections of trail from north of Peru to the trailhead at the

OPPD trailhead so that it can be reopened by July 1, 2020. The actual opening will depend on the spring flood potential on the Missouri River.

- The stretch of trail from Peru south to Brownville will remain closed until damage can be repaired with the possible exception of the popular mile segment of trail from the Peru Trailhead to the Sherman Memorial Area.
- Evaluate making major repairs and reopen the entire trail by fall, 2021. The earliest any work could occur is July, 2021, to avoid the spring flood season.

Major repairs will not be made to the six-mile segment of trail north of Peru until the levee can be repaired. The NRD will do limited maintenance to assure this segment is safe for hikers and bikers. Over time periodic closures due to flooding should be expected.

We are excited at the possibility of getting at least a portion of the trail opened again. It is difficult to announce a firm date on any reopening because it is highly dependent on the potential seasonal flooding in the spring. It is not prudent to invest NRD resources on repairs until the highest timeframe for flooding has passed.

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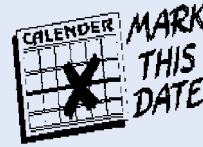
# NRD Election Results in New Member

Every two years half of the Nemaha NRD board members are up for election. This year only one race was contested, which was in Otoe County. Dan Giittinger upset incumbent, Jessica Donnelly, in the November 3rd contest to represent Subdistrict 4 for a two-year term. Normally terms are four years, but this spot was filled by appointment in March of 2019; thus, law requires that the remaining two years of the term be filled by election.

Full results from this month's election are as follows:

Subdistrict	Candidate (*Incumbent)	Total Votes Cast
1	*Robert Lassen, Firth	2,013
2	*Mike McDonald, Palmyra	1,986
3	*Orval Gigstad, Syracuse	2,344
4	*Dan Hodges, Julian	1,502
4	(2-year term) Daniel Giittinger, Nebraska City	1,005
4	(2-year term) *Jessica Donnelly, Nebraska City	562
5	*Randy Fox, Nebraska City	1,654
6	*Robbie Bohling, Johnson	1,501
7	*Mike Speece, Auburn	1,771
8	*Eldon Snoke, Humboldt	1,774
9	*Jon Keithley, Falls City	1,813
10	*Jim Gerweck, Falls City	1,565

All candidates will be sworn in at the January 14, 2020, board meeting.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### November

26 Thanksgiving Holiday,  
NNRD Office Closed

### December

10 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh  
24 Christmas Holiday,  
NNRD Office Closed @ Noon

25 Christmas Holiday,  
NNRD Office Closed

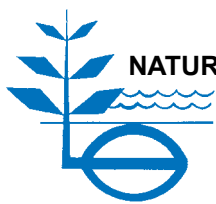
### January

1 New Year's Day Holiday,  
NNRD Office Closed

14 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh

18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Holiday,  
NNRD Office Closed

26-27 NARD Legislative Conference, Lincoln



**nemaha**

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

62161 Hwy 136

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The Nemaha NRD's **Insight** is a publication of the Nemaha Natural Resources District. Requests to be placed on the **Insight** mailing list and/or comments regarding information in this publication should be directed to Jane Kuhl, Administrative Assistant, 62161 Hwy 136, Tecumseh, NE 68450. Phone (402) 335-3325