



Nemaha Natural Resources District

Insight



Summer 2008

Big Muddy Creek Field Day & BBQ



Work was completed this summer on this weir near Johnson in the Big Muddy Creek Watershed

On Tuesday, September 16, 2008, the NRD will hold a public event to celebrate, promote, inform, and educate the public about the Big Muddy Creek Watershed Project. Plans are to have the public visit completed projects on their own from 3-5 p.m. where NRD staff will be present at each site to provide information and answer questions. An evening barbeque supper starting at 6 p.m. will then be held at the sheet pile weir site located on 728 Road just south of the town of Johnson, Nebraska. The meal will be free to those who visit at least one of the project sites earlier that day and receive a meal ticket.

Specific information about this upcoming event will soon be released, so watch local newspapers for details. Please contact the Nemaha NRD at 402-335-3325 if you have questions.

Bagworms & Other Tree Pests Cause Concern

Trees in the Nemaha NRD are fighting a battle this year against a major outbreak of bagworms. Typically limited to cedar and other evergreen species in the past, this year the pests are even targeting some deciduous species including maples and fruit trees. Fortunately bagworm activity is beginning to wind down for this year, which also makes spraying less effective than it is earlier in the summer. The next phase in the cycle will occur around mid-September when the males emerge from their bags to mate with the females in other bags. Both adults die following mating but leave behind 500-1000 eggs in each bag, which will hatch next spring/summer to begin feasting on tree foliage again. If possible, pick off any bags and destroy them by burning or smashing the bags to kill the adult inside. For heavy infestations, look for signs that the worms are still feeding on the tree; if so, spraying may still be effective. Check with your local garden center for recommendations on chemicals to use.

Another enemy of trees in the Nemaha NRD is the emerald ash borer. The good news is that it has not been detected in Nebraska yet, but it has shown up as close as Missouri. This insect attacks and kills all native ash species by disrupting the tree's ability to transport water and nutrients. It is most commonly spread through transportation of infested firewood. Because there are nearly 2.2 million ash trees planted in Nebraska, the threat of infestation is very real. Currently there is no effective treatment available should the pest appear. Nebraska Forest Service staff is taking a proactive stance against the borer by forming a working group and readiness plan, which includes monitoring trees throughout the state. For more information on identifying the emerald ash borer, visit www.emeraldashborer.info to learn about what it is, and what it is not.

It's Budget Time!

The Nemaha NRD board of directors will unveil their final budget for FY2009 during a public hearing on Thursday, September 11, 2008, beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the NRD Headquarters in Tecumseh. Following the hearing, the board will take action to approve the budget at their regular meeting, which starts at 8:00 p.m.

Free Meeting/Lunch to Highlight Lespedeza Control Efforts

Join area experts and chemical representatives on Tuesday, September 23, at Indian Cave State Park in northeast Richardson County for a free meeting about sericea lespedeza. A test plot at the park will highlight chemicals to use in controlling this noxious weed that is moving north out of Missouri and Kansas. A perennial warm season legume introduced from Asia, sericea lespedeza has been listed as a noxious weed in Richardson, Pawnee, Nemaha, Gage, and Otoe Counties. It's been found in CRP fields, pastures, and road sides. Sericea lespedeza will form a thick stand of weeds that is unpalatable to cattle when it has much growth, producing tannic acid and becoming woody stemmed. It will grow to about four feet tall and suppress grass growth.

The meeting will begin at 11:00 a.m. with registration at 10:45 a.m. A free grilled burger lunch will be provided following the meeting sponsored by the 5 Rivers Weed Management Area. Vehicle entry into the state park will also be provided by the meeting sponsor. In case of inclement weather, the event will be held on Thursday, September 25, instead.

Cost-Share Available for Flow Meters

Since May 1, 2008, the District has been accepting applications for cost-share on water well flow meters. Thanks to a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, District landowners can receive 50% of the total cost of a new flow meter up to a \$500 maximum. Program requirements include owning land within the District and agreeing to use, maintain, and report usage for a 10-year period. Any well that is capable of pumping 50 gallons per minute or more and is not used for domestic purposes is eligible.

Funding is limited and will only be available for the next two years. So contact the NRD office today for more information or to sign up for this program. A program application may also be downloaded from the District website, www.nemahanrd.org



NRD Dams: Silently Waiting to Protect You and Your Property

The Nemaha NRD operates over 400 flood control and grade stabilization structures throughout southeast Nebraska. Spring and early summer rains put a number of these structures to the test. The most dramatic flooding occurred in the Upper Little Nemaha basin, which is located in eastern Lancaster and western Otoe counties. On the evening of June 4, a weather system dropped rainfall that exceeded the capacity of most rain gauges in a short period of time. Since the ground was already saturated, most of the water ran off causing the Little Nemaha River to flow out of its banks at numerous locations from Bennet to southeast of Auburn. Bridges were damaged, and fields were flooded within the watershed.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, the NRD constructed 19 dams in the Upper Little Nemaha watershed. The June 4 event filled many of the dams to capacity with five structures becoming so full that they exceeded their flood storage capacity. In this case the excess runoff was routed around the dam and back into the waterway in order to protect the dam from failing. Approximately 10,000 acre-feet of flood water was held in storage by the 19 dams, which is equal to two feet of water covering an eight square-mile area. Had that water not been stored by the dams, it would have added to the flood damage that did occur.



This dam in the Upper Little Nemaha Watershed near Bennet filled to capacity then routed excess water around its spillway following heavy June rains.

The community of Bennet provides a good example of what could have happened had the dams not been in place. Some floodwaters damaged the baseball complex on the south part of town, but it could have been much worse. Bennet is protected by two of the largest structures in the watershed, which are located just southwest of the town. These dams were designed to contain up to a 100-year frequency runoff event. Simply stated, this means that there is a 1 in 100 chance of such an event occurring in any given year. On June 4 runoff into both structures exceeded 100-year flood storage capacity. Without these dams an additional 2,400 acre-feet of flood water would have been routed through the south part of Bennet, certainly causing far more damage to that part of the community.

Upper Little Nemaha dams did their job, but not without a few bumps and bruises. Initial estimates indicate that damages to the dams will total around \$120,000. The NRD is working with NRCS to obtain Emergency Watershed Protection funds to help pay for repairs. None of the dams is in danger of failing as almost all the damage involves erosion below the structures.

Dams often go unnoticed as they silently protect public and private property from flood damage. Throughout the Nemaha NRD many of the original flood control dams are 40 or more years old, and the damages due to the frequent flooding that used to occur have been long forgotten.

Iron Horse Trail Lake Set for Renovations

In 2007 the NRD evaluated the feasibility of a sediment basin on the upper end of the present reservoir at Iron Horse Trail Lake to capture some of the sediment that enters the lake every year. During the evaluation of the basin, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission fisheries staff approached the NRD and suggested incorporating a complete lake restoration into the project. The Flatwater Group, a Lincoln consulting firm, was hired in March, 2008, to evaluate and develop a restoration plan, which included input from the NRD, NGPC and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. On July 31 a meeting was held in Pawnee City to allow the public an opportunity to provide their input into the plan.

During this public meeting, NGPC stated that Iron Horse Trail Lake is one of the better fishing lakes in southeast Nebraska; however, scientific data shows that this fishery is in decline and that fishing success would noticeably decline in the next 3 to 5 years. As Iron Horse Trail Lake has been a proven excellent fishery for the past 20 years, NGPC is willing to fully fund a restoration project that would include drawing down the lake, eradicating the current fish population, removing approximately 250,000 cubic yards of sediment, installing numerous handicap accessible fishing jetties, and upgrading the current fishing jetty near the existing boat dock with a wood deck, handicap accessible fishing pier. This restoration project is estimated to cost \$1.5-\$2 million, all of which would be funded with Nebraska Sport Fish Restoration and Aquatic Habitat Funds from

NGPC. NGPC stated that prior to eradicating the existing fish population, NGPC would remove all fishing regulations to allow the public to harvest as many fish as possible. NGPC also plans to relocate as many healthy fish as possible to other nearby state managed fishing reservoirs. Please be aware, however, that all fishing regulations will remain in effect until an official notice from NGPC is received and signs are posted.

The plan will be completed in September with the NRD expected to make a final decision on proceeding with the restoration project. Although it is uncertain when funds will allow this project to begin, it is estimated that funding could be available in the fall of 2009 or spring of 2010. In addition to improving fishing aspects of Iron Horse Trail Lake, the NRD intends to seek additional grant funds to implement park upgrades such as electrical RV hookups, improving and expanding the existing hiking trail, providing walking access between the RV camping area and day use area, upgrading playground equipment, and installing a new restroom in the day-use area.

The lake drawdown phase is expected to start six months prior to beginning construction; and the construction phase will take up to 12 months. For safety and liability purposes, the park will likely be closed during the construction phase. If this project proceeds as planned, your patience and understanding is requested as the end goal is to extend the lifespan and improve the overall quality of the Iron Horse Trail Lake Recreation Area for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Buck Creek Project Moving Forward

The NRD has started the process of working with landowners impacted by the Buck Creek Watershed site to obtain the easements required to construct this 144,000 cubic yard dam near Peru. Work has begun to obtain permits that are required from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the Corps of Engineers prior to construction. It is hoped that construction of the dam will begin in 2009 and require about four to six months to complete.

Plans for a community based watershed program above both the Buck and Duck Creek dam sites are also moving forward. This program will combine both federal and state funds to provide cost share opportunities to landowners desiring to install management practices that help reduce sediment and pesticide loading into reservoirs. It is hoped that funding from sources such as the federal 319 non-point source pollution program

and the Nebraska Environmental Trust can supplement EQIP contracts to offer an attractive incentive to participants. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has already made a commitment to provide some initial funding. Applications for additional funding will be submitted in September.

Landowners interested in participating should contact the NRCS office by October 1, 2008, to submit an EQIP application. Landowners in the watershed with active EQIP contracts may also be eligible to participate in the program. Practices such as tile terraces, grass waterways, small dams, and cropland to grass conversion will be considered. In the near future a steering committee made up of landowners from the Buck and Duck Creek Watershed will be developed to help guide the project.

From the Manager's Desk —→ *by Bob Hilske*

NRDs – Your Hometown Conservation Partner

Hey folks, this might be a great time to show some appreciation to your local NRD. Since 1972 we've been working hard to protect, conserve, and manage the natural resources of Nebraska. NRDs are the model of efficiency handling a wide variety of duties at the local level. Did you know that over 100 special purpose districts were consolidated into NRDs when they were created -- everything from soil conservation districts to mosquito abatement districts. (I think our mosquito program is limited to a bunch of swatting and a can of Deep Woods Off.)

In most states if you want information on drilling an irrigation well you'd have to drive to the big city to meet some guy wearing a tie who calls himself a farmer because he mows his yard with a John Deere riding mower. If you have to go to Lincoln, remember to bring your legal description; because I can assure you there's nobody up there that knows where the Hanson Place is south of Vesta. Not only do we know where the Hanson place is, we can probably tell you how Mrs. Hanson's apple pie did at the fair this year.

We've been pretty lucky in the Nemaha NRD; many of our counterparts out west have had to deal with some difficult and controversial issues over the past few years. NRDs in the Republican River basin are spending millions of dollars to buy up surface water irrigation rights to assure that Kansas gets their cut of the water in the river. Groundwater in the Republican is also being allocated to help protect stream flows in the river. The Upper Republican has actually been allocating irrigation water for 30 years! NRDs in the Central Platte basin now have to develop programs to manage a fully appropriated river, which means there is no new water for future development. They are hoping to start a water bank, which would allow water credits to be saved for future use -- a whole new meaning to your hometown bank. Sorry, no toasters for opening new accounts.

It's not easy being a board member these days; imagine having to tell your neighbor that their irrigation water will be limited or they cannot convert their dryland farm to irrigation. One of the best things about NRDs is that you get to vote for your representative on the board, and most of the time it is somebody you actually know. Nothing is more comforting than coming to the NRD meeting for a well permit variance and finding out that the board includes your wife's ex-husband and the neighbor whose hunting dog you just ran over.

I hope people appreciate how fortunate we are in Nebraska to have an entity such as the NRD that addresses a wide variety of resources concerns at the grassroots level. We don't always make everyone happy; but at least when you do have an issue with us, our office is right around the corner. We're always happy to see you stop in; and who knows, maybe we'll share a tip on who makes the best pie.

All Hazard Mitigation Planning Underway

Efforts to develop an all-hazards mitigation plan for Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties are underway. JEO Consulting was hired by the NRD to develop the comprehensive plan that will take over a year to complete. The purpose of the plan is to identify hazards that potentially threaten public safety and infrastructure and develop a plan that reduces or mitigates the potential problems. FEMA, which will fund 75% of the plan, believes that addressing these concerns prior to a disaster will reduce the money spent by the federal government on post disaster aid. Projects identified in the plan become eligible for further assistance from FEMA for their implementation. The NRD and five counties involved have agreed to share the balance of the cost to complete the plan. Portions of the NRD

located in Lancaster and Cass Counties will be included in a plan coordinated by the Lower Platte South NRD in Lincoln, and Gage County is included in the Lower Big Blue NRD plan.

A series of four public meetings designed to identify hazards will be held in September and October. This will be the first opportunity for JEO to meet with community officials and start the planning process. In the future a second round of meetings will focus on projects that may be implemented to help mitigate the identified hazards. Projects included in the plan are eligible for assistance from FEMA for installation.

Southeast Nebraska annually faces threats from tornados, flooding, ice, and snow. Over time a well conceived plan could help save lives and reduce costs to repair damages.

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GOOD NEWS!

The Entire Steamboat Trace Is Open!

Groundwater Management Plan Hearing

On Thursday, September 4, 2008, you will have an opportunity to express your opinion, ask questions, and hear about the recent changes made to the NRD's Groundwater Management Plan. A public hearing is scheduled that evening at 7:00 p.m. at the NRD's offices east of Tecumseh.

Changes to the plan include establishing criteria for well permits, determining groundwater quantity

management areas and setting rules and regulations for varying phase levels for such management, and establishing rules and regulations for water well spacing, groundwater transfers, certification of acres, use of flow meters, water use reports, and allocation of groundwater use. For a complete copy of the updated plan, rules, and regulations, contact the NRD office in Tecumseh or visit our website: www.nemahanrd.org.

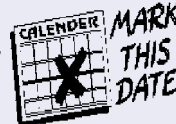
NRD Assists Camp Cornhusker Lake Project

The Nemaha NRD is providing assistance to the Cornhusker Council of the Boy Scouts of America to restore the aging lake at Camp Cornhusker south of Humboldt. Camp officials have already started draining the six-acre reservoir that has been used by thousands of campers over the years to incorporate swimming, canoeing and other water based activities into their summer camp experience. Over the next two years, the District will provide \$40,000 to \$50,000 towards the effort, which will include removing sediment and adding measures to reduce future siltation. Funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust will cover the majority of the cost to renovate the

lake. The present dam, which was built in the 1960's, was inspected and determined to be in sound condition allowing the project to focus on renovating the lake. Sediment removal may begin as early as this fall, and it is hoped that the project can be completed by mid 2009.

In the past the NRD has worked with communities, counties and many private landowners to construct small dams thought the District. This project is an outstanding opportunity for the NRD to invest in a project that will provide many future generations of Boy Scouts both water based recreation and educational experiences.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



September

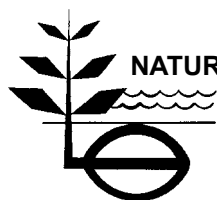
- 1 Labor Day, Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 4 Groundwater Management Plan Hearing, Tecumseh
- 9-11 Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island
- 11 NRD Board Meeting & Budget Hearing, Tecumseh
- 16 Muddy Creek Demo & Barbecue, near Johnson
- 23 Sericea Lespedeza Meeting/Lunch, Indian Cave State Park
- 24 Area Range Judging Contest (Location TBA)
- 29-30 NARD Annual Conference, Kearney
- 30 Natural Resources Commission Meeting, Kearney

October

- 7 Area Land Judging Contest, Otoe County
- 9 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 13 Columbus Day, Holiday, NRD Office Closed

November

- 4 Election Day
- 11 Veterans Day, Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 13 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 15-23 Steamboat Trace Trail Closed During Firearm Deer Season
- 27 Thanksgiving, Holiday, NRD Office Closed



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NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

62161 Hwy 136
TECUMSEH, NEBRASKA 68450

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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