



Nemaha Natural Resources District

# Insight



Winter 2009

## Nemaha NRD Board Undergoes Change, Elects New Officers

During their January meeting, the Nemaha NRD board of directors experienced a significant change in leadership. As a result of the 2008 general election, five directors exited the board in December; and four new members took their oaths of office in January. Directors who retired included Jeff Crunk, Nebraska City, David Hunzeker, Humboldt, Roland Meyer, Palmyra, Steve Sherrow, Nebraska City, and Chuck Starr, Bennet. New members on the Nemaha NRD board are:

**Charles Duryea, Humboldt** – Charlie Duryea farms/ranches on five-generation land in southwest Richardson County. He has been a rural carrier for the U.S. Postal Service for 30 years and holds a BS degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of Nebraska. Duryea's goals as a Nemaha NRD board member are to protect our soil and water resources and to represent the people of his area.

**Lynn Heng, Nebraska City** – Eight years as Assistant Manager and Manager of the Nemaha NRD plus six years with NRCS provide Lynn Heng with valuable background as he begins his stint as an NRD director. Currently Environmental Program Manager with the Nebraska Army National Guard, Heng earned a BS in Agronomy from UNL and an MS in Administration from Central Michigan University. Heng's goals are to continue promoting watershed development, watershed maintenance funding, groundwater management plan education, and promoting urban special projects.

**Steve Sugden, Douglas** – Representing the



**New directors L-R: Steve Sugden, Charles Duryea, Lynn Heng, and William Umland.**

members of Subdistrict 1 and all other districts as an active director on all projects is one of the goals for new board member Steve Sugden. He adds that he wants to make sure the voices of the members in the district are represented fairly. Sugden is a farmer in the Douglas area, a board member of the Farmers Coop-Waverly, and a member of the Adams American Legion and Adams American Lutheran Church. He also served with and is now retired from the Nebraska National Guard.

**William Umland, Palmyra** – As a retired employee of the Army Corps of Engineers Geotechnical Branch and a farmer, Bill Umland brings another measure of experience to the NRD board. Born and raised on a farm near Eagle, he also attended UNL. He hopes to be involved in further promoting the mission of the District – flood control, soil and water erosion, water quality, recreation where applicable,

educational functions and other items. Umland is a member of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church at Palmyra and a member of the Planning and Zoning Board for Otoe County.

One position is still unfilled as no one ran for the position in Subdistrict 4 that was previously held by Steve Sherrow. The Board will continue to accept written letters requesting appointment to this position, which is located within Nebraska City, until its March 12, 2009, meeting.

### New Officers Named

At their January meeting, the Board also voted the following as their new officers for 2009: Chair: Scott Kudrna (Auburn); Vice-Chair: Lisa Beethe (Elk Creek); Secretary-Treasurer: Rob Bohling (Johnson). Orval Gigstad (Syracuse) and Don Siske (Table Rock) will represent the Nemaha NRD on the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts as member and alternate, respectively.

## Employees added at NRCS Offices

In January two new employees were added to the NRCS offices in Auburn and Tecumseh through an agreement between the NRD and NRCS. Described as Project Technicians, the two employees were hired to help with administering, designing, and implementing conservation practices in the Buck and Duck Creek Watershed near Peru, Nebraska. Grant funding is available for these positions for about three years.

Tyler Weishahn from Western, Nebraska, and Craig Willoughby from Beatrice, were selected to fill the two openings. Weishahn graduated from UNL in December, 2008, with a degree in Fish and Wildlife and has worked for the Lower Big Blue NRD and DEQ. Willoughby has an ag engineering degree and has been in the industrial engineering field for 30 years.

At the Falls City NRCS office, another vacancy was recently filled. Amanda Hartman will start March 9 as the NRD Clerk in that office. She is a native of Falls City who most recently has worked as the secretary for the Zion United Church of Christ and The First Christian Church. A graduate of Falls City High School, she also attended UNL and Methodist College of Nursing-Omaha.

## Parks Vehicle Entry Permits for Sale

If you're planning a trip to Kirkman's Cove northwest of Humboldt, Iron Horse Trail Lake northwest of DuBois, or Wirth Brothers Lake north of Tecumseh this year, you might want to get your vehicle entry permit soon. Annual permits purchased before April 1 are just \$10; after April 1 the price increases to \$12. One additional permit may be purchased at \$6 for a vehicle titled to the same owner. Permits expire December 31 regardless of the date of purchase and are required for all motorized vehicles entering the parks. Infrequent visitors to the parks might find a two-day permit, which is available for purchase at each park for \$5, more appropriate.

Over the past ten years that the permits have been required, the nearly \$80,000 collected has helped with several improvements at the parks. Another concrete restroom is in the plans this spring for Kirkman's Cove, and Iron Horse Trail Lake will undergo lake renovations later this year and next year.

To get your 2009 annual permits, contact the Nemaha NRD in Tecumseh at 402-335-3325; or print the application from our website [www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org), mail to the NRD, and receive your permits by return mail.

## All Hazard Mitigation Planning

The District continues to work on the development of an all-hazard mitigation plan for five counties in southeast Nebraska, which is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Counties, communities, and other entities participating in the planning process are encouraged to attend a second round of public meetings that will be held during the month of March. All of the following meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m.:

- March 11<sup>th</sup> – Nemaha NRD in Tecumseh
- March 16<sup>th</sup> – OPPD Office, Syracuse
- March 18<sup>th</sup> – Fire Hall, Humboldt
- March 31<sup>st</sup> – 4-H Building, Auburn

The meetings will provide all the entities participating in the plan an opportunity to see the initial draft including the information that will be included as part of their portion of the plan. If a community in Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, or Richardson County has not taken the opportunity to participate in the plan and is interested in doing so, they are still encouraged to attend. Once completed the plan will provide a vehicle for governmental entities to obtain funding from FEMA to construct projects, develop programs, or purchase equipment that will help reduce impacts caused by natural disasters.

## Focus on Pheasants Initiative (FOP)

Landowners with land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) now have the opportunity to improve the habitat quality of their site at no cost to them. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) and Pheasants Forever, are working with the USDA to offer the Focus On Pheasants (FOP) Initiative. The initiative's goals are to improve current CRP and grassland conditions to benefit wildlife. The FOP initiative is targeting sites in the southwest corner of Johnson County and is currently enrolling landowners. A complete story can be found on the NNRD website, [www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org) or contact Jake Holt at 402-471-5413 or 308-730-1750.

## Open Fields and Waters Program Enrollment

Landowners now have an opportunity to enroll their lands, lakes, ponds, rivers and streams in the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's new Open Fields and Waters Program. They are eligible to receive payment for allowing public walk-in hunting and fishing on those areas. The Open Fields and Waters Program allows enrollment of land types not currently allowed in the Conservation Reserve Program-Management Access Program (CRP-MAP).

The statewide, two-year pilot program allows landowners to enroll qualifying lands and waters for one or two years. Hunters and anglers will be allowed access to enrolled lands and waters beginning in September, 2009.

For the lands portion, the new program is focused on sites that must have a core of mature woodland or quality wetland hunting habitat, which will complement the grassland/upland game focus of the existing CRP-MAP. However, land cannot be enrolled in both CRP-MAP and the Open Fields and Waters Program at the same time.

The program divides the state into two zones. The program's primary target area, which includes lands near large population centers and along the Platte River, will offer higher rates for public access and will receive more staff emphasis for enrollment. Lands enrolled elsewhere will be offered a reduced rate. Landowners may be paid as much as \$12 per acre for enrolling high quality woodlands or wetlands in the program's target area and allowing hunter access to their land during all hunting seasons. The payment to landowners who enroll lakes or ponds in the program for fishing access will be \$250 for bodies of water up to one acre and an additional \$40 per acre for larger waters. Access to streams and rivers bordered by private land will be paid at the rate of \$750 per mile for cold water trout streams and rivers, and \$500 per mile for warm water. Other rates will be paid depending on the quality and type of habitat enrolled in the program and the types of hunting permitted on the land.

More information about the Open Fields and Waters Program can be found on the Commission's Web site at [www.OutdoorNebraska.org](http://www.OutdoorNebraska.org).

## What's New with Water

### Chemigation Training Certification

Friday March 13th from 9 am – 12 pm

#### NRD Office

- Initial Certification Fee \$20.00 (includes notebook)
- Recertification Fee \$15.00 (notebook not included)
- Instructor – Gary Lesoing, Nemaha County Extension (402) 274-4755
- Additional information & training dates throughout the state can be found at <http://www.deq.state.ne.us/Chemig.nsf/Pages/Chemig> & study materials at <http://nerec.unl.edu/chemigation.shtml>

### Groundwater Management Plan Update

- On February 1st, 2009, the District's revised Groundwater Management Rules and Regulations became effective. The new rules and regulations provide for a three-phase system of management areas addressing groundwater quantity.
- A phase triggering mechanism was developed based upon the percentage of change in the District's spring static groundwater level measurements in comparison with each well's upper elevation of principle aquifer saturated thickness. If the static water level reaches or exceeds an established percentage of decline for a two consecutive year period, an elevated phase area will be delineated based upon the extent of the aquifer decline.

• **Phase I Groundwater Management Area (GWMA)** encompasses the entire District and requires a well permit be applied for and approved prior to construction of any water well designed and constructed to pump greater than 50 gallons per minute (gpm). The application must also be accompanied by a well driller's testhole log describing the geology of the proposed well location. Testholes do not require any permit prior to drilling. Wells requiring a permit must also observe a minimum 1,000 foot spacing from any other existing well pumping greater than 50 gpm. The District has up to 60 days to approve or deny the application, and any permits received the week of the regularly scheduled monthly Board of Directors meeting will automatically be tabled until the following month. Approved permit holders agree to allow the District to collect a GPS location point and a one-time water sample within 18 months after the well is registered with the Department of Natural Resources.

• **Phase II GWMA**s were established in areas of the District where the thickness of the principle aquifer is shown to be absent or very thin by the UNL Conservation & Survey Division maps. Well permits requested in these areas of the District must follow all the Phase I GWMA requirements. Wells approved will be required to have a fully functioning flowmeter installed prior to use, agree to provide an annual flowmeter use report, and agree to allow the well to be added to the District's Observation Well Monitoring Network. All existing wells pumping greater than 50 gpm in these areas are encouraged to install flowmeters.

• **Phase III GWMA**s – **No Phase III** areas are currently designated in the District. Any area of the District that becomes elevated to a Phase III level of groundwater management shall be closed to the issuance of new well permits. Replacement wells shall be designed and constructed to not pump greater than the well being replaced. All existing wells pumping greater than 50 gpm shall be required to have a flowmeter installed and submit annual use reports. Also the District may require all wells in the area pumping greater than 50 gpm to have the number of irrigated acres certified and comply with an annual allocation of groundwater to be pumped.

*This is a summary of the changes made; a complete copy of the District's Groundwater Management Plan and associated Rules and Regulations is available upon request and can be found on the District website, [www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org).*

## From the Manager's Desk → by Bob Hilske

### Please Raise Your Right Hand and Repeat After Me

January board meetings in odd years take on additional importance for the Nemaha NRD. It's the meeting where we get to swear in the board members that were elected in November. We like to think of it as our own little version of the presidential inauguration minus 2 million people, CNN, and a fancy ball that runs late into the night. The acceptance speeches are usually limited to "where do I sit?"

Most of the time swearing in a new board really isn't that big a deal because we only have one or two new members. This year was a little different because we have four new board members plus a fifth rookie when we can find someone to fill a vacant seat from Nebraska City. As a new member it takes a while to figure out where you fit in and who you need to make friends with. It's a good way to hone your communication skills, because unlike grade school you can't simply make friends by trading your prized Twinkie for a bologna sandwich at lunch. Having as many new members as we have this year we have to take it slow to help get their feet on the ground. We show them where the restroom is and dazzle them with our 25-year old "trick" coffee pot -- the one that sounds like a nuclear reactor ready to explode but only warm, clear water comes out. It is sort of our hint that we need to budget for a new one.

As I noted, we are still trying to find someone to fill a vacant seat in Nebraska City. For some reason many people prefer to be appointed versus going through the election process. I don't know if it is because they are worried they'll have to mount a big mudslinging campaign or it's just the fear that they may find out how few friends they really have. I'd like to tell you that there is so much interest in serving on the board that we can auction off the seat to the highest bidder like they do for senate seats in Illinois, but to be honest we're happy if a couple of folks throw their names in the hat.

Over the past few years, I've heard several officials, including the Governor, say that NRD board members may have the toughest elected position in the state. NRDs have been given more and more responsibility over the years meaning that board members are called on to make difficult decisions often times impacting friends and neighbors. You hear or read a lot about NRDs having to impose regulations on water users to protect that resource for the future or constructing a big flood control dam to protect the safety of the public, but it goes beyond that. Most of the decisions NRD boards make don't get much press, but they still are important. Their decisions impact tax levies, provide help to cities and counties, or impact the lives of NRD employees and their families. That's the easy stuff; once in a while they have to make a really tough decision such as do we buy a Chevy, Ford, or Dodge pick-up. It takes more than a Twinkie to get a board member to change their mind on their favorite pick-up.

## Buck & Duck Creek Flood Control Dams

Planning and design work continues to move forward on the Buck and Duck Creek flood control dams near Peru, Nebraska. Design work on the Buck Creek structure is complete, and the NRD is presently in the process of securing the necessary permits and obtaining the land rights on property that will be impacted by the project. It is hoped that the project will be

ready for construction in the fall of this year. Design work is continuing on Duck Creek; and in an effort to reduce sediment loading into the reservoir, NRCS engineers have been designing two sediment basins that would be installed just above the 60-acre reservoir. Construction on Duck Creek is tentatively scheduled to begin in 2010.

## Buck & Duck Creek Watershed Management Project

One of the major benefits of the Buck and Duck Creek flood control project is the District's ability to obtain funding to help with the implementation of land treatment practices above the structures. Practices such as terraces, waterways, grade stabilization structures, and small ponds will reduce sediment loading into the large dams and reduce contamination from other sources such as fertilizer, pesticides, and bacteria. The District has secured funding through the federal 319 Non-point Source Pollution program and the Nebraska Environmental Trust for the implementation of practices in the watershed. Most of the funds

will be used to supplement EQIP contracts thereby assuring a minimum of 75% cost share assistance for landowners that participate.

The Buck and Duck Watershed Council, a group consisting of landowners in the watershed, was formed as a steering committee to assist the NRD with implementing the watershed plan. The Council will provide input on determining eligible practices, help establish cost share funding levels, and help promote the program. An implementation plan should be completed in the next few months. Landowners interested in participating in the program must apply for EQIP funds to qualify for additional assistance.

## NEMAHA NRD STAFF

Bob Hilske, Manager  
Scott Nelson, Assistant Manager  
Jane Kuhl, Administrative Assistant  
Allison Caspers, Administrative Assistant  
Lisa Bartels, Secretary  
Chuck Wingert,  
Water Resources Manager  
Charlie Pierce,  
Water Resources Technician  
Steve Bartels, Field Representative  
Mark McDonald, Field Representative  
Vernon Speers, Jr., Field Representative  
Aaron Stalder, Resources Specialist  
Tomas Chalé Aké, Projects Crew Leader  
Shawn Kreienhop, Resources Specialist

## NRD STAFF IN NRCS OFFICES

Deb Kreienhop, Auburn  
Glenda Bates, Tecumseh  
Jim Masters, Syracuse  
Amanda Hartman, Falls City  
Kathy Harlow, Pawnee City  
Tyler Weishahn, Auburn  
Craig Willoughby, Tecumseh

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Albrecht, Nebraska City  
Lisa Beethe, Elk Creek (**Vice-Chair**)  
Rob Bohling, Johnson (**Sec.-Treas.**)  
Charles Duryea, Humboldt  
Orval Gigstad, Syracuse  
Ted Godemann, Falls City  
Lynn Heng, Nebraska City  
Ron Heskett, Nemaha  
Scott Kudrna, Auburn (**Chair**)  
Jim Rush, Tecumseh  
Don Siske, Table Rock  
Mike Speece, Auburn  
J. Duane Sugden, Sterling  
Steve Sugden, Douglas  
William Umland, Palmyra  
Bruce Walker, Falls City  
Dan Watermeier, Syracuse  
Paul Weber, Firth  
Tom White, Falls City  
Jim Wirth, Nebraska City

## NEMAHA NRD OFFICE:



62161 Hwy 136  
Tecumseh, NE 68450  
Phone: (402) 335-3325  
Fax: (402) 335-3265  
www.nemahanrd.org

# Iron Horse Trail Lake Restoration Project Could Begin This Spring

This project may go down as one of the fastest moving in the history of the NRD. In January the NRD Board agreed to move ahead with the complete restoration of Iron Horse Reservoir southeast of Pawnee City.

Plans include removing over 200,000 cubic yards of sediment from the 80-acre reservoir, constructing a large sediment basin, and constructing a number of unique fish habitat and angler access facilities in the lake. Although the total cost of the project is estimated at \$3 million, most of the cost will be paid by aquatic habitat funds, federal Sport Fish Restoration funds and federal 319 funds. The NRD's contribution is expected to be less than \$120,000.

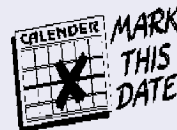
All of the material removed will be done mechanically versus dredging. This will require lowering the lake 14 feet to expose the sediment for removal. The District plans to begin drawing down the lake in the spring of this year, and it will take two to three months for the lake to drop the entire 14 feet. As the lake level drops, boat access to the lake will be limited. The amount of water left in the lake after it is drawn down is uncertain; however, it is not expected that there will be a large single pool of water remaining. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has suspended some of the fishing regulations for the area for this year.

#### Changes are as follows:

- ◆ No length limits
- ◆ Bag limits still intact
- ◆ Stranded fish may be removed by hand nets or other means
- ◆ Fish taken may not be used to stock private ponds

The NRD does plan to work with Game and Parks to move some of the larger desired sport fish to other public lakes in southeast Nebraska. All the camping, picnic, shelter, and restroom facilities will be open in 2009; but once work on the lake begins, the entire recreation area will be closed to the public. It is expected that the area will be closed during the entire 2010 season.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### March

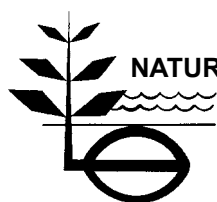
- 3 Southeast Regional Envirothon, Beatrice
- 3 NRD Water Programs Conference, Kearney
- 5 Prescribed Burn Training Workshop, Tecumseh ([www.NebraskaPF.com](http://www.NebraskaPF.com))
- 10 Water Celebration @ Peru State College
- 12 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh (7:00 p.m.)
- 13 Chemigation Training, NRD Office, Tecumseh
- 23-25 NARD Washington, DC, Conference

### April

- 9 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh (8:00 p.m.)
- 22 Earth Day
- 24 Arbor Day
- 26-5/3 Soil & Water Stewardship Week

### May

- 2 Nebraska Envirothon, Ponca State Park
- 14 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh (8:00 p.m.)
- 16-17 Free Park Permit Weekend @ Nemaha NRD Parks
- 25 Memorial Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed



**nemaha**

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

62161 Hwy 136  
TECUMSEH, NEBRASKA 68450

### Stories This Issue:

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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