



Nemaha Natural Resources District

# Insight



Winter 2008

## Steamboat Trace Experiences Weather Woes - Flooding, Wind, and Ice

Weather was not kind to the Steamboat Trace in 2007 as flooding, wind, and ice caused portions of the 22-mile long trail to be closed at various times of the year. The latest challenge took place in December when ice storms caused trees and tree limbs to fall on and litter almost seven miles of the trail in Nemaha County. District crews started cleaning up the trail in January, but it could take 3 to 4 weeks of work to remove all the debris. Although a considerable amount of damage occurred, the NRD did extensive pruning and scrub tree removal earlier in the year, which probably reduced the debris along some stretches of the trail. The District is looking into applying for federal disaster aid to help cover the cost of the cleanup work.

The NRD still plans to resurface 3.5 miles of trail between Brownville and Peru that were damaged during spring, 2007, flooding. Approximately \$48,000 in disaster aid funds from FEMA will be used to help pay for the cost of resurfacing that segment of the trail. Lottman-Carpenter Construction of Diller, Nebraska has been contracted to do the surfacing work.



## NRCS to Receive Funding for Buck & Duck Creek

Good news was received in late December when it was announced that \$2.47 million will be included in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service budget to complete the design and construction of two flood control dams on Buck Creek and Duck Creek near Peru. For the past year the NRD has been working with Nebraska's congressional delegation in Washington, D.C. to get funding included in the FY2008 budget. Support from entities such as Nemaha County, the Five Rivers RC&D, Peru Drainage District, City of Peru, and Peru State College was essential in securing the funding. A considerable amount of work was also done by NRCS to get the project into a position to make the funding request possible

Over the next six months, the NRD plans to begin the land rights acquisition process for Buck Creek with hopes that construction on the dam could begin in early 2009. Because of the complexity of the soils and geology at the site, it could take as long as 18 months to complete the dam. The dam planned for Duck Creek would be built in 2010 with recreation facilities completed in 2011.

In addition to the federal funding, over \$1 million will be required from other sources to complete the entire project. The District is already in the process of submitting a grant application to the Nebraska Resources Development Fund to cover a portion of the non-federal component. An agreement was also recently reached with Nemaha County to work together to address several associated county road issues. Nemaha County is applying for federal funding to assist with raising two county roads and replacing several bridges that will be impacted by the project.

The Buck and Duck Creek Watershed project has been discussed and planned for over 20 years. Once completed it will provide an estimated \$355,000 in annual flood damage reduction and recreation benefits to the Peru area. The District greatly appreciates the support provided for this project as well as the help that Senator Nelson's, Senator Hagel's, and Congressman Fortenberry's offices provided in acquiring funding for the project.

**The public is invited to an informational meeting Thursday, February 7, at 7:00 p.m. at the Peru City Hall to hear more about these projects.**

## Election Filing Deadlines

Deadlines for those interested in filing for election to the Nemaha NRD board of directors are quickly approaching. **Incumbent Filing Deadline:** Friday, February 15, 2008. **Non-Incumbent Filing Deadline:** Monday, March 3, 2008

NRD directors are elected through the primary and/or general elections for terms of four years. Candidates must be registered voters. The Nemaha NRD is divided into 10 subdistricts represented by two directors, who are elected alternately in even numbered years. Directors meet monthly, as prescribed by law, and receive per diem, mileage, and reimbursement of expenses. Incumbents whose terms expire this year include:

### Subdistrict    Current NRD Director

- |    |                               |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 1  | Charles (Chuck) Starr, Bennet |
| 2  | Roland Meyer, Palmyra         |
| 3  | Jeff Crunk, Nebraska City     |
| 4  | Steve Sherrow, Nebraska City  |
| 5  | Orval Gigstad, Syracuse       |
| 6  | Robbie Bohling, Johnson       |
| 7  | Mike Speece, Auburn           |
| 8  | David Hunzeker, Humboldt      |
| 9  | Tom White, Falls City         |
| 10 | Ted Godemann, Falls City      |

If you're interested in filing and need more information or a candidate filing form, contact the Nemaha NRD in Tecumseh (335-3325). Forms must be filed at the Secretary of State's office by close of business on the dates listed above.

## Hazard Mitigation Planning is a New Concept Promoted by FEMA Throughout the USA

Hazard mitigation planning is a new concept promoted by FEMA throughout the United States. As a result of major disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, the 1993 midwest floods, and fires in California, FEMA is looking at ways to mitigate damage caused by future, similar catastrophic events. For every dollar invested in preventing or reducing damage, it is estimated the federal government could save up to \$4 in after-the-event disaster aid. To get the concept of mitigation off the ground, states and counties are being asked to develop all-hazard mitigation plans. Because of the regional nature of natural resources districts, Nebraska will be somewhat unique as NRDs have been asked to work with multiple counties to develop a multi-county, regional mitigation plan.

Meetings have been held between the Nemaha NRD and officials from Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties to begin the planning process. In addition, the District has been cooperating with the Lower Platte South NRD in Lincoln and the Lower Big Blue NRD in Beatrice agreeing to allow them to spearhead the planning in the portions of Lancaster, Gage, and Cass Counties that lie in the Nemaha NRD.

The Nemaha NRD recently received approval for \$125,800 in planning assistance from FEMA, which will cover 75 percent of the local cost to create the plan. The remaining 25 percent will be shared by the counties and the NRD. Public entities including counties, communities, schools districts, and rural water districts will have an opportunity to include projects in the plan that would help mitigate damage from future catastrophic events. Numerous potential mitigation projects could be included in the plan. The NRD may want to include flood control structures; a school may plan to construct a tornado safe area; or a community would like to address problems with trees impacting power lines or streets. Any project identified in the plan will become eligible for future funding from FEMA.

Once agreements are finalized with the five participating counties, the NRD will select a private consultant to help develop the plan. It is anticipated plan development will begin in May of this year and would take 18-24 months to complete.

## 2008 NRD Park Entry Permits on Sale Now

Annual permits are now on sale for visitors of three of the Nemaha NRD's public recreation areas: Kirkman's Cove northwest of Humboldt, Iron Horse Trail Lake northwest of DuBois, and Wirth Brothers Lake north of Tecumseh. If you purchase your permit before April 1, it's only \$10; after April 1 the price increases to \$12. One additional permit may be purchased at \$6 for each original, full-price permit purchased; both vehicles must be titled to the same owner. Permits are good through December 31 regardless of the date of purchase and are required for all motorized vehicles entering the parks. For infrequent visitors to the parks, two-day permits are available at each park for \$5.

Since the inception of the permits in 1999, about \$70,000 has been collected. Improvements to the parks during that time include three new, concrete restrooms, a new boat dock, concrete group picnic area, beach renovations, replacing wooden steps at Iron Horse with concrete steps, replacing old picnic tables with new, pedestal tables,



**Nemaha  
NRD  
Annual Park  
Permit**

**#00000**

**Expires Jan. 1, 2009**

and the addition of electrical hookups and a light near the camping area at Kirkman's Cove.

To get your 2008 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.

## Big Muddy Creek Project Moving Along

The first six months of this three-year project have involved identifying specific project sites and completing design engineering for projects located in a 55 square mile area of the upper reaches of the Big Muddy Creek Watershed near the town of Johnson. Sixteen projects are planned for completion by June, 2010, and are aimed at protecting public infrastructure and taming flows of Big Muddy Creek to lessen existing and future streambed and streambank erosion impacts.

Nine grade control structures with drainage areas ranging from 50 to 300 acres have been approved and include the following landowners: Phil Bohl, Dave Borrenpohl, Clyde LaVigne, Jerry Oestmann, Duane Caspers, Larry Bohlken, Robert McGinley, Don Mathers, Tim & Tom Teten. Landowners will receive a minimum of 75 percent cost share towards construction and will receive free engineering services. Structures for Phil Bohl and Dave Borrenpohl are planned for construction this coming spring.

Seven joint projects between Nemaha County and the NRD are planned. The projects include constructing six weirs below existing county road bridges for protection and replacing a degraded county bridge with a road dam, which will control 600 drainage acres and create a private lake on property owned by Ray Caspers. Nemaha County is currently negotiating land rights for these projects and plans on two weir projects on 730 and 728 roads, respectively, near Johnson to be constructed this coming spring. Landowners associated with the two weir projects include Genevieve Michel and Lowell Hahn.

Funding partners for this \$1 million plus project and their contributions include the Nebraska Environmental Trust - \$566,000; Nemaha NRD - \$209,000; NRCS (EQIP) - \$150,000; Nemaha County - \$132,500; Big Muddy Creek Landowners - \$70,000. As these projects are completed, the Nemaha NRD plans to hold two or three demonstration field days to inform and educate the public about this project.

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

### FEMA, Thanks for the Help, but...

There are certain times in your life when you get a clear sign that things may not be going as well as you had hoped. Maybe it's when you realize that you know all the attorneys in town on a first name basis or you walk into the local café and see your girlfriend sitting in a booth with the quarterback of the football team. Not exactly signals that you are going to be titling your annual Christmas letter "My Favorite Year". In 2007 I learned that asking your phone company to include the number of FEMA on your "Friends and Family" call list is another one of those ominous signs.

You've heard of FEMA -- the Federal Emergency Management Agency -- the folks that took all the heat for what happened in New Orleans after Katrina. I can tell you that FEMA employees need some loving on occasion. They should probably be on that Dirty Jobs TV show, not because they keep Proctor and Gamble in the black selling laundry detergent; rather they have to work with people at times when they are depressed and frustrated.

The staff at FEMA who do all the post disaster work are fine people, but I'm not exactly excited to see them anymore. In the spring I had the pleasure of working with them on getting funding to help repair damage to the Steamboat Trace from flooding. They came through and provided us money to help resurface 3.5 miles of trail between Peru and Brownville. Just when we thought we had that disaster behind us, Mother Nature dealt us a nasty blow as December ice storms dropped trees and tree limbs on almost seven miles of the same trail. Time to make another call to FEMA. Maybe building the trail on top of a hill in the middle of a pasture would have been a better plan. At least we never started the resurfacing work we originally wanted to do in the fall.

Even though it has been cold and snowy, our staff sharpened up the chainsaws, borrowed an industrial strength wood chipper, and have worked hard to clean up the mess. Running an eight-inch log through a wood chipper is pretty exciting for about five minutes; then it becomes monotonous work. Not to mention it has the same impact on your hearing as sitting through a heavy metal rock concert at full volume. We've set simple goals for this project: get the trail cleaned up by spring, and make sure that the only limbs that go through the chipper are of the wood variety.

Hopefully when the leaves start popping out and the red buds are in bloom along the Trace, all trail enthusiasts will notice is the new surface and a big pile of sawdust along the trail. There are donation boxes along the trail for you to help the cause and show your appreciation for all the work our staff did this winter. Last year random trail users offered up over \$1,000 in monetary love. It has been put to good use.

As far as my good friends at FEMA go, you folks do a great job; and you don't deserve all the bad press you have received in the past. Unfortunately I'll have to admit, you're sort of like running into that old girlfriend who took off with the quarterback; the visit was nice, but let's not do this again very soon.

## 2008 Trees for Sale Until March 1

Several species of conifers, deciduous trees, and shrubs are still available if you act now! All are priced at \$0.70 each, plus handling charges and sales tax; you must order in quantities of 25/species, and payment is required to reserve your order. Seedlings are usually available around the first part of April and delivered to one of five locations in the District for you to pick up on a designated date.

Call the NRD today at 335-3325 for more information or to place your order.



### NEMAHA NRD STAFF

Bob Hilske, Manager  
Scott Nelson, Assistant Manager  
Jane Kuhl, Administrative Assistant  
Allison Caspers,  
Administrative Secretary  
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  
Rachel Shafer, Falls City  
Kathy Harlow, Pawnee City

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Albrecht, Nebraska City  
Lisa Beethe, Elk Creek  
Rob Bohling, Johnson  
Jeff Crunk, Nebraska City  
Orval Gigstad, Syracuse  
Ted Godemann, Falls City (**Chair**)  
Ron Heskett, Nemaha  
David Hunzeker, Humboldt  
Scott Kudrna, Auburn (**Vice-Chair**)  
Roland Meyer, Palmyra  
Jim Rush, Tecumseh  
Steven Sherron, Nebraska City  
Don Siske, Table Rock  
Mike Speece, Auburn  
Charles Starr, Bennet  
J. Duane Sugden, Sterling (**Sec.-Treas.**)  
Bruce Walker, Falls City  
Dan Watermeier, Syracuse  
Paul Weber, Firth  
Tom White, Falls City  
Jim Wirth, Nebraska City

### NEMAHA NRD OFFICE:



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# Water Related Meetings at the Nemaha NRD:

## 1. Chemigation Certification

– March 14<sup>th</sup> from 9 am – 12 pm

- Initial Certification Fee \$20.00 (includes notebook)-pre-registration suggested
- 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>

## 2. NAWMDN Seminar

– February 27<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm

- Nebraska Agricultural Water Management Demonstration Network (NAWMDN)
- UNL Extension will present new technologies and tools used in demonstration projects in Nebraska farmers' fields that help conserve water and energy resources associated with irrigated crop production.
- Additional information available at <http://bse.unl.edu/Research/WaterMgmt.shtml>
- There is no fee to attend

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## February

- 5-6 NARD Legislative Conference, Lincoln
- 7 Duck Creek/Buck Creek Public Meeting, Peru
- 10-13 NACD Annual Meeting, Reno, NV
- 14 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 15 Incumbent Filing Deadline
- 18 President's Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 26 Forestry Workshop, Falls City Senior Center
- 27 Nebraska Agricultural Water Management Demonstration Network Seminar, NRD Office, Tecumseh

## March

- 3 Non-Incumbent Filing Deadline
- 4 Water Celebration @ Peru State College
- 4 Southeast Regional Envirothon, Beatrice
- 10-12 NARD Washington, DC, Conference
- 13 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 14 Chemigation Certification, Nemaha NRD, Tecumseh

## April

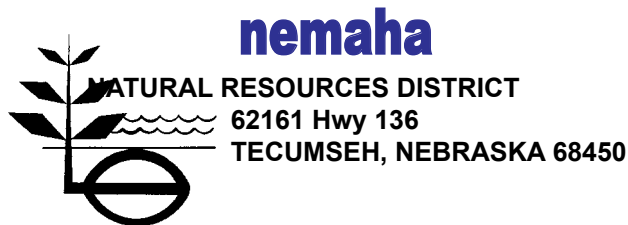
- 10 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 25 Arbor Day, NRD Office Open
- 27-5/4 Soil & Water Stewardship Week

## Forestry Workshop February 26 Features Storm Damage Tips

A free workshop scheduled Tuesday, February 26, in Falls City will focus on how to attend to trees damaged by recent ice storms in the area. The Nemaha NRD is hosting the workshop with assistance from the Nebraska Forest Service.

No fee is required, but participants are asked to pre-register by calling the NRD office at 335-3325. The workshop runs from 9:00-Noon and will be at the Senior Center located at 221 W. 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Falls City.

Watch your local newspapers for more details!



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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