



Nemaha Natural Resources District

Insight



Spring 2010

Steamboat Trace Attracts Media Attention

This spring the Steamboat Trace trail has been getting national and local publicity for its beauty and unique features. *Rails to Trails* magazine, a national publication dedicated to railbanked trails, highlighted the trail in their spring/summer 2010 edition, which included a story by *Omaha World Herald* writer Henry Cordes and photos by the nationally renowned outdoor photographer, Joel Sartore. Cordes based the article on a recent ride he completed with a friend; and after noting the diversity of people he saw using the Trace he wrote, "...the Steamboat truly is a trail for everyone." He also pointed out that the trail allows you to see much of the same flora and fauna that Lewis and Clark witnessed during their explorations over 200 years ago. You can read the entire article at www.railstotrails.org/news/magazine.

Nebraska Educational Television also featured the trail in a segment of its Nebraska Stories series. The five-minute program features some background on the trail particularly focusing on the unique tree species that can be found along the trail. The segment still airs occasionally on NET, and you can also watch it at www.netnebraska.org/extras/nebraskastories. It is part of episode 106.



Trail detour around Missouri River bridge construction at Brownville.

[netnebraska.org/extras/nebraskastories](http://www.netnebraska.org/extras/nebraskastories). It is part of episode 106.

The Steamboat Trace is 22 miles long and runs from the OPPD power station south of Nebraska City to Brownville, Nebraska. Construction is presently underway on the Highway 136 bridge at Brownville, so trail users need to follow the marked detour.

2010 Construction in the Nemaha NRD

Summer construction and renovation plans include the following:

Big Muddy Creek Watershed Projects in Nemaha County

- 1.) Don Mathers grade control structure
- 2.) Davis Gerdes grade control structure
- 3.) Ray Caspers road dam

Small Dam Cost-Share Program Projects

- 1.) Ed Bruening dam in Johnson County
- 2.) Randy Miller dam in Gage County

Renovation Projects

- 1.) Speckmann-Ottemann structure in Nemaha County (replace principle spillway pipe)

Park Permits Required at Kirkman's Cove, Wirth Brothers Lake

Visitors to Kirkman's Cove and Wirth Brothers Lake this summer are reminded that a vehicle entry permit is required at each of these public recreation areas. Annual permits cost \$12 and are assigned to a specific vehicle of your choice; one additional permit may be purchased for \$6 for a second vehicle titled to the same owner. Two-day permits are also available at a cost of \$5 and are available at the parks. Annual permits may be purchased from the NNRD office in Tecumseh in person, by mail, or via the NRD's website, www.nemahanrd.org. Annual permits may also be requested through the temporary permit envelopes at the parks.



Funds collected from NRD park permits go directly back to the parks to help with maintenance and development. NRD crews recently replaced deteriorating shingles on outhouses and picnic shelters with tin roofs.

Iron Horse Lake Renovation Project

Renovation of Iron Horse Trail Lake is currently ahead of schedule. Shanahan Bros. Construction battled unfavorable weather conditions all winter long but was able to complete nearly half of the planned renovation work that includes constructing a main sediment basin, removing 175,000 cubic yards of sediment from the upper end of the lake, and constructing three islands. Remaining work to be completed includes constructing several fishing jetties and fishing access points along with a boat mooring island near the RV camping area. Shanahan expects construction to be complete by the end of this fall versus the spring of 2011 as originally planned.

Due to Shanahan's favorable construction bid and the approval of a \$46,500 grant by the Nebraska Environmental Trust to reduce the District's share of renovation expenses, the District's board of directors is looking at several potential recreation development upgrades to the park. Options include bringing power into the park for a dozen or so electrical RV hookups, constructing new, primitive RV/tent camping spots within a wooded area that will provide needed shade as well as a beautiful view of the lake, a new restroom in the day use area, a primitive hiking trail connecting the RV area to the day use area, and installing vegetative barriers that will prevent aquatic vegetation from growing near the swimming beach. Currently these improvements are being prioritized by the board as not all of these upgrades can be incorporated into one budget year.

As a reminder, Iron Horse Trail Lake is closed and will remain closed until all renovation and recreational upgrade work is complete.



Concrete pipe for renovation project stockpiled near RV camping area at Iron Horse Trail Lake

Buck and Duck Creek Update

It is hoped construction can begin this summer on the Buck Creek dam near Peru. Trees have already been removed from the site; and once all permitting is completed, work on the actual construction of the 145,000 cubic yard structure will begin. The District expects to bid out the dam in the next 60 days.

One of the major components of the Buck and Duck Creek Project was the development of a watershed project to provide incentives to landowners above the dam sites to install management practices that help reduce sedimentation into the reservoirs. With the help of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Environmental Protection Agency 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Program, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, and landowners, the project has been a huge success. Almost \$2 million in federal Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applications were approved through the initial sign-up, and it is estimated that in the end the total could approach \$3.5 million. This has been a very unique opportunity for landowners to access funding to install practices ranging from terraces to riparian filter strips. Landowners still interested in participating should contact the NRCS in Nemaha County.

Water Resources Department Updates

High Capacity Flow Meter Cost-Share Program

• The District currently has cost-share funds available from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund for flow meters for water wells pumping greater than 50 gpm within the District. The program covers 50 percent of the cost of a new flow meter up to a maximum of \$500. Approval is required prior to purchase. Contact the office for more information, or log on to our website and download the application.

Water Resources Summer Intern Hired

• The District is pleased to announce that Brandon Beethe of Elk Creek has been hired as this year's Water Resources Summer Intern. Brandon is currently a junior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln majoring in Diversified Agriculture. He will be assisting the District's Water Resources Department with surface and ground water sampling, groundwater level measurements, chemigation inspections, laboratory water analysis, well decommissioning, and GIS database entry.



Spring Groundwater Level Measurements

• A network of over 100 groundwater wells are measured biannually the first week of October and April. This spring's results, as expected, were mostly higher than those measured in the spring of 2009. An increase was indicated in 82% of the wells while 18% showed a decrease. Here's a breakdown of the data collected:

- 31 wells increased from no change to 1 foot
- 48 increased from 1 foot to 5 feet
- 8 were greater than 5 feet with the largest increase of 17 feet
- 14 wells showed declines ranging from no change to 1 foot
- 5 wells declined from 1 foot to a maximum of 3.16 feet

Toxic Algae & *E. coli* bacteria testing

• The District has begun the weekly collection of water samples from Kirkman's Cove and Wirth Brothers Lake swimming beaches. The samples are analyzed for *E. coli* bacteria in the District's water laboratory, and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) runs analysis for microcystin, the toxic algae toxin. The results of the tests are posted on Fridays on the NDEQ website (www.deq.state.ne.us) under Environmental Alerts. Additional information on safety precautions and potential health effects are also posted on that webpage.



From the Manager's Desk by Bob Hilske

Is it Really Spring?

You may not have noticed, but the past winter was a long one. Like everyone else the District had plenty of outdoor things on our list for those "nice" days we usually enjoy during the winter months. Since there were no "nice" days from December through March, our field staff spent most of their time plowing snow and confined to the shop trying to find things to do. One sign that cabin fever was at epidemic proportions is that every guy in the shop has had at least three new nicknames since fall. The guy they were calling "Groundhog" last October and "Headlight" in January is now known as "Jackhammer." I don't even ask questions anymore; I've found out it's best not to know.

Spring means things like tree planting, drilling grass, and getting those parks ready for the summer crowds. Tree planting has gone as well as can be expected. We've sold around 21,000 seedlings this year, and all but three lucky folks got their trees planted before the rains came. It is always amazing how Mother Nature knows to hold the rain off until just before you are done so you get to sit around worrying for two more weeks whether things will get planted.

The guys have been working hard on sprucing up Kirkman's Cove. In the spring we do things like put rock on roads, spray parking areas, fix picnic tables, and make sure the signs are in place. These are the important signs with the park rules on them; the ones people claim they never see when they are actually caught breaking a rule. Why do you suppose people can't see a big "No Camping" sign, yet if you put up a small barely legible sign that says "Free Food and Beer," the whole county shows up?

We aren't planning any major improvements for Kirkman's this year; I think we are going to get some things done at Iron Horse while it's closed. It's sort of a double-top-secret deal right now, but I am hearing some rumors of electric RV hookups at Iron Horse. The nearest power is almost a mile away; so if there's a good sale on extension cords at Home Depot this summer, things look promising!

Over the winter our crews try to do a lot of dam maintenance. Obviously that took a big hit this year. Our old beaver friends have been busy, and apparently they spent the winter huddled up in their huts laying out dam designs and applying for 404 permits. Once that snow started melting, it seemed like we were getting calls every other day about another dam that was plugged by our favorite rodents. We have a lot of dams that are beginning to show their age. Watersheds such as Brownell and Wilson Creek were completed in the 1950s and 1960s, so many dams have tubes that are rusted out and need to be replaced. Since we didn't opt for the extended warranty, we have to fix them on our own; and it can cost \$20,000 or more to install a new spillway tube. Amazingly the repair can often cost two or three times the original cost of the structure.

All in all, spring tends to be our busiest time of year. Just like a group of kids that have been cooped up in school, when the bell rings in the spring, the staff is excited to go out and get something done. I just hope we can put all that enthusiasm to good use before they change Jackhammer's nickname to "lazy" or "deadbeat".

All Hazard Mitigation Plan Completed

During the past 18 months, the NRD has been working with communities, counties, and other local entities in Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties to develop an All Hazard Mitigation Plan that meets FEMA requirements. The purpose of the plan is to identify natural hazards that impact lives and property and outline activities that could be put into place to reduce the damage caused by a future disaster. The plan was submitted to FEMA for review and was approved in April. Participating entities are now in a position to obtain grant funds through FEMA for projects they have identified within their jurisdictions. Some of the common hazards identified by participants included thunderstorms, tornados, winter storms, and flooding. Several communities are already considering requesting assistance from FEMA for funding. Backup generators, tornado shelters, weather radios, and sirens are some of the projects being discussed.

The District greatly appreciates all the help it received from counties and communities to develop the plan. County emergency managers in all five counties were particularly helpful in getting the plan completed. Anyone wanting more information on the plan may contact the NRD.

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
Brandon Beethe, Water Resources Intern
Doug Schmidt & Phil Vance,
Seasonal Maintenance

NRD STAFF IN NRCS OFFICES

Deb Kreienhop, Auburn
Glenda Bates, Tecumseh
Jim Masters, Syracuse
Amanda Hartman, Falls City
Kathy Harlow, Pawnee City
Technicians: Dan Gudenkauf, Brandon
Hunzeker, Misty Strayhorn, Delmar
Schmidt

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Dan Watermeier, Syracuse
Paul Weber, Firth
Tom White, Falls City
Jim Wirth, Nebraska City

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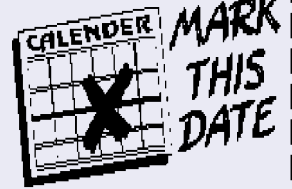
Participants at the 2008 WoW camp enjoy a boat ride.

“Watershed of Wonders” Set for June 16 at Kirkman’s Cove

The fifth edition of Watershed of Wonders is scheduled for Wednesday, June 16, 2010, returning to Kirkman’s Cove near Humboldt. This day camp is designed to provide natural resources education to youngsters ages 10-12 in a fun and safe atmosphere.

Participants this year will experience a boat ride on the lake, archery, water rockets, fishing instruction, geo-caching, and an amazing water cycle race. Sponsored by the Nemaha NRD, there is no charge to attend; but pre-registration is appreciated. To obtain a registration form or for more information, contact the Nemaha NRD at (402) 335-3325 or nnrđ@nemahanrd.org.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



June

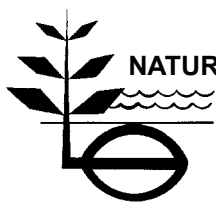
- 10 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 8 p.m.
- 16 Watershed of Wonders Day Camp @ Kirkman’s Cove
- 21-22 NARD Meeting & Tour of Nemaha River Basin

July

- 5 Independence Day Holiday Observed, NRD Office Closed
- 8 NNRD Board meeting, Tecumseh – 8 p.m.

August

- 1-7 Canon National Envirothon, Fresno, CA
- 12 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 8 p.m.



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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