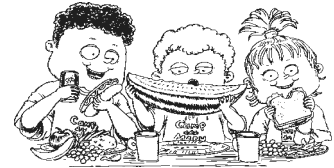


Nemaha Natural Resources District

Insight



Summer 2005

Steamboat Trace Bridge Construction Continues

Construction continues on the replacement of both a county road bridge and a pedestrian bridge crossing Weldon Creek about 2½ miles north of Brownville. Nemaha County and the Nemaha NRD are working together to install one, new bridge that will provide a pedestrian crossing for the Steamboat Trace trail as well as a crossing for vehicles on the county road. Funding for the project is provided largely through the Federal-Aid Bridge Highway Rehabilitation Fund with assistance from the Nemaha NRD. Replacement of the bridges will help alleviate flooding problems that occurred when debris floating down Weldon Creek would get caught on the trail bridge.

As a result of the construction, this section of the Steamboat Trace has been closed and will remain closed until the new bridge is completed, which is anticipated sometime in June. Signs have been posted; and as soon as the bridge is finished, notices will be posted and published notifying prospective users when the trail is once again open for its entire 22-mile stretch from approximately Nebraska City to Brownville.



Construction progresses on the bridge across Weldon Creek.

Paul Weber Joins Nemaha NRD Board

At the April 14, 2005, meeting of the Nemaha NRD board of directors, Paul Weber of Firth was selected to fill a vacancy on the board in Subdistrict 1. Due to the resignation of Doug Wahlstrom, the board was required to advertise for applicants to fill the spot. Four individuals submitted letters of interest, and two ballots were required to ultimately decide upon Weber.

"I have always been interested in water and soil conservation. Growing up on a farm, I saw first hand how important conservation was," said Weber in his letter of interest. He holds biology degrees from UNL and from Kearney State College, where he obtained a Masters Degree. Weber taught biological science for 10 years. He now is a licensed well installer.

Other public service positions held by Weber include two terms on the Norris School board, and he currently serves on the Gage County Planning Commission.

Along with fellow director, Chuck Starr of Bennet, Weber represents the portions of Gage and Lancaster Counties within the Nemaha NRD as well as extreme southwest Otoe County. His position will be up for election in 2006.



NRD Assistant Manager, Scott Nelson (right) administers the oath of office to Paul Weber.

What's My Flowrate?

Do you have a new or seasoned irrigation well and want to know the pumping flowrate (gallons per minute)?

Several variables such as plugged screens, engine horsepower, and head pressure can change the original pumping flowrate of irrigation wells.

The Nemaha NRD has recently purchased an ultrasonic flow meter (USFM) to assist producers with determining a well's output. The USFM is a non-invasive device that can be used to measure both flowrate and volume. Clamp-on transducers attach to the exterior of the irrigation pipe acting alternately, transmitting and receiving sonic beams. A handheld meter interprets the beam's movement and calculates a flowrate.

In order for the USFM to work properly, there must be at least five pipe diameters upstream and two pipe diameters downstream of straight, unobstructed pipe from the meter location. Also the pipe must run completely full of water. The riser pipe on pivots is an ideal location when enough other straight pipe is not available.

Please contact the District to schedule an appointment. There is no charge associated with this service; the District only asks for a small sample of the water pumped.

Park Improvements Planned

The Nemaha NRD entered into the recreation business around 20 years ago with the development of Iron Horse Trail Lake Recreation Area near Dubois. A few years later Kirkman's Cove was opened to the public. Today we operate four recreation areas along with the Steamboat Trace trail. Much of the infrastructure at the parks including restrooms, shelters, and boat docks is beginning to show wear and tear as they reach the end of their expected life. It is time for the NRD to start planning for their repair and replacement. This past winter NRD staff developed an 8-10 year plan for repairing, replacing, and upgrading facilities in the District's four recreation areas. Many of the improvements in the plan address concerns that we have received from the public who use the area on a regular basis. Some of the plan's highlights include:

- Upgrading the restrooms at Iron Horse and Kirkman's Cove with more attractive and durable concrete units. This component of the plan will take eight years to complete and actually started in 2003 with the installation of a new concrete restroom at Iron Horse. A similar structure will be installed near the beach at Kirkman's Cove this year.

- A new boat dock is planned for Kirkman's Cove in 2006. It will replace the aging dock located on the south side of the lake near the boat ramp. The dock at Iron Horse was replaced in 2003.

- More handicapped accessible facilities are being planned for the District's recreation areas. The District has been receiving an increasing number of requests for more of these types of facilities at our parks to better accommodate users with disabilities. One idea being considered is the installation

of handicapped accessible fishing decks at both Iron Horse and Kirkman's Cove. The District may look at developing an entire day-use area that will be handicapped accessible. As handicapped use and facilities increase, more handicapped parking pads will be installed throughout the parks to better accommodate users with disabilities.

- As part of the plan, the NRD will also be looking at possible improvements such as additional RV pads with electrical hook-ups, additional picnic shelters, and expanding or constructing new camping areas. We have received a number of requests to expand the electrical hook-ups beyond the present area near the beach at Kirkman's Cove. Unfortunately the accessibility to power on the south side of Kirkman's and at Iron Horse limits the NRD's ability to do this.

The estimate to implement the proposed eight-year maintenance plan is over \$300,000. Grant dollars may be available to help cover the costs of some items, but most of the funding will come from the District's general fund. The NRD generates revenue each year from the sale of park permits, but it is not enough to cover the cost of the plan. It is hoped that as the public sees the improvements, it will encourage more park users and increase the number of park permits that are sold every year.

One change recreation area users may notice this year is that NRD staff is planning to be more visible at the parks on weekends. Their duties will include everything from assisting area guests to inspecting vehicles for park permits. The District is always interested in comments and suggestions for our recreation areas.

Well Owners: Register Wells Now!

The Nemaha Natural Resources District is encouraging well owners to make sure their wells are properly registered before the end of the year to avoid possible restrictions if the basin's water supply is declared "fully-appropriated" by the State.

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (Department) is currently assessing water conditions in the Nemaha and the state's other major river basins as part of LB962, a major overhaul to the state's water law that went into effect in July, 2004.

Under LB962 provisions, a basin's surface water and groundwater are both taken into account when deciding whether the water supply can sustain further development for irrigation and other high-volume water uses. The number and capacity of wells and their effect on surface water rights are used to determine when a basin is "fully-appropriated" (at the maximum level of sustainable development) or "over-appropriated" (water levels in decline due to over-development).

While the Department's decision won't be known until January, 2006, the NRD considers it possible that portions of the Nemaha Basin could be declared fully-appropriated.

If declared fully-appropriated, there will be an immediate stay or moratorium on new drilling for irrigation and other high-capacity wells, but existing wells will be grandfathered as long as they are properly registered. The District is then required to develop an Integrated Management Plan (IMP)

with the Department for those areas. A local stakeholders group of interested parties (irrigators, municipalities, among others) would also be formed to assist the NNRD board with the goals, objectives, and possible controls of the IMP.

The NRD estimates that approximately 10-20% of the District's irrigation wells are not properly registered. According to state statutes, an unregistered well is considered to be illegal, and the state can require it to be decommissioned or plugged. Typically the biggest problem if a well is registered is well ownership -- State statutes also consider a registered well illegal if the landowner of the ground where the well sits and well owner on the registration form do not match. The District is more than willing to assist with making these corrections or with registering an existing well.

Well owners can check the registration status of their wells at the Department of Natural Resources website: <http://dnrdata.dnr.state.ne.us/wellssql>.

Since August of 1999, the District requires a permit be obtained prior to the drilling of any well designed to pump over 50 gallons per minute. Contact the District for a permit application.

Well owners who would like more information or have questions about a well registration should contact the District office at (402) 335-3325 or by e-mail at nnrd@nemahanrd.org.

From the Manager's Desk —→ by Bob Hilske Here Comes the Class of 2005

Spring is time for graduation. Students line up to receive diplomas and wonder what their future may hold. Here at the NRD we have our own graduation. Each spring we take seedling trees that have been cared for and nurtured for two years and introduce them into the cruel, tough world of outdoor Nebraska. There they are lined up in rows all hoping that they can survive and provide a valuable service to the world. They will have much to overcome: disease, insects, and drought; but many will stand the test of time. Let's introduce some members of the class of 2005:

As the oak walks down the aisle, we all think back when he was just an acorn. Now he is ready to head out into the world and become one of the most majestic trees in the landscape. The oak will outlive most of his classmates and become a pillar of the community.

There is the old Scotch pine. The class of 2005 had high hopes for him: a solid candidate for most likely to succeed; a beautiful landscape tree; and the most popular species for Christmas trees. Sadly the Scotch pine will probably never achieve those goals and most likely will not even make it to the 10-year class reunion as pine wilt will take him at a young age.

How about our old friend the red cedar? A hard worker, she'll certainly make the class proud protecting a farmstead from the wind and cold. Unfortunately, Red, always popular with the boys, will never get past her problem with promiscuity as she spreads her offspring throughout pastures in eastern Nebraska. At least she'll have plenty of pictures of the kids to show at the class reunion.

Then there are those pesky shrubs. Always too small to participate in class activities and made fun of by the bigger trees, the shrubs never got much respect. Don't sell our friends the shrubs short; many will become important members of society providing food and shelter for many species of wildlife. I'm sure opinions will change when we hear about how they saved some birds from certain death during a tough winter or provided cover for deer during a blizzard.

What will become of the crabapple? She was the homecoming queen and with her spring flowers voted best looking in the class. Yeah, but wait until the class reunion; you'll see what years of rust and fire blight will do to her looks. I'll bet she'll be the first in line at the arborist getting cosmetic tree surgery just like those fancy, high priced trees in California.

Finally, we can't forget the Norway spruce. He was the foreign exchange student from Europe. He was a little different and talked kind of funny, but in the end we found out that Norway was a pretty decent guy. It sounds like he'll be staying around trying to help fill in the gap left by our friend Scotch pine. He grows faster than his American cousin "Blue", so I'm sure by the time the class reunion comes around he'll be one of the most popular trees in the community.

Graduation is always a tough time of year as you watch the young ones leave the nest. We'll be there to help when we can by giving them a drink of water or offering assistance when they break a limb. Eventually they'll have to face the world all on their own because in most cases they'll outlive us. The best part is that we know that next year we will have another group of graduates lining up getting ready to take their turn helping society.



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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,
Watershed Project Coordinator
Robert Henry & Phil Vance,
Summer Maintenance Crew

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Glenda Bates, Tecumseh
Carolee DeVorss, Syracuse
Lori Foster, Falls City
Cheryl Skinner, Pawnee City
Dave Stalder,
Farm Program Assistant, Auburn

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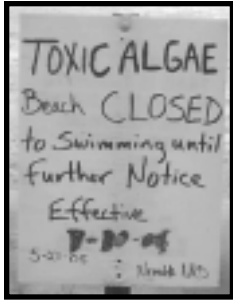
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Toxic Algae Detected at Iron Horse Trail Lake



Just in time to spoil the plans of hopeful swimmers, toxic blue-green algae has again been detected at Iron Horse Trail Lake near DuBois. Right up until the Friday prior to the start of the Memorial Day holiday, it appeared the blooms would be avoided. However, results from tests taken earlier that week came back on Friday indicating levels of the toxin, Microcystin, above the state's 20 ppb threshold for a health alert. So far the algae has not been detected at the NRD's other public lakes: Kirkman's Cove near Humboldt, Wirth Brothers Lake near Tecumseh, or Prairie Owl near Dunbar.

Notices were placed at the park as well as issued to local news media. Access to the lake at the beach will remain closed until tests determine the algae level has decreased. Park visitors may continue to fish, but catch-and-release is recommended since the toxins can be found in the liver, pancreas, and intestines of the fish.

Skin irritations and gastrointestinal problems are the main risks to humans, but in rare instances, extremely high toxin levels can be fatal. People should avoid physical contact with or swallowing water from lakes with the blue-green algae. The toxic algae causes lake water to become cloudy with a green or blue-green cast and often resembles pea soup; it has also been described as looking like thick green paint spilled on the water. As it accumulates and begins to decompose, a strong musty or fishy odor may be observed.

To help track the occurrence of toxic algae in lakes, the Nebraska Cooperative Extension will provide free test kits to lake owners, users, and managers. For more information, go to the UNL Water Center web site at <http://watercenter.unl.edu/>, or contact the Nemaha NRD in Tecumseh at (402) 335-3325. Updates on the condition of the water, not only at Iron Horse Trail Lake but also at the District's other public lakes will be posted on the NRD's website <http://nemahanrd.org>.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



June

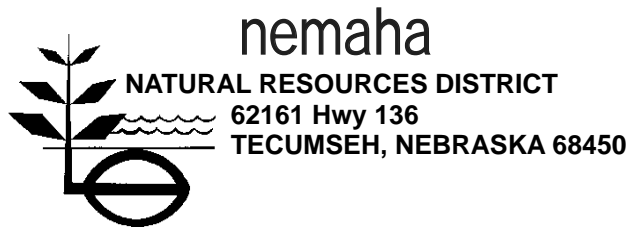
- 9 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 20-21 NARD Board Meeting and Basin Tour
- 20-24 Nebraska Forestry Short Course, Chadron State College

July

- 4 Independence Day, Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 6-7 Natural Resources Commission Meeting, Holdrege
- 14 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 18-24 National Envirothon, Springfield, MO

August

- 11 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh



Stories This Issue:

- *Steamboat Trace Bridge Construction*
- *Paul Weber Joins Nemaha NRD Board*
- *Whats My Flow Rate*
- *Park Improvements*
- *Register Wells Now*
- *From the Manager's Desk*
- *Staff Listing*
- *Toxic Algae Detected at Iron Horse Trail Lake*
- *Calendar of Events*

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