



Nemaha Natural Resources District

# Insight



Spring 2007

## Nemaha NRD Receives NACD National Excellence Award

At the 2007 meeting of the National Association of Conservation Districts, the Nemaha NRD was honored with a District Excellence Award for Water Resources. The award, presented annually to conservation districts for excellence and successful initiatives; and winners are selected by NACD national committees. The Nemaha NRD was selected because of the wide variety of water resources programs and activities, including the more than 350 watershed structures in the District.

Pictured at right is NRD Manager, Bob Hilske, left, receiving the award certificate from Bill Wilson, NACD President, at the meeting held in Los Angeles on February 7. In addition, the NRD also received a prize check for \$1,000 from NACD.



## NRD Board Welcomes New Members



Lisa Beethe

Two new members joined the Nemaha NRD board of directors in 2007. Lisa Beethe from Elk Creek took her seat on the board in January representing the at-large position following her win in the 2006 general election over incumbent Gerald Royal from Palmyra. Beethe is the Grants Administrator for the Nebraska Environmental Trust; she and her husband, Harlan, live on a farm near Elk Creek with their two children. Her objective as an NRD board member is to become involved in local natural resource and environmental issues.

Following the recent resignation of Dave Neddenriep in Subdistrict 6, Rob Bohling, Johnson, was appointed in February to fulfill the remainder of this term. His goals while on the board include representing taxpayers and informing the public of the importance of conserving our natural resources. Bohling farms south of Johnson and has a registered Angus herd. He and his wife, Janet, have two children and one granddaughter.

### Officers Elected for 2007

At their January meeting, the NRD board elected their new leadership for 2007. Assuming the job of Chair for 2007 was Ted Godemann, Falls City. Scott Kudrna, Auburn, will take on the Vice-Chair responsibilities. Duane Sugden, Sterling, was voted the Secretary/Treasurer.



Rob Bohling

## FREE WORKSHOP

**Sericea Lespedeza  
(Chinese Bush Clover)  
The Pest that Threatens  
Your Grasslands**



**Learn to Identify It  
Learn to Control It  
Learn Why You Should  
Act NOW**

**Two workshops have already  
been held,  
but there's one more:**

**Thursday, April 5**

**1:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

**Pawnee City VFW**

**Refreshments will be served**

**Sponsored by**

**5 Rivers Weed Management Area**

**For more information, contact the  
Five Rivers RC&D (402) 335-3347**

# Nearly 1 Million Dollars Secured For Big Muddy Creek Project

Thanks to a \$566,000 grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust (NETF), work in the Big Muddy Creek Watershed will soon be underway! Combining NETF funds with other committed funds from the NRD, Nemaha County, and local landowners, various structures primarily aimed at controlling streambed and streambank erosion will be implemented over the next three years.

Nearly \$1 million will be available to implement 10 grade control structures, 10 sheet-pile weirs, and a road dam in a 55 square-mile area located to the south and to the west of Johnson, Nebraska. If all goes as planned, the construction of some of these structures could take place as early as the fall of 2007.

Currently the NRD is working to secure a contract to retain JEO Consulting Group as the design firm for this project (JEO was the firm who recently completed a watershed work plan that identified problems and solutions in the study area near Johnson). In addition, the NRD will be working hand-in-hand with Nemaha County towards the construction of weir structures designed to protect existing bridges and to replace an existing, degraded county bridge with a new road dam. Last, but not least, an important aspect of this project will involve the NRD working with private landowners to construct grade control structures on tributaries that feed into the main-stem of Big Muddy Creek. The selection of grade control sites will involve a council comprised of members of the task force that will rank sites according to the benefits that each site will provide. As it now stands, cost-share rates offered to private landowners to construct grade control structures on their property will be around 75%; broken down, a structure that costs \$24,000 would cost the NRD \$18,000 and a landowner \$6,000.



Small Dam Target Area

## Watershed Updates:

### Buck and Duck Creek Project

All the preliminary planning work for the Buck and Duck Creek Watershed structures has been completed. The next major step is to obtain the needed federal funding to complete the project. During the next couple of months, the NRD will be working with our congressional representatives in Washington DC to get \$2.98 million included in the FY2008 budget for technical and financial assistance needed to complete the remainder of the project. Although this is an approved PL566 project, there will be no money in the federal budget for final design or construction of the two proposed dams unless it is specifically earmarked by Congress. Once the money is included in the budget, the project should be completed in three to four years. FY2008 begins on October 1<sup>st</sup> of this year; however, it is not uncommon for Congress to approve the final budget well after the fiscal year begins.

The total cost of the project has been estimated at \$3.9 million. Once funding is received, NRCS will start working on the final design; and the District can begin land rights negotiations with property owners impacted by the project. The NRD has also been working with Nemaha County to address road issues. Several county roads are impacted by the project.

### Wilson Creek 8-H

Wilson Creek 8-H is located in the Wilson Creek Watershed five miles east of Syracuse along Highway 2. When constructed in 1968, the dam was classified by the State as a low hazard structure. The low hazard classification simply means that if the dam would fail, it poses no threat to human life and would only cause minimal property damage. After Highway 2 was upgraded and moved to its present location just below the dam, the State reviewed the classification status and determined that it now meets the criteria for a high hazard dam. It was determined that upon failure that water released from the dam would cover portions of Highway 2 creating a threat to motorists.

Since design standards for low and high hazard dams are different, the NRD must determine how to address the concern. Basic options include decommissioning the structure, altering the structure so that it no longer poses a threat to the highway, or upgrading the structure to meet high hazard specifications. Since the dam was installed as part of the federal PL566 program, the NRD is receiving planning assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to evaluate each option. This effort will include the development of a planning document that looks at all potential options and identifies which option is the preferred. If the preferred option is adopted by the NRD, the District would be eligible for 65% federal funding to perform the necessary work. The present goal is to have a draft plan available for review in June.

## Water Resources Notes

- **Well Blitz** – What do the first weeks of April and October have in common? Yes, besides the temperature and the amount of precipitation it is also the District's "well blitz" or biannual measuring of static water levels in groundwater wells. The District continues to measure over 100 wells each spring and fall to monitor groundwater rises and declines.

- **Chemigation** – Nebraska law requires anyone planning on applying more than just water through an irrigation distribution system (center pivot or gated pipe) in order to fertilize or treat crops must first be certified with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. The producer must also apply for a chemigation permit with their local NRD. The NRD is then required to inspect each injection location for mandatory safety equipment.

- **Water Analysis** – Any resident within the District who would like to have their domestic or livestock well sampled and analyzed for nitrate-nitrogen and/or coliform bacteria is asked to please contact the NRD office and schedule an appointment. The sample is collected and analyzed by NRD staff, and there is no charge for this service. Additional analyses can be conducted for a fee from an outside laboratory.

## Groundwater Management Plan

The District has contracted with Olsson Associates of Lincoln to provide technical assistance with collecting data needed for the revision of the groundwater management plan. Olsson staff will help review available geologic and hydrogeologic data, assist the NRD with collecting field data, help define areas of the NRD where use is nearing or exceeding supplies, help the NRD develop a groundwater model for designating these critical areas, and evaluate management practices that would best address problems in critical areas.

The present groundwater management plan was developed in 1985 and revised to address quality concerns in 1993. Revisions to the plan will focus on quantity issues as much of the 1985 plan is now outdated. The plan should be completed in early 2008, and it is anticipated that it will recommend changes to NRD groundwater rules and regulations. It is the goal of the NRD to have any new rule changes in place when the present well permit moratorium expires on May 15, 2008. A public hearing will be required to make any rule changes.

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

### Happy 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Bob

It's Monday, March 15, 1982; I walk into the office of the Little Blue Natural Resources District in Davenport, Nebraska, for my first day of work as an NRD employee. My lunch in one hand and college diploma in the other, I'm ready to solve all of Nebraska's natural resources problems. Let's face it, this should be easy -- control a little erosion here and conserve some water there, and I'll be out of a job in 10 years. The first problem: Nebraska's groundwater levels are declining. This should be easy; give me 5 or 6 years, and we'll have this water issue under control. The boss says take this map and put color coded pins locating all the wells in the NRD. Is this really an Al Gore approved "save the environment" activity? My memory of pushpin map 101 class in college is a little hazy. This may slow things down; I'm revising my schedule for solving Nebraska's groundwater problems to 7 or 8 years.

It must be time to go out in the field and get my hands dirty. Sorry, not quite; the State says we need to have a groundwater management plan. The good news is to help write the plan, we have this new computer complete with an 8086 processor and 10 megabyte hard drive to make the plan writing go faster and easier. I didn't figure in 2 years for planning; maybe I need to add a couple more years on to my self imposed deadline.

Good news -- the plan's done, so things should start happening now. Funny, the State didn't buy off on my "5 years in solitary confinement listening to the greatest disco hits of the 70's" penalty for using too much groundwater idea. They seemed to think use limits and promoting more efficient systems would be a better way to go. So it's time to move out and start showing those water wasters what we're made of. But wait -- it's starting to rain, and it keeps raining. Groundwater levels are up, so put the plan away. Thanks to your years of planning, groundwater in Nebraska is safe for our future generations. I guess it's time to sit back and take it easy for a while.

Not so fast my friend! We found out that all that water you helped save is contaminated with nasty things like nitrates and phosphorus. I'm ready; show me what to do; and I'll have this solved in 5 years, tops. Hold on -- the State says you need to revise your plan first. You forgot to say anything about water quality in the first one. Good news -- now we've got a 486 computer with 500 megabytes of memory and a color screen. Better yet, some guy named Bill Gates came up with this Windows system so even idiots like you can use a computer.

Welcome to 2007! I'm in the Nemaha NRD, it quit raining, and we found that old plan. Unfortunately it's 20 years out of date, and for your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary you get to revise the plan. We bought you a faster computer, and it's a lap top; so you can work on the plan 24-7. I guess I'll have to revise my timetable for saving Nebraska's groundwater to 30 years. This time I mean business, and I'll warn you -- I still have that disco greatest hits tape from the 70's. Now, where's my 8-track tape player???

## Nemaha NRD Awarded NDEQ Grant for Waste Collection

The Nemaha Natural Resources District was recently awarded a grant in the amount of \$18,173.00 from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality's Litter Reduction and Recycling Grant Program. Altogether, the state received 74 applications requesting more than \$2.5 million for litter reduction and recycling projects. A total of over \$1.6 million was awarded to 69 projects throughout Nebraska.

"These grant funded projects provide innovative ways to educate the public about litter reduction and recycling and will reduce the amount of material sent to Nebraska's landfills," said Mike Linder, Director of NDEQ.

This program provides funds annually to Nebraska projects in three areas: public education, cleanup, and recycling. The funds awarded to the NNRD through recycling funds will be used for several household hazardous waste collections within an eight-county area of southeast Nebraska. Ultimately the grant will help diminish contamination of our groundwater, raise awareness of used oil collection sites, educate constituents on the importance of proper household hazardous waste disposal, and promote recycling of pesticides, cardboard, acid-lead batteries, paint, and oil. Cooperative Extension, Five Rivers RC&D, and Keep Nebraska Beautiful are also partnering in this effort. *Collections will be held as follows:*

DATE	COUNTY	TOWN	TIME	LOCATION
Friday, April 20	Otoe	Nebraska City	1:00-4:30	County Shop, Hwy 2 Beltway
Saturday, April 21	Nemaha	Auburn	8:00-11:30	Behind City Hall, 1101 J Street
	Johnson	Tecumseh (tentative)	1:30-4:00	County Shop, Hwy 136, west side of town
Friday, May 4	Pawnee	Pawnee City	8:00-11:00	County Shop, 342 Fifth Street
	Richardson	Falls City	1:00-4:30	City park lot by Prichard Auditorium
Saturday, May 5	Gage	Beatrice	8:00-3:00	Fairgrounds, West Scott Street

*Additional collections are also scheduled in Crete and Fairbury. For more information, contact Five Rivers RC&D at (402) 335-3347.*

## NEMAHA NRD STAFF

Bob Hilske, Manager  
Scott Nelson, Assistant Manager  
Jane Kuhl, Administrative Assistant  
Artis Fisher, Business 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  
Lori Foster, 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:



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

## Get Your Park Permits Before April 1!

Only a couple of weeks remain for you to purchase your annual Nemaha NRD park permit at the discounted price of \$10. Permits are required for all motorized vehicles entering Kirkman's Cove (Humboldt), Iron Horse Trail Lake (DuBois), and Wirth Brothers Lake (Tecumseh). Beginning April 1, the price increases to \$12 for the permit, which is valid through December 31.

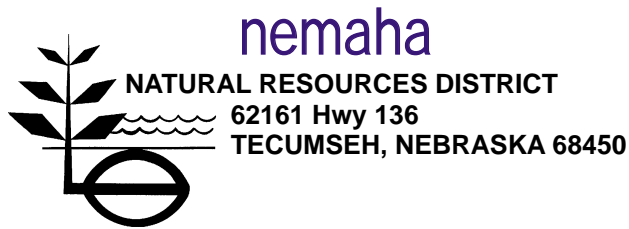
A second annual permit may be purchased for \$6 if purchased at the same time as the original, full-price permit; it may be used on a second vehicle titled to the same owner as the original. Park visitors who opt not to purchase an annual permit may instead buy a temporary, two-day pass for \$5; these permits are available at the parks.

To obtain an application for an annual permit, call (402) 335-3325 or stop by the Nemaha NRD; or print the application form from our website [www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org). Applications must be postmarked by March 31 to qualify for the discounted rate.

## Campground Improvements at Kirkman's Cove

The fee camping area at Kirkman's Cove will expand to 16 RV pads this year as the NRD is nearing completion of a project to add six new sites to the popular area. Grading was completed last fall, and the District recently hired Al Wusk Electric, Sterling, to install the electrical service for the new pads. Work should be completed by May 15, and the total cost to install the new pads, including grading and dirt work completed last fall, is about \$15,000.

Traffic patterns around the RV area will also be changed. Instead of one continuous loop drive, there will be separate loops for the camping area and beach area. Users should watch for signs when they use the southeast entrance of the park, which serves the beach and fee camping area. Fees to use the camping area will remain at \$10 per day, and the NRD does not accept reservations.



## Stories This Issue:

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**April**

1 NRD Annual Park Permit Fees Increase to \$12

5 Sericea Lespedeza Workshop, VFW, Pawnee City (1-2:00)

12 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 8 p.m.

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection,**

20 Nebraska City (1-4:30)

21 Auburn (8-11:30) - Tecumseh (1:30-4)

27 Fairbury (8-10:30) - Crete (12:30-3:30)

27 Arbor Day, Observed (NRD Office Open!!!)

29-5/6 Soil & Water Stewardship Week

**May**

**Household Hazardous Waste Collection,**

4 Pawnee City (8-11) - Falls City (1-4:30)

5 Beatrice (8-3)

5 Nebraska Envirothon, Fort Robison

10 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 8 p.m.

19-20 Free Park Permit Weekend @ NNRD Parks

20-23 National Watershed Coalition Meeting, LaCrosse, WI

28 Memorial Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed

**June**

2 National Trails Day

14 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 8 p.m.

18-20 NARD Meeting & Basin Tour

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