



Nemaha Natural Resources District

# Insight



Spring 2005

## New Directors Join NRD Board

Two new directors joined the ranks of the Nemaha NRD Board of Directors in January. David Hunzeker, Humboldt, unseated incumbent Tom Farwell of Humboldt in Subdistrict 8; Roland Meyer, Palmyra, ran unopposed for a vacant seat in Subdistrict 2. Both men joined eight other directors in taking their oath of office during the board's first meeting of the new year on January 13.

Hunzeker and his wife live southeast of Humboldt. Their farm is enrolled in the CRP program, and he also works as a bricklayer. Meyer, also a farmer, lives south of Palmyra and has a truck and trailer sales business. Both will serve four-year terms on the board.

### Board Officers for 2005

New officers elected to lead the Nemaha NRD board in 2005 are: Jim Wirth (Nebraska City), Chair; Ted Godemann (Falls City), Vice-Chair; and Scott Kudrna (Auburn), Secretary/Treasurer. Orval Gigstad (Syracuse) will continue as the District's representative to the Nebraska Association of Resources District; Gerald Royal (Palmyra) will be the alternate.

## NRD Completes Road Dam Project

Four years later and a lot of hard work marks completion of a federally funded road dam project in the District. Early in 2000 the NRD entered into an inter-local agreement with Otoe County to seek federal funds to replace an aging county road bridge. The District's role in the project was to coordinate efforts to obtain funding, secure land rights, and handle permit and mitigation issues relating to the construction of a county road dam.

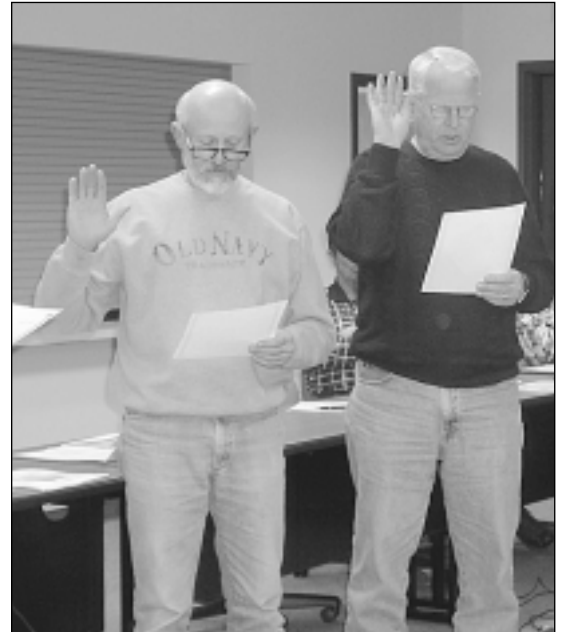
This \$302,000 project known as the Lorton Road Dam is located ½ mile south of the intersection of County Road 52 and Hwy. 128 or a couple of miles east of the Village of Lorton. The structure provides both safe rural transportation and downstream flood protection benefits to local citizens while creation of a 10-acre lake provides environmental benefits such as fish and wildlife habitat.

Currently the District is involved with other county road dam projects, two with Nemaha County, two with Richardson County and one with Johnson County.

## NRD to Fulfill Mitigation Requirements

The Nemaha NRD recently secured a 50-year mitigation easement with a Johnson County landowner to convert 35.8 acres of pasture to trees and native grasses for wildlife habitat. Accomplishment of this tree planting site in the spring of 2005 will fulfill the NRD's mitigation requirements in the Middle Big Nemaha Watershed.

Because of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers requirement, the NRD was required to mitigate 96 acres of trees and native grasses lost due to the construction of eight flood control dams in this watershed, which spans much of Johnson County. The NRD recently completed the construction of the last two dams and is pleased to announce that mitigation requirements will soon be completed also.



New NRD Board Members, David Hunzeker (L) & Roland Meyer (R), take their oath of office at the January, 2005, board meeting.

## 2005 NRD Clerk Changes

With the new year came some changes in the NRD personnel stationed at the Tecumseh and Pawnee City NRCS offices. Following the retirement of long-time NRD Clerk, Marge Rathbone, Glenda Bates, NRD Clerk in Pawnee City, moved to the Tecumseh position. Bates has been a permanent part of the NRD staff since 1994, and prior to that she worked in a temporary position as a technician's aid at the NRCS.

Cheryl Skinner began her duties filling the NRD Clerk vacancy in the Pawnee City office on February 14. Skinner, a Pawnee County native, had been working at both the Johnson County Sheriff's Office as a dispatcher/jailer and at the Farm Service Agency in Pawnee City on a temporary basis as a Program Technician. In addition she has also been enrolled in classes at Southeast Community College.

## REMINDER:

NNRD annual park permits, are available for \$10 ONLY through **March 31**. On April 1 the cost goes up to \$12. - **See Page 3**

# Project Updates

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## Weldon Creek Bridge Construction

This spring Nemaha County will be replacing a county road bridge that crosses Weldon Creek north of Brownville. The new bridge is designed with a pedestrian crossing that will be used to accommodate Steamboat Trace users. When completed trail users will be routed across the new county road bridge, and the old pedestrian bridge on the Steamboat Trace will be removed. This will eliminate problems that occurred when debris floating down Weldon Creek would get caught under the trail bridge and flood neighboring fields. The Nemaha NRD is contributing toward the cost of this project with the majority of the assistance coming from the Federal-Aid Bridge Highway Rehabilitation Fund. The trail may be closed on occasion during construction.

## Wirth Brothers Recreation Area

Repairs to the picnic shelter at Wirth Brothers Recreation Area have been completed. The shelter and several signs were damaged last summer by vandals. Some minor changes have been made to the area to better protect facilities from vandalism. With the upgrade of County Road 620 to Wirth Brothers and new signs to direct the public to the area located northwest of Tecumseh, it is hoped that use will increase. Low water levels in the 34-acre reservoir have been a problem in the past; however, it appears that seepage rates may be decreasing; and water levels are becoming more stable.

## Duck and Buck Creek

Work on the geological investigation will continue into 2005. Field work has been completed at the Buck Creek site near Peru. There are some concerns because of shallow bedrock and soil conditions at the proposed dam site on Buck Creek. Engineers will use the data collected to determine how these concerns can be addressed. The NRD is also looking at options to keep the Oregon Trail Road west of Peru open. It appears that the road project would qualify for Federal-Aid Bridge funding.

## Brownell 13-6

The NRD completed work on repairing structure 13-6 on Brownell Creek near Syracuse. This structure is almost 50 years old and required replacement of the entire principal spillway tube and riser. The final cost of the repair work, which was funded by the NRD, was \$20,700. Brownell Creek is one of the earliest watershed projects on record in southeast Nebraska with many of the structures built in the 1950s. Many have exceeded their design expectancy and are in need of rehabilitation.



**Brownell structure 13-6 riser after repair work**



**Brownell structure 13-6 riser before repair work**

# Does This Look Familiar?

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Abandoned wells are not only a safety issue with children and pets but are points of entry for contaminants to enter groundwater (southeast Nebraska's sole source of drinking water).

The Nemaha NRD provides 75% cost-share for the proper closure of abandoned wells. There is a maximum cost-share payment of \$300 for each cased well and \$700 for each hand dug well. If you have a well that you would like to have closed, please contact the NRD office for a program application.

An abandoned water well is any water well that:

- a) the use of which has been accomplished or permanently discontinued
- b) is in such a condition that it cannot be placed in active or inactive status
- c) is in such a state of disrepair that continued use for the purpose for which it was constructed is impractical
- d) poses a health or safety hazard

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

### PICNIC TABLE TALES

Picnic tables have a tough life. They sit outside in all types of weather getting little acknowledgement from the public. Maybe it's time we show more respect for our picnic tables, because what would a summer picnic be without a solid table, sour potato salad, and a few friendly ants. The Nemaha NRD owns many picnic tables at our four recreation areas, and you might be amazed to find out that picnic tables have many uses. Oh yes, you'd be surprised what our park users have come up with over the years. Here are a few examples:

Picnic tables provide an excellent supply of emergency firewood. Instead of the arduous task of foraging through the woods, it's much simpler to dismantle your picnic table and start throwing it in the fire. Picnic table wood makes a great fire, especially the ones that are treated with copper and arsenic. Nothing adds to the romance of a campfire like the scent of poisonous gases; and you thought dad's secret recipe beans were dangerous.

Picnic tables can be used as an emergency flotation device. You're ready to hit the beach at Kirkman's Cove, but you forgot the handy air mattress. No problem, just grab the nearest picnic table, throw it in the lake, and start tanning away. One word of caution: if picnic tables made a good raft, don't you think the Professor would have built one to get the castaways off Gilligan's Island?

So you've got that big family reunion coming up and need a few extra picnic tables. The solution: just drive down to your nearest NRD recreation area, and borrow a table for the "weekend". Doesn't the fine print in the vehicle permit application say something about lifetime use of picnic tables? I think the guy in the cell next to Al Capone was doing 10 to 15 for picnic table theft.

You're on a family picnic at Iron Horse, and Little Billy needs a piece of paper to write on. Whoops, we forgot paper; but no problem, take your handy pocket knife and show him how to carve words right into the top of the picnic table. "Here are a few words that daddy learned when he was a sailor; just make sure not to say them when mommy is around." "Remember, it's not right to carve stuff in our furniture at home; but it's okay to do it in the NRD picnic table."

So as you can see, the picnic table deserves far more respect than we have given it in the past. Did you know that the average picnic table only has a life span of 4 to 5 years? With such a short life, we certainly need to treat it with kindness; and who knows, maybe it could live to the ripe old age of 10.

## Free Water Testing

Are you concerned with the quality of your well water? If so, the NRD offers nitrate and bacteria testing FREE OF CHARGE to District residents. An outside hydrant connected to the well in question is all that is typically needed for staff to collect a sample. Also, if you would like additional tests performed such as hardness, livestock suitability, or pesticide testing, NRD staff can assist with the collection and mailing of a sample to a certified laboratory. Costs associated with these types of tests vary; if interested, contact the District office for further details or to schedule an appointment.

### REMINDER:

NNRD annual park permits, required at Kirkman's Cove, Iron Horse Trail Lake, and Wirth Brothers Lake, are available for **\$10 ONLY** through **March 31**. On April 1 the cost goes up to \$12. Permits may be purchased at the NRD office in Tecumseh, by mail, or through envelopes in collection boxes at the parks. You may also print a copy of the application from our website, [www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org).

### 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,  
Watershed Project Coordinator

### NRD STAFF IN NRCS OFFICES

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

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Albrecht, Nebraska City  
Jeff Crunk, Nebraska City  
Orval Gigstad, Syracuse  
Ted Godemann, Falls City (**Vice-Chair**)  
Ron Heskett, Nemaha  
David Hunzeker, Humboldt  
Scott Kudrna, Auburn (**Sec.-Treas.**)  
Roland Meyer, Palmyra  
Dave Neddenriep, Johnson  
Gerald Royal, Palmyra  
Jim Rush, Tecumseh  
Steven Sherrow, Nebraska City  
Don Siske, Table Rock  
Mike Speece, Auburn  
Charles Starr, Bennet  
J. Duane Sugden, Sterling  
Bruce Walker, Falls City  
Dan Watermeier, Syracuse  
Tom White, Falls City  
Jim Wirth, Nebraska City (**Chair**)

### NEMAHA NRD OFFICE:



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

# Iron Horse Trail Lake Watershed Management Plan Approved

A watershed management plan has been approved by the public for Iron Horse Trail Lake. At a meeting held in January, the management plan was presented to the public and approved by those in attendance. Developed by the Nemaha NRD (NNRD), Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and a group of landowners that have land within the Iron Horse watershed, the plan was developed to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients entering Iron Horse Lake.

The management plan outlined the problems that the levels of sediment and nutrients were causing in the lake, a strategy to reduce those levels, listed action items, goals and objectives that we would use to reduce the levels of sediment and nutrients flowing into the lake. In order to reduce the amounts of sediment and nutrients entering the lake, Best Management Practices need to be implemented upstream of the lake to reduce the amount of erosion. Practices selected for the program as well as the cost-share rates were determined by the Iron Horse Lake watershed council, which was comprised of local landowners and personnel from the aforementioned partners. Some of the practices that have been approved for cost-share as part of the management plan include: flood control structures, grade stabilization structures, tile terraces, grade terraces, no-till incentives, and cropland to grass implementation. Some of these practices are available for cost-share up to 90% based on the county average for that practice.

Sources for cost-share funds include the NNRD, NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program funds, NDEQ 319 funds from the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, which just announced preliminary grant recommendations. This project is similar to the Kirkman's Cove watershed management plan, in which close to one million dollars will be spent on conservation. The goal is to spend a similar amount within the Iron Horse watershed.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### March -----

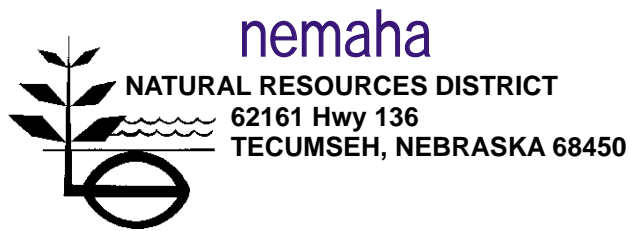
- 8 Water Celebration,  
Peru State College
- 10 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 14 Pesticide Collection,  
Dettmer Farm Service, Auburn
- 14-16 NARD Washington, DC, Trip

### April -----

- 14 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 29 Arbor Day
- 24-5/1 Soil & Water Stewardship Week

### May -----

- 7 Nebraska Envirothon, Halsey
- 12 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 21-22 Free Park Permit Weekend  
at NNRD Parks
- 30 Memorial Day, Holiday,  
NRD Office Closed



## 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