



Nemaha Natural Resources District

Insight



Spring 2006

The Nemaha NRD Tackles Hwy. 73 Flooding Problems

For years flooding has been a problem on Highway 73 located a couple miles north of Falls City, Nebraska. In April of 2005, Richardson County Emergency Management Director James D. Gerweck sent a letter to the Nemaha NRD stating that *"the safety of the public that uses this highway is a risk each time it rains. A long term solution is very much in order."*

Taking Mr. Gerweck's letter seriously, the Nemaha NRD began investigating solutions and is happy to announce that we believe we have a project that will greatly reduce future flooding on this stretch of highway.

The plan is to build a flood control structure on land owned by the Cleo and Helen Taft family. This structure will control approximately 440 drainage acres on the west side of the highway and will be a big win for taxpayers as Bob Taft, landowner and local contractor, has agreed to donate land rights and build this structure free of charge if the NRD pays for the engineering and half the cost of the principal spillway pipe and riser. This means that taxpayers will pay \$30,000 or 40% of this anticipated \$75,000 project.

To date King & Associates Engineering from Holton, Kansas, reports that the project is on schedule; and construction could begin as early as the fall of 2007. The NRD acknowledges that this project will not entirely prevent flooding as this same stretch of highway is affected to a lesser degree by flooding from the east. However, the Nebraska Department of Roads has plans



This stretch of Highway 73 north of Falls City will be protected by the Taft dam, to be located to the northwest (the camera is pointed north in this photo).

to raise this stretch of highway in 2010, which should correct problems encountered from drainage acres from the east.

Temporary Closure to the Issuance of Well Permits in Effect

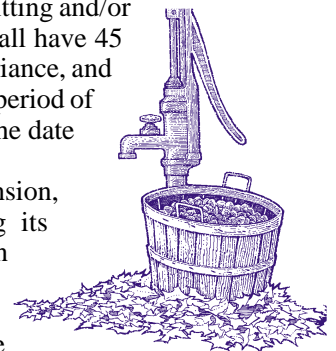
The NRD Board issued an administrative order at the April 13, 2006, Board meeting approving the proposed revisions and additions to the District's Groundwater Management Plan Rules and Regulations. The changes include placing a two-year, temporary closure to the issuance of well permits for all wells designed to pump GREATER THAN 50 GALLONS PER MINUTE and establishing criteria to allow for well permit variances. The decision for the temporary closure was made due to a considerable amount of high capacity well development occurring within areas of the District where the sustainability of the groundwater aquifer is considered vulnerable.

The following types of water wells are NOT subject to the temporary closure: test holes, monitoring and observation wells, dewatering wells with an intended use of 90 days or less, replacement wells, and wells designed to pump 50 gallons per minute (gpm) or less (house & most livestock wells).

Under the variance provision, each request will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The Board may approve or deny a variance for a well permit depending upon such factors as the well's intended use, location within the District, and potential impact the well or wells may have on the surrounding aquifer's water quality or quantity. Minimum requirements for the variance process include a \$100 administrative fee, evidence that a test hole was drilled,

with the data provided to the District, and the proposed well location is greater than 1,320 feet away from any existing well pumping greater than 50 gpm or from a non-constructed well with a valid permit intended to pump greater than 50 gpm. Additional information and/or requirements may also be required as part of the permitting and/or drilling process. The Board shall have 45 days to approve or deny the variance, and the variance will be valid for a period of not more than 180 days from the date of issuance.

During the two-year suspension, the District will be updating its Groundwater Management Plan to better address groundwater quantity issues and gather additional data to better define vulnerable aquifer areas. The suspension will expire on or before May 15, 2008, but may be extended by amendment of the Board. A complete copy of the District's Groundwater Management Plan Rules & Regulations can be found at www.nemahanrd.org or by contacting the office.



Project Updates

New Dock at Kirkman's Cove - - - - -

Users of Kirkman's Cove Recreation Area will be pleased to see that a new boat dock has been installed adjacent to the boat ramp. It replaces the original boat dock that was installed when the lake was constructed in 1988. The new dock is 50 feet long and 7 feet wide, which is longer and wider than its predecessor. It also is made of plastic, which allows it to adjust to changing water levels in the reservoir. The cost of the dock was over \$11,000, paid for in part by permit fees collected from users of the four recreation areas in the Nemaha NRD. Efforts will be made to salvage the old dock and use it at another location on the lake.

Several other improvements at Kirkman's Cove should be in place by the Memorial Day weekend. The new restroom, which was installed last summer, will have ramps installed to make the unit handicapped accessible. There are also plans to install 12 new stationary picnic tables throughout the four NRD recreation areas (Kirkman's Cove, Iron Horse Trail Lake, Wirth Brothers Lake, and Prairie Owl). Eventually most of the picnic tables in the recreation areas will be replaced with the stationary pedestal tables, which should last longer and are more resistant to vandalism.



This new dock is now in place at Kirkman's Cove.

Buck – Duck Creek Ready for Next Step - - - - -

With the geological investigation completed at both sites, work will now focus on designing the two flood control structures planned near Peru as well as updating cost estimates for the project. Cost updates will incorporate any design or anticipated construction changes since the original project plan was completed in 2004. Once the updated cost estimates have been finalized, the NRD will work with Congressional representatives in Washington to earmark money in the federal budget to fund construction of the projects.

Another component of the project will be developing a watershed management project in conjunction with the dams to help reduce sediment and nutrient loading into the structures. The NRD has had success doing this at both Kirkman's Cove and Iron Horse Trail

Lake. Cost share is provided to upstream landowners willing to install conservation practices ranging from terraces to small dams. Using the two dam projects as the focal point of the watershed effort allows the NRD to tap into federal and state sources of funding to help pay for the cost-share assistance.

Other components of the projects that need to be addressed include mitigating wetlands that will be damaged by construction of the lakes, mitigating almost 100 acres of trees, and developing plans to keep three county roads open which would be flooded by the reservoirs. The present goal is to have a preliminary plan for addressing these issues in place by the end of 2006.

Pawnee County Lake No Longer on NNRD Agenda - - - - -

The NRD has been looking at options for constructing a 1600+ acre lake on Turkey Creek south of Pawnee City for nearly 10 years. Large projects always present challenges to overcome, and it is not uncommon that they generate controversy. The Pawnee County Lake Project was certainly no different. The District wrestled with many tough issues such as cost, determining what benefits the project could provide, and trying to build a solid base of support in

the area impacted by the project. In March the NRD board voted to no longer proceed with the project. With that decision, efforts by the NRD to move ahead with the project have been discontinued. A considerable amount of work was done and data collected for the project. It is always available to the public and may prove useful in some capacity in the future.

Will Blue-Green Algae Invade Again This Year? - - - - -

Blue-green algae have been a major problem in many area lakes including Kirkman's Cove and Iron Horse Trail Lake the past few summers. Unless precipitation patterns change and runoff into the reservoirs increases, it is likely that the algae will return again this summer. The NRD has already started collecting water samples and testing them for the presence of the toxic algae. Ironically improved water clarity in both Kirkman's Cove and Iron Horse has contributed to the blooms that have occurred the past few years. There has been very little runoff into the reservoirs during the past several summers, and this allows sediment to settle out clearing up the water.

Controlling the algae is very difficult; however, the NRD is looking at some possible options including using algaecides which may help reduce the algae. If the NRD pursues this option, it will probably be done only on an experimental basis this summer. It is very costly to treat a lake and may prove cost prohibitive in reservoirs the size of Kirkman's Cove and Iron Horse.

Persons wanting updates on the status of the water condition in District lakes may call the NRD office at 402-335-3325. A recorded message will be provided during hours when the office is closed.

From the Manager's Desk —→ by Bob Hilske

Does He Really Work for the NRD?

So it's July; you're on the beach at Kirkman's Cove watching the surf and taking in the sun; and suddenly a gray haired man in an NRD shirt yells, "hey buddy, where's your park permit?" You think, "come on, does this guy really work for the NRD; and what do they do with all that park permit money anyway?" I have some good news to report -- the NRD is putting your permit dollars to work improving all of our park facilities. In the past two years we've installed a new boat dock at Kirkman's Cove and at Iron Horse Trail Lake, replaced restroom facilities at both locations, and plan to install more over the next several years. Efforts are also being made to make more of our facilities handicapped accessible.

You want more? The public has plenty of suggestions for improving our recreation areas. People tell us that the beach sand is too hot, and they are burning their feet. We are right on this and looking at importing some cold sand from the arctic; or if that doesn't work, maybe start a cost share program on flip-flops.

They tell me that our beach dress-code is too restrictive. This isn't California, folks; our "plastic surgeon-to-citizen ratio" isn't high enough in Nebraska to qualify for public nakedness. And you thought burning your feet on the sand was a problem.

How about more picnic tables and fire rings? We are always replacing grills and tables -- for some reason their life span isn't very long. If you are at one of the parks and can't find one, you might put on the scuba gear and troll the bottom of the lake. We have reason to believe there is an ample supply available down there. (Memo to David Letterman: picnic tables don't float.) Maybe that's why we have started using tables that are concreted into the ground.

Fish and more fish, it's all about the fish. One guy says the fishing is terrible, and the next guy sends us pictures of a lunker so big that he must have used a side of beef for bait. I'm thinking we need to either stock more fish or have guy 2 show guy 1 how to fish.

Yes, it is another fun summer season at your favorite NRD parks. We hope that you find your stay enjoyable, and don't forget to buy that park permit! The annual permits are red this year and are a nice compliment to any windshield. By the way, the gray haired guy does work for the NRD. If you think he's tough, wait until you meet his dog, Chip. Trust me, you don't want to tangle with Chip!

Don't Sell Your Boat Just Yet!

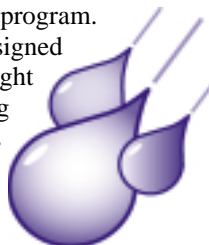
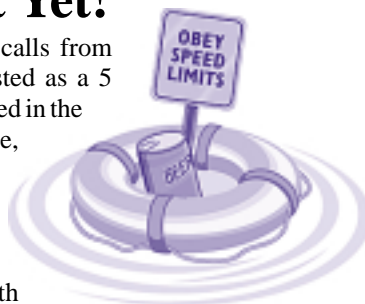
Recently the Nemaha NRD has received phone calls from boaters concerned that Kirkman's Cove has been listed as a 5 mph, no-wake lake. Contrary to the information provided in the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission's boating guide, visitors to Kirkman's Cove will still be able to use the lower two-thirds of the lake for boating up to 35 mph (personal watercraft are not allowed, however). The other three public lakes operated by the NNRD, Iron Horse Trail Lake near DuBois, Wirth Brothers Lake north of Tecumseh, and Prairie Owl near Dunbar, are no-wake lakes.

If you have questions about the rules and regulations for Nemaha NRD parks, contact our office at 335-3325 or check our website, www.nemahanrd.org.

NeRAIN Network Underway in Nemaha NRD

Though some volunteers are still needed to measure rainfall in the Nemaha NRD, many have already signed up to help with this statewide monitoring program. The Nebraska Rainfall Assessment and Information Network is designed to track precipitation throughout the state. Volunteers are being sought from each precinct within the NRD to read a rain gauge every morning and report the amount, or lack of, on the NeRAIN website. Volunteers will receive a rain gauge and training on how to read and report their precipitation.

If you're interested in participating, contact the NRD at 335-3325 to find out if there is an opening in your area.



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Tecumseh & Norris Competed at Nebraska Envirothon



Norris Envirothon Team (L-R): Cody Young, Cody Wedding, Emily Derks, Jan Zink (Advisor), Ellen Norton, Kyle Lococo

Fourteen teams from across the state competed at the 2006 Nebraska Envirothon held at Bunker Hill Hunting Resort near Hastings Saturday, May 6. Both Tecumseh High School and Norris High School qualified to attend during their regional competition held earlier in the spring. Teams consisting of five high school students test on seven different natural resource related subjects: aquatics, range, forestry, soils, wildlife, natural resources



Tecumseh Envirothon Team (L-R): Lucas Kahnk, Tom Paap, Isaac Tubbesing, Kate Trout, Louie Keim (Advisor). **Not pictured:** Kaleb Kuhlmann

policy, and a current environmental issue. This year's environmental issue is Water Stewardship in a Changing Climate.

Winning this year's Nebraska Envirothon was the team from Wauneta-Palisade High School. They will go on to represent Nebraska at the Canon National Envirothon to be held in Canada in July. Tecumseh's team placed 5th in this year's state competition followed closely by Norris in 6th place.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



June

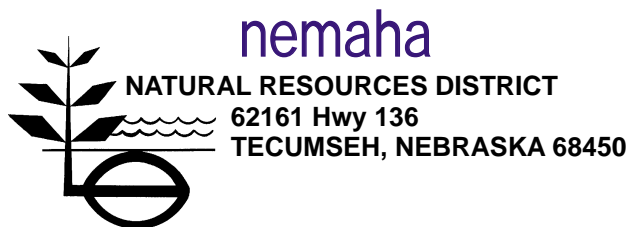
- 3 National Trails Day
- 8 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 14 Watershed of Wonders @ Kirkman's Cove
- 19-21 NARD Meeting & Basin Tour

July

- 4 Independence Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 13 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 23-29 National Envirothon, Manitoba, Canada

August

- 10 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh



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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