

Nemaha Natural Resources District

Insight



ANNUAL REPORT

Fall 2008

2008 Area Land Judging Breaks Records



Winners of purple ribbons at the 2008 Land Judging (L-R): Jared Eickhoff, Jimmy Jarred, James Kelly, Jeremy Epp, John Regier, Levi Likens, and Andy Adam.

If you want the weather to suddenly change from sunny and warm to cloudy, cool, and rainy, schedule a high school Land Judging Contest in southeast Nebraska. This year's contest was no exception as over 150 FFA members from eight schools in southeast Nebraska braved the elements to compete for local honors. While the rain actually stopped just short of the contest, clouds and mud were abundant for the October 8 contest held near Syracuse.

Earning purple ribbons and the top slots in the individual scoring division were (in order of finish): James Kelly and Jimmy Jarred, Falls City; Andy Adam, Diller-Odell; John Regier, Tri County; Jared Eickhoff, Falls City; Levi Likens and Jeremy Epp, Tri County. Taking top honors in team scoring was Falls City's team of Jimmy Jarred, Casey Gerdes, Victoria Vollmer, and Jarod Eickhoff. The top three schools (not necessarily the top three teams) advanced to state competition, which was held at Scottsbluff on November 5. In addition to the Falls City team, Tri County and Diller Odell sent teams to the state contest.

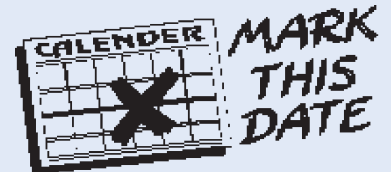


The winning team from Falls City (L-R): Victoria Vollmer, Jared Eickhoff, Jimmy Jarred, and Casey Gerdes.

Other schools competing included Johnson County Central, Palmyra, Syracuse, Fairbury, and Lewiston. Special thanks to Ken Lamb for allowing the contest to be held on his property.

(Check our website for more photos & complete results.)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS



NOVEMBER

- 15-23 Steamboat Trace Trail Closed During Firearm Deer Season
- 27 Thanksgiving, Holiday, NRD Office Closed

DECEMBER

- 11 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh (7:00 p.m.)
- 24 Christmas Eve Holiday, NRD Office Closed @ Noon
- 25 Christmas Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed

JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 1-15 Steamboat Trace Trail Closed During Firearm Deer Season
- 7 Nebraska Legislative Session Begins
- 8 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh (7:00 p.m.)
- 19 Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 27-28 NARD Legislative Conference, Lincoln

Time to Order Spring Trees

It's time to begin thinking about what kind and how many trees you might need for that windbreak, shelterbelt, or wildlife area you've been considering. The Nemaha NRD is now accepting orders for spring, 2009, planting and/or delivery. Here are the details:

If you will plant your own trees:

- Orders must be placed in lots of 25/species (no exceptions)
- Orders will be accepted until March 1, 2009, or until inventories are depleted
- All species are \$0.80/tree, plus a \$2.00 packaging/handling charge & sales tax (payable in advance)
- Trees will be available in April, 2009

If you want the NRD to plant your trees:

- a minimum order of 200 trees is required
- fall site preparation is required if the ground is in sod
- orders are due and payable no later than December 31, 2008
- Planting charges: \$1.00/tree, plus sales tax (does not include cost of trees @ \$0.80 each)

Seven conifer, 10 deciduous, and 12 shrub species are available to choose from. Contact the NRD or check our website for a full listing.

REMINDER:

The entire Steamboat Trace trail is closed to all users during the rifle deer hunting season starting Saturday, November 15, through Sunday, November 23, and again from January 1-15, 2009. No one is allowed on the trail during this time without permission from the NRD. Hunting and/or possession of weapons is never allowed on the Steamboat Trace.

NNRD Elections Bring Out the Voters

Perhaps those Washington, DC, hopefuls thought it was their historic races that brought the voting public out in droves this month. But we're pretty sure in the Nemaha NRD it was the potential for up to five new board members that intrigued local voters! Election 2009 brought with it a significant turnover in Nemaha NRD director positions. Two seats saw contested races, and in three more subdistricts the incumbents chose not to run again leaving those new candidates unopposed. In Subdistrict 4, the incumbent did not file nor did any non-incumbents. Therefore, this position will be filled by appointment after January.

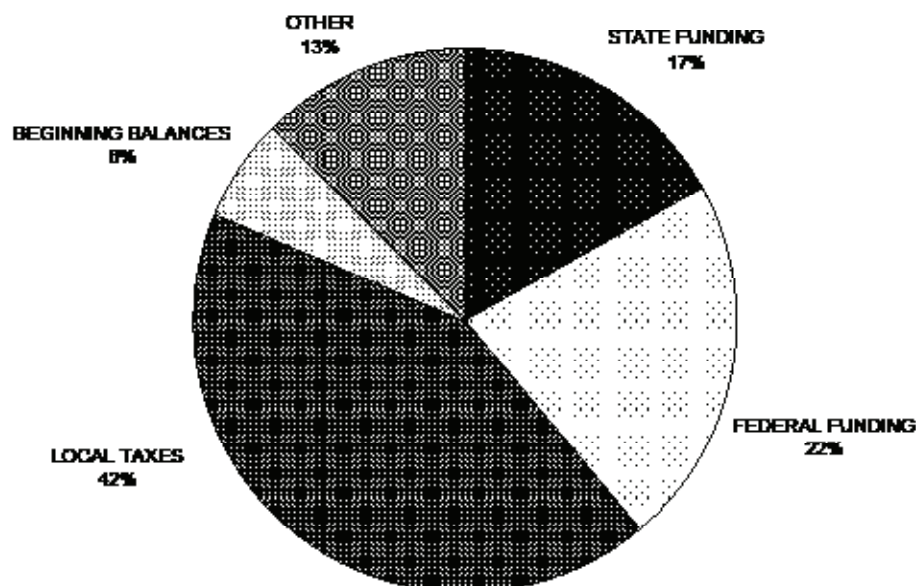
Though the numbers are not yet official, here's the tally as of November 5:

Subdistrict	Candidate	Votes Received (unofficial)
1	Charles P. Starr, Bennet*	727
	Steven D. Sugden, Douglas	1095
2	William R. Umland, Palmyra	1773
3	Lynn Heng, Nebraska City	1678
4	No filings	--
5	Orval Gigstad, Syracuse*	989
	Dwight A. Eisenhauer, Syracuse	849
6	Robbie L. Bohling, Johnson*	1646
7	Mike L. Speece, Auburn*	1656
8	Charles P. Duryea, Humboldt	1532
9	Tom G. White, Falls City*	1479
10	Theodore J. Godemann, Falls City*	1373

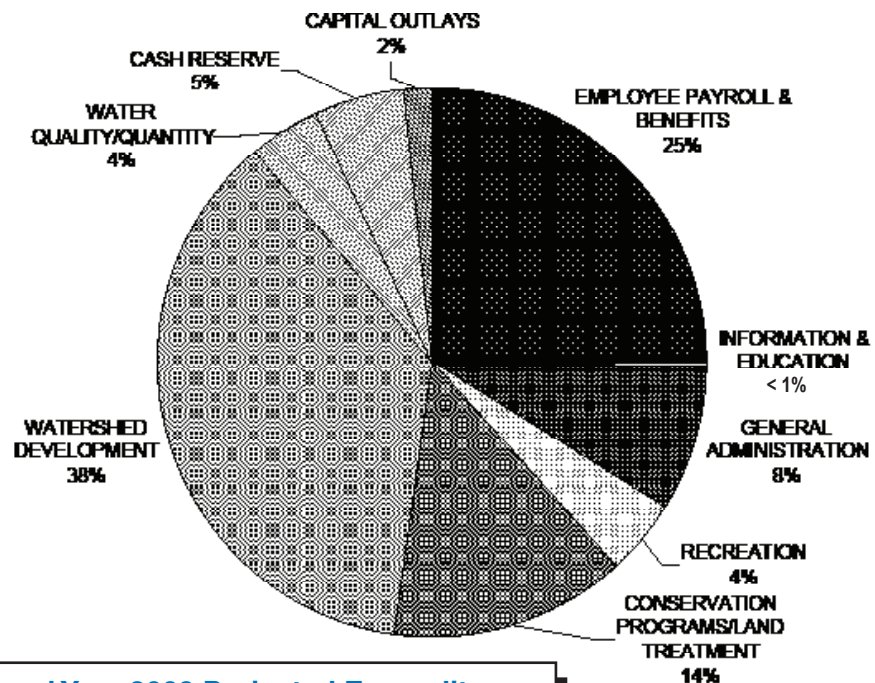
* Incumbent

Annual Report:-----

PROJECTIONS FOR 2008 - 2009



Fiscal Year 2009 Projected Revenue



Fiscal Year 2009 Projected Expenditures

A detailed breakdown of budget figures is available on our website or by contacting the NNRD Office, Tecumseh, NE.

Water Wrap-up

Groundwater Levels

- A network of 118 wells (irrigation, livestock, domestic, and public water supply) located throughout the District were measured in the spring and fall of 2007 and 2008. Spring '07-'08 readings indicated an average groundwater rise of 1.85 feet; and the fall '07-'08 readings indicated an average groundwater rise of 0.83 feet.

Well Abandonment

- 45 abandoned wells decommissioned using the District cost-share program totaled \$20,840. Each year the District receives funding from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) to fund a portion of the program. Since the program's inception in 1994, the District has received \$139,203 from NDNR resulting in the closure of 940 abandoned wells.

- Of the 45 wells closed, 18 were within the Village of Julian; a special project with additional funding administered by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust provided 100% of the cost for their closures.

- 75% cost-share is available from the NNRD for the decommissioning of abandoned wells with a maximum of \$500 for each smaller diameter, cased type well and \$700 for each larger diameter, hand dug type well. Approval prior to the closure is required, and the work must be conducted by a licensed pump installer or well driller.

- Funds are available – Sign Your Unused Well Up Today!

Groundwater Management – A Timeline of Events

- In August of 1999 the entire District was designated as a Phase I Groundwater Management Area (GWMA). Phase I controls include obtaining a permit for wells designed to pump greater than 50 gallons per minute (gpm) prior to construction.

- In May of 2006 the Board of Directors approved a District-wide, temporary moratorium to the issuance of well permits in order to update its Groundwater Management Plan. Although the moratorium was issued District-wide, a well could still be applied for through a variance process. The variance process required a testhole be drilled and logged, spacing between other registered wells pumping greater than 50 gpm had to be at least 1,320 feet, followed by Board action and approval.

- During the temporary moratorium the District's Groundwater Management Plan was updated and scheduled to be in place by October, 2008. Various issues arose concerning the plan that did not allow it to be in place by October, therefore, forcing the Board to issue a temporary, 180-day stay on all high capacity wells (Q>50 gpm).

- The issues are currently being worked out, and it is anticipated that the temporary stay will be lifted early in either January or February, 2009.

Well Monitoring

- 88 wells (38 irrigation, 50 domestic & livestock) were sampled this year for nitrate and some for bacteria (domestic wells) also.

- The District can analyze groundwater wells for nitrate and bacteria and provides this service to residents free of charge. Contact us to have your well tested!

- Additional tests are available from Ward Laboratories of Kearney at varying fees.

Phase II Groundwater Quality Management Area (GWQMA)

- A Phase II GWQMA was established in January of 2004 for northwest Richardson County. The 73 square mile area includes all land east and south of Pawnee and Nemaha Counties,

respectively, north of the North Fork of the Big Nemaha River and west of Highway 75.

- Elevated levels of nitrate in the groundwater prompted the designation.

- Within this area cost-share assistance is available for soil sampling & complete fertilizer control systems – contact the District office for more information.

- Annual groundwater sampling occurred in August with 23 wells sampled for nitrate-nitrogen averaging 8.36 parts per million (ppm) – down from 9.75 ppm last year!

Irrigation Well Registrations

- Is your irrigation well properly registered with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR)? Improperly or unregistered irrigation wells are considered “illegal wells” according to State Statutes and could ultimately be required to cease pumping or to be decommissioned. Registration of irrigation wells has been required since 1957.

- How do I know if my well is properly registered? You can logon to NDNR's website at <http://dnrdata.dnr.ne.gov/wellssql/?&> and search by several methods such as owner name, legal location, county or NRD.

- What if I discover that my irrigation well(s) is not registered? PLEASE NOTE: There is NO PENALTY to the well owner for registering a well late. Registering your well helps to protect it from encroachment of other proposed high capacity wells.

- What if I found my irrigation well(s) registered but in a previous landowner's name? A simple and free Change of Ownership form is all that needs to be completed.

- What if I found my irrigation well(s) registered but not shown in the correct location? A simple and free Water Well Modification form is all that needs to be completed.

- Nemaha NRD staff are available to help register your well or correct ownership or location issues.

Chemigation Applications

- With the passage of LB 284 in 1986, the Nebraska Legislature enacted the Nebraska Chemigation Act. The Act charged the Department of Environmental Quality and the Natural Resources Districts with the authority to document, monitor, regulate, and enforce chemigation practices in Nebraska.

- Beginning in 1987, the Act required producers engaged in the application of chemicals to land or crops with water through an on farm irrigation distribution system to attend a training session and obtain/renew an applicator certificate every four years. Several training sessions are held throughout the State each winter, and the NRD will host a session at the District office later this winter.

- The Act also requires anyone chemigating to obtain a permit from the NRD for each injection location used annually. The permit is reviewed and the site inspected by District staff to insure proper safety equipment is in place and functional.

- In 2008 the District received 86 permit applications and inspected 60 systems.

High Capacity Flow Meter Cost-Share Program

- The District applied for and received funding for the next two years from the Nebraska Environmental Trust to establish a cost-share program for flow meters for water wells within the District pumping greater than 50 gpm.

- The program covers 50% of the cost of a new flow meter up to a maximum of \$500 with a limit of one meter per landowner per year. Approval is required prior to purchase.

- Contact the office for more information, or logon to our website and download the application.

Recreation Recap

Steamboat Trace: Is it possible that Mother Nature isn't a big fan of the Steamboat Trace? Over the past two years, the 22-mile long hiking and biking trail has been damaged by flooding three times and closed for several months because of debris after last December's ice storm. With disaster funding assistance from FEMA, the NRD was able to clean up debris and make the necessary repairs to the trail. Though the trail is currently closed during firearm deer season, beginning November 24 it will again be completely open to the public. Anyone who has not had an opportunity to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Steamboat Trace should spend an afternoon walking or riding from one of the three trailheads in Brownville, Peru, and at the OPPD plant southeast of Nebraska City. To learn more about the trail or how you can donate to help with maintaining and upgrading the trail, check out the District's website.

Homestead Trail: In late 2007 the Lower Platte South NRD opened the Homestead Trail, which runs north from Cortland adjacent to Highway 77 where it eventually joins into the Lincoln trail system. It includes a three-mile segment in the Nemaha NRD near Princeton. The LPSNRD is responsible for maintaining the trail, which eventually will connect Lincoln and Beatrice.

Kirkman's Cove: Kirkman's Cove near Humboldt now offers 16 electrical RV pads as well as numerous other camping sites around the 160-acre lake. This is a beach and boating lake; so if you enjoy swimming, beach volleyball or honing your waterskiing skills, this is place for you. This year the NRD plans to install a new restroom near the campgrounds on the southwest side of the lake.

Iron Horse Trail Lake: For those who prefer quiet day fishing over the rumbling of a motorboat, Iron Horse Trail Lake southeast of Pawnee City may be the place to go. Over the years the 86-acre lake has been stocked with a variety of fish – largemouth bass and catfish being the most popular catches of the day. If you have not been to Iron Horse for awhile, you will notice a number of improvements including new restrooms, improved handicapped access, and a new group picnic area. NRD crews also replaced a weathered stairway near the boat dock with concrete steps this year.



These steps at Iron Horse Trail Lake (top) were replaced in the fall of 2007 with concrete steps (bottom).



Iron Horse Trail Lake Restoration Plan

In February of 2008 the District hired a private consultant, The Flatwater Group, to put together a restoration plan for Iron Horse Trail Lake. The Department of Environmental Quality and the District split the cost of this \$145,000 plan. The plan includes constructing a sediment basin near the inlet of the lake, dredging 200,000 cubic yards of sediment from the pool area, enhancing fish habitat, and constructing numerous angler access points such as fish jetties, which will also provide shoreline erosion control. Over 95% of this estimated \$3 million project will be funded by the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and the Department of Environmental Quality. Within the next several months, District board members will decide whether to pursue this project.

Wirth Brothers and Prairie Owl Recreation Areas: For many years the NRD struggled to maintain water levels in Wirth Brothers reservoir because of leaching problems. It appears that the leaching has finally slowed down, and water levels have been fairly steady for the past two years. Wirth Brothers has an excellent beach, which the NRD upgraded in the past couple years. It is also a popular fishing spot for those who have discovered the area north of Tecumseh. Although facilities are limited, Prairie Owl lake just south of Dunbar is also a nice lake to spend an afternoon fishing.

Park Permits: Just a reminder that Nemaha NRD permits are required for all NNRD recreation areas except Prairie Owl. Permits may be obtained by stopping at the NRD office in Tecumseh or at any of the three parks where they are required. Thinking about a group outing? The NRD recreation areas are becoming more popular for reunions, weddings, and club activities. If you are interested in holding a group event at one of the recreation areas, call the NRD to find out about facilities and obtaining a group permit.

So far in 2008 the NRD has taken in about \$9,000 in park permit revenue and \$2,500 in electrical hookup fees. New annual park permit stickers for 2009 will be available sometime in December. If you purchased an annual permit last year, watch your mailbox in December for renewal information.

FY 2008 Highlights

Small Dams: Three small dam projects were completed this past year. The largest of these is the Bob Taft dam in Richardson County, which was built to reduce annual flooding that occurs on Hwy. 73 north of Falls City. Dams were also built for Arlen Grotrian in Nemaha County and Klaus Hartmann in Johnson County. B.A.B., Inc., from Adams, Nebraska, was recently awarded the bid for constructing a small dam on property owned by Daniel Hill near Falls City. Construction of this dam will take place during the spring of 2009.

Big Muddy Creek Watershed: The Big Muddy Creek Watershed Project is a \$1.3 million project aimed at controlling streambed and streambank erosion in the watershed's upper reaches (in the Johnson, Nebraska, area). This three-year project involves constructing nine grade control structures, six weirs, and a large road dam. B.A.B., Inc. was awarded the bid for the Robert McGinley structure to be built this fall; upon its completion a total of three grade control structures and two weirs will have been built during the first year. In September the NRD held an information and education event which included a tour of completed projects and free barbecue dinner.

Watershed Repair:

WILSON CREEK 8-H: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS) continue to evaluate alternatives to renovate this dam near Hwy 2 west of Dunbar to meet high hazard dam specifications. A recommendation is expected to be received by the fall of 2009.

BROWNELL 2-1: This fall the District will be repairing Brownell 2-1, which is located just north of Syracuse. The major component of the project will be replacement of the 18-inch spillway tube. Kuhl Trenching of Tecumseh was awarded the low bid of \$19,905 to complete this repair.

UPPER LITTLE NEMAHA SITES 25 & 26: As a result of the emergency spillways running at full capacity from a large storm event that occurred on June 4, 2008, Sites 25 & 26 east of Bennet sustained damages to their emergency spillways. Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funds from the NRCS will pay for 75% of the repairs, which are scheduled this fall, weather permitting.

ZIEGLER CREEK SITES Z-3 & Z-6-1: Ziegler Creek Sites Z-3 & Z-6-1 located south of Syracuse also sustained damages from the June 4, 2008, storm event. EWP funds will pay for 75% of these repair expenses that involve debris removal and repair

of erosion in the plunge pools. Work is also scheduled this fall.

Urban Special Projects: Three applications for Urban Special Project funding were approved by the board in May, 2008, for completion during the FY09 fiscal year. Freeman School at Adams received \$2,400 for an outdoor classroom project; Nebraska City will be using \$6,200 of cost-share for a landscaping project at Wildwood Park; Falls City is installing a trail at Stanton Lake Park combining \$16,400 from the NRD with other funding sources.

Conservation Cost-Share: \$151,801 of State Soil & Water Conservation Program funds coupled with about \$11,640 of NRD funds provided 50% cost-share for:

- 182,442 linear feet of terraces
- 18.33 acres of grass waterways
- 21,570 linear feet of side dikes
- 45,189 linear feet of tile
- 403 cubic yards of diversions

The next sign-up will be January 2, 2009, through May 29, 2009, at your local NRCS office.

Trees & Grass: Approximately 18,000 trees and shrubs were distributed and/or planted by the NRD during the spring of 2008.

Over 700 trees were provided to third graders at 13 schools throughout the District in April. Each spring the NRD distributes the trees and provides planting and care information to the youngsters.

As part of the NRD's no-till drilling program, about 65 acres were seeded for private landowners during the fall of 2007 and spring of 2008. In addition the NRD also seeded dams that were constructed last year with NRD assistance.

Education: Norris High School once again qualified a team for the state Envirothon competition held at the Nebraska National Forest near Halsey in May; the NRD contributed \$100 toward their registration.

On June 18, 2008, the NRD hosted the Watershed of Wonders day camp at Iron Horse Trail Lake. Fifty-seven 10-12 year olds were treated to a day of hands-on, fun and educational activities on subjects ranging from forestry to water quality to wildlife. A grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality helped make the day possible!

From the Manager's Desk by *Bob Hilske*, General Manager

It May Be Time to Check Out Our Website

Another year has passed, and it is time for our annual report. It seems like every year we have more and more going on, so to get it all in the newsletter, we've had to eliminate photos and keep reducing the font size. Now we are to the point where we either have to go to that microscopic font rental car companies use to print disclaimers on their contracts or leave stuff out. We opted for leaving some stuff out and directing you to our great, no membership required, no annoying pop-ups, kid viewable website: www.nemahanrd.org. It's so popular we must get at least two or three hits a day. As a transition between the website and the newsletter, I thought it might be a good idea to use this space to highlight a few of the items that we had to leave out of the report.

► Bugs and diseases seem to be a growing problem for our trees in southeast Nebraska. A few years ago pine wilt started killing many of the popular, non-native pine species. Now we are battling bagworms. Mark, our tree guru, is so worked up about this we've had to cut him back to one Mountain Dew per day. Bagworm larvae build protective bags that actually look like they are part of the tree and can totally defoliate the tree. They are a major pest for windbreaks because they favor cedars and spruce.

► Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could make it rain when we wanted it to? The NRD has actually been doing some research on this. Shawn is experimenting with taking his official rain gauge inside anytime it doesn't rain for more than two weeks. Meanwhile repairing dams in the Brownell Watershed, resurfacing the Steamboat Trace, and scheduling after-work staff golf outings all show real promise for guaranteed rainfall.

► Did you know that over a two-year period we inspect over 400 watershed structures in the NRD? Our goal is to make certain that they are safe and perform the job they are designed for. We don't like to see things like leaking tubes, overgrazing, and trees growing on our dams. I think a tree will actually grow three times faster on a dam than it will if you plant it in your yard. Trees on dams never get bagworms either. We've looked at the plans for some of our older structures and confirmed that car bodies, campers, farm implements, and sewage lagoons were not in the engineer's original spillway design.

► One thing that we probably don't promote enough is our wildlife habitat programs. We work with entities such as Nebraska Game and Parks and U.S. Fish and Wildlife to offer incentive payments and assistance to landowners desiring to develop everything from wetlands to food plots. (Sometimes I think that our tree planting program is the best food plot program we offer.) Aaron handles our wildlife programs in the office, and a hint for improving your chances for funding: profess your lifelong allegiance to the Boston Red Sox when you sign-up. Rumor has it no New York Yankee fan has ever been enrolled in the program.

That's just a small update on a few of the programs that don't get the publicity that our recreation areas or the big watershed projects receive. Don't forget that website either; there are all sorts of good information available there. Who knows, maybe we can get to over five hits a day and put some pressure on those folks at Google and Ebay!

Watershed Project To Provide A Wealth of Benefits

After many years of hope and planning, a milestone for the Duck and Buck Creek Watershed project was reached in December, 2007, when it was announced that \$2.47 million was included in the federal budget to complete design and construction of these two structures west of Peru. With funding now secured work on the project was put into high gear as NRCS has nearly completed design work on both dams. The NRD is in the process of working with landowners impacted by the Buck Creek site to acquire the land rights necessary to build the dam. Once all land rights are obtained and permitting is completed, it is hoped that construction of the Buck Creek dam will occur in 2009. The estimated cost of the structure is just under \$1 million. The present timetable to construct the second dam on Duck Creek is 2010.

All landowners in the Buck and Duck Watershed can benefit from this project. Land located below the structures benefits from the flood and sediment control aspect of the project; above the dams a new program will allow landowners to apply for assistance to install management practices that will help reduce sediment and contaminant loading into the reservoirs. Funding from the federal EQIP program combined with money from the 319 non-point source program will be used to implement the cost-share effort. Interested landowners should contact NRCS about signing up for this program.

Over the next 4-5 years, more than \$7 million will be invested in flood control, bridge improvements, and land treatment projects in the 17,000-acre Buck and Duck Creek Watershed.

All Hazards Mitigation Plan – Are You Included?

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires that all states develop a statewide and local all hazards mitigation plan. In most states local plans are being developed at the county level. Nebraska's NRD system provides the state with the unique opportunity to develop the local plan on a multi-county basis thus lowering development costs and resulting in a more efficient plan. The Nemaha NRD is presently working with Johnson, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties to complete the required plan for Southeast Nebraska. JEO Consulting has been hired by the NRD to help develop the plan, which should be submitted to FEMA by fall 2009.

The planning process can be divided into two basic phases. First, participating entities are being asked to identify

potential natural disasters and the impact they would have on the county, school, or community. Once that is completed projects are identified that would help mitigate threats or damage as a result of that hazard.

So exactly what qualifies as a hazard mitigation project? Community improvements such as emergency generators, tornado shelters, tree management programs, and floodplain management are all considered hazard mitigation projects. Projects included in the plan are eligible for 75% funding through FEMA.

Has your community agreed to participate in the All-Hazards Mitigation Plan? Check the NRD website and find out.

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