



Nemaha Natural Resources District

Insight



September 2010

Iron Horse Trail Lake Renovation “Sneak Preview” September 19

When Iron Horse Trail Lake first opened to the public in 1985, the quaint recreation area attracted avid fishermen, campers seeking a secluded hideaway, and even the annual Easter sunrise service hosted by a nearby church. However, like all things subjected to time and weather, the lake and park began to show its age, requiring a facelift of sorts.

Particularly for the lake itself, that facelift has developed into a full-fledged makeover! A cooperative effort of the NRD, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Nebraska Environmental Trust, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and landowners in the surrounding drainage area is resulting in an improved fishery, better water quality, reduction of sediment entering the lake, and the addition of new and updated recreation facilities. In addition to sediment removal, habitat islands and a boat mooring island are being added along with a handicapped accessible fishing pier. Recently the NRD board approved adding electricity to the RV camping area and subsequently developing another area for primitive RV and tent camping. Improvements to the beach and trails in the park are also in the works.

Shanahan Bros. Construction from Lincoln has been working on much of the renovation work in the lake including removal of sediment and construction of habitat islands and a sediment basin. Though the work is not scheduled for completion until next spring, NRD officials will be opening the park to the public on Sunday, September 19, from 1:00-5:00 p.m. for a sneak preview of what has happened so far and what can be expected. Organized in an open house format, curious visitors are invited to stop by and see



Shanahan Bros. continue work on the renovation of Iron Horse Trail Lake.

the work in progress. NRD and agency staff will be on hand to provide information, answer questions, and guide visitors during the afternoon. This will be your only opportunity to view the work this fall as the park is otherwise closed during the construction.

In the event of inclement weather, cancellation of the event will be advertised on local radio stations KLZA-Sunny 101.3 FM, Falls City; KTNC-1230 AM, Falls City; and KNCY-103.1 FM; 1600 AM, Nebraska City. A message will also play on the NRD's telephone voicemail system: (402) 335-3325.

Don't miss this opportunity to see first-hand what is happening at Iron Horse Trail Lake! Gates won't be opened again to the public until all work is completed next summer.

NRD Dams: What You Need to Know

The Nemaha NRD operates and maintains over 350 flood control and grade stabilization structures throughout its eight-county area of southeast Nebraska. In most cases this operation and maintenance is provided under rights granted to the District by the landowner(s) through an easement. (The District does own three structures: Kirkman's Cove, Iron Horse Trail Lake, and Prairie Owl.) Easements allow the landowners to continue using the property, with some limitations, and keep the property on the tax rolls.

Over the years the District has established some outstanding relationships with landowners to help assure that the dams are safe and well maintained. Every year NRD

staff inspect structures to assure that they are safe and are operating correctly. Inspectors look for concerns such as pipe leaks, cracks, debris, woody vegetation growing on the dam, and rodent activity. If the structure has deficiencies, it is added to the maintenance schedule and repaired based on the severity of the problem. Over the next six months, the District plans to inspect every dam and grade stabilization structure in the NRD.

Landowners who have dams operated and maintained by the District on their property should be aware that the easement does include some restrictions. Any use or alteration of the dam, spillway, or reservoir that impacts the safe operation of the structure is not allowed under the terms

of the easement. Unacceptable activities include removing or adding fill, plugging or altering the spillway, constructing buildings on the dam or in the flood pool, and overgrazing.

Anyone with questions regarding what may or may not be allowed is encouraged to contact the NRD. Persons that are considering buying land that includes an NRD lake should review the easement prior to purchase and are welcome to contact the District for additional information on the structure. The public should also be aware that an NRD operated dam that is on private property is not open to the public, and anyone desiring to access the lake must obtain permission from the landowner.

Steamboat Trace Trail Reopens After a Tough Summer

The Steamboat Trace trail survived a tough summer this year as water from the Missouri River flooded portions of the trail from June through August. A combination of high flows on the Missouri River and levee failures were the cause of the extended flooding period. Damages to the 22-mile long trail included loss of trail surface, sediment deposition, debris, and damage to two bridges. Total cost to repair all the damages could be from \$50,000 to \$100,000. The NRD has submitted a request for disaster assistance from FEMA to help cover the cost of the repairs.

The trail from the Arbor Spur trailhead south of Nebraska City to Brownville has been reopened; however, the two-mile segment south of Brownville will remain closed until further notice as a result of significant damage to a bridge. A short detour has also been developed near Brownville to route users around Highway 136 bridge construction and a damaged bridge on the trail.

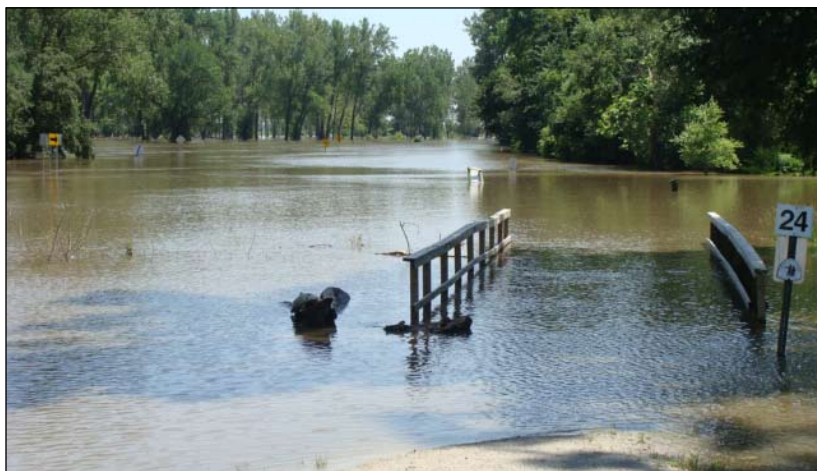
Users should be aware that the NRD has only made preliminary repairs so that the trail could be opened to the public. Some sections of the trail, particularly between Brownville and Peru, will be rough; so caution should be used in these areas. Further repairs to the trail will not occur until a later date.

On a related note, trail users should note that for everyone's safety, the Steamboat Trace trail will be closed during the upcoming firearm (including rifle) deer hunting seasons: October 2-11; November 13-21; December 26-January 18.

Buck Creek Flood Control Set for Construction

After many years of planning, the first dirt will be moved this fall on the Buck Creek dam west of Peru. Shanahan Brothers Construction of Lincoln, who submitted the low bid of just under \$700,000, was awarded the construction contract for the dam. Engineers expect that it will take until the summer of next year to complete the 145,000 cubic yard structure. When the dam is completed, it will help reduce damage from flooding and sedimentation on land, county roads, and bridges below the structure.

With work on the Buck Creek structure underway, some of the focus will now shift to the Duck Creek structure, which will include public recreation at its location a bit farther northwest of the Buck Creek site. During the next six months, the NRD will work on 404 permitting; and once that is completed, land rights acquisition can begin. It is hoped that construction on the Duck Creek dam can begin in 2012.



Floodwaters inundate a trail bridge at Brownville.



Just a sample of the debris encountered on the Steamboat Trace.

Water Resources Updates

High Capacity Flow Meter & Irrigation Management Cost-Share Program

- Cost-share funds are still available from the NRD through the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF) for flow meters for water wells pumping greater than 50 gpm within the District. The program covers 50% of the cost of a new flow meter up to a maximum of \$500.

- Cost-share funds are also now available from the NETF for soil moisture sensors and evapotranspiration gauges to improve irrigation application scheduling. The program covers 50% of the cost of the equipment up to a maximum of \$500.

- Application completion and approval is required prior to purchase. Contact the NRD office for more information, or logon to our website (www.nemahanrd.org) to request an application.

Water Well Decommissioning

- 75% cost-share remains available 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 is required prior to the closure, and the work must be conducted by a licensed pump installer or well driller. Funds are available – Sign Your Abandoned Well Up Today!



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

With Dams, Age Doesn't Matter

As we age we start coming to the realization that we just can't do the same things or perform as well as we used to. The good news for folks living in the Wilson Creek and Brownell Creek Watersheds is that this doesn't apply to flood control dams. Wilson Creek and Brownell are two of the oldest watershed projects in the Nemaha NRD. Most of the structures built in these two watersheds were constructed in the early 1950s to early 1970s. In those days engineers still used slide rules to make all their calculations and essentially were only about one step ahead of the beaver in dam building technology. (For you youngsters out there, a slide rule was a device that by moving a couple of small boards around with numbers on it you somehow could magically do anything from multiply numbers to calculate square root; and amazingly, no batteries were required.)

Wilson Creek and Brownell Creek are adjacent watersheds located east of Syracuse in Otoe County; together they total approximately 85,000 acres consisting mostly of cropland. They include 122 structures ranging from 60-acre flood control structures to small, concrete grade control chutes. In mid-June a slow moving storm cell dropped four to seven inches of rain over the two watersheds. With the ground already saturated, streams quickly reached bank full; and the flood storage behind the structures started to fill. When the storm finally passed, almost all the structures were full to capacity, which means that they contained 21,000 acre-feet of water in flood storage or enough water to cover 32 square miles with one foot of water! There was enough rain that the emergency spillways operated on many structures, and in a few cases there was so much runoff that the flood water went over the top of the dam! I can assure you water going over the top of a structure is not included in Dam Design 101. Although it is difficult to estimate, the structures in the Wilson Creek and Brownell Watersheds reduced damages by around \$500,000.

There is more good news. NRD staff have been inspecting structures in both watersheds, and there was a considerable amount of debris – things like logs, cornstalks, and the occasional barbecue grill, but very little damage to the structures. When you think about the age of the dams, it's pretty amazing that they hold up to that kind of test – a real tribute to the engineers that designed and the contractors that built the dams. It is also a tribute to the efforts of the Watershed Conservancy Districts, predecessors of the NRD, who were the driving force to get these structures built. By today's standards some of their accomplishments were amazing. In the period from 1964 to 1966, 23 structures were built in the Wilson Creek Watershed, many costing less than \$15,000. Today it would cost \$70,000 to build the same structure; and at best, because of today's regulations, we could have only constructed two or three a year. In today's world we can't build as many dams as we used to, so it is important that we take care of what we have. Think of it the way the big stars in Hollywood get some work done on occasion to stay looking young; well, the big stars of the flood control world need a periodic facelift to do their job too. So you're wondering if that dam near you has had a little work done? Sorry, just like those famous plastic surgeons, we promised we wouldn't tell.

Chuck Porter Joins the Nemaha NRD Staff

We're pleased to announce the addition of Chuck Porter to the Nemaha NRD staff as of August 3. Chuck is the new Clerk at the NRCS office in Syracuse having filled the spot previously occupied by Jim Masters. Now, you may still notice Jim around the office once in awhile too; he's helping NRCS on a part-time basis. Chuck

may also seem familiar to visitors to the USDA Service Center in Syracuse since he previously worked as a temporary employee for the Farm Service Agency.

A native of Indiana, Chuck's interest in sustainable agriculture led him to relocate to Nebraska a few years ago. He and his wife and children live near Unadilla.

NEMAHA NRD STAFF

Bob Hilske, Manager
Scott Nelson, Assistant Manager
Jane Kuhl, Administrative Assistant
Allison Caspers, Administrative Assistant
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
Brandon Beethe, Water Resources Intern
Doug Schmidt & Phil Vance,
Seasonal Maintenance

NRD STAFF IN NRCS OFFICES

Deb Kreienhop, Auburn
Glenda Bates, Tecumseh
Chuck Portter, Syracuse
Amanda Hartman, Falls City
Kathy Harlow, Pawnee City
Technicians: Dan Gudenkauf, Brandon Hunzeker, Misty Strayhorn, Delmar Schmidt

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NEMAHA NRD OFFICE:



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Fall Grass Drilling Options Available

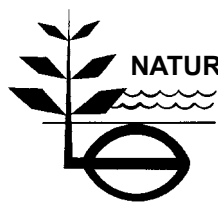
The Nemaha NRD offers a couple of options for landowners who need some grass drilling on small plots this fall. For those requiring no-till seeding, NRD staff will begin fall drilling November 1. To qualify an application must be submitted no later than October 15 to the NRD office along with prepayment of the estimated cost for the seeding. No-till services are billed at the rate of \$22/acre with a \$100 minimum charge, and each landowner is limited to 25 acres per year. Total acres that the NRD will drill in a season are limited to 100, so the service is first-come, first-served. Landowners must provide their own seed. Spring seeding services are also offered with a deadline of March 1 for applications/payment.

If a grassland drill will do the job instead, the NRD has a Miller grassland drill available to rent at the rate of \$9/acre. A \$100 deposit is also required, and you must call ahead to reserve the drill. (The no-till drill is not available for rent but is limited to NRD custom seeding service only.) Contact the NRD at (402) 335-3325 for more information.

NRD Accepting Tree Orders For Spring Planting/Delivery Beginning November 1

Call (402) 335-3325

or check our website (www.nemahanrd.org)
in late October for species list, pricing,
or more information.



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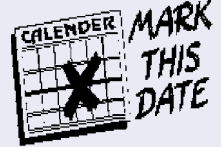
NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

62161 Hwy 136
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS



September

- 14-16 Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island
- 19 Iron Horse Trail Lake Renovation
Open House (1-5 p.m.)
- 27-28 NARD Annual Conference, Kearney

October

- 2-11 Steamboat Trace Trail Closed During Deer Season
- 5 Southeast Area Land Judging Contest, Auburn
- 11 Columbus Day, Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 14 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh (8:00 p.m.)

November

- 1 NRD Tree Orders Begin (for Spring, 2011, delivery)
- 2 Election Day
- 11 Veteran's Day, Holiday, NRD Office Closed 8-4:30
- 11 NRD Board Meeting (tentative), Tecumseh (8:00 p.m.)
- 13-21 Steamboat Trace Trail
Closed During Firearm Deer Season
- 25 Thanksgiving, Holiday, NRD Office Closed

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