



Nemaha Natural Resources District

# Insight



Fall 2011

## Steamboat Trace Beginning to Dry Out

Like most infrastructure located in the Missouri River floodplain, the Steamboat Trace trail that winds along the river between Nebraska City and Brownville was heavily impacted by flooding this summer. With flood waters finally receding, the NRD has started the process of evaluating damage to the trail and determining what will be required to get it back to a useable condition. The stretch of trail from Peru south to Brownville was most heavily impacted. Typical damage in this area includes erosion, loss of the rock surface, and silt damage. Tree debris does not appear to be as bad as in past floods. A couple of bridges that were damaged by the 2010 flood still await repairs. The NRD is working with V&K Engineering from Omaha to help assess damage and develop plans for repairs and mitigating future damage. No timetable has been established for reopening the south segment of the trail.

North of Peru the trail received less damage. In many areas levees protect the trail from the river, so damage is limited to small sections of the trail in the Camp Creek area. Due to floods damaging some power poles, OPPD is presently using a section of the trail as a temporary power supply corridor; and the NRD will not be able to open the north section until the power line can be removed.

For more information on the status of the Steamboat Trace, check out the NRD's website ([www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org)) or call the office in Tecumseh (402-335-3325).



Flood waters have receded from the trail but still hug it's edges.



Tree damage is not as widespread but still prevalent on the trail.



Only the original railroad bed remains on some of the trail.



Silt covers portions of the Steamboat Trace several inches thick.

### *In Memory...*

Lola Panko, who was the Nemaha NRD's first employee back in 1972, passed away on September 13, 2011, at the Good Samaritan Center in Syracuse. She served as both secretary and bookkeeper in those early years and retired in 1997 after 25 years of dedicated service to the District.

## NRD Approves FY2012 Budget

The good news in the budget that was approved by the Nemaha NRD board at their September meeting is that the property tax levy was lowered slightly from 4.29 to 4.15 cents per \$100/valuation. A roughly nine percent increase in property valuations helped lower the levy in spite of the fact that the total taxes requested are about five percent above last year. Much of the \$4.9 million budget is dedicated to watershed projects including construction of the Buck Creek dam near Peru and funding to begin work on the land rights and permitting requirements for the Duck Creek dam in the same vicinity. More details about the budget will be provided on the District's website and in the next issue of the *Insight*, which will include the annual report.

## Board to Consider New Sub-districts in October

Because of the recent census changes, the NRD board was required to review it's voting boundaries to assure equal representation among the 10 sub-districts. Therefore, after considering several options, the board settled on a plan that adjusts the lines to meet the requirements. Though not required, public input is invited on the new plan prior to the board's final action, which is slated for their October 13 meeting. A map showing the new boundaries is posted on the NRD's website and is also available by contacting the NRD office in Tecumseh. Once made the changes will take place beginning with the 2012 election.

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## Buck & Duck Creek Update

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### Construction Progresses on Buck Creek Dam

Work on the Buck Creek dam west of Peru progressed rapidly this summer. Much of the initial fill work has been completed, and the contractor will begin installing the 30-inch concrete principal spillway tube in late September. If weather cooperates there is a chance the dam may be completed this fall; however, it is likely that



**“Work continues on the Buck Creek dam near Peru.”**

some work will be completed in the spring. Shanahan Brothers Construction from Lincoln is the contractor for the project. When completed the \$800,000 structure will control runoff and sediment resulting from over 4,500 acres.

### Duck Creek Ready for Next Step

NRCS has finished the design for the Duck Creek structure, which will be located on the companion watershed to Buck Creek west of Peru. The NRD hopes to begin the 404 permitting process for the 145,000 cubic yard structure this fall. Expectations

are that it could take up to a year to obtain the permit. Depending on progress on the permitting, land rights negotiations could begin in early 2012. However, the District does not plan to acquire any of the necessary land until the 404 permit is approved by the Corps of Engineers. It is also expected that an extensive amount of mitigation will be required to offset the impacts to the trees and stream channel. Plans are for the Duck Creek project to ultimately provide public recreation in addition to its flood and erosion control.

## An Improved Wilson Creek 8-H in the Works

Wilson Creek 8-H is a flood control structure that was built in 1969 between Syracuse and Dunbar. Like most dams in the NRD, it was originally classified as a low-hazard structure, which means if it failed there would be little threat to human life. When Highway 2 was moved north and expanded to a four-lane highway, it was routed just below the dam; and as a result the structure has been upgraded to a high-hazard dam. Unfortunately the structure does not meet the design criteria for a high-hazard dam.

Typically a high-hazard structure is designed with the ability to handle a larger storm event, and the principal spillway must be made of material such as concrete, which lasts much longer than steel. The NRD has been working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to upgrade the structure to meet high-hazard criteria. A funding agreement has been signed by both agencies, and it is hoped that work on the renovation can begin in the spring of 2012. Work will include replacing the metal spillway riser and pipe with concrete, expanding the size of the auxiliary spillway, and increasing the height of the dam.

## Spring Tree Planting Starts With Fall Preparation

Any farmer will tell you that the secret to a successful crop is attention to the preparation of the seedbed. Not surprisingly the same key to success applies to your spring tree planting project. Soon the NRD will begin accepting orders for tree seedlings to be delivered and planted next spring. However, though you can't actually order your trees yet, this is the time to start planning your site and determining the type of tillage it will require.

Though fewer farmers use conventional tillage methods for their row crops, this method of ground preparation is required if the NRD will be planting your trees since the NRD's tree planter is not designed for no-till situations. That means plowing sod in the fall and disking or tilling in the spring just before planting (ground may be tilled in strips if necessary).

If you have questions about a potential tree planting for next spring, give the NRD a call. Staff can help you decide what, where, and how many trees to plant. Orders for next spring are typically accepted beginning November 1, so watch the local news media for more information about species, prices, and deadlines!

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## Project Tames Storm Water Drainage

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Work is complete on a project by the Village of Firth to upgrade a major storm water drainage system through their community. The project involved upgrading several culverts to increase the capacity of a drainageway through the community and constructing a four-acre detention cell on the north edge of town. The improvements allow for more controlled flows through the community and



**“This detention cell will temporarily hold future storm water before releasing it in a controlled manner.”**

provide storage in the detention cell to hold a portion of the water and allow it to drain over time. Total cost of the project was approximately \$400,000. Firth

received assistance through a Community Development Block Grant along with an \$88,000 contribution from the Nemaha NRD towards the project.

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

### New Sub-District Boundaries

Back in the 1700s our forefathers in Colonial America were not exactly pleased with the British government. Now some of it might have been because they made men wear those funny white wigs or that they were afraid that once someone invented a car the King would make us drive on the left side of the road; but the main reason was something known as "taxation without representation." That's what the Boston Tea Party was really all about. As a result our country was founded on the concept that everyone should have equal representation in the government. That's why every 10 years you hear about Congress or our State Legislature using new census data to redraw their district boundaries. People just don't stay put. They move because of new jobs, retirement, or their burning desire to be part of the billions served at that golden arches place.

Just like Congress or the State Legislature, the NRD has to adjust our sub-district boundaries to account for population changes. It's not always an easy task. In Washington, DC, congressional representatives lock themselves in a room, there's lots of kicking, screaming, and fighting, and in the end they come out arm-in-arm with bandages, black eyes, and missing teeth and announce they have come to a friendly agreement. Their new boundary map may look like an electrical circuit diagram for the space shuttle, but at least everyone's happy. Fortunately it isn't that complicated for us as our board can usually come to an agreement without having fisticuffs break out. With that said we still have some difficult challenges to overcome. Things like voting precinct consolidation, where our present board members live, and even prisons factor into the equation. Did you know even though they can't vote, serve on the board, or never stop to buy a park permit, we have to include "guests" at a correctional institution in our population count? There's also been a few times when we've thought about asking the Smiths to adopt a few of the Jones kids from across the road to even things out. The population is moving north and west towards Lincoln, so it means the sub-districts in Richardson and Pawnee Counties get bigger. I'll warn you folks in Richardson County, one day you may be represented by one of those scoundrels from northern Nemaha County.

I hope you have a chance to take a look at the new sub-districting plan. The board will be making a final decision on the plan at their October meeting. Things actually worked out pretty well, and it doesn't look like the boundaries were drawn during happy hour at the Elk Creek Village Tavern. The Nemaha NRD has 10 sub-districts, and they need to have a population of around 4,500, give or take a few hundred. It turns out that Falls City is the perfect size for one sub-district, so nobody gets to leave town; and it's cold showers for everyone, because I don't think the Smiths can afford to adopt any more kids.

## Water News Updates

### High Capacity Flow Meter & Irrigation Management Cost-Share Program

• Thanks to a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, the District has available a cost-share program for water well flow meters. Limited to 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. Approval is required prior to purchase.

• Cost-share is available through the same grant for irrigation management equipment. Eligible equipment includes soil moisture sensors, meters and atmometers (evapotranspiration gages). The program

covers 50% of the cost of the equipment up to a maximum of \$300. Approval is required prior to purchase.

• Contact the office or logon to our website for more information.

### Abandoned Well Reminder

• Don't forget: it is your responsibility to properly close and seal any well that is considered abandoned, and the NRD can help! The District offers 75% cost-share toward the closure of these abandoned wells. Funds are limited to \$500 for a drilled well or \$700 for a hand-dug well. You must contact our office prior to closing the well to qualify for funding.

## 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  
Doug Schmidt & Phil Vance,  
Seasonal Maintenance Crew

## NRD STAFF IN NRCS OFFICES

Deb Kreienhop, Auburn  
Glenda Bates, Tecumseh  
Chuck Porter, Syracuse  
Amanda Hartman, Falls City  
Kathy Harlow, Pawnee City  
Technician: Delmar Schmidt

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Steve Sugden, Douglas  
William Umland, Palmyra  
Bruce Walker, Falls City  
Dan Watermeier, Syracuse  
Paul Weber, Firth  
Tom White, Falls City

## NEMAHA NRD OFFICE:



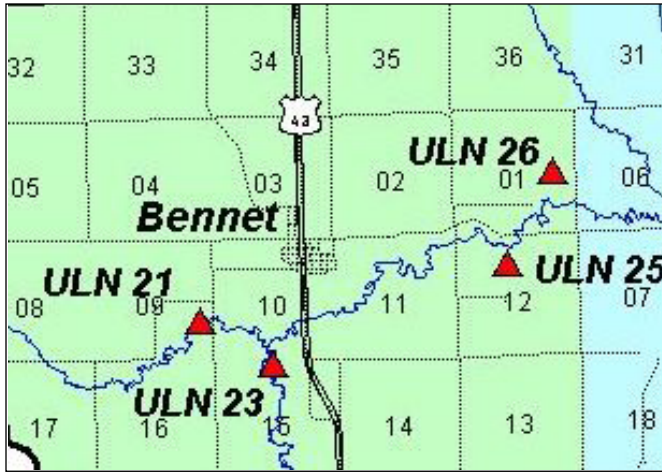
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## Where Are All the Rock Trucks Going?

This fall residents of Bennet might be wondering where all the trucks loaded with large rock are going. The answer would be to Upper Little Nemaha dam site 21 one mile west and ½ mile south of Bennet. Site 21 is among 19 structures

in this watershed which provides flood control benefits for the towns of Bennet, Eagle, Palmyra, Unadilla, Syracuse, and their surrounding areas. Built in 1998 site 21 is one of two high-hazard dams that directly protect lives and property in the Village of Bennet.

Due to excessive wave erosion on the face of the dam, repair work this fall will consist of reshaping the eroded cut and placing class C rock rip rap along the entire



Map: upper little nemaha watershed

face of the dam. At nearly ½ mile long, this dam will require approximately 2,000 tons of rock, which means more than 60 trips with a truck/pup.

The NRD recently awarded a contract for the project to Luetchen's Land Company from Murdock, who submitted the low bid of \$76,100. Work should begin around the first of October and take about two weeks to complete.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### October

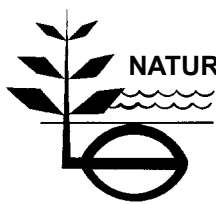
- 1-10 Antlerless Deer Season, Steamboat Trace Trail Closed
- 4 Southeast Area Land Judging Contest, Beatrice
- 10 Columbus Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 13 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh

### November

- 10 NNRD Board meeting, Tecumseh
- 11 Veterans Day Holiday, NRD Office Closed
- 12-20 Firearm Deer Season, Steamboat Trace Trail Closed
- 24 Thanksgiving Holiday, NRD Office Closed

### December

- 8 NRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 26 Christmas Holiday Observed, NRD Office Closed
- 26-1/18 Late Deer Season, Steamboat Trace Trail Closed



**nemaha**

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

62161 Hwy 136  
TECUMSEH, NEBRASKA 68450

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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