



## Local Couple Honored for Soil Stewardship

At the annual conference of Natural Resources Districts held September 25-26 in Kearney, a new award was presented to a Humboldt area couple. Nominated by the Nemaha NRD, Ben and Paula Sue Steffen were presented the first annual Nebraska Outstanding Soil Stewardship Conservation Award by Nemaha NRD and State Association board member, Orval Gigstad.



**Pictured L-R are Jim Bendfeldt, President of Nebraska Association of Resources Districts board, Paula Sue Steffen and Ben Steffen, award winners.**

Goals of this award are to reward outstanding soil management and promote healthy soil management. The Steffen's are a perfect fit for the award since their 1900 acre operation is entirely no-till. They have increased their use of cover crops over the past 20 years and have been active promoters of the practice. In fact

you will find them promoting soil stewardship in a variety of arenas including hosting school groups at their farm.

An engraved plaque was presented to them during the Monday luncheon of the NRD conference.

## Kirkman's Cove, Iron Horse Trail Lake Attract Eclipse Watchers

Though clouds complicated the view of anxious eclipse viewers, that didn't reduce the number who came out on August 21 to both Kirkman's Cove and Iron Horse Trail Lake. It was estimated that as many as 1,000 visitors flocked to the parks for the once-in-a-lifetime event. Unfortunately, though those at Kirkman's Cove only enjoyed a very brief view of totality, nonetheless it was a breathtaking moment. NRD park permits were waived for the day, and visitors came from over a dozen different states and even one person from England. NRD staff split time between the two parks helping direct traffic and assist visitors throughout the previous weekend and on the day of the eclipse.



**Kansas Astronomical Observers shared some of their equipment during the solar eclipse at Kirkman's Cove.**

## Bench Dedication Honors Doc Gigstad

A new bench was installed along the Steamboat Trace at the Peru trailhead in memory of the late Alfred O. "Doc" Gigstad. Dr. Gigstad was a longtime Nebraska City veterinarian who was also active in many economic development and community betterment projects in southeast Nebraska. He served on many boards and commissions over the years which included serving as mayor of Nebraska City, a director on the Nemaha NRD board, and member of the Five Rivers RC&D board.

Around 35 family and friends attended the official bench dedication on October 14th. Doc Gigstad's son and NNRD board member, Orval, spoke on behalf of the family encouraging everyone to honor his father by "sitting on the bench" and when they do "think of ways they can help their community". The bench project was sponsored by the Five Rivers RC&D, Nemaha NRD, and Gigstad family.

### In Memory...

On September 7 the Nemaha NRD received word that Lorelei "Lori" Foster, who had worked as NRD Clerk in Falls City, passed away at the age of 76. Lori served as our clerk from 2003 to 2007 and lived in Shubert at the time. We express our condolences to Lori's family and friends.

## Youth Conservation Successes:

### Area Range Judging Hosted in Pawnee County

Every few years the Nemaha NRD plays host to the regional Range Judging Contest for high school students in southeast Nebraska. This year fourteen schools sent 134 students to test their skills in plant identification and range management. Schools from within the Nemaha NRD who competed included Auburn, Johnson County Central, Lewiston, Nebraska City, Norris, and Sterling. The contest took place at the Bowwood State Wildlife Management Area south of Steinauer.

Teams from Diller-Odell took top honors in both the junior and senior divisions. Individually Sophie Linnemann of Tri County earned first in the senior division with Diller-Odell's Ashtyn Humphreys placing first in the junior division. Locally Lewiston and Norris placed teams second and fourth, respectively, in the senior division. Norris also claimed second place in the junior team standings. Full results for

both teams and individuals are available on the NRD's website, [nemahanrd.org](http://nemahanrd.org).

Thanks to the Natural Resources Conservation Service for their huge contribution to the contest. Thanks also goes to the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission and Cooperative Extension for supporting the contest.

### State Land Judging Results

Local students competed at the State Land Judging Contest near Fremont on October 18. Teams from Falls City, Johnson County Central (JCC), and Pawnee City earned a berth at the state contest. Placing third out of 30 teams was the JCC team of Gabi Alvarado, Connor Bartels, Sam Buss, and Nick Goracke, earning them a trip to the National Land Judging Contest in Oklahoma City next May. Individually Falls City's Joel Gifford placed 9th out of 144 individual contestants. A full listing of the results is available by following the Land Judging link on the NNRD's website, [nemahanrd.org/programs/education](http://nemahanrd.org/programs/education).



Students ponder range condition during testing at the Range Judging Contest.

## Duck Creek Recreation Area Nears Completion

With each passing month Duck Creek is looking more and more like a public recreation area. Over the summer the water and electrical systems were completed. The District had to develop its own water system which includes a well, five hydrants, and over 2,500 feet of distribution pipe. The system was designed to meet state water supply standards, and NRD staff will continually monitor the water to assure it meets quality requirements.

Power is needed for both the water system and camping areas, so the NRD worked with OPPD to provide power for the area. Kreifels Electric from Nebraska City was hired to install the park's distribution system. The area will include 28 RV pads that will have 50-amp hookups. Power was also provided for the well and an overhead light at the boat ramp.

Other major improvements completed over the past few months include the installation of five precast, concrete vault



The contractor prepares to pour concrete for restrooms at Duck Creek Recreation Area.

restrooms, picnic tables, fire rings, and grills. In addition, grass was seeded in the major public use areas in the park.

Over the next six months, the project will be wrapped up with the installation of concrete sidewalks, two picnic shelters, playground equipment, gates, and signage. A beach will also be installed in the spring. The District plans to open the park to the public sometime after April 1st with an official opening day announced in February. The District also plans to have a dedication event in late spring, but a date for that has not been set. As in our other major recreation areas, park entry permits will be required at Duck Creek.

## Groundwater Study Completed

The District recently finished the most comprehensive assessment ever done of the hydrogeology in southeast Nebraska. Leggette, Brashears and Graham (LBG), a nationwide environmental engineering firm, was hired to do the assessment for the NRD. They evaluated existing log data from wells and test holes drilled throughout the basin and looked at parameters such as sand thickness, saturated sand thickness, and the ability of an aquifer to transmit water. This information was then used to create maps that define aquifer boundaries and demonstrate each aquifer's potential for high capacity well development. The NRD will use this data to update its Groundwater Management Plan and rules. It will also help the District set future development goals for each primary aquifer region in the NRD.

District groundwater management decisions are based on the best available data. This new assessment represents a major advance in the District's available data. As new data is generated in the future, it can be used to update the present information. Eventually some of the information developed by the LBG study will be made available on the District's website. The public is always welcome to look at a hard copy of the assessment and/or request an electronic version of the report.

## NRD Budget Takes Conservative Turn

Nemaha NRD board members took a sharp edge to their budget again this year, trimming it by about 12% over last year's. The total requirements landed at \$4.17 million requiring a tax request of just under \$2.17 million. With the expected increase in tax valuations, the resulting levy also dipped to just below three cents per \$100 valuation.

Though smaller the budget still aims to accomplish plenty in FY18 with the upcoming completion of the Duck Creek Recreation Area near Peru next spring. Progress continues on groundwater management updates and related collection of

data, and the rehabilitation of a flood control dam near Adams is included. Three urban special projects were funded, and additional monies were included to supplement the conservation cost-share program. A pilot project to encourage windbreak renovation is also underway. More updates are planned at the District's other recreation areas, and a lengthy list of watershed maintenance projects will take place.

For more details contact the NRD office (335-3325) or check out the website ([nemahanrd.org](http://nemahanrd.org)).

## Conservation Notes & Updates

### Nemaha NRD Small Dams Program

Cost share assistance is available to landowners to construct small dams on land located within District boundaries. Cost share rates range from the NRD paying 25% up to 75% of construction costs

depending on the purpose and benefits a dam might provide. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact the Nemaha NRD or visit our website at [www.nemahanrd.org](http://www.nemahanrd.org) for program details.

### Nemaha Basin Water Quality Management Plan

Work on a District-wide water quality management plan is nearing completion. The completed plan will involve the implementation of a long-term strategy to systematically address water resources deficiencies and allow for enhanced and

coordinated adaptive management of both surface water and groundwater resources for targeted watersheds. Within the next couple of months, prior to finalization, the District will hold a public meeting to share the plan and receive public feedback.

## Steamboat Trace Closure November 11-19

As is the case each November, the Steamboat Trace will be closed November 11-19 during rifle deer season. Keep in mind the trail is closed to everyone, including hunters! The closure is in the interest of

safety. In January the trail will again be closed during the first 15 days of the month for a similar deer season. Please heed the closures as anyone on the trail during the closures would be considered trespassing.

## Where Are They Now?

Over the past 15 years, the Nemaha NRD has employed many seasonal interns and staff to assist with water programs, project maintenance, and other field work. Most were college students who used their time with the NRD to generate income for school and gain practical experience they could use when entering the workforce. The ability to include a job with the NRD on their resume can be a great asset when seeking full-time employment. Here is an update on just a few of our former part-time employees:

Lucas Geyer, who was originally from Humboldt and attended Peru State College, worked as a water department intern for the NRD in 2006. Today Lucas works for the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources in their Water Administration Division. Brandon Beethe also works for the Department of Natural Resources in the Engineering and Technical Services Division. He grew up in the Tecumseh area and was a summer intern for the NRD in 2010 and 2011.

Syracuse native James Conradi worked on the District's maintenance crew in the

summers of 2006 and 2007. Today he is a technician for NRCS working out of their Weeping Water office.

Tyler Weishahn and Dan Gudenkauf both worked for the NRD as technicians on the Duck and Buck Creek Watershed Project in 2009 and 2010. Dan also spent a summer working as a water department intern. Today Tyler works as a Natural Resources Specialist for the Lower Big Blue NRD in Beatrice, and Dan is a Soil Conservationist for NRCS in Blair.

Norris High School alumnus Amy Fossler was a summer water department intern for the NRD in 2014. She now works as a junior engineer for The Flatwater Group.

This past summer Eric Sundar, who is attending Peru State College, and Nebraska Wesleyan student Mitch Faris were part of our maintenance team. They spent the summer helping at our recreation areas, working on the Duck Creek project and doing other general maintenance. We hope they have enjoyed their experience with the NRD and can use it to benefit their future careers.

## NEMAHA NRD STAFF

Bob Hilske, Manager  
Scott Nelson, Assistant Manager  
Jane Kuhl, 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, Field Technician  
Ken Hatten,  
Land & Water Resources Assistant  
Doug Schmidt, Seasonal Maintenance

## NRD STAFF IN NRCS OFFICES

Alice Alexander, Auburn  
Geraldyn O'Malley, Tecumseh  
Kim Zech, Syracuse  
Monica Dishong, Falls City  
Kathy Harlow, Pawnee City

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Rob Bohling, Johnson  
James Gerweck, Falls City  
Orval Gigstad, Syracuse  
Dave Guhde, Nebraska City  
Dan Hodges, Julian (CHAIR)  
Doug Iske, Dunbar  
Jenny Kearney, Nebraska City  
Jon Keithley, Falls City  
Robert Lassen, Firth  
Timothy Loseke, Hickman  
Michael McDonald, Palmyra  
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Russel Moss, Burr  
William Niedfeldt, Shubert (VICE-CHAIR)  
Alan Romine, Falls City  
Don Siske, Table Rock  
Eldon Snoko, Humboldt  
Mike Speece, Auburn  
Dan Stukenholtz, Brock  
J. Duane Sugden, Sterling  
Kevin Thorne, Nebraska City

## NEMAHA NRD OFFICE:



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## Recreation Updates to Remember

With the upcoming opening of the District's fifth public recreation lake next spring, the board of directors is considering a few changes to its rules. Most noteworthy would be a proposed increase in the park entry permit for vehicles. Since its inception in 1996 the fee has not changed from its original \$12 for an annual permit. At their November 9 meeting the NRD board may recommend an increase in both the annual and the daily permit fees. It is anticipated that camping fees will remain the same (\$12/day). Once a new fee is determined, a public hearing

on the change will take place most likely prior to the December 14 board meeting.

Once fees are set 2018 annual park permits will be available for purchase. If you bought a permit last year, watch for an email in mid-December with details on how to buy your 2018 permit. Online requests are available now, so you can use your credit card for your purchase; and your permit(s) will be mailed to you within a few days. This is the quickest method for purchasing annual permits. Remember that 2018 permits will not be available until after December 14.

## Order Trees Now for Spring Planting

Every year the NRD begins taking orders on November 1 for tree seedlings to be planted next spring. Several species of conifers, deciduous, and shrubs are once again offered, and orders must be placed in multiples of 25/species. Prices will remain at \$1/seedling regardless of the variety plus applicable sales tax and handling charges. If you think you might have room for a windbreak of 200 trees or more, the NRD will gladly plant for you next spring for an additional fee. Contact the office soon to set up a time to design your windbreak, and make sure to

work your ground this fall. All trees and planting charges are payable in advance. Check the NRD's website ([nemahand.org](http://nemahand.org)) for more details and full listing of all species available.

Watch for more details soon about a windbreak renovation cost-share program and subsequent informational workshop coming up on February 1. This is designed for anyone who has an old, deteriorating windbreak in need of removal and replanting. Landowners will learn what qualifies for renovation and requirements for the cost-share program.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS



### November

- 9 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 7:00 p.m.
- 10 Veterans Day Holiday Observed, NNRD Office Closed
- 11-19 Steamboat Trace Closed during Firearm Deer Season
- 23 Thanksgiving Holiday, NNRD Office Closed

### December

- 14 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 7:00 p.m.
- 25 Christmas Holiday, NNRD Office Closed

### January

- 1 New Year's Holiday, NNRD Office Closed
- 1-15 Steamboat Trace Closed during late Firearm Deer Season
- 11 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh – 7:00 p.m.
- 15 Martin Luther King Holiday, NNRD Office Closed
- 23-24 NARD Legislative Conference, Lincoln



**nemaha**

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

62161 Hwy 136

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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