#### **Nemaha NRD Board of Directors & Staff**

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Robert Lasser Todd Boellston Patty Coates **Kevin Thorne** Ed Ehmer

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Dick James **Kraig Coonce** Tim Schaardt

Staff Brooke Gerdes Chuck Wingert Charlie Pierce Correy McClintoc Aaron Stalde Steve Bartels Mark McDonal Tomas Chale Ken Hatten

**NRCS Clerks** Geralynn O'Malle Kathy Harlow Deb Nelson

Toni Niedermeye

Maddie Million

**Orval Gigstad** 

9 - Falls City

1 - Hickman

3 - Syracuse

2 - Douglas

4 - Nebraska City 5 - Nebraska City

5 - Nebraska City

6 - Sterling

7 - Brock

8 - Verdor

9 - Rulo

10 - Steinauer

Assistant Manager

Water Technician

Field Technician

Secretary / I&F

Tecumseh NRCS

Pawnee City NRCS

Syracuse NRCS

Position

**Resources Specialist** 

Watershed Coordinator

Watershed Coordinator

Watershed Coordinator

Administrative Bookkeepe

Water Resources Manager

Water Resources Specialist

Machine planting available for orders of 200+ trees (must contact us to establish planting plan prior to ordering)

**Conservation Tree & Shrub Program** 

The Nemaha NRD is taking conservation tree and shrub orders November 3, 2025 -

March 13, 2026 for spring delivery.

Cost share may be available through the Soil & Water Conservation Program.

#### **Deadlines:**

Ground Preparation for Machine Planting – Completed by Dec. 31, 2025

Machine Planting Orders – Paid by December 31, 2025

<u>Price:</u> \$1.50 per seedling — sold in lots of 25 per species

Order early – popular species sell out fast!

Self-Plant Orders – Paid by March 13, 2026

Fall 2025

Order forms available both online and in our office.

Scan the QR code to find out more about the program:





Insight is a publication of the Nemaha NRD. Requests to be placed upon the Insight mailing list and/or comments regarding information in this publication should be directed to Maddie Million at 62161 Hwy 136 Tecumseh, NE 68450 or at mmillion@nemahanrd.org. For more information on the Nemaha Natural Resources District please visit our website at www.nemahanrd.org





## nemaha

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

# INSIGHT

**Fall 2025** 



## **Planting for Tomorrow at Kirkman's Cove**

On October 16, Nemaha NRD staff, HTRS (Humboldt Public K-2 students, and FFA

members gathered at Kirkman's Cove Recreation Area to plant 10 new trees through the Trees for Nebraska Towns Initiative. Students participated in a hands-on experience from start to finish-placing trees in the ground, mulching, and watering—while



learning how trees play a vital role in supporting people, wildlife, and the environment.

Trees at our recreation areas do much more than provide shade and beauty. They create comfort for visitors, support wildlife habitat, and contribute to the overall health of the landscape. In recent years, however, more trees have been removed than replaced due to ex-

> treme weather, insects, disease, and a lack of species diversity. The emerald ash borer has been detected in surrounding areas, and while it has not yet reached the park, concern about its potential arrival is growing.

NRD Field Representative Steve Bartels explained that green ash was once a common choice because it grew quickly. "There's a high number from what we planted," Bartels said. "But they drop limbs and decline, and for safety reasons, we have to take them down.'

Planting more resilient species helps ensure the recreation area continues to



#### Farm Smarter, Protect Resources with ProducerConnect

December 11: Nemaha NRD Board of Directors

Meeting—Time TBA

December 24: Office Closed at Noon

December 25: Christmas: Office Closed

This free web based program and mobile app gives Nebraska farmers a secure dashboard to track irrigation, get nitrogen recommendations, and access field data. Make informed decisions that boost crop production while protecting our ground-

S)

water. Join today to support your farm's success and sustainable agriculture in Nebraska. Scan the QR code to get started or visit producerconnect.com.



provide shade, beauty, and environmental benefits for years to come. Supported by the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and the Nebraska Forest Service, the Trees for Nebraska Towns Initiative not only sup-



plies trees for community projects but also raises awareness about the value of Nebraska's natural spaces. By promoting species diversity and planting in public recreation areas where trees are most needed, projects like this help sustain resilient landscapes and a healthier environment across Nebraska.



Fall 2025 Fall 2025

### **Recreation Roundup: Around the Parks & Trails**

#### **Kirkman's Cove Dock Upgrade**

Kirkman's Cove received a dock upgrade this summer with field staff installing thicker and heavier tiles. The improvement created a more solid and stable surface that allows boaters to launch and dock safely, improving the overall boating experience at the recreation area.





#### **Wirth Brothers Lake**

The rains this season have brought much-needed moisture to Wirth Brothers Lake, and water levels have risen. Persistent drought over the past few years allowed water to slowly drain through the sandy layers beneath the lake, but these recent showers have made a noticeable difference. While the lake may not contain fish, it remains a popular stop for ducks, geese, and other water-loving birds.



#### **Iron Horse Trail Lake**

Iron Horse received a new roof on the picnic shelter near the primitive camping area, ensuring guests can continue enjoying it while camping, hiking, or taking a break from water activities



The Pawpaw (Asimina triloba) is the largest native fruit in North America. The species grows no further west or north than its native range in SE Nebraska.



#### **Duck Creek Recreation Area**

Duck Creek proves to be a popular fall spot for both park visitors and wildlife. As late summer arrived, flocks of migrating birds and geese made their way through the recreation area. In July, a record redear sunfish was caught at Duck Creek measuring 12.5



inches and weighing in at exactly 2 pounds, which beats the previous record by 2 ounces!

The outlook shelter near the upper-level electrical sites was another popular new feature at Duck Creek. Plans are being made to add seating in the shelter for visitors to enjoy the views of the lake while they relax.



#### **Steamboat Trace Trail**

About 2.5 miles south of the Peru Depot, a low spot formed along the Steamboat Trace Trail near the wood rail fence. While we work on repairs, the easiest way to get through is to stay close to the bluff side of the trail.







#### Summer may be over, but algae doesn't check the calendar!

Even though we have completed weekly beach monitoring for the year, harmful algal blooms (HABs) can still pop up in the fall - check out DWEE's website to learn the signs so you know what to look for: dee.nebraska.gov

## Remembering the Flood of May 1950

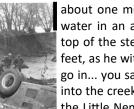
Flooding was nothing new to southeast Nebraska in 1950, and most residents saw it as just another spring event. Nemaha NRD staff spoke with longtime Unadilla residents John Stilwell and his uncle, Jack Stilwell, to capture their memories of those floods. John recalls, "I can remember waking up in the mornings and seeing water around our house previously and at other times. When I was a kid I remember having to go out to let cattle out of the pasture because they were up to their necks in water." Jack added, "We had so many floods, up at Unadilla. See, if it rained two inches west of town, it flooded in Unadilla."



But on the afternoon of May 8, 1950, residents in Southeast Nebraska had little time to prepare for a disastrous storm that would be etched in local history. John stated, "The afternoon of the eighth it started raining...at four o'clock or something. And I just remember it raining so hard that night." Jack told how he was unable to make it home after work, "I was going to go home... I had put chains on the car, started out, and boy, it was raining like, well, it was raining pretty good. And I decided I

wasn't going to get home. And so I stayed in town. And, well...the water came right up to the steps (Unadilla storefronts)...that water come down there in a hurry, you know. It was coming fast."

One of the most tragic events of that night was the bus tragedy near Unadilla. An American Busline Aerocoach carrying the driver and eight passengers was traveling westbound on Old Highway 2,

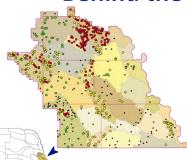


about one mile east of Unadilla when it was struck by fast-rising water in an attempt to turn around. Jack recalls standing on the

top of the steps at the corner of what is now G & Main Streets, with floodwaters nearly touching his feet, as he witnessed a moment he would never forget: "I watched the bus go in, you could see the bus go in... you saw lights, going, and then all of a sudden, there wasn't any. And that was when it washed into the creek." The powerful current carried the bus nearly two miles downstream before it settled in the Little Nemaha River. The following day, valiant efforts were made to retrieve the bus and its passengers from the river; however, the bus top remains buried within the sediment to this day. Only three passengers survived the bus tragedy, while the flood claimed a total of 23 lives.

The flood of May 1950 serves as a lasting reminder of how vital flood control is to our area. When asked about the Nemaha NRD dams, John replied, "I'm grateful for the land that I have and that it is not flooded because of all the dams we have." Events like these have shaped the Nemaha NRD's commitment to maintaining and improving watershed dams and structures across southeast Nebraska working every day to keep lives, land, and the future of Southeast Nebraska safe.

## **Behind the Scenes: Keeping Our Dams Safe & Sound**



Across the Nemaha NRD, more than 400 watershed dams are working quietly behind the scenes—our "silent partners" in protecting land, communities, and the future of Southeast Nebraska. Designed primarily for flood control, these dams slow down stormwater and temporarily store it during heavy rain. By releasing water gradually, they help prevent flash flooding, reduce erosion, and keep sediment and pollutants from rushing into our rivers and

Most days, our watershed structures blend into the landscape—nestled among hillsides,

fields, and recreation areas. But when storms roll in, their role becomes critical. These structures safeguard homes,

roads, farms, and entire communities from what could otherwise be devastating flood events.

Because many were built decades ago—some more than 60 years—age is beginning to show, especial ly in the underground outlet pipes that control water flow. To extend their life and ensure continued protection, the Nemaha NRD is investing in modern solutions like UV-CIPP (Ultraviolet Cured-In-Place



Pipe). This trenchless relining process reinforces pipes from the inside without excavation—meaning farmland stays intact, repairs finish in a day rather than weeks, and taxpayers save significantly on costs. Best of all, UV-CIPP can add UV-CIPP Installation up to 75 more years of reliable performance.



Since 2023, 24 watershed structures have been successfully relined using this method—with more scheduled to keep our flood-control system strong for generations to come. While these dams may not make noise or draw public attention as they work quietly behind the scenes, they are always protecting us, our property, and our future.



Fall 2025 Fall 2025

## Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025)

#### **Programs**

#### **Conservation Assistance**

The NNRD's Soil and Water Conservation Program works with NRCS offices to provide technical assistance, design, and layout of better grazing management systems. In FY25 the NNRD along with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources provided cost share assistance to landowners. The following conservation practices were installed throughout the district:

- Miles of terraces: 9.03
- Miles of underground outlets (tile): 3.02
- Acres of grassed waterways: 1.1
- 2,325 windbreak trees /shrubs cost-shared (Otoe & Pawnee Counties)
- Cubic yard of diversions: 8,429

#### **Trees**

Through the 2024-2025 Conservation Tree Program, 11,015 trees and shrubs were distributed in 2025. Of those, Nemaha NRD staff machine-planted 4,475 at nine different locations across the district, while the remaining seedlings were picked up directly from the NRD office by landowners for their own conservation planting projects.

#### **Nebraska Buffer Strip Program**

Over 725 acres in the NNRD were enrolled in the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program aimed at reducing cropland pollutants entering surface waters. The program provides annual payments for grass filter strips or riparian forest buffers along vulnerable surface water resources. Those acres earned a combined \$122,300 in annual payments in FY25.

#### **Urban Special Projects**

Two Urban Special Projects were completed in 2025—one in the Village of Talmage and one in the Village of Palmyra. In Talmage, upgrades were made to the city pond, including the addition of a water fountain, new aeration pump and hoses, and a sign featuring the pond's history and donor recognition. In Palmyra, the original, deteriorating, asphalt surface on the quarter-mile walking trail at Taggart Park was replaced, improving accessibility and enjoyment for the community.

#### **Nebraska Buffer Strip Program**

The Nemaha NRD and Nebraska Department of Agriculture offer the Buffer Strip Program for cropland along waterbodies or wetlands. Earn 120% of the CRP rental rate on a 5-10 year contract, with having and grazing allowed once established.

Sign up year-round at your county USDA Service Center!

#### **Education & Outreach**

#### Plant-A-Tree

Each spring, Nemaha NRD hosts its Plant-A-Tree Program, visiting third-grade classrooms across the district to provide students with structural conservation practices that reduce erosion and facilitate a tree or shrub and demonstrate how to plant and care for their seedling. In spring 2025, the program delivered 685 trees and shrubs to 15 area schools, helping young students learn about conservation firsthand.

#### **Land Judging**

The Nemaha NRD hosted the Southeast Area Land Judging Contest in October 2024. Following their 4th place finish at last year's State Land Judging Contest, the Falls City FFA team advanced to the National Land Judging competition earlier this year, where 93 teams and 363 individuals competed.

Individual results were: Bowdy Jones (9th), Dayton Snethen (25th), Malori Kuker (180th), and Taiylah Moore (299th). The Falls City FFA team placed 11th overall.

Congratulations to the Falls City FFA team on their outstanding accomplishments!

#### **Radio Advertising**

The Nemaha NRD shares news and updates on the airwaves all year long, running 180 radio ads annually along with weekly live call-ins. Tune in to B103 (103.1 FM) every Wednesday at 8:15 a.m. to catch the latest updates from General Manager Kyle Hauschild and/or Secretary/I&E staff Maddie Million.

#### Staff Years of Service

Ken Hatten—Field Technician—10 Years

#### **Funding for Outdoor Learning and Recreation**

The Nemaha NRD's Urban Special Project Fund is now accepting applications for 2026! This program provides financial support for projects on public land that create opportunities for natural resource-related recreation, education, or interpretation in urban areas. Eligi-

ble projects include outdoor classrooms, arboretums, native tree or grass plantings, pond improvements, native landscaping, trails, and more.

Applications are due by February 1, 2026, so now is the perfect time to start organizing your ideas and plan a project that benefits your community, school, or organization!

The Nemaha NRD Board of Directors finalized the fiscal year 2026 budget in September, approving a levy of \$0.029999 per \$100 of valuation. Revenue for the year comes primarily from local property taxes, with grants through state, federal, and other local funds.

Maintaining and repairing watershed structures remains a top priority with Ultraviolet Cured-in-Place pipe (UV-CIPP) being a main focus on aging structures. The FY26 budget allows for \$850,000 to be put towards these relining efforts to structurally renew the pipes and extend the life of the dams within the Wilson Creek and Upper Big Nemaha watershed areas.

With the Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Act (NiRIA) program renewed for the 2026 growing season, funds are again available for producers in the district to apply for incentive payments for reducing nitrogen fertilizer use. Payments for the 2025 program will be finalized by January 15, 2026 for this year's participating produc-

Approximately \$30,000 is available through the Irrigation Efficiency Improvement Program this year for applicants within specific areas to receive 100% reimbursement for approved irrigation nozzle packages. The program aims to improve application uniformity, reduce runoff, drift, evaporation, and maintain or improve crop vields.

FY26 Budget	Budgeted	
Expense Category	Amount	% of Budget
Watershed & Flood	\$1,304,483	29%
Recreation	\$121,170	2%
Personnel & Director	\$1,665,990	35%
General Operation	\$363,923	8%
Conservation Assistance	\$292,000	6%
Water Quality/Quantity	\$359,958	7%
Capital/Expenditures	\$33,692	<1%
Cash Reserve, Sinking	\$600,000	12%
Information & Education	\$37,475	<1%
Total FY26 Budget	\$4,778,691	

## Manager's Update

From Kyle Hauschild, General Manager

It's been another busy year at the Nemaha NRD. Our recreation areas continue to be popular and have been full many times over the summer. An angler at Duck Creek was able to catch a new state record redear sunfish. We were also lucky to catch timely rain throughout the district this summer, allowing Wirth Brothers to fill back up following a few years of drought.

The watershed structures continue to be maintained and brought up to current day standards. Some of the improvements that we saw over the last year include twelve (12) dams being slip lined with UV Cast in Place Pipe (UV-CIPP), giving those structures a new lease on life. With these investments into the watersheds, we will see many more years of benefits downstream of the dams that have outlived their design life of 50 years. These upgrades will continue to protect lives, homes, and other property for another 75 years.

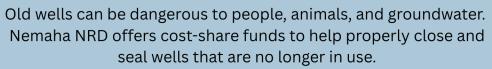
We have had the chance to welcome a few new employees to the district after others have departed or retired. While we are sad to see staff leave, we are excited to have new team members join us.

I want to thank our Board and everyone who has been working with the NRD for making this a great year. We appreciate all your efforts and look forward to making the coming year even better.

-Kyle Hauschild, General Manager



### **Abandon Old Wells Safely!**





Visit nemahanrd.org/programs/water or contact our office for more information.

