



NRD Parks Are Ready & Waiting for Visitors!

It's time to put away the coats and break out the shorts and sunscreen! Our summer recreation season has started, and we are planning for another record breaking year at our four park areas. Visitors to Kirkman's Cove should be happy to hear that a new boat dock will soon be installed. The NRD Board approved the purchase of a new dock from On the Water Co. in Fremont, and they will be installing it sometime in June.

Iron Horse users will notice a new rock trail that they can use to access the east side of the 80-acre lake. Eventually the trail will go around the entire reservoir. Most of the trail has minimal grade with a few steeper areas. Last year a new restroom was installed in the day-use area.

Every year the District gets numerous questions and inquiries regarding blue-green algae levels in our lakes. The lakes are monitored weekly throughout the summer, and the results are usually available by late Thursday afternoon. Lakes are posted if they are on health alert, and, consequently, water body contact activities are not recommended. However, toxin levels

can change rapidly; so swimmers should always do a visual evaluation of the lake before entering. If the algae, which looks like blue green paint, is present, stay dry. Pets are extremely vulnerable to the toxin if they consume the water.

If you are planning to head to the parks, here are some things to remember:

- Park permits are required for Kirkman's Cove, Iron Horse Trail Lake, and Wirth Brothers Lake. They may be purchased at the NRD office or through the iron rangers located near the park entrances.
- Campsites are all first-come, first-served.
- Reserving spots by parking boats, vehicles, trailers, or unattended RVs is not allowed.



Vehicle entry permit envelopes are available in these iron boxes at each of the parks.

- NO ATVs or UTVs are allowed in the parks.
 - Vehicles must be parked in designated areas.
 - No alcohol, firearms, or fireworks are allowed.
- Park rules are posted at numerous locations in the parks and are available on our website (www.nemahanrd.org).

Iron Horse Lake Fisheries Evaluation Favorable

Earlier this year NRD staff assisted Nebraska Game and Parks with a fisheries inventory of Iron Horse Trail Lake. The main purpose of the inventory was to determine how the fish population has progressed since the 2011 renovation. Two capture methods were used to collect fish: electro-shocking and frame netting. Neither method harms the fish; and after data is collected, they are returned to the lake. Four species of fish were inventoried: Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, White Crappie, and Black Crappie. Other fish were captured, but their numbers were not inventoried. The good news is that the fisheries is developing as planned.

Percent of the Total Species Population Captured (by Length)

Species	<6"	6" to 8"	8" to 10"	10" to 14"	>14"
Largemouth Bass	3%	7%	26%	36%	28%
Bluegill	14%	71%	15%		
White Crappie		100%			
Black Crappie		58%	42%		

Note: Smaller fish may have been too small to capture

Results from recent fishing tournaments and anecdotal reports appear to be similar to the Game and Parks evaluation. The largest Largemouth Bass captured or reported has been 20 inches. A 21-inch minimum limit is set for keeping bass at Iron Horse. A minor Bluegill kill this spring appears to be due to a fungus, and Game and Parks fisheries staff feels it should not impact the lake's population.



Game & Parks staff measure this fish captured at Iron Horse Trail Lake in May.

Anglers are reminded that no live bait is allowed at Iron Horse, and disposing of live fish into the reservoir can have a long-term, detrimental impact to the fisheries.

Norris Envirothon Team Tops Forestry Test at State Event

This year's Nebraska Envirothon competition was held in Nebraska City on Wednesday, April 27. It was the first time this state contest was held in the Nemaha NRD, and it took place on the grounds of the Arbor Day Farm and Steinhart Park/Lodge. Fourteen high school teams of five from across the state qualified to compete during regional competitions earlier this spring. Working as teams, students are tested in seven different categories: Aquatics, Wildlife, Forestry, Natural Resources Policy, Soils, Range, and this year's special topic, Invasive Species.

Norris High School's team of Emily Burnside, Kaili Jorgens, Renae Mitchell, Calla Sullivan, and Maria Talero was coached by long-time Envirothon sponsor and supporter, Jan Zink. Though the team ended up in 6th place overall for the contest, they took top honors in the Forestry testing section earning them a plaque for their efforts. A team from Concordia High School in Omaha took home the top honors and the opportunity to compete at the National Envirothon at Ontario, Canada, in late July.

This year marked the end of a dedicated career of coaching Envirothon teams for Jan Zink as she has retired. Her passion for the Nebraska Envirothon has been unmatched, and she will be sorely missed by those who knew and worked with her in this program. Best of luck, Jan, in your retirement endeavors!



Pictured left to right: State Senator Dan Watermeier, Syracuse, presented the Forestry award to the Norris High School team of Emily Burnside, Kaili Jorgens, Renae Mitchell, Calla Sullivan, and Maria Talero. Also participating in the presentation was Jim Johnson, Chair of the Nebraska Association of Resources District's Information & Education Committee.

Watershed of Wonders – June 15 @ Kirkman's Cove

This year the Watershed of Wonders day camp, which is held every two years, will return to Kirkman's Cove near Humboldt on Wednesday, June 15. The camp is offered free of charge for kids 10-12 years old and is sponsored by the Nemaha NRD. Activities include archery, fishing, water rockets, a boat ride and hayrack ride, and the return of the Amazing Water Race.

To date more than 50 kids have signed up, but we still have room. Pre-registration is required, and the form is available on our website (www.nemahanrd.org). The initial deadline for registrations has passed, but we'll keep receiving them as long as possible. Signed permission/liability forms must be provided on or before the event in order to participate. For more information, please call our office (402) 335-3325.



Water rockets @ 2014 Watershed of Wonders



Taking a ride on the rack @ 2014 Watershed of Wonders

Water Rules Update Progressing

For the past few months, the District has been working on updating the current Groundwater Management Rules & Regulations. One of the primary updates will be delineating the District into similar groundwater aquifer regions in order to better manage each region's resource for all users. Other rules considered include requiring a pivot/irrigation plan along with the well permit application to indicate the number of acres to be irrigated, recognizing previously approved, active well permit locations that have not yet been constructed in the well density scoring portion of the permit ranking methodology, and how to address irrigating land under separate ownership than the irrigation well owner's. Also we are looking at how to address unregistered, domestic wells within close proximity to a proposed irrigation well, adding a rule about when a permit could be reapplied for if it expires after the one-year approval period, and who has the authority to sign a permit application.

The District has been working with Leggette, Brashears & Graham Engineering to assist with the groundwater region delineation and anticipates the updated rules to be completed by fall. Throughout the process, if anyone needs more information or has questions, please contact the NRD staff. The end goal is to come up with a plan that best meets the needs of all water users in the District.

Urban Areas to Benefit from NRD Funds

In May the NNRD board of directors approved four applications for Urban Special Project funding. Matching funds up to \$25,000 are available for projects that provide opportunities for natural resources related recreation, interpretation, or education in a public, urban setting.

Three of this year's applicants were schools who will be incorporating various types of outdoor classroom situations into their landscapes. Auburn Public Schools will receive \$25,000 toward a \$268,002.80 project to build a greenhouse for their agricultural/biology programs. Johnson-Brock Public Schools receives \$24,400 toward a \$48,800 project to develop the school's courtyard into an outdoor classroom. A joint project with the Lewiston Public School and its FFA chapter will develop



This trail project was completed last year in Unadilla with help from the NRD's Urban Special Projects program.

a butterfly garden and arboretum with \$1,250 from the NRD. The fourth application approved was from the Shubert for Kids, Inc./Village of Shubert for a native prairie garden in their village park. Their \$929.55 project will use \$464.77 to fund half the cost.

All projects must be completed by this time next year.

Steamboat Trace Improvements to Begin

Much needed improvements to a two-mile stretch of the Steamboat Trace trail are set to begin July 1. In May the NRD board approved a bid from Kreifels Conservation & Excavating of Nebraska City for the \$346,000 construction project. Work will include concrete paving of a total of 3,100 feet within this stretch along with drainage improvements and installation of 18 new culverts. The project is located north of Brownville between the Honey Creek and Weldon Creek bridges.

Because of the amount and type of work to be done, this section of the trail will be closed for the duration of the construction, which is estimated to take about two months.

Grant funds from the federal Recreational Trails Program are providing 80 percent of the engineering and construction costs. JEO



Drainage work and sections of paving are planned for this area of the Steamboat Trace.

Consulting Group is the project engineer. Total project cost including engineering is \$411,000 with the NRD contributing \$82,000.

Over the past 10 years maintenance and repairs in this section of the trail were costing about \$10,000 per year, so it is expected this improvement project will pay for itself in about eight years.

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Duck Creek Dam & Recreation Area On Its Way

Work was recently completed on construction of the Duck Creek dam; and although recent rains have filled up the reservoir, the District plans to allow the lake to drain back down to complete construction of the recreation facilities. Work on the interior roads, parking areas, and RV camping pads should begin sometime this summer. A boat dock was recently ordered and will be installed later this year. The District also hopes the water and electrical service will be installed by the end of 2016. Plans are to open the area to the public around September 1, 2017. Until that time the area, including the lake, is **closed** to the public.

Once the reservoir has lowered, Nebraska Game and Parks fisheries staff plans to eradicate any fish that may have populated the lake so they can begin their stocking process. Fish stocking is done very systematically to assure that the appropriate balance among

the different species is achieved. The water clarity appears to be very high in comparison to other lakes in southeast Nebraska which will be beneficial to fisheries and water contact activities. It typically takes four to five years to develop a decent sport fishery.

Upgrade of 736 Road was also completed this spring. A new bridge and box culvert should make the road safer and reduce future maintenance. The bridge was included in the design to allow boaters access to a greater portion of the 61-acre reservoir. It was also important to raise the road high enough to assure that park users could still vacate the area during major flood events.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS



June

- 9 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 13-14 NARD Basin Tour, York
- 15 Watershed of Wonders day camp @ Kirkman's Cove

July

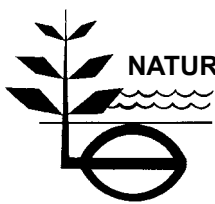
- 4 Independence Day Holiday, NNRD Office Closed
- 14 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 24-29 National Envirothon, Ontario, Canada

August

- 11 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 26-9/5 Nebraska State Fair, Grand Island

September

- 5 Labor Day Holiday, NNRD Office Closed
- 8 NNRD Board Meeting, Tecumseh
- 10 3rd Annual Doc Gigstad Steamboat Trace Race, Peru
- 13-15 Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island
- 25-27 NARD Annual Conference, Kearney



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NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

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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