

- ✓ November 9, 2016, Washington Co. Enterprise article, Japp wins NRD race
- ✓ November 22, 2016, Omaha World Herald editorial: UNL helps address global ag and water needs
- ✓ November 30, 2016, Omaha World Herald article, After teen's death, others are kept away from railroad bridge hangout called 'Oz'

- ✓ December 5, 2016, Omaha World Herald Midlands Voices, Tom Briebe: Rebalancing our state's tax structure
- ✓ December 7, 2016, Omaha World Herald article, UNO adjunct professor wins seat on Papio-Missouri NRD

**Information**

- Continued work on updated web site.
- Continued work on updates for Chalco Hills Visitors Center Exhibit
- Distributed news releases
- Responded to several requests for information/materials received through web site contacts
- Monitored local media coverage of NRD-related stories
- Coordinated Speakers Bureau presentation by Marlin Petermann
- Scheduled photographer for Board Members photos at January Board meeting
- Helped coordinate and attended Ribbon Cutting ceremony for South Omaha Trail
- Scheduled sponsorship of Midlands Community Foundation Refection Ball and provided info for NRD recognition
- Began work on Winter, 2017 Spectrum Newsletter
- Retrieved files from old web site for archiving storage

**Education**

**November Programming Schedule:**

- 11/1- Mary Our Queen Elementary- Environmental History- 3 programs- 53 students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 11/2- Sandoz Elementary- Turtles- 26 students (pre-K)
- 11/2- Vet Club, UNL- Adventures in Animal Care- 23 students
- 11/3- Walnut Creek Elementary- hibernation- 2 programs- 35 students (pre-K)
- 11/3- Sandoz Elementary- Tiger Explorers- Hibernation- 43 students (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 11/7- Omaha Library Millard Branch- turkey- 36 people
- 11/7- Westgate Elementary- Reptiles- 4 programs- 116 students (K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 11/8- Crestridge Elementary – Animal Adaptations- 65 students (5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 11/10- Sandoz Elementary Cub Explorers- Snake art- 86 students
- 11/14- Chandler View Elementary- Recycle Relay- 22 students (K-5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 11/15- Elkhorn Middle School- Environmental History- 36 students (7<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 11/16- La Vista Middle School- Surface/Groundwater- 23 students
- 11/17- Elkhorn Ridge Middle- Geocaching- 23 students
- 11/21- Westside Middle School- Reptiles/Amphibians- 2 programs- 46 students
- 11/22- Crestridge Elementary- Recycle Relay- 2 programs- 52 students (5<sup>th</sup> grade)
- 11/28- Rockwell Elementary- Environmental History- 2 programs- 39 students (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)
- 11/29- Grandview Elementary- Owls - 23 students
- 11/29- Sandoz Elementary-Owls-26 students (pre-K)
- 11/30- Arbor Park Middle- Wildlife Wonders- 46 students

**Planning:**

Updates/Monitoring of Papio-Missouri River NRD Facebook/Twitter/Google+/Instagram Sites and Web Pages

General NRD Animal Care

Outdoor Classroom Grants

Assist with Press Releases and Press Statements

Spring Program Planning

Van Maintenance

Water Works Registration Form on Web Site

**Meetings/Trainings:**

Social Media Training

Envirothon Steering Committee



8 December 2016

Mr. John Winkler  
Papio-Missouri River NRD  
**via email**

Re: Missouri River Federal Levees R-613/R-616-613 Fee Status

Mr. Winkler:

This letter is an update to the contracted fee for the above-referenced project contract with FYRA Engineering and offers an opportunity to document scope items that have changed since the start of the most recent Phase III contract executed in July of 2015.

As you are aware, there have been numerous delays in the project attributable to the USACE process and changing regulations that are occurring constantly at the USACE about levee improvement requirements and the permitting associated with them. The attached memo, dated 9 November 2016, was prepared to discuss with NRD management and staff the details about the additional efforts that have taken place over the last year. These services are the subject and reason for this letter.

#### **Contract Status**

As of the date of the preparation of this contract, after removing the contracted amount owed to subconsultants, FYRA is currently approximately \$215,000 over the contracted amount, but we have not billed any part of that overage, most of which has been generated in the last few months delivering the 100% documents. After speaking with NRD management and staff, and acknowledging that FYRA accepts responsibility for a good share of the overage, we have reached an agreement for your approval that would add approximately \$103,004.56 to the contract amount for services rendered as detailed in the attached invoice.

In addition to those services, FHU, our environmental permitting subconsultant on the project, has also been affected by the same additional services related to the USACE 408 and 404 permitting for the project. Attached is an email from Amy Zlotzky at FHU detailing the additional services her company has endured and what she expects to complete her deliverables for the project. These services are above and beyond those in either scope or anticipated effort from the most recent contract amendment. The FHU total of \$25,500 is in addition to the FYRA request of \$103,004.56 for a total of \$128,504.56.



There still remains nearly \$1,000,000 on this contract for bidding and construction phase services. We are committed to keeping the contract from running over and there are many strategies that can be employed during construction phase services to do so. Therefore, it is not necessary to execute a contract amendment at this time.

As always, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding this summary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael K. Sotak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael K. Sotak, PE



## Memorandum

**Project:** Federal Levee Systems R-613 and R-616-613

**FYRA Project Number:** 001-12-01

**Date:** 9 November 2016

**Regarding:** Contract Status

**To:** Paul Woodward and Marlin Petermann

**From:** Mike Sotak and Lindy Rogers, FYRA Engineering

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The following items have been attributed to contract overages that have not been billed to date:

### Project Management

- Contract Duration - Increase in contract duration due to items being worked on longer than anticipated increased monthly project assessment and invoicing costs, coordination time with sub-consultants, and client coordination.

### 408

- ATR Team changes and depth of DrChecks comments.
- Review Plan - Required to be integrated into USACE review plan and required additional information and documentation of the process. Appendices' to the review plan were added which included a detailed quality control plan, IEPR confirmation, detailed information on key staff and qualifications of all members of the consultant team. The iterations back and forth between FYRA, ATR team lead (Mr. Mark Nelson at the time) and USACE Division staff were numerous before resolution occurred on the final plan.
- Project Performance – Due to the unique situation of the left bank levee system project performance was required to be re-done along the Missouri River to include several index locations and a major modification to the Missouri River HEC-RAS modeling to include lateral weirs at each of the index station locations. This iterative process of updating the HEC-RAS model and then manually entering the data into the FDA model occurred several times to make modifications requested by the USACE ATR team.
- Re-design of R-613 Missouri River Right Bank Levee Unit – After discussions and meetings with the USACE ATR team, the project sponsor requested that the proposed right bank levee system be lowered to match the design elevations shown along the left bank levee unit. This required shifting of the alignment and profile to adjust for the modifications.



- Meetings with L-611-614 levee sponsors to inform them of the project. Time includes coordination and preparation for 4 meetings.

#### Project Permitting

- Wetland Delineation – Additional wetland delineation occurred within the benches of the Papillion Creek after USACE informed the client that all work in the area would need to be included in the 404 permit application. Time also included the preparation of an addendum to the original wetland report.
- Environmental Assessment – Complete modification of the original environmental assessment based on comments received from the ATR team after the 90% submittal.
- USFWS Letters of Non-Concurrence
  - Ground Water Quality TM - A technical memorandum and model was developed in the vicinity of the Missouri and Platte River confluence to address multiple concerns raised by USFWS in the first letter of non-concurrence.
  - Additional time spent by FYRA and FHU preparing response to first letter and incorporation of the information into the Biological Assessment.
  - Additional time spent by FYRA and FHU preparing the response to the second letter of non-concurrence to USFWS. Time included preparation of figures/attachments to the letter, attendance at meetings, and researching real estate purchases and project history of other projects in the vicinity (Highway 34 in particular and the USFWS response to that project).

#### Project Design

- Changes in geotechnical guidance and EMs and ETLs
- Levee setback to reduce floodwall extents

#### Additional Items

- Fuccinaro Property – Review and comment on USACE 408 permit application
- Darling Ingredients – Review and comment on USACE 408 application. This particular review was quite extensive as it included a geotechnical analysis because of the locations of the aeration ponds.

## **Mike Sotak**

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**From:** Amy.Zlotsky <Amy.Zlotsky@FHUENG.COM>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 21, 2016 11:26 AM  
**To:** Mike Sotak; Lindy Rogers  
**Subject:** FHU Request to Supplement

### **PMRNRD 613/616 Levee Improvements Extra Effort and Remaining Environmental Tasks 21 November 2016**

Completed Work Out of Scope: (86 hrs @ \$150 = \$12,900)

- Extra effort to address Dr. Checks responses (50 hours)
- Prepared response letter from USACE to FWS, revisions (24 hrs)
- Contacted Bob Harms to set up Conference Call, send Doodle Poll (2 hrs)
- Attended status meeting at NRD on 10/26/16, including discussion how to proceed with FWS (10 hrs)

Remaining Work: (84 hrs @ \$150 = \$12,600)

- Participate in Conference Call with FWS & USACE (4 hrs)
- Revise BA, EA & 404(b)(1) to incorporate pallid sturgeon analysis information (from response letter) and outcome of conference call with FWS; resubmit to USACE (56 hrs)
- Possible coordination with Matt Wray to finalize 404 permit (24 hrs)

For a total of \$25,500.



## MEMORANDUM

TO: John Winkler and Marlin Petermann

FROM: Amanda Grint, Water Resources Engineer

SUBJECT: Update on Future Papio Reservoir Projects

DATE: December 1, 2016

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Development pressure has increased around and near many of the proposed flood control reservoir sites in the Papillion Creek Watershed Management Plan (map of priority sites attached). Below is a summary of meetings and actions over the months of October and November.

### WP1

District staff worked with TD2, the engineers for Indian Pointe Phase 3, located northwest of 180<sup>th</sup> and West Maple Rd. to amend their plat to avoid the area necessary for the construction of WP1. The original plat had several lots in the flood pool of the flood control structure.

**District Action:** The District contracted with HDR to update the WP1 concept plan with current hydrology and layout a conceptual spillway. This information was provided to the developers and the plat was revised. The area necessary for WP1 was reserved in an outlot on the plat. The District will need to purchase this property for the WP1 project.

**Next steps:** The final plat was approved in November (map attached). Construction will begin soon.

### WP2

On October 27, 2016, District staff met at Sarpy County for a pre application meeting on a development at 180<sup>th</sup> and Giles. The proposed development includes a portion of the flood pool of WP2.

**District Action:** The District contracted with HDR to update the hydrology and look at alternative spillways to establish a top of dam elevation.

**Next Steps:** The plat process will move forward and the land necessary for WP2 will be reserved in an outlot. The District will need to purchase this property for the WP2 project.

### WP4

On November 10, 2016, the District met with one of the two majority landowners of the WP4 project and their engineers. The landowner intends to develop the site as soon as Fall 2017. In this case, because of existing downstream flooding issues (Forrest Run), it is not beneficial to purchase the land and delay the construction of the project. The developer is interested in pursuing an option where land payment is deferred until after construction of WP4. Those details are being worked on by the developer and engineer to be presented to the Board at a later date.

**District Action:** HDR was contracted to update the WP4 concept with new hydrology and look at additional spillway alternatives to establish a top of dam elevation. That analysis along with the top of dam elevation and WP4 layout will be provided to developer.

**Next Steps:** Developer is coordinating with the other majority landowner and working on details of a proposal to sell land for the WP4 project to the District.

## **DS12**

On November 14, 2016, District staff meet with the landowner/developer and engineers for a development near 216<sup>th</sup> and Fort Streets. This development would impact DS12. It is located partially in the flood pool and the dam embankment of DS12.

**District Action:** The District has contracted with HDR to update the concept of DS12 with new hydrology so a top of dam elevation can be agreed upon. The results of the analysis will be provided to the developer.

**Next Steps:** Continue coordination with the developer as they prepare a preliminary plat for submittal in the near future. The area needed for the DS12 project is planned to be reserved in an outlot on the plat. The District will need to acquire that land for the DS12 project.

## **Ongoing Reservoir and Water Quality Basin Projects**

For District projects that are currently in design phase, development is also encroaching. Zorinsky Basin 2 has two major projects that have been platted with one under construction (map attached). WP6 has construction ongoing on the north adjacent property and WP7 is platted on both the east and west sides of the reservoir.

# Papillion Creek Watershed

Our Watershed connects communities in Washington, Sarpy and Douglas Counties encompassing over 400 square miles

## Proposed Priority Reservoir Projects

PROJECTED COST IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

DAM SITE / LOCATION	LAND	CONST.	TOTAL
<b>Dam Site 7</b> DS-7 168th & Bennington Road	9.1	4.7	13.8
<b>Dam Site 12</b> DS-12 216th & Fort Street	12.9	7.8	20.7
<b>Dam Site 19</b> DS-19 192nd & Giles Road	18.2	5.5	23.7
<b>West Papio 1</b> WP-1 180th & Fort Street	6.0	7.7	13.7
<b>West Papio 2</b> WP-2 180th & Giles Road	5.2	4.7	9.9
<b>West Papio 4</b> WP-4 204th & Schram Road	5.7	4.2	9.9
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>\$57.1</b>	<b>\$34.6</b>	<b>\$91.7</b>

## PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED MAP KEY

-  Existing Flood Control Reservoir Sites
-  Current Reservoir Implementation Sites
-  Proposed Flood Control Reservoir Sites
-  Proposed Priority Reservoir Project Sites
-  WP-8 Was Lost To Urban Development  
No longer a potential reservoir site



LOTS 267 THROUGH 394, INCLUSIVE AND OUTLOTS "L", "M" AND "N"  
DOUGLAS COUNTY, NE



VICINITY MAP

## FUTURE

### PHASE 3

## PHASE 2

BASIN #1

192ND IMPROVEMENTS  
WETLAND MITIGATION AREA  
DOUGLAS COUNTY PROJECT C-20[524]  
OPW&S2571 - ST PD W TS  
OPW&S2525 - PD

SUBDIVIDER

OMAHA, NEBRASKA 68122  
ENGINEER  
HOMPTON DREXSEN AND BORMER INC  
10036 D.D. ROAD

NOTES

LOADING ZONEING > 30' PROPOSED ZONEING FOR LOTS 250  
AND 318 IS N-4 PROPOSED ZONEING FOR OUTLOTS L, M  
AND N. SEE ATTACHED PROPOSED ZONEING AND SHOWN AT 2 U  
INFORMED BASED ON U.S.S. DRAWING  
WATER AND GAS WILL BE PROVIDED BY THE METROPOLITAN  
UTILITIES DISTRICT  
CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
CITY ENGINEER  
CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
CITY ENGINEER

RELEASES OF RECORD

AN UNBORROWED LENDMENT GRANTED TO THE INCREASED POWER COMPANY IN THE SE 1/4 OF THE NW 1/4 SW 1/4 OF T-6 NE COMPANY IN THE SE 1/4 OF THE NW 1/4 AND THE SW 1/4 ALL IN SECTION 3-15-11 RECORDED IN BOOK 63 AT PAGE 449

AN EASEMENT GRANTED TO AGRICULTURAL WALL LINDSEY COMPANY AND STIMP OF CLOUT AND ONE MILE FROM THE SE 1/4 OF SECTION 3-15-11 RECORDED IN BOOK 233 AT PAGE 107

THE DOCUMENT IS 11/20/82 TO PLAT THE DESCRIBED.

AS FURTHER SET FORTH AND EXPLAINING ACCESS TO NEAR ROAD TO THE TWO AND ONE HALF ACRES UNIMPROVED SOME 100 FEET FROM HIGHWAY AS REFLECTED TO A

M. P. Allen

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## 2

10

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**TD2**  
engineering  
& surveying

thompson, dressen & dornier, inc  
10836 Old Mill Rd  
Omaha, NE 68154  
p 402 330 8860 www.td2co.com

Indian Point  
Phase III

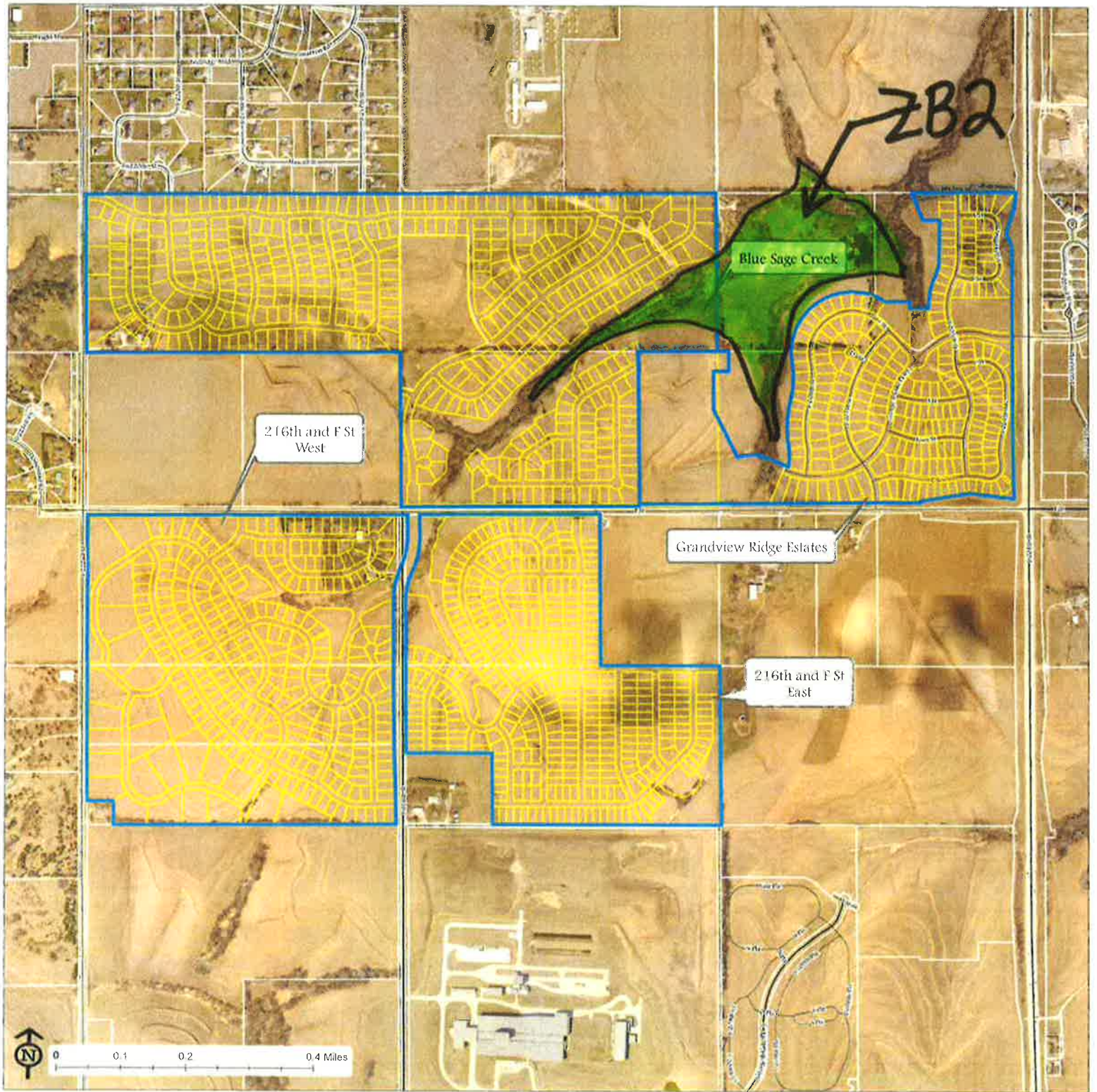
FRK Development  
LLC

Drawn By MEM  
Job No 169 205  
Reviewed By GSH  
Date 9/12/16

### Preliminary Plat

wp!





# **Report on Purchases** **Construction Services, Professional Services, Personal Property**

**November, 2016**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Item / Task</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Cost</b>
11/1-30/2016	Project Maintenance	Rip Rap material	Martin Marietta	\$2,569.23

Updated: November 14, 2016

## **Current and On-Going Projects P-MRNRD Legal Counsel**

**★ = Top Priority**

F = Future Work – No Assignment

N = New Assignment

O = Others Handling

W = Work in Progress

P = Counsel Portion Completed

B= Next Board Meeting

- **Little Papio:** (Cleveland)
- **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
  - ★ Master Tune Sign License Enforcement (P)
- **West Branch:** (Cleveland)
  - ★ Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96<sup>th</sup> St.) (P)
  - Bellino Sale of NRD ROW (W)
- **Western Sarpy Dike:** (Cleveland/Petermann)
  - NRDs/NE-ARNG Interlocal for Camp Ashland Property (F)
- **Floodway Purchase Program:** (Laster/Grint)
  - Arlington Purchase Agreements, Deeds, etc. (F)
- **Trail Projects:** (Williams)
  - West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Potential Tyson Access License Agreement (N)
  - West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Qwest LLC License Agreement Potential Termination (N)
- **Missouri River Corridor Project:** (Becic)
- **USDA PL 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed:** (Schumacher/Cleveland)

- ★ Papio W-3 Eminent Domain (Camden) (W)
  - Papio PL 566 Site W-2 Issues (F)
  - PJ-10 Easement (N)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:** (Grint/Laster/Williams)
  - ★ ROW Acquisition Documents for WP6 & WP7 (F)
  - ★ Transfer Deed to City of Omaha for Zorinsky Basin 1 (P)
  - ★ City of Omaha Interlocal Agreement for ZB-2 (W)
  - ★ WP6 & WP7 Interlocal Agreement with Papillion and Sarpy Co. (W)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Grint)
- **Southern Sarpy Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Laster)
  - ★ Professional Services Contract for SSWP Watershed Management Plan (F)
- **Missouri River R-613 and R-616 Levees:** (Cleveland/Woodward)
  - Offutt AFB Culvert O&M Agreement (W)
  - ★ ROW Acquisition Documents (W)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Nelson)
  - WCRW – Amendment to Washington County Interlocal Agreement (P)
- **Other:**



# **PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**

## **MEETING MINUTES**



### **Partnership Meeting November 10, 2016 – 10:00 AM – Board Room Natural Resource Center, 8901 S 154<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, NE**

#### Attendants:

Jim Kee, Nina Cudahy, Andy Szatko, Donna Lynam, Matt Knight, Marlin Petermann, Amanda Grint, Lori Laster, Marty Leming, John Kottmann, Jerry Chancellor

#### Purpose

A meeting of the Partnership was held on the above date in order to discuss topics stated in the attached agenda. The meeting began at approximately 10:10 am.

#### 1. Introductions

- An agenda and handouts were distributed.

#### 2. MS4 Permit Update

- Amanda gave an update on the SMS4 permit that was put on public notice on October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The permit is a statewide permit for all SMS4s in the state and it did not address all of the concerns of the PCWP members. Nina Cudahy discussed the Omaha permit and that the City had submitted comments to NDEQ and not received an answer yet. The group discussed the need for the PCWP SMS4 communities to have a permit very similar to Omaha so that they may be implemented together. A few things are in the works to help get the concerns of the PCWP members addressed. A conference call has been scheduled by NDEQ on November 18<sup>th</sup> to respond to questions regarding the permit. A meeting is being scheduled with NDEQ and the PCWP members, the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts DEQ Liaison, is scheduling the meeting for face to face discussions on the draft permit. Also, the public comment period is open until November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The group decided to submit a public comment requesting that the PCWP members be removed from the statewide permit and have their own permit similar to Omaha's. A draft template will be sent to the communities to send to NDEQ.

#### 3. Sediment and Erosion Control Violations/Enforcement

- Sarpy County attorneys believe there are issues with the ordinance wording that makes it infeasible to enforce and collect fees from stormwater violations. The City noted that the



authority is in their zoning regulations. It was suggested that Sarpy contact Kent Holm at Douglas County to see how they handle.

4. Other Items

- Nina noted that Omaha is meeting with the City of Lincoln during the NeSFMA meeting on November 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss the shortfall in 319 funding this year. Stormwater grants to communities was cut nearly in half for 2016.
- The NeSFMA conference is November 17<sup>th</sup> beginning at 9am at the SAC museum.

5. Next Meeting Date

- The next meeting will be held December 15, 2016 at 10am at the NRC building.

6. Adjourn

- An agenda and the handouts passed out at the meeting are available upon request.

Please contact Amanda Grint at 444-6222 regarding any questions or comments concerning these meeting minutes.

# Japp wins NRD race

- Katie Rohman
- Enterprise Newspaper
- Updated Nov 9, 2016

Kennard resident Ted Japp will carry on the family name as the Subdistrict 1 representative on the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District Board of Directors.

Japp defeated Bill Rhea Jr. of Arlington for a four-year term. Rhea was appointed as the Subdistrict 1 director after Scott Japp of Arlington died in a farm accident in June. Scott Japp, a cousin of Ted Japp, was seeking a third term on the board.

Washington County — where both candidates live — has the largest number of voters in Subdistrict 1. Ted Japp clinched four of the five counties in Subdistrict 1: Washington, Burt, Douglas and Thurston. Rhea won Dakota County.

A Bennington High School graduate and recently-retired Blair chiropractor, Ted Japp collected 2,500 valid petition signatures to get on the general election ballot; he needed 1,900.

"I think an awful lot of people stepped up to help me tremendously," he said. "There were people I didn't know who came forth to help me."

He said he received "really good feedback" from Washington County residents during his campaign.

"I worked really hard for it," he said. "I think some of it is a hold-over from Scott Japp; I have the same last name, and I'm a relative. I've had a business in Blair for many years."

Rhea and Scott Japp defeated Chad Scebold of Bennington in the May 10 primary election to advance to the general election. All three ran as Republicans.

Rhea has not returned a request for comment.

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## Papio-Missouri River NRD-Subdistrict 1 results by county

281 precincts

Unofficial as of Wednesday afternoon

- Washington: Japp 5,977 (65.2%); Rhea 3,189 (34.8%)
- Burt: Japp 1,086 (70.9%); Rhea 445 (29.1%)
- Dakota: Rhea 2,616 (57.6%); Japp 1,925 (42.4%)
- Douglas: Japp 4,364 (53%); Rhea 3,868 (47%)
- Thurston: Japp 378 (50.7%); Rhea 368 (49.3%)
- TOTAL: Japp 13,730 (56.7%); Rhea 10,486 (43.3%)

# Editorial: UNL helps address global ag and water needs

The world clearly can benefit from technologies and data that help industrialized countries and developing nations better cope with periods of severe weather stress.

- World-Herald editorial/11-22-16

Midlanders are no strangers to drought. It was only four years ago that drought-afflicted Lake McConaughy shrank to only 54 percent full. In 2013, it fell further, to 46 percent, although it has since recovered.

Drought is currently hitting parts of the American Southeast and Southern California, and the National Drought Mitigation Center in Lincoln reports that abnormally dry conditions are affecting the mountain West and creeping into western and central Nebraska.

The world clearly can benefit from technologies and data that help industrialized countries and developing nations better cope with periods of severe weather stress. It's encouraging to see how the University of Nebraska's Water for Food Institute is building global connections to address this need.

In addition to its wide-ranging work on groundwater management directly relevant to Nebraska, the institute now has water- and agriculture-related projects in more than 40 nations. They can be found on every continent except Antarctica.

The institute's scientists work collaboratively with national governments and overseas universities plus the U.S. Agency for International Development and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization.

A notably ambitious and valuable project by the institute is its development of a global, public database to monitor water and drought conditions and gauge the potential for improved crop yields.

Such tools can be especially helpful in developing nations. For example, Esther Ngumbi, a plant pathologist from Kenya who is doing research at Auburn University, wrote this month that "drought is ravaging crops and destroying harvests" in eastern and southern Africa and parts of India.

"In Malawi, as many as 6.5 million people are in dire need of food aid as a result," she noted. "According to the World Food Program, the number of people expected to need food aid by the end of the year in southern Africa alone is 14.1 million."

There are no miracle solutions for the challenge of drought, but the more that modern science can provide worthwhile weather information and help boost crop productivity, the more that nations both rich and poor can be helped.

The Water for Food Institute deserves a salute for its visionary work on these issues, here and abroad.

# After teen's death, others are kept away from railroad bridge hangout called 'Oz'

By Hailey Konnath / World-Herald staff writer 11-30-16



RYAN SODERLIN/THE WORLD-HERALD

The La Vista Police Department and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District have worked to make the area known as Oz — off 118th and Olive Streets near Harrison Street — a less appealing hangout destination.

There's a spot beneath the trees and under a railroad trestle on the banks of the Papillion Creek known as "Oz." For years, it's been a haven for teenagers, and it's easy to see the appeal. It's fairly isolated. Colorful graffiti coats much of the trestle's supports. The creek there forms a small waterfall.

But in early August, a train struck and killed 19-year-old Nicholas Wilson at Oz. Wilson and two friends had been walking on the railroad bridge more than 30 feet above the creek. His friends scrambled off to safety, but Wilson didn't have time.

Since then, the La Vista Police Department and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District have worked to make Oz — off 118th and Olive Streets near Harrison Street — a less appealing hangout destination.

Their efforts, combined with a few external factors, are paying off, police say.

While some people still go there, there's a decrease in Oz's popularity, said Police Chief Bob Lausten. And he's hopeful that coming development in the area will continue to lessen its draw.

In the nearly four months since the accident, La Vista police have conducted enforcement operations at the spot, Lausten said. Additional "no trespassing" signs were painted and hung.

The NRD and BNSF Railway gave La Vista police permission to ticket trespassers on their land.

Perhaps most noticeably, the NRD also cleared out a bunch of trees and brush, said John Winkler, general manager of the NRD.

"It opened up the entire area so the police could visually inspect it," he said. "And it made it less attractive."

Patrick Tulagan, 19, who witnessed the August accident, said he hadn't been back to Oz recently.

Kids went there to drink and smoke because it was hard to get to, Lausten said. But without that isolation, the spot isn't ideal for those activities.

Even without the tree and brush removal, there's a lot of hustle and bustle around Oz these days. A new business is going up near 118th and Olive Streets. The Nebraska Multisport Complex will be built on the other side of the creek.

"Maybe the issues we've had the last couple of years are going to naturally go away," Lausten said.

Next year, a new walking and biking trail will be cutting through that area, linking Giles Road to 132nd and Q Streets. That will also clear out some of the area, Lausten said.

Carol Daley, executive director of Operation Lifesaver Nebraska, said she is working on getting into Papillion-La Vista Community Schools classrooms to talk to students about the dangers of being on railroad tracks.

In the spring, the police and the railroad will work together on promoting safety, Lausten said. Winkler said the NRD will also work with the city on putting up fences or any additional steps needed to deter hanging out near the train tracks.

"We'll sit down with all the adjoining property owners and the La Vista Police Department and try to work out a plan to prevent any other incidents like this," Winkler said.

# Tom Briese: Rebalancing our state's tax structure

- OWH/Midlands Voices 12-5-16

*The writer is an incoming Nebraska state senator from Albion.*

One of the stated goals of my legislative campaign was to strive for a fair and balanced tax structure. And with property taxes comprising an onerous 48 percent of the big three revenue sources (property, income, and sales taxes) in our state, it was a message that resonated well with Nebraskans.

So how do we deliver the property tax relief necessary to achieving balance in our tax structure?

Many will say we simply need to cut spending. And clearly we must always look for ways to reduce spending at the state and local levels while maintaining the delivery of services, including public education, that our residents expect.

But as we commit to finding efficiencies and innovations that will help us reduce spending, the imbalance in our tax structure persists, and it must be addressed.

**Others will suggest that property taxes are a local issue and should be addressed locally. But remember that 60 percent of our property taxes are directed toward public education, and much of how we run our K-12 schools is dictated at the state level. Furthermore, our community colleges and natural resources districts, both of which receive substantial property tax revenue, are hardly "local" entities.**

We could go on here, listing numerous unfunded mandates imposed on our political subdivisions by the state. But the takeaway is clear: Just because property taxes are collected locally does not make them a "local" problem.

Sound tax policy should be fair, effective, transparent and conducive to economic growth. And the simplest, most effective and transparent means of property tax relief is rebalancing our tax structure by replacing some property tax revenue with sales or income taxes.

To avoid budget shortfalls at the state level, this would mean increasing sales or income tax receipts. But income taxes already comprise 32 percent of the big three revenue sources, and increasing income taxes raises a host of concerns over Nebraska's competitiveness with other states.

With sales tax revenue at only 20 percent of the big three sources, it is only logical to look at raising sales tax revenue to offset the property tax burden borne by all Nebraskans.

In its 2014 tax expenditure report, the Nebraska Department of Revenue estimated that our sales tax exemptions add up to \$4.4 billion.

According to a 2007 survey of the Federation of Tax Administrators, Nebraska taxes only about 77 of a total of 168 services that are taxed in at least some other states. Significant property tax relief can, and should, be accomplished by the inclusion of more goods and services in our sales tax base.

Economists agree that the ideal sales tax is a one-time tax on the retail sales of goods and services to consumers. Such a tax meets the standards of fairness (as long as regressivity issues are addressed), effectiveness and transparency and has a minimal effect on economic growth. A tax on business-to-business transactions should be avoided, as it can lead to "pyramiding," a scenario where sales tax is levied on multiple transactions leading up to a final retail sale.

This can create a lack of transparency, as the consumer will be paying an effective sales tax rate in excess of the stated rate.

Taxation of business-to-business transactions also impacts economic growth, as it can discourage business expansion and location.

A fair, effective, transparent and pro-growth strategy for achieving an equitable and balanced tax structure begins by including additional consumer goods and services in our sales tax base. To protect those less fortunate among us, such a move must be accompanied by tax credits directed at low-income taxpayers.

Besides the amount needed to reimburse low-income individuals for their additional sales tax outlays, all other revenue raised by such a strategy must be directed toward property tax relief to make this rebalancing a truly revenue-neutral shift.

# UNO adjunct professor wins seat on Papio-Missouri NRD

- By Roseann Moring / World-Herald staff writer

12-7-2016

University of Nebraska at Omaha adjunct professor Larry Bradley will be seated on the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board without a recount.

In the final vote total, Bradley edged out incumbent Curt Frost 11,475 to 11,232. That is a greater margin than 1 percent of the highest vote-getter's total.

Election night figures indicated that the margin might be closer than that threshold, which would have triggered an automatic recount.