

- ✓ December 9, 2016, Omaha World Herald article, Papio-Missouri NRD to build hiking, biking trail on Bellevue land
- ✓ December 9, 2016 Omaha World Herald Public Pulse, A blow to crappie fishing
- ✓ December 15, 2016, Omaha World Herald/Staff Reports, \$6.7 million will go toward two Sarpy County reservoirs
- ✓ December 19, 2016, Omaha World Herald article, Omaha's public bike-sharing system is set to nearly double in size by 2019

- ✓ December 27, 2016, Omaha World Herald article, Nebraska Legislature's first battle may be over push to end use of secret ballots in leadership elections
- ✓ December 30, 2016, Omaha World Herald article, NRD's flood plain map might save millions in insurance costs
- ✓ January 3, 2017, Omaha World Herald editorial: Can global water wars be contained?
- ✓ January 4, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Nebraska's 2017 legislative session begins with 17 new senators
- ✓ January 6, 2017, Omaha World Herald article, Ricketts appoints 2, reappoints another to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

December 2016 Information/Education Report

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
- Began preparing for web site update of Board of Directors page.
- Continued work on Winter, 2017 Spectrum Newsletter
- Began preparation for 2017 Omaha Boat Sports and Travel show booth
- Began work on update of Paths of Discovery brochure

Education

December Programming Schedule:

12/5- Omaha Library Millard Branch- Winter- 3 people

12/5- United Faith Community Church Boy Scouts- Snakes- 16 boys (1st-5th grade)

12/7- Mary Our Queen- Recycle Relay- 3 programs- 68 students (3rd grade)

12/8- Elkhorn Middle School– Squamata- 35 students

12/12- Westgate Elementary- Pelts, tracks, skulls- 4 programs- 168 students (1st-3rd grade)

12/13- Paddock Road Elementary-Careers in the Field- 26 students (5th grade)

12/14- Millard West High– Animalia- 4 programs- 89 students

12/16- Westside Middle – Birds/Mammals- 2 programs- 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

Regional Envirothon Wildlife Test Review

Regional Envirothon Aquatics Test Review

Trail Tales Reptilian Hibernation Rough Draft, NGPC Publication

Worked with NGPC on Shad press release

Coordinated Toys 4 Tots

Owl Paperwork with USFS/Vet

Meetings/Trainings:

Social Media Training

Omaha Publications Ad meeting

December, 2016

[illegible]

Updated: December 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. (96th St.) (P)
- **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 (F)
 - West Papio Trail, Giles to Millard – Qwest LLC License Agreement Potential Termination (F)
- **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)
 - ✪ ROW Public Hearing for ZB-2 at January Board (B)
- **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)
- **Other:**

PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

MEETING MINUTES



Partnership Meeting December 15, 2016 – 10:00 AM – Board Room Natural Resource Center, 8901 S 154th Street, Omaha, NE

Attendants:

Patrick Ducey (NDEQ), Shelley Schneider (NDEQ), Reuel Anderson (NDEQ), Emma Trewwhitt (NDEQ), Jennifer Swanson (NARD), Pat Dowse (Sarpy), Stacy Gillman (Douglas Co), Jeff Calentine (LaVista), Jordan Cook (LaVista), Matt Knight (Bellevue), Andy Szatko (Omaha), Jerry Chancellor (Ralston), John Kottmann (LaVista), Mark Stursma (Papillion), Bruce Fountain (Sarpy), Jim Kee (Omaha), Nina Cudahy (Omaha), Marlin Petermann (PMRNRD), and Amanda Grint (PMRNRD)

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 10:09 am.

1. Introductions

- An agenda and handouts were distributed. Marlin Petermann facilitated introductions and noted that he would like to add stream degradation study to the agenda.

2. MS4 Permit Update

- Amanda gave a brief overview on the sMS4 permit that was put on public notice on October 23rd and the follow up conference call at the end of November. The discussion was then led by NDEQ to discuss certain aspects of the draft sMS4 permit and the timeline of the permit.

NDEQ stated that the draft permit published on October 23rd was being revised to address comments and that the comments were significant enough that the permit would be republished for comment. They anticipate the revised permit to be put on public notice in early 2017. Emma and Patrick noted that the PCWP communities could have a separate permit but that it would essentially be the same permit as the other statewide sMS4s. They noted that the schedule of the PCWP communities' sMS4 permit could be the same at the City of Omaha's. It was noted that a draft permit for Omaha was expected to be distributed in the next couple of weeks. The communities noted the importance of the Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) and that the permits needed to be similar enough that the SWMP for Omaha and the PCWP sMS4s could be the same. This is important because the PCWP works together to implement the SWMP. NDEQ noted that this could be possible. NDEQ



also noted that SWMPs needed to be public noticed and that they needed to be submitted 180 days after issuance of a permit.

The group then discussed the questions presented at the conference call and went through each question from the City of Omaha and the NDEQ response. These questions and responses will be posted on NDEQ website along with the permit. Patrick noted that a redline copy of the permit could be sent to the PCWP members. To make it easier to see what NDEQ has revised. It was suggested that a copy of the PCWP interlocal agreement and budget breakdown be provided to NDEQ so they can see the shared responsibilities and finances of the Partnership.

3. Stream Degradation Study

- Marlin Petermann noted that there are a number of eroding channels in the Papillion Creek Watershed and although the 319 Water Quality Plan is working toward identifying those areas, more can be done on this issue. Funding from 319 is decreasing and so other avenues should be pursued to study the stream degradation issues and solutions. Marlin and Jim Theiler with the City of Omaha met with the USACE to see if their Section 22 Program could help study and identify area of concern and ultimately provide financial assistance in repairs. This is a 50/50 cost share and the local share would most likely come from the Papio NRD, City of Omaha and then have the PCWP consider a portion of the local share. Marlin noted that the study could take about 2 years and initially, the USACE would like a letter of intent from the local partners. This can be discussed further and will be an action item at the January PCWP meeting.

4. Other Items

- Nina discussed the shortfall in 319 funding this year and pointed out that the funds have been cut in half. Many of the SMS4 communities use these dollars to implement their SWMP. She asked NDEQ if they could look in to the funding cut and see if any information was available about the future of these funds.

5. Next Meeting Date

- The next meeting will be held January 26, 2017 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.

Papio-Missouri NRD to build hiking, biking trail on Bellevue land

- By Jay Withrow / World-Herald staff writer
- Dec 9, 2016

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board has approved an agreement with Sarpy County officials for the county to build a short hiking and biking trail on Bellevue land.

The land where the trail will be situated is maintained by the NRD for a West Branch Papillion Creek flood prevention levee and channel improvement project, officials said.

The 10-foot-wide, 900-foot-long trail will be built along 42nd Street east of Raynor Parkway and near the Ashford Hollow SID. The trail will be built and maintained by Sarpy County.

The trail is a part of an overall trail system being built in Ashford Hollow, officials said.

Also, the board has OK'd an agreement with Papillion and La Vista to share the costs for improvements to the Portal Road Drainageway.

The project extends across the boundary between La Vista upstream to the north of Portal Road, and Papillion downstream south of Portal Road west of 96th Street, officials said. The drainageway empties into the nearby West Branch Papillion Creek.

The drainageway stabilization work's estimated cost is \$307,122, officials said. The district's cost for the project is \$127,122. Papillion and La Vista each will pay \$90,000.

Omaha W-H 12-9-16 Public Pulse

A blow to crappie fishing

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recently reported about the types of fish killed in the recent poisoning of Wehrspann Lake ("After kill, acres of dead fish," Dec. 3 World-Herald).

I am a lifelong fisherman and have fished that lake for nine years. The report by the commission states that there was minimal kill of desired species. On Monday, a few days after the kill, I walked the shoreline for 30 feet north of the boat dock. I found approximately 35 fish — two shad, two sunfish, two catfish and the rest crappies ranging in size from 1 inch to 6 inches.

The crappie kill was not mentioned by the Game and Parks Commission in the article. I believe that crappie fishing has been severely hurt in this kill.

I can only wonder what other kinds of fish I would have found if I had been able to walk the entire shoreline.

Anne M. Kenkel, Omaha

Omaha World Herald/Staff Reports - December 15, 2016

\$6.7 million will go toward two Sarpy County reservoirs

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District will receive \$6.7 million from the Nebraska Water Sustainability Fund to use toward two small reservoirs.

The State Natural Resources Commission approved the funding for the reservoirs at its December meeting.

The money will go to the Papillion Creek Watershed flood prevention reservoir sites West Papio 6 and West Papio 7 in Sarpy County, according to a release from the natural resources district.

The district will use the money to complete land rights acquisition and construction for the two reservoir sites. One of the reservoirs will be built on the west side of 114th Street, north of Cornhusker Road. The other will be built on the east side of 108th Street, south of Cornhusker Road, the release said.

Omaha's public bike-sharing system is set to nearly double in size by 2019

- [By Kelsey Stewart / World-Herald staff writer](#)

[Kelsey Stewart](#)

- 12—19-16
-

Heartland B-cycle has partnered with the City of Omaha to nearly double the size of the public bike-sharing system by 2019.

B-cycle will add 36 stations and 150 bikes. Organizers hope to have the first round of new equipment, which includes 20 bikes, installed in Omaha next year, said Ben Turner, executive director of Heartland B-cycle.

The program will help meet many goals related to the city's master plan, particularly in providing multiple modes of transportation, said Derek Miller, the city's transportation planner. He said he wants more bikes accessible to more people.

The city signed onto the project last month.

New stations will be placed near existing bus stops and the planned Bus Rapid Transit route east of 72nd Street. Officials are looking at areas along Farnam Street and western parts of downtown, as well as stops in north and South Omaha. They focus on placing stations in well-populated areas.

"Ideally they'll be spread across the entire community," Miller said. "We have to take it incrementally."

This project will target existing public transit users, but officials also hope to draw new users, including those who can't afford cars.

"There are a great number of Omahans who can't drive or don't have financial means to drive a car," Miller said. "Another important part of all this is to provide more mobility for our citizens."

Federal and state grants provided \$1.2 million for the project.

The state grant, from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, contributed \$292,000 to the project. It also will provide some additional support for operating costs, Turner said.

The federal grant, which was worth \$930,000, required a city partner. That means the city will take ownership of all new equipment purchased with the grant money.

This year more than 16,000 trips were taken on B-cycle bikes. That's up from 1,000 trips when the system debuted with 33 bikes in 2011.

For a fee, people can rent a bike from a B-cycle station, ride it and return it to any station.

B-cycle added new bikes to stations in downtown Omaha this summer, in part to accommodate College World Series crowds. Another station was temporarily relocated earlier this month to the trailhead of the Wabash Trace Nature Trail in Council Bluffs.

"There's a powerful opportunity for bike sharing to be a transit extender," Turner said. "We think it has the ability to shorten people's commutes."

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Nebraska Legislature's first battle may be over push to end use of secret ballots in leadership elections

• By Emily Nohr / World-Herald Bureau/12-27-16

LINCOLN — A new push could be made in January to end the use of secret ballots when deciding leadership positions in the Legislature. At least one state senator isn't ruling out bringing it up on the first day of the session.

Supporters of the proposal say it would improve the Legislature's level of transparency. Continuing the use of secret ballots, they say, promotes distrust between senators and their constituents and allows for vote and influence trading.

Others argue secret ballots fit with the institution's nonpartisan tradition by minimizing the influence of political parties when electing legislative leaders. And they say voting for the legislative speaker and committee chairs in the open could harm working relationships among the 49 senators.

Many say the issue is unlikely to be brought up Jan. 4, the first day of the 90-day legislative session, though State Sen. John Kuehn of Heartwell said he's considering it.

"All options are on the table. Exactly what may happen, whether in the form of an official action, has yet to be foretold," he said. "Certainly the issue is going to be on the minds of senators."

Omaha Sen. Ernie Chambers, a staunch opponent of past attempts to change the practice, brought up secret ballots in one of his "Kintner-grams" issued last month.

For months Chambers has used the letters featuring rhymes and drawings to take aim at Sen. Bill Kintner of Papillion over his use of a state computer to engage in cybersex.

Chambers has questioned Kintner's call for transparency in leadership votes when he was silent about the cybersex scandal until a year after the incident.

He's also threatened to read, on the floor of the Legislature, the investigative transcript of Kintner's incident, should Kintner not resign. Kintner reported the incident to the Nebraska State Patrol after the woman tried to extort money from him.

Chambers now won't say what he might do. In his latest lengthy poem, which he noted will be his only pre-session comments on secret ballots, Chambers ended with:

"If the senators at the start
Tear their Legislature apart....
For, to tell the truth, I've had it;
Let them stupidly go at it."

State Sen. Bob Krist, who supports maintaining secret ballots, said that if senators want to talk about the issue on day one they should be prepared to deal with Chambers.

"If you want to preserve that family day, that traditional day, don't get off course," he said. "There's 89 other days we can talk about that."

Unlike on other days, family members and friends of senators are allowed to join them on the floor of the Legislature as senators elected or re-elected in November are sworn in.

Krist, a Republican in the officially nonpartisan Legislature, was the target of a censure effort in 2015 by the Douglas County Republican Party for not voting to end secret ballots for leadership elections.

The Republican Party has long pushed for public leadership votes and has called on party members to support only Republicans running for leadership positions.

Because elections are done by secret ballot the party cannot identify which lawmakers voted for Democrats or independents. Some Republicans also believe the policy helps Democrats win leadership roles.

The Legislature's leadership is important because those senators set the tone and priorities and often lead the discussions of bills on the floor.

Elections for the positions are held on the first day of the session.

If a change to the process isn't made at the start of the session, leadership for the next two years will be determined by secret ballot. Kuehn said that public votes are essential to the integrity of the Legislature and that the body needs open and honest dialogue about how it manages the legislative branch of government. "Those discussions should not be tempered because any senator wants to make threats or tries to disparage the integrity," he said.

Gov. Pete Ricketts did not take a position on the matter when his office was contacted last week. His spokesman, Taylor Gage, said: "The governor does not weigh in on legislative leadership elections or the rules governing elections and debate in the Unicameral."

The Legislature has voted for its leadership by secret ballot since the early 1970s, when it began meeting annually instead of every other year, said Clerk of the Legislature Patrick O'Donnell.

Before that a small group, including the lieutenant governor and speaker, made decisions in private.

The Legislature operates under temporary rules on the first day of the session. To attempt to open up the leadership ballots, a senator would have to file a motion to amend the temporary rules. Debate would then begin — without rules.

O'Donnell said such a maneuver would be unprecedented.

"We'd kind of be making stuff up as we went," he said. "It's never happened before."

The Legislature and other public bodies are allowed under state law to elect their leadership by secret ballot and record the total number of votes for each candidate. But local governmental boards, all of which are significantly smaller than the Legislature, approach the issue differently.

The Douglas and Sarpy County Boards both vote for the chair and vice chair openly, while the Omaha City Council and Omaha Public Schools board select their leaders by secret ballot.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board has the option to use a secret ballot if the position is contested, said General Manager John Winkler. If not, the board can vote by roll call, though typically a secret ballot is used.

None of those local governments has seen a push to change the practice.

Douglas County Board Chair Mary Ann Borgeson said the board voted by ballot for several years after she took office in 1995, but has since switched to a roll call vote. The result isn't always unanimous but hasn't resulted in problems, she said.

Kintner, who has unsuccessfully led efforts the past two years to end secret ballots, said he suspects the proposal is gaining supporters, noting that a handful of incoming senators indicated their backing while running for office.

At least five incoming senators — Mike Hilgers and Suzanne Geist of Lincoln, John Lowe of Kearney, Steve Erdman of Bayard and Tom Brewer of Gordon — signed a pledge to support open votes for speaker and committee leadership, said Matt Innis of Concerned Conservatives, the group behind the pledge.

Another conservative group, the Nebraska Chapter of Americans for Prosperity, has launched an online petition to make leadership votes public. Matt Litt, the group's state director, declined to say how many signatures the petition has, saying signatures were still being collected.

Innis said he expects the matter to come up on day one so the record shows "who's for transparency and who isn't." He said his group will be watching and intends to "expose people that

are not transparent.” It also plans to ask future candidates to sign a similar pledge for open ballots to help ensure they are “accountable to people in their districts.”

Erdman said it’s not a top priority for him. He’s focused on cutting spending and promoting property tax relief. However, he said, every vote he took in his 12 years on the Morrill County Board was public, including those for leadership. While serving as board chairman he didn’t always receive unanimous support for the post. “It had no bearing going forward, working together and accomplishing the purpose,” Erdman said. “Not at all.”

The two candidates to replace outgoing Kearney Sen. Galen Hadley as speaker of the Legislature are both Republicans, but they have different views on secret ballots.

Sen. Jim Scheer of Norfolk said he supports ending secret ballots, though he understands how others view that as an invitation for partisanship. “My opinion has always been that if I tell you I’m going to vote for you, I will,” he said. “If it’s open or closed, it doesn’t really make any difference to me.”

Gothenburg Sen. Matt Williams said he strongly supports maintaining secret ballots because he believes they represent the nonpartisan nature of the Legislature that George Norris, the architect of the unique system, intended.

Maintaining the Legislature’s nonpartisan nature is more important than any small loss of transparency from casting ballots secretly, he said.

Williams said there could be more support for opening the ballots in the upcoming session, though he doubts there will be enough to cause a change in the rules. Williams said he thinks the real goal behind open ballots is control of the body “by outside forces, primarily the political parties.” “The more political we make this thing, the less we will be able to do what is right,” he said.

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NRD's flood plain map might save millions in insurance costs

New expenses and restrictions are on tap, unless feds approve the alternative proposal

BY ROSEANN MORING
 WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Local flood control officials think they've found a way for residents and business owners to avoid an expected deluge of new costs and development restrictions related to the Papillion Creek flood plain.

The flood plains of the Papillion Creek and its tributaries cut through the heart of the Omaha area, running past places like the Aksarben Village development and going through downtown Papillion.

Federal officials were prepared to expand the Papillion Creek flood plain designation based on data released last year by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. That change would most likely add millions of dollars in expenses for Omaha-area households and new development restrictions in the affected areas.

But officials with the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District have presented an alternative map to the Federal Emergency Management Agency that they said is more accurate, taking into account new data and new reservoirs that are under construction. They said they are hopeful that federal officials

See Flood plain: Page 4

Little Papio Creek
Current flood plain



SOURCE: NRD

Proposed by Corps of Engineers



Proposed by NRD



THE WORLD-HERALD

Flood plain: Buildings inside area require federal insurance

Continued from Page 1
 will approve it.

A flood plain is an area prone to flooding during a major storm. As an area develops, the flood plain can grow. That means homes and businesses that were built outside of the designated flood plain can find themselves inside it, creating problems for the landowner.

Structures inside the plain require costly insurance. And there are restrictions on development intended to protect property from flooding — meaning it can be difficult or even impossible to rebuild if something happens to the structure.

Andrew Rainbolt, executive director of the Sarpy

County Economic Development Corp., said the flood plain is important both because of the cost and because of the risk.

Excluding tributaries, the current Papio Creek flood plain in Douglas and Sarpy Counties covers more than 10,400 acres. According to NRD figures, that was set to grow to about 11,500 acres based on the corps' data.

The NRD calculated that the resulting increase would have cost the metro area at least \$9 million a year in insurance costs. In contrast, the NRD's map would actually shrink the overall flood plain to about 10,000 acres.

Shrinking the map would not necessarily mean the structures no longer covered

by the designation would never flood. But it would mean those structures no longer require federal flood insurance.

"This is powerful," NRD board member Tim Fowler said at a recent meeting. "This is the grail."

If the new proposed map is approved, NRD General Manager John Winkler said, "Papillion's going to be doing cartwheels down Main Street."

FEMA is expected to make its final decision about the new flood plain in early 2017, he said, with the new maps to be implemented in 2019.

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JAMES R. BURNETT/THE WORLD-HERALD

The Papillion Creek near Harlan Lewis Road south of Bellevue runs high after heavy rains in 2014. Federal officials were prepared to expand the Papillion Creek flood plain, but the NRD's proposal would shrink it.

Editorial: Can global water wars be contained?

World-Herald editorial/January 3, 2017



Mallard ducks take flight from a wetlands near the headwaters of Medicine Creek near Wellfleet. The wetlands was created by water pumped into the creek from a project to enhance flows in the Republican River.

Look at just about any region of the world, and you'll find heated disputes between countries or regions when it comes to sharing water.

Sometimes disagreements get violent. Consider what happened in India in September.

More than 15,000 law enforcement and security officers had to be deployed to quell large-scale rioting to protest a water-distribution order from the country's Supreme Court. The court ordered the Indian state of Karnataka to share river water with downstream residents in a neighboring state.

Farmers in the two states depend on the water for irrigation, and severe shortages have raised the allocation stakes to a desperate level.

There are no easy solutions in some situations, but Nebraska has provided an important positive example in how it has worked with Colorado and Kansas in recent years to find agreement on managing the Republican River.

After years of disagreement, experts from the three states began serious negotiations in 2014. They settled a series of issues and ultimately worked out a long-term, mutually acceptable management plan signed by the three governors.

That's a big contrast to some river disputes elsewhere in the country, especially two being handled by special masters who were appointed by the U.S. Supreme Court: Texas and New Mexico legal jousting involving the Rio Grande, and courtroom warring by Florida and Georgia over management of the Apalachicola River.

The special master in the Florida-Georgia case will soon announce his recommendations. The two states remained recalcitrant after he urged them to settle, warning them: "I can guarantee at least one of you will be unhappy with my recommendation and perhaps both of you. You can't both be winners. But you can both be losers."

That kind of realization has spurred California, Arizona and Nevada to pursue fruitful negotiation for Colorado River management, one of our country's most complicated water-stress situations.

Oklahoma had good news this year with approval of an agreement resolving longstanding tensions pitting the Choctaw and Chickasaw tribes against Oklahoma City over municipal water diversions from a major lake in Indian country.

The international front provides some encouraging examples, too. A notable case is a multi-faceted U.S.-Canadian agreement involving the Great Lakes.

In many other situations, though, water disagreements spur ill will among countries when governments fail to resolve matters. That's the situation involving the Nile River, with Egypt and Ethiopia at odds.

China provides a particular example. Its downstream neighbors, from India to the west and Vietnam to the east, are expressing concern as Beijing approves dams that reduce water flow southward.

The Japan Times newspaper reports that "re-engineering transboundary water flows is integral to China's strategy to employ power, control and influence to fashion a strongly Sino-centric Asia. ... With as many as 18 downstream neighbors, China enjoys riparian dominance of a kind unmatched in the world."

Water-distribution disputes around the globe come in many different forms. Tackling them can be complex and challenging.

Through cooperation with two of its neighbors on managing the Republican River, Nebraska sets a noteworthy example of the right way to achieve practical solutions.

Nebraska's 2017 legislative session begins with 17 new senators

By Emily Nohr / World-Herald Bureau-1/4/2017

LINCOLN — The 2017 legislative session convenes Wednesday with 17 new faces filling the halls of the State Capitol.

Ten Republicans and seven Democrats make up the newest class of lawmakers in the officially nonpartisan Nebraska Legislature.

While Democrats picked up three seats, they remain in the minority in the body.

The new crew of senators means about 70 percent of the body's 49 members have two years of experience or less, an effect of limiting lawmakers to two consecutive terms of four years.

Here's a look at the new class:

- **Joni Albrecht** of Thurston won the District 17 seat vacated by term-limited Dave Bloomfield of Hoskins. Albrecht, a 58-year-old Republican, is a farmer who previously served on the Sarpy County Board and Papillion City Council before moving to northeast Nebraska.



- **Carol Blood** of Bellevue beat incumbent Tommy Garrett of Bellevue to represent District 3. A business consultant, Blood, 55, is a Democrat whose background includes serving on the Bellevue City Council.



- **Bruce Bostelman** of Brainard ousted incumbent Jerry Johnson of Wahoo to represent District 23, which includes Saunders, Butler and Colfax Counties. Bostelman, a 54-year-old Republican, is a farmer and Air Force retiree.



- **Tom Brewer** of Gordon bested incumbent Al Davis of Hyannis to represent District 43, which includes all or part of 13 counties in the state's vast Sand Hills. A Republican, Brewer, 58, is a retired Army colonel and former helicopter pilot who ran for Congress in 2014.



- **Tom Briese**, a Republican from Albion, follows term-limited Kate Sullivan of Cedar Rapids to represent central Nebraska's District 41. Briese, 57, is a farmer who has a law degree and who served on the Boone Central school board.



- **Steve Erdman** of Bayard replaces outgoing Ken Schilz of Ogallala to represent western Nebraska's District 47. Erdman, a 67-year-old Republican, is a real estate agent who served on the Morrill County Board and Bayard Public Schools board of education.



- **Suzanne Geist** of Lincoln follows Kathy Campbell, who was term-limited, to represent District 25 that includes southeast Lincoln and northeast Lancaster County. Geist, 55, is a Republican and the owner of a custom clothing business.



- **Steve Halloran** of Hastings defeated incumbent Les Seiler of Hastings to represent District 33, which covers Adams County and part of Hall County. Halloran, 68, is a Republican, co-owner of HuHot Mongolian Grill restaurants and a retired farmer.



- **Mike Hilgers** of Lincoln succeeds term-limited Ken Haar of Lincoln to represent District 21, which includes parts of northwest Lincoln and Lancaster County. Hilgers, 38, is a Republican and attorney who owns a firm. He ran for attorney general in 2014.



- **Lou Ann Linehan** of Elkhorn takes over District 39, the western Douglas County seat previously held by Beau McCoy, who was barred from running due to term limits. Linehan, 61, is a veteran Republican activist and consultant who was chief of staff to former U.S. Sen. Chuck Hagel.



- **John Lowe** of Kearney assumes representation for the people of District 37, previously held by Galen Hadley, who was prohibited from running because of term limits. Lowe, a 57-year-old Republican, is a real estate investor and former bar and restaurant owner who served on the Kearney Planning Commission.



- **Mike McDonnell** of Omaha replaces Heath Mello to represent District 5, which includes parts of midtown and South Omaha. A former Omaha fire chief, McDonnell, 50, is a Democrat and a labor educator at the University of Nebraska at Omaha William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies.



- **Dan Quick** of Grand Island replaces Mike Gloor, who was term-limited, to represent Grand Island's District 35. A Democrat, Quick, 59, is a power plant maintenance mechanic at Platte Generating Station, Grand Island's city-owned plant.



- **Tony Vargas** of Omaha follows Nicole Fox, who lost in the May primary election, to represent South Omaha's District 7. Vargas, a 32-year-old Democrat and director of marketing and communication for Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance, served on the Omaha Public Schools board.



- **Lynne Walz** of Fremont beat incumbent Dave Schnoor of Scribner to represent the Fremont-area District 15 seat. A Democrat, Walz, 53, is a real estate agent who has been a teacher and has worked with people with disabilities.



- **Justin Wayne** of Omaha replaces term-limited Tanya Cook to represent northeast Omaha's District 13. A Democrat, Wayne, 37, is an attorney and owner of a small construction company who sat on the OPS board.



- **Anna Wishart** of Lincoln fills an open seat previously held by Colby Coash to represent west Lincoln's District 27. A Democrat and former legislative aide, Wishart, 32, is a policy consultant for an organization dedicated to after-school programs who has served on the Lincoln Airport Authority.



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OUTDOORS

Ricketts appoints 2, reappoints another to Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

- By David Hendee / World-Herald Bureau
- 1-6-17

LINCOLN — Two new commissioners have been appointed to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission by Gov. Pete Ricketts and another commissioner has been re-appointed.

Jim Ernst of Columbus and Rick Brandt of Roca have been appointed to represent District 3 (northeastern Nebraska) and District 8 (Lancaster County), respectively. Pat Berggren of Broken Bow has been re-appointed in District 6 (Sandhills and north-central Nebraska). The appointments to four-year terms are effective Jan. 15.

Berggren was appointed last March to fill a vacant commissioner position, completing the term of his father, Lynn Berggren, who passed away. The Commission last year adopted the Berggren Plan, a comprehensive pheasant management plan named in honor of Lynn Berggren.

Pat Berggren said he wants to see the pheasant plan achieve its goals and become a success. "I'm excited," he said. "I can't wait. It's a big honor to follow Dad. To serve four more years to help the sportsmen of Nebraska is pretty awesome."

Berggren, owner of a construction business, has been active for many years in the One Box Pheasant Hunt. He is active in other endeavors, similar to his father, including fishing, hunting, boating, camping and promoting Nebraska's outdoors.

Ernst, president of Ernst Auto Center and Ernst Toyota, is passionate about conservation and the environment and long has been active in Ducks Unlimited. His other interests include hunting, fishing, camping, boating and parks. "I want to continue the really good work the commission has done and I want to be part of it and help them move forward in the future," Ernst said. "Whatever we can do to get more people participating is great. Getting young people involved is very important."

Brandt, president of Brandt Excavating in Lincoln, said his appointment is a dream come true. "Basically, I want our children and our children's children to have what we have today — or better," he said. As president of the Nebraska Big Game Society, Brandt has worked with Game and Parks with funding animal studies.

"I love every minute of it," he said. "There are great, dedicated people at Game and Parks."

Ernst and Brandt succeed Mick Jensen of Blair and Dr. Kent Forney of Lincoln, respectively, whose terms had expired.

The first commission meeting of the year is Jan. 20 in Lincoln.

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