

# MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General Manager's Report

DATE: March 5, 2012

FROM: John Winkler, General Manager

- A. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION REPORT:** The I&E Report detailing Information and Education activities for the month of February 2012, is attached for your review.
- B. **PERSONNEL/MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS:**
1. The USACE update on the 2011 Missouri River Levee Rehabilitation Project is attached for your review.
  2. The District received a letter from Jim Doyle, Vice-President, Corporate Real Estate & Facilities, ConAgra Foods, thanking the District for hosting the Emergency Operation procedures for Dam Sites. His letter is attached.
  3. The District is incorporating an Emergency Procedure Plan to the District's Safety Policy, which is attached for your review. Thanks to Heather Guthridge and Sarpy County Law Enforcement for their help in this matter.
  4. The Candidate List for the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District Board of Directors is attached.
- C. **REPORT ON PURCHASES – CONSTRUCTION SERVICES, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND PERSONAL PROPERTY:** Pursuant to Board direction, attached is a report indicating construction services, professional services and personal property purchases for the month of February 2012. Please review this report and contact me if you have any questions.
- D. **CURRENT AND ON-GOING PROJECTS – P-MRNRD LEGAL COUNSEL:** Attached is a copy of the current and on-going projects for District Legal Counsel, Paul Peters, as of February 13, 2012. I would ask each Director to review this listing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
- E. **PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP REPORT:** The February, 2012 Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership Monthly Update is attached for your review. The next Partnership meeting will be held on March 22, 2012, at 10:00 a.m. at the NRC.

F. **NEWS CLIPS:**

- ✓ February 9, 2012, Omaha World Herald article, Kerrey Bridge popular, well used
- ✓ February 16, 2012, Omaha World Herald article, 2 Iowa firms to do levee repairs
- ✓ February 29, 2012, Omaha World Herald article, Flooding costs top \$1 billion
- ✓ March 1, 2012, Omaha World Herald article, Storing up trouble? Concerns flow from two proposals intended to help manage flows on the Platte River in Nebraska
- ✓ March 5, 2012, Omaha World Herald article, Funding may delay Wanahoo debut

## **February, 2012 Information/Education Report**

### **Information**

- Prepared for and staffed NRD booth at Omaha Boat Show
- Began work on Papio Watershed Flood brochure
- Began digital photo archiving of old slides and prints
- Updated Facebook page
- Continued planning for Spring media campaign
- Began work on Spring Spectrum

### **Education**

- Presentations
  - **2/1**-Sandoz Elementary, The Lorax (3<sup>rd</sup> grade)—16 students/1 teacher
  - **2/7**-Sandoz Elementary, The Lorax (Kindergarten)—23 students/1 teacher
  - **2/14**- Avery Elementary, Hissing Cockroaches (5<sup>th</sup> grade) - 45 students/2 teachers
  - **2/16**- Wheeler Elementary Boy Scout Meeting (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade)- 75 kids/15 adults
  - **2/21**- Bryan High School Teacher Resource Day-Programming Booth- 50 teachers
  - **2/25**- Omaha Boat and Travel Show- Owls- 500 children and adults
  - **2/26**- Omaha Boat and Travel Show- Owls- 500 children and adults
- Metro Area Trail Map delivery
- NAI Region 5 Conference Committee meeting
- Continued correspondence on updates to Federal and State Owl permits
- Continued upkeep of owl enclosures, and care of owls
- Christine & Austen completed First Aid/CPR training
- Continued taking orders for NRD tree/seed give away
- Closed registration for Water Works 2012 and selected schools
- Continued planning spring programs, nature nights and summer camps
- Hired Spring Scanning Intern
- Met with Live Well Omaha Kids regarding Safe Routes to School program partnerships
- Met with LPS NRD Education Specialist regarding programming
- Christine attended Social Media Marketing training
- Met with Omaha Zoo School representative regarding Job Shadowing opportunities
- Participated in Grassroots Leaders Webinar
- Started NRD Summer Camp registration for Summer 2012 Camps
- Facilitated MORE Nature Meeting
- Provided Community Service hours for 2 high school students
- Updated MORE Nature Community Calendar
- Started taking registrations for Metro Regional Envirothon
- Started planning Earth Week and Earth Day presentations
- Ordered supplies for Nature Nights/spring programs/Summer camps



US Army Corps  
of Engineers

## 2011 MISSOURI RIVER LEVEE REHAB UPDATE

Missouri River Levee Unit R-613

South of Bellevue, Nebraska

Readiness Branch

(Updated February 20, 2012)

Omaha District

### Schedule

Request for Assistance:	Aug. 15, 2011
Damage Survey Report:	Sep. 6, 2011
Funding Received:	Jan. 23, 2012
Request for Proposal Issued:	Jan. 26, 2012
Contract Award:	Feb. 14, 2012
Construction Start Date:	Week of Feb. 20, 2012*
Construction End Date:	Mar. 15, 2012*

\*These dates are estimates and are based on many factors including receipt of funding, contract award, real estate, availability of materials, weather, etc.

### Progress

Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Progress: \_\_\_\_\_



**Project Overall Map**  
**Missouri River Levee Unit R-613**  
**South of Bellevue, NE**

### Award

- The initial repair award for work on Missouri River Levee Unit R-613 was awarded February 14, 2012 with a notice to proceed pending for contractor bonds submittal.
- Initial repairs include seeding, which is scheduled to be completed by March 15, 2012 (weather dependant).

**Note:** Engineering/design and construction funding received by the Omaha District for Increment I will be used to repair areas identified during the damage survey report. Repairs will return these areas to pre-disaster conditions.

### Current Progress

- Preparation of contract documents to award a follow-on construction contract for the repair is on-going pending geotechnical investigations.
- Purchase order for critical seeding proposals were received on February 13, 2012.



US Army Corps  
of Engineers

## 2011 MISSOURI RIVER LEVEE REHAB UPDATE

Missouri River Levee Unit R-616  
Bellevue, Nebraska

Readiness Branch

(Updated February 20, 2012)

Omaha District

### Schedule

Request for Assistance:	Oct. 24, 2011
Damage Survey Report:	Aug. 20, 2011 and Dec. 1, 2011
Funding Received:	Jan. 23, 2012
Contract Award:	Feb. 9, 2012
Real Estate (Rights of Entry/Easements):	Pending
Construction Start Date (Initial Repairs):	Week of Feb. 20, 2012*
(Follow-on Repairs):	After Mar. 1, 2012*
Construction End Date (Initial Repairs):	Week of Mar. 5, 2012*
(Follow-on Repairs):	Nov. 1, 2012*

\*These dates are estimates and are based on many factors including receipt of funding, contract award, real estate, availability of materials, weather, etc.

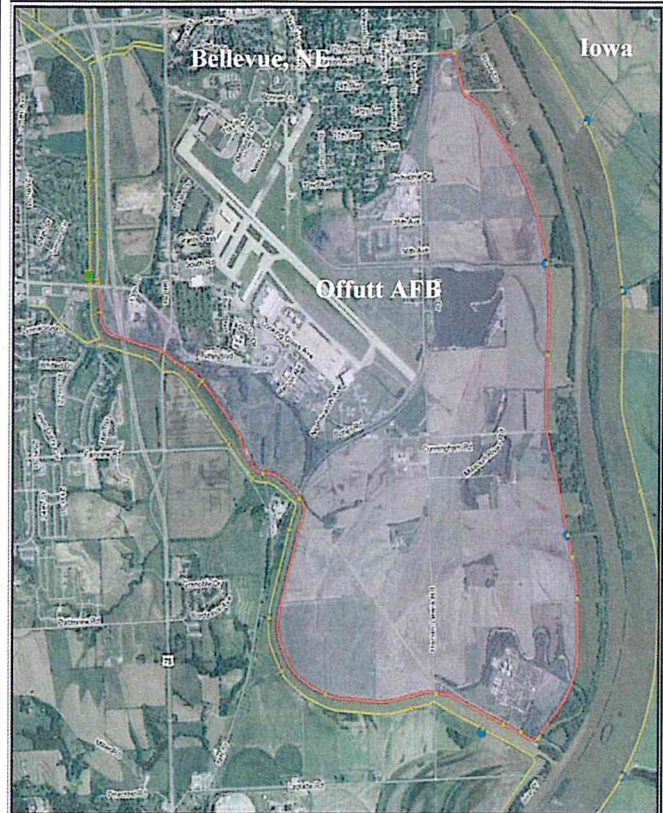
### Award

- Notice to proceed (NTP) is pending. A scope of work is currently being prepared for Missouri River Levee Unit R-616 follow-on repairs.
- Initial repairs include riverside slope restoration, levee crest repair, drainage structure outlet restoration, landside slope restoration and erosion control on the riverside levee face. These repairs are scheduled to be completed by March 5, 2012.
- Follow-on activities and repairs include geotechnical investigations, riverside scour repair, repair of damaged drainage structures and installation of additional seepage berms based on the geotechnical investigations. These repairs will be started after March 15, 2012 and completed by November 1, 2012.

**Note:** Engineering/design and construction funding received by the Omaha District will be used to repair areas identified during the damage survey report. Repairs will return these areas to pre-disaster conditions.

### Current Progress

- Contract NTP for critical repairs is pending the city of Omaha's rights-of-entry to the sewage treatment plant for borrow and disposal.
- Real estate permanent easements will be needed in order to complete follow-on seepage berm installation.



**Project Overall Map  
Missouri River Levee Unit R-616  
Bellevue, NE**

Jim Doyle  
Vice President  
Corporate Real Estate & Facilities



FEB 21 2012

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Omaha, NE 68102-5001  
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t: 402.240.5232  
f: 402.930.3327

February 20, 2012

Marlin Petermann, P. E.  
Assistant General Manager  
Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District  
8901 S. 154<sup>th</sup> Street  
Omaha, NE 68138-3621

**RE: Emergency Operation Procedures for Dam Sites**

Dear Marlin:

It was very good of you to host the meeting on Emergency Operation Procedures for dam sites in the Omaha area.

I want to compliment you again on the facilities you folks have. I don't see how even the most critical of the taxpayers could come up with flaws in your operations. You have the nice mix between being first class and yet within bounds of reason for a governmental office.

At some point in the future we may want to visit further about our Lonergan Lake project. If you are the right person to contact, I will follow up with you directly. If not, and there is someone else in your organization that I ought to be visiting with, please just have them give me a contact, either by phone at 402.240-5232 or via e-mail at [jim.doyle@conagrafoods.com](mailto:jim.doyle@conagrafoods.com). Thanks again for hosting the conference.

Very Truly Yours,

Jim Doyle  
Vice President  
Corporate Real Estate & Facilities

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER  
NATURAL  
RESOURCES  
DISTRICT



8901 S. 154TH ST.  
OMAHA, NE 68138-3621  
(402) 444-6222  
FAX (402) 895-6543  
[www.papionrd.org](http://www.papionrd.org)

With direction from Sarpy County Law Enforcement and the General Manager, all employees, and guests thereof, will adhere to the following emergency procedure plan. In emergency situations it is important to remain calm and follow the below procedure to ensure everyone's safety.

If deemed that the NRC, staff and general public in the Chalco Hills Recreation Area have NO threat to their safety, business will be conducted as normal. All individuals will remain clear of any business being conducted by law enforcement. Except in cases where assistance is requested by Sarpy County Law Enforcement or the General Manager.

If deemed that the NRC, staff and general public in the Chalco Hills Recreation Area DO have a real threat to their safety, notice will be given by the General Manager or designee, and the following procedure will take place. All individuals will remain clear of any business being conducted by law enforcement. If assistance is requested of individual staff members by Sarpy County Law Enforcement or the General Manager, those individuals will cooperate as needed. If staff members, or guests thereof, are in the park they will immediately report to the NRC and participate in all procedures. All doors exiting and entering the NRC will be locked down and individuals will be required to stay inside until notice has been received that the area is safe. Once the area is safe, business may again be conducted as normal.

If deemed there is an extreme threat to safety, the following contingency plan will be put into place at the discretion of Law Enforcement or the General Manager. Individuals will immediately cease what they are doing and follow this procedure. All blinds/shades will be closed to cover windows and staff, or guests thereof, will remain clear of doors and windows. All lights will be turned off in the building. Individuals will immediately report to the central "safe room" of the basement. If it is deemed too unsafe to report there, individuals will sit underneath their desks. This contingency plan will be in effect until the threat to safety has been removed.

# Statewide Candidate List

## List as of 3/1/2012 5:12:00PM

### Papio Missouri Natural Resources District For Board of Directors

District Name	Party	Name	Address	Phone	Preferred Mailing Address:
Subdistrict 01		Scott Japp	4752 Co Rd 15 Arlington, NE 68002	(402) 639-6653	
Subdistrict 01		Chris J. Koenig	5773 Glen Oaks Dr Fort Calhoun, NE 68023	(402) 548-5112	
Subdistrict 01		Joe Morgan	1456 Lake Ave South Sioux City, NE 68776	(712) 898-2221	
Subdistrict 01		Jeff Rothlisberger	9260 County Road 36 Fl. Calhoun, NE 68023	(402) 616-0822	
Subdistrict 03		Curt Frost	11220 Rainwood Rd Omaha, NE 68142	(402) 571-2820	
Subdistrict 03		Brian J. Kuehl	3333 N. 129 Cir. Omaha, NE 68164	(402) 330-8000	
Subdistrict 03		Brandon Clark	6630 N 77 St Omaha, NE 68122	(402) 980-1544	
Subdistrict 05		Rich Tesar	28700 Platte River Plz Waterloo, NE 68069	(402) 359-2705	
Subdistrict 05		Brad Dunbar	16131 Bedford Ave Omaha, NE 68116	(402) 672-7859	
Subdistrict 05		Gene Sladek	1629 N 160th St Omaha, NE 68118	(402) 504-0722	
Subdistrict 07		Jerry M. Nielson	6310 Lafayette Ave Omaha, NE 68132	(402) 612-6057	
Subdistrict 07		Patrick Leahy	2661 N 96th St Omaha, NE 68134	(402) 650-4464	
Subdistrict 07		Jim Powers	704 N 57th St Omaha, NE 68132	(402) 556-2562	
Subdistrict 07		Lucas C. Billesbach	3123 N 58th St Omaha, NE 68104	(402) 319-5951	
Subdistrict 09		Matt Pinkerton	19604 V St Omaha, NE 68135	(402) 616-3027	
Subdistrict 09		Patrick Bonnett	4979 S 132 Ave Omaha, NE 68137	(402) 968-7282	
Subdistrict 11		Gus Erickson	203 Caldor Dr Bellevue, NE 68005	(402) 293-1282	
Subdistrict 11		Ron Woodle	218 Bellevue Blvd So Bellevue, NE 68005	(402) 291-1614	
Subdistrict 11		Eric Shirey	12013 S 51st St Papillion, NE 68133	(402) 926-9881	

## February, 2012

[illegible]

Updated: February 13, 2012

## **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 = PFP's Portion Completed

- **Little Papio:** (Cleveland)
  - ★ Gabion Repair Project Easement Consents (W)
- **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
  - ★ Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96<sup>th</sup> St.) (W)
  - ★ Land Exchange with Trumble family (W)
- **West Branch:** (Cleveland)
  - Saunders County side ROW agreement and easements (F)
  - ★ NRDs/NE-ARNG Interlocal for Camp Ashland Property (W)
  - ★ NE-ARNG Fairview Road Access License (N)
- **Western Sarpy Dike:** (Cleveland)
  - Purchase agreements and closing documents for King Lake – Osborne Property (W)
- **Floodway Purchase Program:** (Laster)
  - MoPac Trail (Hwy 50 to Lied Bridge) New Dowd Easement (N)
- **Trail Projects:** (Bowen)
  - ★ Missouri River Corridor Project (Becic)
- **USDA PL 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed:** (Schumacher/Cleveland)
  - ★ Pigeon/Jones Site 15 Purchase Agreements and closing documents (W)
  - Papio W-3 Eminent Domain (Camden) (F)

- ✪ Papio W-3 Access-Quiet Title Action (W)
- ✪ Pigeon/Jones Sites 1, 9, & 23 Easements (N)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:** (Grint/Laster/Petermann)
  - Interlocal agreement with Douglas County for DS 15A (W)
  - Interlocal agreement with City of Omaha for DS 15A (F)
  - ✪ Zorinsky Basin #1 – purchase agreements, deeds and easement (W)
  - ✪ 3 Purchase Agreements for additional WP5 ROW (N)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Grint)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Sklenar)
- **Other:**
  - ✪ MOU with UNO for Lied Platte River Bride Research Station (Henkel) (N)
  - ✪ Tetra Tech Contract modification for Missouri River Levee Accreditation (Henkel) (N)

## **MONTHLY UPDATE**

**February 2012**



A Partnership meeting was held on February 23, 2012 at 10am at the NRC Building. Minutes are updated regularly on the Partnership's website: [www.papiopartnership.org](http://www.papiopartnership.org).

### **Update on EPA Small Urban Waters Grant**

An application was submitted in January for a grant through the EPA Small Urban Waters grant.

The application submitted will cover the first phase of the Natural Resources Inventory for which the Partnership has been applying for grant funds. The first phase will collect available GIS data and compare the data from 2004 to 2010.

A response from EPA is expected in March. If the grant is approved by EPA the Partnership must vote to expend the \$60,000 matching funds.

### **Runoff Control Plans – Training Session**

The City of Omaha has developed runoff control plans for their municipal facilities. These are facilities that are not required to have a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan under NPDES regulations, but still have the potential to release pollutants in the event of a stormwater discharge from the site. Omaha will share the template developed for their facilities with the other communities in order to address that item in the Stormwater Management Plan approved in the NPDES permit.

A training session will be held at the end of March. Evaluation forms will be sent and should be completed prior to the training session.

The City of Omaha is now working to enter data into the CBI software for tracking MS4 permit activities. At this time, there are complications and issues with the software and Omaha is looking for feedback from other Partnership members as to whether or not to continue using the software. Jim Kee, City of Omaha, will give a demonstration of the software at the March meeting.

### **Omaha Stormwater Manual Update**

The City of Omaha is in the process of updating the Regional Stormwater Manual's chapters on best management practices and sediment and erosion control. The best management practices chapter draft is available for review on [www.omahastormwater.org](http://www.omahastormwater.org). Omaha's consultant, CDM Smith, is now finalizing the best management practices chapter and drafting the sediment and erosion control chapter. A public meeting will be held on March 7, 2012 to present the draft sediment and erosion control chapter.

### **Other Items of Interest**

- Douglas County has purchased the 2012 Center for Watershed Protection Webcast series. The cost to attend each webcast is \$15 and includes lunch.
- There are several upcoming training opportunities including a Post Construction Workshop in Lincoln March 20-21 and a Pervious Pavement seminar on April 26.

### **Next Meeting:**

The next Partnership meeting will be March 22, 2012 at 10 am at the NRC building.

### **MS4 Annual Report – CBI Software Update**



# W-H Midlands Voices:

## Kerrey Bridge popular, well used

By Donald L. Greer, Ph.D. Published Thursday February 9, 2012

*The writer is a professor in the School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.*

Since its opening in September 2008, the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge has been the occasional target of criticism as useless "government pork." But, by and large, it also seems to have become a relatively popular community attraction and, at least to some degree, a symbol of Omaha's downtown redevelopment and the "Back to the River" movement.

Yet only limited information has been available on the usage of the bridge by area citizens. Although the early user counts (see World-Herald articles on April 3, 2009, and May 30, 2010) indicated relatively high rates of bridge usage, they were limited to some extent by their use of relatively small convenience samples. More recent data now allow us to improve on that.

During May 2011, graduate students, using a carefully developed checklist, counted all entries to the Kerrey Bridge from the Omaha side from 8 a.m. until midnight on a Friday, Saturday and Sunday. All counts were done prior to the flooding that occurred along the Missouri River during the summer and fall.

During the three days of observation, we counted 5,050 entries to the Kerrey Bridge, with an overall rate of 107 users per hour. As one might expect, Saturday was easily the busiest day on the bridge, with an average rate exceeding 150 users per hour. Approximately 90 users per hour were counted on Friday and Sunday. The graphic at right shows the hourly user profile for each of the three days.

In terms of demographics, the Kerrey Bridge was used nearly equally by men and women during our three days of observation. In fact, just over one-half of all bridge users were female. And Omaha's black and Latino citizens are making use of the bridge as well, accounting for nearly one in five of all the entries we recorded.

With regard to the types of activity taking place on the bridge, approximately 9.3 percent of all the bridge users we counted were cyclists and another 4.8 percent of them were joggers or runners. So running and cycling together accounted for just over 14 percent of all uses of the bridge, and the remaining uses were comprised primarily of walking, with a very small number of children in strollers or carriages and some skaters and wheelchair users.

Based on this new evidence, any concerns that a Missouri River bridge devoted exclusively to bicycle and pedestrian activity will become an unused "white elephant" should be put to rest. In fact, the possibility for overcrowding on the bridge seems quite real, at least during its peak hours of use.

In a previous paper, it was suggested by this writer that the Kerrey Bridge had become much more than a transportation corridor; it had become a destination in itself, used as much for simply enjoying the outdoors and sightseeing as for serious exercise. Nothing in the present report refutes that idea.

In fact, these results are consistent with a body of nationwide research indicating that simple, low-demand outdoor activities close to home are done by most Americans more frequently than anything else.

As to the possibility of overcrowding on the bridge, it would not be too surprising if the volume of traffic we have been seeing was not entirely anticipated by bridge developers. Whether or not that is true, future planning for the area surrounding the bridge should keep the potential for overcrowding in mind, especially during weekends and other peak periods of demand.

Above all else, one thing surely seems certain: The Kerrey Bridge brings people to the Omaha riverfront. Whether it does so as a stand-alone attraction or in combination with other downtown venues such as the CenturyLink Center is a topic for future investigation.

Published Thursday February 16, 2012

## 2 Iowa firms to do levee repairs

By [David Hendee](#)

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Army Corps of Engineers has awarded contracts for Missouri River levee repairs near Bellevue, Plattsmouth and Nebraska City.

A \$4.7 million contract to Newt Marine Services of Dubuque, Iowa, is to repair scour holes, construct seepage berms, repair slopes and seed ground cover on five miles of levee southeast of Nebraska City.

The repairs involve a stretch of levee, in place since 1950, that protects an Omaha Public Power District coal-fired station. The work is scheduled for completion by March 1.

A \$43,000 contract to Next Phase Environmental of Underwood, Iowa, is for seeding on the levee between Bellevue and Plattsmouth.

The levee protects about 3,000 acres of land, including part of Offutt Air Force Base, farmland, residences and businesses. Work is scheduled for completion by March 15.

The levees were damaged during last year's summerlong flood.

Contact the writer:

402-444-1127, [david.hendee@owh.com](mailto:david.hendee@owh.com)

Published Wednesday February 29, 2012

# Flooding costs top \$1 billion

By David Hendee  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Finding the price tag for last summer's Missouri River flood has been as murky as the Muddy Mo itself.

Costs revealed Tuesday continue to push the bill over \$1 billion in the lower river states of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas alone.

Yet, it could have been more costly.

Early estimates of flood damage indicate that the Army Corps of Engineers' six big upriver dams prevented at least \$7.6 billion in damage last year, said Erik Blechinger, who manages river programs for the corps.

"Without the reservoirs," he said, "the damages experienced in 2011 would have been far, far worse."

Blechinger said the reservoir system provides an average \$1.8 billion in annual benefits. The benefits are based on the spring and summer runoff that the dams capture for release throughout the year for navigation, irrigation, water supply, hydropower, fishing, wildlife and water quality purposes.

Col. Bob Ruch, commander of the Omaha District, said the \$7.6 billion prevented-damage estimate is a "low-ball number" because it is based on 1970s-era information of what businesses, homes, crops and developments exist in the river floodplain.

"A lot of things have changed," he said.

Ruch and Blechinger were among more than 100 federal, state, local and tribal officials from across the region who gathered in Omaha to coordinate immediate and long-term post-flood recovery efforts as members of the Missouri River Flood Task Force.

The cost of flooding continues to climb, officials said. Bills include:

- » An estimated \$520 million in repairs to levees in the Omaha District (\$280 million) and dams (\$240 million).
- » More than \$276 million in estimated costs to roads and other infrastructure owned by local, county and state governments. Nebraska's share of the damage is \$142.78 million. Iowa's share is \$85.8 million.
- » More than \$218 million in claims paid to farmers for cropland flood damage in South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas. The number of new claims continues to climb, said Rebecca Davis, a federal crop insurance regional director in Topeka, Kan.

The totals don't include Federal Emergency Management Agency payments to individuals whose primary homes were damaged, or renters who lost personal property to floodwater, said Beth Freeman, the agency's regional administrator.

Nearly 1,100 Nebraskans and 1,300 Iowans have sought individual assistance from FEMA.

Blechinger said the cost of repairs to dams and levees will climb as engineers continue inspections and find soft spots in levees, for example.

Seepage is a primary concern this year because floodwater was on the levees for a long time and could have created a capillary effect through the earthen structures, said John LaRondeau, a corps engineer.

Still, the corps said, it is ready for the traditional March 1 start of the spring runoff season.

Repairs to five holes in levees protecting the Hamburg, Iowa, and Rockport, Mo., areas now are substantially complete, Ruch said.

"All five levee breaches are closed off, and we could withstand high water," Ruch said. "That doesn't mean they're done. There's still a lot of work to go on those levees."

Crews worked through the night Monday to finish closing the third and final breach in the Hamburg area before a rainstorm rolled in Tuesday. The levees have been rebuilt to original height and width. Seeding and other finishing touches remain.

Ruch said the five projects represented the most critical repairs in the levee system damaged during last summer's flood.

Brig. Gen. John McMahon, commander of the Northwest Division, said good progress is being made.

"Dirt's flying," he said. "We're still not out of the woods. We've enjoyed a mild winter so far.

There's still plenty of potential for lots of snow to fall, especially in the mountains. We've got to stay vigilant and stay focused on completing this work and improving the situation."

Contact the writer:

402-444-1127, [david.hendee@owh.com](mailto:david.hendee@owh.com)

Col. Bob Ruch, commander of the Army Corps of Engineers' Omaha District, announced the milestone Tuesday during a meeting in Omaha of the agency's Missouri River Flood Task Force.

"All five levee breaches are closed off, and we could withstand high water," Ruch said. "That doesn't mean they're done. There's still a lot of work to go on those levees."

Crews worked through the night Monday to finish the third and final breach in the Hamburg area before a rainstorm rolled in Tuesday. The levees have been rebuilt to original height and width. Seeding and other finishing touches remain.

Ruch said the five projects represented the most critical repairs in the levee system damaged during last summer's flood. The corps set a March 1 deadline to complete the repairs. That date represents the traditional start of the spring runoff season.

Contact the writer:

402-444-1127, [david.hendee@owh.com](mailto:david.hendee@owh.com)

## **Omaha W-H 3/1/12 Storing up trouble?**

### **Concerns flow from two proposals intended to help manage flows on the Platte River in Nebraska**

**BY RILEY JOHNSON | WORLD-HERALD BUREAU**

LINCOLN — The braided channels of the Platte River give water to farmers, electricity to central Nebraskans and homes to endangered wildlife. But lately, two parts of a project to protect the river have instead tied officials, conservationists and farmers in knots.

Riverfront property owners and historians also are concerned about a proposal to create two holding reservoirs to help manage the river and plans to dump 100,000 tons of sand into the Platte to prevent it from eating away at its banks and bottom.

The \$50 million reservoir proposal, if approved, might not be ready to begin earth work until 2014. A mix of funds from federal and state taxpayers and the Central Public Power and Irrigation District would cover the costs.

Jerry Kenny of Kearney, who oversees the broader project to protect the river and its wildlife — the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program — said negotiations are ongoing. He expects his program, funded in part by the U.S. Department of the Interior, to pay the lion's share.

The recovery program is paying the full \$325,000 for the sanddump proposal, or sediment augmentation. That project could begin as early as next fall, pending approval of permits by the Army Corps of Engineers.

The corps is reviewing the potential effect on nearby property of dumping sand in the river at two sites between Lexington and Elm Creek. Barb Friskopp of the corps expects a decision over the next two months.

"We're several steps away from firing up the bulldozers and moving dirt," Kenny said.

Locals are concerned that the holding reservoirs southeast of Lexington would drown part of the Oregon Trail. They also fear that the project might swamp adjacent farmland and encroach on a pioneer-era cemetery. And they worry that the sand project could put riverfront property at greater risk of flood damage.

"They think they know so much about the river ... more than those of us who lived on it all their lives," said Joe Jeffrey of Lexington, who owns about 6,000 acres on or around the Platte between Lexington and Overton.

The holding reservoirs would allow operators at Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation to better regulate some Platte water flows they use to generate hydropower, Kenny said.

During times of excess water flow, reservoir operators could divert water into the holding reservoirs. At times of lower flows, they could reintroduce water into the river.

More regulated flows would help improve the performance of Central's hydropower plants such as the J-2 plant, southeast of Lexington. Project officials, including Jennifer Schellpeper of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, say irrigators would not have to worry about seeing their water depleted.

Covering less than 1,000 acres combined, excess water for the holding reservoirs would come from flows already diverted to the Lexington-area plant, Kenny said. Instead of being returned immediately to the river, as in the past, flows above target levels would be diverted.

Currently, water pulled from the Platte just east of North Platte travels through a supply canal, goes through one of the hydropower plants and enters Johnson Lake. Hydro plant engineers then slowly release the water in varying stages at the next two plants, said Jeff Buettner, a Central spokesman in Holdrege. That process creates an up-and-down flow as the water returns to the river, a process of generating electricity that Buettner and others call "hydrocycling."

Essentially, the reservoirs would help "take the peaks and valleys" out of the system and stabilize the energy-producing process, Buettner said.

The proposed changes would allow the hydro plant to operate 60 percent more efficiently during the less-than-optimal flows typical of irrigation season, said Central engineer Cory Steinke.

The reservoirs would hold and release 40,000 acre-feet of water annually, Buettner said. That's enough water to fill more

than 13 million one-gallon jugs.

Still, local historians and farmers worry that the reservoirs could flood surrounding cropland and a pioneer cemetery in Phelps County.

Just east of one proposed reservoir sits the wire fence enclosed Plum Creek Cemetery, the final resting place of 15 pioneers.

"Our concern was that the whole area was going to be under water," said Dan Van Dyke, executive director of the Nebraska Prairie Museum in Holdrege.

Kenny has told Van Dyke that the project would go forward with sensitivity to the cemetery and the Nebraska leg of the Oregon Trail.

Van Dyke also said that, if history is a guide, pioneer bodies could be buried every three miles and that digging for the reservoirs could unearth unmarked graves. Kenny said crews would temporarily halt construction for excavation and preservation if human remains are found.

It was the proposal to dump sand into the Platte that caught property owner Todd Brown's eye.

"I was worried it would fill up the river and water would rise," said Brown, who owns Brown Construction in Kearney.

Initially, Brown feared that dumping sand would increase the chances of future flooding.

In the pilot study proposed to begin next fall, the recovery program would pump 50,000 tons of sand from an adjacent pit into the Platte, a method it has never used, Kenny said. Engineers also would bulldoze land near the banks, pushing sand into the river, as they have in the past.

"In my simple mind ... if you fill something up ... the riverbed would go up," Brown said.

But Kenny said the "sandbox, sugar-fine sand" the project would use is not big enough to leave deposits during the dump. Sand akin to road gravel would be necessary to increase deposits and the chances of flooding, he said.

"We're trying to keep the hole from getting deeper. ... We're not trying to fill the hole in," he said.

The root of the problem officials are trying to solve is what Kenny calls "hungry water." Water diverted from the river for use in Central's hydroelectric dams returns to the river devoid of sediment. Kenny said this "hungry water" gouges nearby river bottoms and banks, leaving an annual sand deficit of 150,000 tons.

Dumping sand in the water would make it less likely to eat away at its banks and bottom because the water would be carrying the new sand and its capacity to lift and carry additional sediment would be reduced.

For Overton farmer Jeff Carlson, the proposed reservoirs raise red flags.

One proposed reservoir site would submerge 160 acres where Carlson grows corn. Carlson worries that productive farmland near the site could be endangered. If the reservoirs cause the water table to rise, Carlson fears saturated ground that might turn fields into marshlands.

Groundwater seepage is a "legitimate concern," Kenny said, but one that engineers can address in the design process with drains and a liner. He also said the program would address any significant seepage.

Carlson, despite concerns, will "listen if they offer," he said.

Kenny said he invites the comment of those concerned with either project.

"We certainly don't know everything, but part of what we do is learn," he said.

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# Funding may delay Wanahoo debut

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WAHOO, Neb. (AP) — Questions about local funding could delay an agreement with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the opening of the Lake Wanahoo Recreation Area.

The 637-acre lake, north of Wahoo in eastern Nebraska, had been expected to open for recreation in April after being in the works for more than a decade. The lake is already stocked with fish, and officials had hoped to have the lake and surrounding recreation area open for camping, hiking, no-wake boating and fishing by April 1.

John Miyoshi, general manager of the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District, said the district board will meet Wednesday and consider approval of a three-year agreement for Game and Parks to operate the area. It should become clear after that meeting whether the April 1 opening of the lake will happen, Miyoshi said.

Some board members want to wait until the district, the city of Wahoo and Saunders County agree on their shares for local financing of the project before approving the Game and Parks takeover of the recreation area.

"The problem with that is we have an opportunity now with Game and Parks, and they need time to gear up to start that operation," Miyoshi said. "They need to hire personnel."

Funding for the project is coming mostly from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, state sources such as the Natural Resources Development Fund, and a local partnership of the city, county and natural resource district.

Miyoshi said a delay in getting money from the Natural Resources Development Fund means it will be seven years before the natural resources district recoups that money.

"The interest that we're paying and will be paying in the future is what was not fully budgeted for," he said.

The district has paid about \$1.9 million in interest so far, he said, and wants the city and county to share equally in covering that cost.

But Wahoo Mayor Jerry Johnson wants more information on what his city will have to spend.