

E. **PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP REPORT:** The Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership meeting for June was cancelled. The next Partnership meeting is scheduled for July 26, 2014.

F. **NEWS CLIPS:**

- ✓ June 18, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, Douglas County Board denies tax break for northwest Omaha dam site
- ✓ June 19, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, All eyes on river as flood threat heads to Omaha
- ✓ June 19, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, After recount, State Canvassing Board still keeps NRD race on fall ballot
- ✓ June 19, 2014, Lincoln Journal Star article, Report: Nebraska's waterways are 6th worst in nation for pollution
- ✓ June 20, 2014, Omaha Business Journal article, Organizations focus on conservation, storm water management
- ✓ June 20, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, Omaha keeps wary eyes on river, but no panicking yet
- ✓ June 21, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, Heavy rainstorms swells rivers, Omaha metro area remains under flood warning
- ✓ June 23, 2014, Omaha World Herald Editorial, New board off to a flowing start
- ✓ June 24, 2014, Washington Co. Pilot Tribune article, Water system evaluation goes to city council
- ✓ June 25, 2014, Bellevue Leader article, Replenish gardens at ENVH to help with erosion, water quality
- ✓ July 2, 2014, Lincoln Journal Star article, New section of MoPac Trail opens in Sarpy County
- ✓ July 2, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, Flooding to dampen holiday fun at some lakes, rivers
- ✓ July 2, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, In 2014-15 budget, Douglas County Board maintains property tax rate
- ✓ July 8, 2014, Omaha World Herald editorial: Build it, and it might stay
- ✓ July 9, 2014, Omaha World Herald article, NRD to honor Omaha police officer who rescued swarm of 5,000 bees

June, 2014 Information/Education Report

Information

Prepared I&E budget recommendations
Distributed information via Twitter
Updated Facebook page
Updated NRD web site
Received Bee oriented seed planter boxes for distribution at special events
Distributed news releases
Hired part time staff member to assist with slide/print photo archiving
Continued development of FY 2015 Information Campaign video and radio spots
Responded to numerous requests for NRD information received via the web site and Facebook

Education:

May Programming Schedule:

6/2 - 6/6: Discovering Nature Camp #1, 22 kids, 9am-2pm daily
6/2: Library Program, Nature Hike, 75 people
6/9: Druid Hill Owl program, 125 people
6/10: Millard Library, Animal Tracks Program, 45 people
6/11: Hills Montessori, Reptile Program, 45 people
6/12: Millard Library, Recycle Relay Program, 40 people
6/14: Kiwanis, Owl Program, 100 people
6/16 - 6/20: Discovering Nature Camp #2, 20 kids, 9am-2pm daily
6/23: Sump Library, Insect Programs, 80 kids
6/24: Masters Elementary, Reptile Programs, 100 kids
6/24: Millard Library, Bird Nests program, 45 kids
6/25: Blair Library, Insect Programs, 100 kids
6/26: Creative Kidz, Animal Program, 30 kids
6/30: Springfield Library, Animal Adaptations program, 50 kids
6/14- Seymore Smith Park Kwanis- Owls- 150 people
6/23- Sump Library- Insects- 32 kids (7-12)

Meetings/Training:

Review of Applicants/Interviews for Archivist position
Board Meeting & Press Release
Community of Practice Conference Call
Word Press Training
Budget Meetings

Planning:

Fall Nature Nights
Fall Programming
Summer Day Camps: Confirmation e-Mails
Update MORE Nature Website

From: Sue Crawford [<mailto:scrawford@leg.ne.gov>]
Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2014 5:20 AM
To: Winkler, John
Subject: Senator Crawford End-of-session Report

Dear John,

Thank you for your leadership and service to the Bellevue community. I appreciate your proactive leadership on the levee issue. I look forward to our continued work on that issue and others.

Attached please find a copy of my 2014 end-of-session report. This report summarizes some of the work our office has completed in the last year. Feel free to share the report with other people who may be interested.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions about the report or other legislative issues. Thank you again for your commitment to Bellevue.

All the best,

Sue

Senator Sue Crawford
District 45
scrawford@leg.ne.gov
[402.471.2615](tel:402.471.2615)

My legislative blog: <http://news.legislature.ne.gov/dist45/>
Follow me on facebook and Twitter: [fb.com/SenatorCrawford](https://www.facebook.com/SenatorCrawford) @SenCrawford
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SENATOR SUE CRAWFORD

DISTRICT 45

2014 END OF SESSION REPORT

Senator Crawford's Legislative Committees:

Vice Chair, Urban Affairs
Health and Human Services

General Affairs
Midwest Higher Education Compact



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<http://news.legislature.ne.gov/dist45/>

Dear Friend,

It is a pleasure and an honor to serve as your state senator in the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature. As you may know, the 103rd Legislature recently wrapped up its work in Lincoln and adjourned for the year. Despite a short 60 day session, the Legislature still managed to pass several meaningful pieces of legislation on key issues. This report contains a short synopsis of the work we completed this year.

This end-of-session report is one way I keep in touch with constituents and community leaders. During session, I also send weekly e-newsletters that highlight key issues before the Legislature and events from the previous week. When the Legislature is not in session, we send these updates monthly. If you would like to receive these weekly updates in your email, please visit the following link:
<http://eepurl.com/nrCQz>

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or concerns about legislation featured in this report or other state issues. My staff and I stand ready to assist.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve you.

All the best,

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Crawford Bills Enacted in 2014

LB 719: Increasing Transparency and Accountability During Rulemaking Process

LB 719 requires agencies to prepare a report for all proposed rules and regulations following a public hearing. The report includes a summary of comments raised during the hearing through oral or written testimony and includes a response from the agencies to these summarized comments.

The current process for rulemaking hearings and reports makes it difficult for legislators to assess the responsiveness of agencies to citizen and legislative comments on proposed changes in regulations. LB 719 provides a tool for senators and the Governor to use to assess the justifications behind the agency's response--or failure to respond--to the concerns raised. It does so without an impact to the state's General Fund.

Our rulemaking system, like our other public systems, should be accountable to the citizens it regulates. Our state benefits when those who are most affected by the details of the regulation have their say and are heard. Testifiers travel, sometimes great distances, to participate in these public hearings. LB 719 requires agencies to pay special attention to these comments.

LB 720: Strengthening Procedure to Address Burdensome Regulations (incorporated into LB 719)

LB 720 is part of a Responsive Regulations package I introduced this past session. Taken together, the bills bring greater transparency to the rulemaking process and increase the Legislature's ability to conduct meaningful oversight over regulatory agencies without adding to the state's General Fund.

Bills we pass as a Legislature are often converted into regulations that agencies enforce. Our laws are as effective, or as burdensome, as the regulations that enforce them. Laws and regulations get made one-by-one, often in response to specific narrow situations. This can lead to overlapping regulations, regulations that drift from legislative intent, or are more burdensome than anticipated by the lawmakers who authorized the regulations. LB 720 creates a tool that allows legislators to direct attention to areas of regulation most in need of review. It also provides a mechanism to streamline regulations and a process to push for reconsideration and revision of regulations that have become out of date or redundant.

LB 740: Grants In-state Tuition for Veterans and their Families

Veterans are a highly skilled, disciplined, and experienced workforce. Nebraska's colleges and universities are enriched by their contributions in the classroom and our state economy benefits with their participation in our workforce. Between now and 2016, almost 1 million service members will leave the military. Policies in our state should encourage these veterans to move to Nebraska.

Post 9/11 GI benefits only cover the cost of in-state, or resident, tuition at public universities. Prior to the passage of LB 740, if veterans move to Nebraska to attend one of our state colleges or universities, they would have to pay for the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition themselves unless they qualify for Yellow Ribbon funding. Estimated out-of-pocket costs for a veteran who moves to Nebraska to attend University of Nebraska-Omaha is over \$50,000. Many airmen I meet on base and in Bellevue tell me they hope to return to Nebraska once they leave the military because of the warm welcome they receive from the Bellevue community. LB 740 provides an additional incentive for their return to our communities.

LB 740 grants immediate eligibility for in-state tuition to veterans who have left active duty within the last two years and their families, provided they establish residency and register to vote in Nebraska. The University of Nebraska, state colleges and community colleges all supported this change for the benefits it brings their veteran students and its potential for future enrollment growth.

Other Key Bills Passed This Session

Tax Reform

This year the Legislature passed meaningful, sustainable tax reform while ensuring the state is able to meet its obligations to public education, infrastructure and other state programs in future years. These reforms included:

- **LB 96, Agricultural Repair Parts Sales Tax Exemption:** puts Nebraska on par with neighboring states who exempt agricultural repair or replacement parts from state sales tax.
- **LB 75, Military Retirement Income Pay Tax Exemption for New Retirees:** provides a modest tax credit for new military retirees beginning in 2015. I was disappointed that LB 987 does not provide tax relief for those military retirees who have already made a commitment to our Nebraska communities. This is important work that still needs to be done.
- **LB 987, Income Tax Relief:** Indexes income tax brackets for inflation and exempts social security benefits from state income tax for Nebraskans who earn less than \$58,000 for married couples filing jointly and \$43,000 for individuals filing any other return.
- **LB 986 and 905, Property Tax Relief:** LB 986 expands the homestead exemption program to providing additional property tax relief and allowing more families to stay in their homes. This year's budget included an additional \$25 million to the Property Tax Relief fund. Property taxes relief was one of the top issues during the Tax Modernization Committee's hearings last summer. This is a place to start; I anticipate more discussion next session.

These reforms will provide more than \$412 million in tax relief over the next five years.

Economic Development

LB 191: Revitalizes Main Streets with Historic Building Tax Credits

Main streets across Nebraska, like Olde Towne in Bellevue, are full of historically significant buildings. In many of these communities, however, these buildings are in need of revitalization and renovation. LB 191 creates an additional incentive for developers and cities to renovate and restore these buildings in exchange for a tax credit of up to 20% for certain expenditures.

LB 751: Creates a New Corporate Structure Focused on the Public Good

Across the country, interest in a new type of corporate structure, benefit corporation or B-Corp, is growing. Benefit corporations, like other corporations, have a corporate purpose to create profit. Unlike other corporate structures, B-Corps also have a corporate purpose to create a general public benefit. This public benefit can range from reducing poverty to protecting the environment. LB 751 helps Nebraska attract socially conscious entrepreneurs and compete with 22 other states who have passed similar legislation.

LB 800: Reenergizes Communities through Enterprise Zones

In the 1990s, the Department of Economic Development designated enterprise zones to economically distressed areas. LB 800 reactivates this program, requiring the Department of Economic Development designate 5 zones throughout Nebraska. The program also grants preferences for various business incentive and grants programs to businesses who locate in these areas.

LB 905: Increasing Nebraska's Commitment to Job Training

According to a recent Nebraska Chamber survey, one in four respondents indicated a lack of skilled labor was the key issue limiting their growth. Over half of those surveyed experienced difficulty hiring qualified employees in the past year.¹ This year's budget appropriates \$10 million to the job training cash fund to help Nebraskans gain meaningful employment as well as build the labor force Nebraskan companies need.

Military and Veteran Issues

LB 383: Recognizing Those Who Served with Military Honor Plates

This year the Legislature finally authorized military honor plates. LB 383 creates 6 Military Honor Plates for veterans and active duty personnel who served or are serving in the US Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Air Force or National Guard. Many states already allow military honor plates and the creation of a similar program here in Nebraska has been a goal of many veterans for years.

Other Key Bills Passed This Session Cont.

LB 588: Updating Hiring Preferences for Disabled Veterans and their Families

Prior to the passage of LB 588, Nebraska's hiring preference for veterans and disabled veterans was more than 40 years old. LB 588 updates and streamlines this program to better reflect how the state and its political subdivisions hire employees. It also extends a hiring preference for the spouse of a veteran with a 100% permanent disability.

LB 1087: Extending Property Tax Relief to More Disabled Veterans

Nebraska's homestead exemption provides meaningful property tax relief for seniors and some disabled veterans, improving their quality of life by allowing them to remain in their own home longer. LB 1087 grants homestead exemptions to veterans who are 100% disabled due to a service-connected disability and the widow or widower of such a veteran. Previously, the homestead exemption only applied to veterans with a non-service-connected disability.

Intergovernmental Collaboration

While elected officials meet and make decisions in Lincoln, Bellevue, and Washington DC, making policies work for our families in Nebraska often involves negotiation and collaboration of government officials from different governments.

Just a few examples illustrate how your elected and appointed officials work together across levels and types of governments to serve Bellevue. Cindy Copich (school board legislative liaison) regularly informs me of Bellevue Public School concerns and current educational research relevant to educational policy decisions. Dr. Frank Harwood regularly comes to testify to let state senators know how various bills will impact Bellevue Public Schools. Councilwoman Carol Blood and Councilwoman Kathy Saniuk have contacted me and testified on bills important to the city of Bellevue related to addressing vacant properties and school boundaries. Assistant City Manager Larry Burks and City Clerk Kay Dammas have worked with me to reduce state regulations on city operations to save money and allow cities to operate more efficiently. This session, I worked with county commissioners and the county treasurer to allow the county to be reimbursed for the work that we do at the county level to collect millions of dollars of highway funding and to ensure that county concerns are considered in our state juvenile justice reforms.

FEMA's (Federal Emergency Management Agency) reclassification of the levees last year created an issue that requires a great deal of intergovernmental collaboration to meet the new criteria. John Winkler, manager of Papio Missouri River NRD, has been proactive in briefing officials at all levels of government. He has worked with me to engage state officials including the Governor and other senators. We have worked together on briefings for Offutt leadership. Mayor Sanders has worked to get MAPA (Metropolitan Area Planning Agency - another intergovernmental collaboration) involved and to shore up support of our federal elected officials to get their help in addressing the issue. U.S Senator Deb Fischer has successfully pushed for an amendment to a federal water bill to address the issue that is now sitting in conference committee. We will continue to work with other state senators and leaders from all governments to make sure that we do all that we need to do to protect Bellevue, the base, and new economic development in Sarpy County with careful attention to the costs to taxpayers.

Oversight and Representation

There are three main roles as a senator: lawmaking, oversight and representation. Oversight includes monitoring proposed regulations as well as paying special attention to bills as they are implemented.

Throughout the year, we met with various state agencies regarding the implementation of LB 429, a bill I introduced during the 2013 session. Beginning on July 1, citizens will have access to all active contracts through the Department of Administrative Service's website. Our meetings focused on a variety of issues, including the process for agencies to upload these contracts and the types of agreements included under the law. We also met the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure a successful launch of a wage subsidy pilot program for low-income Nebraskans that LB 368, a bill I introduced last session, creates. This pilot program will also begin this summer.

Representation includes not only representing the interests of District 45 but also being a representative of the state to citizens and representing state traditions. This representation includes attending as many community events as possible as well as visiting fourth grade classrooms as they learn about state government. It also means serving as an advocate for constituents when they run into difficulties with state government, whether it is helping cut through red tape or connecting people with the right resources. Representation, in all its forms, is one of the most personally gratifying parts of my job as senator.

ⁱ The Nebraska State Chamber. "State Chamber Leads Effort to Recruit Military Veterans to Neb." 15 January 2014. <http://www.nechamber.net/state-chamber-leads-effort-recruit-military-veterans-neb>

From: Betty Allen [<mailto:betsueallen@gmail.com>]

Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 8:32 AM

To: Egr, Emmett

Subject: Chalco Thank you

Good Morning~

I am a frequent visitor to Chalco Park off of Giles Road and always find my experience great. The grounds are always maintained, trash under control and the scenery--beautiful.

I have especially noticed that the shelter house, on the point has been cleaned and look so beautiful and natural. The picnic tables are clean and the I think you have power washed the posts that make up the shelter house and they look, as I mentioned so natural and clean and in keeping with the Park feeling!!

Thank you to you and your staff for their outstanding job!! Love the animals, the grass, the trees, the cleanliness and the "natural"~~ hard to find these days.

Sincerely,
Betty Allen

From: David Black

Sent: Wednesday, July 09, 2014 5:53 PM

To: 'fred.conley@nofhd.org'; 'davidklugnrd@gmail.com'; 'jwinker@papionrd.org'

Cc: 'conleyjh@cox.net'; 'Curtfrost2012@gmail.com'; 'fowler@stratcom.mil'; 'leahypatrick@yahoo.com'; 'patrickbonnett@nrd9.com'; 'tesarduck@msn.com'; 'sjapp@abbnebraska.com'; 'woodle1@cox.net'; 'zippijd@aol.com'; Dan Hoins; Jeff Thompson; Mark Stursma

Subject: Thank you - NRD Stormwater Management Dam Sites

Chairman Conley, Papillion area representative Klug and Mr Winker:

I wanted to take time to personally thank the NRD Board Members and leadership on your wisdom in funding and building both Walnut Creek Recreational Area and the newest WP5 (Prairie Queen Recreational Area.

You all know the tremendous rains we have had this last month, but a few weeks back Papillion had almost 8 inches of rain in a short period. On that Friday night, I personally spent the evening and early morning hours watching the Papio Creek with our Police and Fire right downtown Papillion.

I am convinced that without those two Stormwater structures in place that we would have been evacuating parts of the historical downtown area.

With the continued buildout of the metro area we feel the impact being at the bottom of the watershed. I've always supported those structures, but that event showed me the reality of why they are there.

So:

First thank you for the previous support and

Second I encourage you to maintain the priority and funding of the other two smaller ones North of Hwy 370 between 96th and 126th.

Thanks again for representing us in this important way.

Regards,

David P. Black | Mayor
City of Papillion

122 East Third Street
Papillion, NE 68046

www.papillion.org

T: 402.827.1111

F: 402.339.0670

dblack@papillion.org

Mayor's Hotline: Sign In or Register

Check out: Sump Memorial Library, Sumtur Amphitheater at Walnut Creek, and Eagle & Tara "Golf the Hills"

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Consistently a Best Place to Live
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June, 2014

[illegible]

Updated: June 16, 2014

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)
- **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
 - Interlocal Agreement with Papillion & La Vista & SIDs on Fricke Drainage (P)
 - Interlocal Agreement with La Vista on Thompson Creek Sewer Relocation (P)
- **West Branch:** (Cleveland)
 - Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96th St.) (P)
- **Western Sarpy Dike:** (Cleveland)
 - Saunders County side ROW agreement and easements (P)
 - NRDs/NE-ARNG Interlocal for Camp Ashland Property (P)
- **Floodway Purchase Program:** (Laster/Grint)
- **Trail Projects:** (Williams)
 - ★ Mo Pac (Springfield to Platte River) drainage repair easements (W)
 - ★ West Papio Construction Contract review (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 W-3 Access-Quiet Title Action (W)
 - ★ Exchange Agreement with Wachter for PJ-15 ROW (W)
 - ★ Deed for 0.46 acre Rohde/Bourland Tract for PJ-15 (W)
 - Tek/Mud PL 566 Site 41A access (W)
 - ★ Papio D-15B Interlocal Agreement (N)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:** (Grint/Laster/Williams)
 - ★ DS-15A purchase agreements, deeds and easements (W)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater):** (Grint)
- **Missouri River R-613 and R-616 Levees:** (Cleveland/Henkel)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Nelson)
 - ★ Fort Calhoun Lawsuits on WCRW (W)
- **Other:**
 - LPRWMP Interlocal Agreement amendment to add additional tributaries (N) (Nelson)
 - ★ Elkhorn River 240th Street Land Acquisition Documents (N) (Williams)

Douglas County Board denies tax break for northwest Omaha dam site

POSTED: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2014 1:00 AM

Douglas County Board denies tax break for northwest Omaha dam site By Cody Winchester / World-Herald staff writer The Omaha World-Herald

The Douglas County Board is thumbing its nose at efforts to build a new dam in northwest Omaha.

Tuesday, the County Board denied a tax exemption and voted unanimously to keep the parcels on the county tax rolls. Governmental entities such as NRDs typically are exempt from paying property taxes.

County Board member Mike Boyle led the effort to deny the exemption, calling the project a “boondoggle” that amounts to a giveaway for lakeside developers.

“It’s really an outrage,” he said.

But the vote won’t do anything to slow the project, said John Winkler, the district’s general manager.

“I doubt they could revoke our tax-exempt status,” he said.

Douglas County Chief Deputy Assessor Mike Goodwillie said the district could appeal the denial to the Tax Equalization and Review Commission.

The NRD is leasing out the parcels as farmland until construction begins, Winkler said.

The county also needs to take up a right-of-way agreement with the district for improvements to Ida Street.

The NRD and eight metro-area governments are part of the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership, which has a long-term water management plan that includes building a number of dams in the metro area.

Douglas and Washington Counties operate under a separate plan, largely because of the counties’ opposition to the dams.

Contact the writer: 402-444-1216, cody.winchester@owh.com, twitter.com/cody_winchester

All eyes on river as flood threat heads to Omaha

POSTED: THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2014 1:00 AM By Emily Nohr and Andrew J. Nelson OWH staff writers



MARK DAVIS/THE WORLD-HERALD

Krista DeWit, 29, and Tricia Vonk, 28, ride through floodwaters to retrieve valuables from their Rock Valley home on Wednesday.

ROCK VALLEY, Iowa — Residents of this northwest Iowa town began drying out Wednesday as the floodwaters that forced them from their homes began receding — and moving south toward Sioux City and Omaha.

On Wednesday, the National Weather Service issued flood warnings for the Missouri River at Omaha, Blair and Decatur.

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With flood concerns on the rise, the Army Corps of Engineers is releasing its lowest amount of water in five years from Gavins Point Dam near Yankton, South Dakota.

The releases will reduce peak stages on the Missouri River and soften the blow for flooding downriver, said Jody Farhat, chief of the Missouri River Basin Water Management Division.

The last time releases from Gavins Point were this low was in 2009, Farhat said.

But because of Missouri River bottom erosion problems caused by major flooding in 2011, corps officials are unsure whether the river can again go that low without affecting the city of Yankton, which requires a minimum river level for drinking water and other uses.

Farhat said the corps was

monitoring the releases Wednesday evening to “make sure we don’t run the community out of water.”

The flood warning at Omaha — which the weather service is calling moderate — is in effect for Friday evening to Tuesday afternoon.

The weather service is forecasting that the Missouri River at Omaha will rise above flood stage, which is 29 feet, by Friday before midnight and continue to rise to 32 feet by Sunday evening.

At 32 feet, Interstate 680 between the Mormon Bridge and Interstate 29 begins to flood, as does Interstate 29 between Crescent, Iowa, and Council Bluffs, said Dave Fobert, a weather service meteorologist.

"This is just a forecast right now," Fobert said. "A lot of it may depend on additional rainfall."

Earlier this week, heavy rains in Dakota County caused a levee breach on Pigeon Creek.

That area had seen more than 10 inches of rain in a 48-hour period, said John Winkler, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

"It flooded some ag land," Winkler said. No people or major structures were endangered, he said.

In Rock Valley, the mood was one of relief Wednesday evening. On Tuesday it had seemed like the Rock River would do nothing but rise as residents hurriedly evacuated themselves and their valuables. But on Wednesday, the water level had dropped several feet.

A barrier of white sandbags about waist high lined 17th Street north of downtown. On the river side, Main Street was under water for several blocks. White frame houses that had stood maybe a century or more had flooded yards, and residents were checking their homes and getting sump pumps going.

Some said that while their basements were completely full of water, their main floors were largely untouched.

"The back porch has muck on it, but that's no problem," said Henrietta Vanden Bosch, 85.

"It went up and down really fast, that makes a pretty big difference," said her daughter, Mary Bierma, 53. "We're feeling very blessed today."

Krista DeWit, 29, who was driving an ATV through floodwaters Wednesday evening with friend Tricia Vonk, 28, said she had been on an emotional roller coaster the past few days. At first she thought she would only get a few inches of water in her basement, then she and

her family were told to evacuate, then she heard the town had ran out of sandbags, but thankfully the water receded.

“This is insane,” she said.

In Omaha, city officials closed the N.P. Dodge Park marina and camping area on Wednesday.

Officials also have announced additional recreational area closures. Among them:

» **All Papio-Missouri River NRD river access sites in Douglas County will remain closed through the weekend. The sites include Platte River Landing near Nebraska Highway 64 and the following Elkhorn River sites: Elkhorn Crossing near 252nd Street and Bennington Road, Graske Crossing at Dodge Street and the NRD’s West Maple Road site.**

» The Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge north of Omaha will be closed until further notice.

» In Bellevue, city officials moved campers in Camp Loop C at Haworth Park to open sites in Camp Loops A and B.

World-Herald staff writer Cody Winchester contributed to this report.

Contact the writer: 402-444-1192, emily.nohr@owh.com

After recount, State Canvassing Board still keeps NRD race on fall ballot

POSTED: THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2014 3:18 AM

After recount, State Canvassing Board still keeps NRD race on fall ballot By Martha Stoddard / World-Herald Bureau
The Omaha World-Herald

LINCOLN — The Nebraska State Canvassing Board on Wednesday received the results of a vote recount in a problematic York County race.

But the results only solidified the board's decision to put all three primary election candidates for the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District Subdistrict 4 on the November ballot.

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The recount found that 1,038 ballots had not been properly initialed by county election officials and could not be counted.

Without those ballots, the second- and third-place candidates switched places.

Report: Nebraska's waterways are 6th worst in nation for pollution



The mouth of the Platte

2014-06-19T11:00:00Z 2014-06-19T12:35:10Z Report: Nebraska's waterways are 6th worst in nation for pollutionBy ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS / Lincoln Journal Star JournalStar.com

2 hours ago • [By ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS / Lincoln Journal Star](#)

Nebraska's waterways are the sixth worst in the nation for toxic pollution, according to a report released Thursday, and most of the contamination is because of nitrates.

In 2012, industrial facilities dumped 10.5 million pounds of toxic chemicals into the state's rivers and streams, according to a 72-page report called "Wasting Our Waterways."

Nationwide, industrial facilities dumped 206 million pounds, polluting more than 17,000 miles of rivers and about 210,000 acres of lakes, ponds and estuaries.

The report was compiled by the nonprofit Environment America Research and Policy Center in Washington, D.C., using data reported to the Environmental Protection Agency's Toxics Release Inventory for 2012, the most recent data available.

"Nebraska's rivers should be clean -- for swimming, drinking and supporting wildlife," said Ally Fields, the group's clean water advocate. "But too often, our waters have become a dumping ground for polluters."

According to the report, corporate agribusiness such as slaughterhouses and poultry plants were responsible for about one-third of all direct discharges of nitrates to waterways. This is in addition to runoff pollution from factory farms and other agribusiness operations.

High levels of nitrates in drinking water can cause serious health problems in infants. They also contribute to oxygen-depleted "dead zones" in waterways.

"The toxic chemicals dumped in Nebraska include chromium and chromium compounds, which cause cancer, and developmental toxins, such as lead and lead compounds, which can affect the way children grow, learn and behave," the group said in a news release.

The report comes as the EPA considers a new rule to restore Clean Water Act protections to more than 60,000 miles of waterways across the nation.

The Lower Platte River, a main source of drinking water for Lincoln and Omaha, ranked fifth in the nation for highest amount of total toxic discharges, with almost 3,726,866 pounds discharged in 2012.

Of that amount, Tyson Fresh Meats Inc., the biggest polluter in Nebraska according to the report, dumped 4,220,510 pounds of toxic pollution into the state's waterways. Furthermore, Tyson ranked as the biggest polluter in the nation in 2012.

Tyson officials could not be reached immediately for comment.

Meghan Sittler, coordinator of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance, said the group is aware of nitrate pollution problems through water quality monitoring done by state and federal agencies from Columbus to Plattsmouth.

She declined to comment on the report because she had not seen it. However, she said she was a bit surprised to hear about the high rankings for Nebraska. She added that water quality problems are not new and are common throughout most of the Midwest.

"We do see a high presence of nitrogen compounds throughout the (Lower Platte) watershed ... and it's something we are trying to address through voluntary measures," Sittler said.

The alliance is in the final stages of completing a watershed management plan that will examine the most common pollutants: nitrates, phosphorous, e.coli and atrazine.

Reach the writer at 402-473-7243 or alaukaitis@journalstar.com.

Organizations focus on conservation, storm water management

by David Kubicek

To rein in costs many individuals and organizations are looking to conservation and small-scale storm management systems.

Conservation methods are a higher priority because they are less expensive and easier to implement than gray water or reclamation systems, said Jason Stanek, director of commercial and contractor services at Metropolitan Utilities District.

The 2012 International Green Construction Code defines gray water as untreated waste water such as waste water from bathtubs, showers, lavatories, and clothes washers — which has not come into contact with waste water from water closets, urinals, kitchen sinks, or dishwashers — and reclaimed water, also known as “recycled water,” as non-potable water derived from the treatment of waste water by a facility or system licensed or permitted to produce water meeting the jurisdiction’s water requirements for its intended uses.

“Water reclamation systems are becoming more common in applications like car washes, flushing for toilets, irrigation systems, and in the food processing industry to filter and reuse water prior to sending it to the sewer,” Stanek said.

All new buildings now feature low flush toilets and improved implementation of water shut-off devices. Water conservation can be implemented in older buildings, but recycling gray water systems can require costly pumps and piping, he said.

“Simple options like rain barrels and water shut off devices are inexpensive, but other systems like large water reclamation systems



Eric Williams, natural resources planner for the Papio-Missouri River NRD, at Chalco Hills.

can approach \$250,000,” Stanek said. “Rain sensors can be implemented into existing irrigation systems for around \$150. These same sensors can be utilized for commercial irrigation systems.”

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District is working on Rockbrook Creek southwest of 114th Street and West Center Road where a previously concrete-lined channel — originally constructed in the 1960s — had been cracking and falling apart.

“The city of Omaha led the rehabilitation project, and we cost-shared to transition the channel back to more natural rocks and plants not only to reduce the erosion but also to remove drainage from the neighborhood,” said

Natural Resources Planner Eric Williams of the Papio-Missouri River NRD.

Most of the construction has been completed on the Prairie Queen Recreation Area, directly west of Werner Park in Sarpy County, but it will continue to fill with each rain event, and by the end of summer should be reaching its final condition, Williams said.

“The area also serves a flood control purpose,” he said. “It will contain some of the storm water to keep it from rushing down the channel.”

Williams said that there is more interest in small-scale storm water management. People are using rain barrels under drain spouts to catch water to be used on lawns. Landscape

Continued on next page.




Stanek



Parod



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Manager

Water management

Continued from preceding page.

architects are getting more orders for rain gardens, which are small ponds that fill up during a rainstorm, but within a day the water filters back into the ground rather than being drained off the soil into storm sewers.

"Omaha has been implementing more of the small scale storm water solutions," Williams said. "We're seeing more parking lots that have rain gardens."

Farmers are converting from gravity or flood irrigation to mechanized irrigation, which uses half as much water, Lindsay Corp. CEO Rick Parod said. In addition, they are finding significant savings by using soil moisture monitoring equipment to measure the effectiveness of water delivered.

"There's a growing trend to add remote monitoring management systems, reducing pumping costs and wasted water, so we're seeing a higher level of efficiency," he said. "More people are re-using water run-off from roofs and parking lots, which they collect in underground tanks."

The increase in water filtration is being driven by factors like the amount of rainwater collected and deeper wells where the water is not as pure, Parod said. Areas with significant water shortage are being planted with drought-resistant crops.

"There's definitely been a higher interest in water efficiency in the past five to seven years, and we think that will continue to increase," he said.

Green operation methods a goal for transport

by Lori McGinnis Black

Omaha area companies are making strides toward greener transportation.

Metro Transit is doing its part to promote green transportation in the city, said Linda Barritt, marketing director. The bus company replaced 18 buses with mini-hybrid electric and clean-diesel buses in the last year and bus replacements are fueled by clean diesel.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Agency promotes the program Little Steps, Big Impact to help people understand how small actions can help lower ground-level ozone levels, said Sue Cutsforth, communications coordinator.

Truck Center Cos. is working to help customers reduce fossil fuel consumption, said Shain Heiss, fuel solutions specialist.

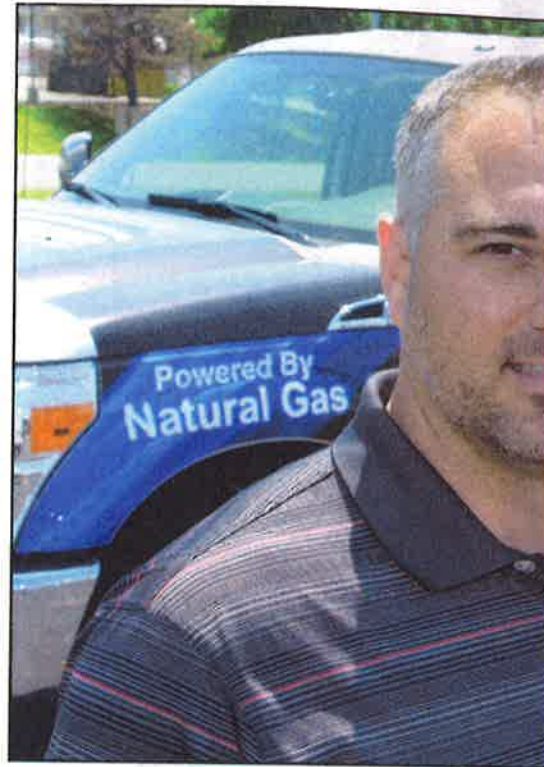
Several green transportation projects are currently underway in the region, said Murthy Koti, Omaha city traffic engineer. Some are in design phase while others are being studied.

Metro has begun taking steps toward more environmentally friendly transportation, Barritt said. In March, the company bought seven hybrid sedans to be used in the MOBY Fleet — Metro's Americans with Disabilities Act complementary para-transit fleet.

In addition to replacing 18, 1998 buses



Koti



Shain Heiss, fuel solutions specialist

with mini-hybrid electric buses, there also is ongoing maintenance and bus storage upgrades.

As of May 2009, bus replacements have been fueled by ultralow sulfur or clean diesel. Currently 44 percent of the Metro fleet operates on clean diesel, she said.

"An additional improvement to the environment is the September 2008 installation of bike racks on the entire bus fleet," she said.

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Omaha keeps wary eyes on river, but no panicking yet

Omaha World-Herald – 6-20-14 POSTED: THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 2014 10:45 PM

Omaha keeps wary eyes on river, but no panicking yet By Emily Nohr / World-Herald staff writer The Omaha World-Herald

Officials in Omaha and the surrounding area say they don't expect the rain-swollen Missouri River this weekend to be as damaging as the historic flood of 2011.

But they're taking precautions anyway.

In Omaha and Council Bluffs, that means filling sandbags, closing various recreational areas and keeping an eye on rising water levels.

Omaha Public Works Director Bob Stubbe said Thursday that crews are building a berm at the Missouri River Wastewater Treatment Plant on South 10th Street and preparing sandbags to protect stormwater facilities and electrical equipment.

The city also has pumps on hand for various flood-prone locations.

Brook Bench, Omaha parks director, said crews are building an earthen dam around structures at N.P. Dodge Park, which the city closed Thursday, a day after closing the N.P. Dodge marina and camping area. Bench said the city expects no issues along the riverfront, including Lewis & Clark Landing.

"Our biggest worry will be how much debris is left in the (N.P. Dodge) park when the water recedes," he said.

Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert said Thursday that the predicted flooding shouldn't affect the College World Series.

Officials at Eppley Airfield also feel secure, she said.

"I think that our team here is confident that we have things secured and we have things protected and that it will be, like we said, a rather quick event," Stothert said.

Minor to moderate flooding is expected along the Missouri River from approximately Decatur, Nebraska, to Atchison, Kansas.

Along this stretch of river, flooding will affect Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri and could reach some riverside cabins, restaurants, recreational areas and businesses.

Flooding on the Big Sioux River, which feeds into the Missouri River, led South Dakota officials to close Interstate 29 on Thursday between Vermillion, South Dakota, and Sioux City, Iowa.

Detours around that portion of I-29 include sending southbound travelers east along I-90 in Minnesota, south on I-35 through Iowa and west on I-80 to return to I-29 at Council Bluffs. Drivers also could leave the Interstate and take Nebraska's Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway.

The duration of the flood risk depends upon how much additional rain falls and the length of time it takes runoff to move down the river.

The Army Corps of Engineers said Thursday that it will maintain its releases from Gavins Point Dam near Yankton, South Dakota, at 10,000 cubic feet per second through early next week when the crest passes, said Jody Farhat, chief of the Missouri River Basin Water Management Division.

In Nebraska, minor flooding already has been reported at Plattsmouth, Nebraska City, Brownville and Rulo, according to the weather service.

The flood warning at Omaha, which the weather service downgraded from moderate to minor on Thursday, will be in effect from late tonight through Monday evening.

The weather service forecasts that the Missouri River at Omaha will rise above flood stage, which is 29 feet, by early Saturday morning and continue to about 32 feet by Sunday morning.

At 32 feet, the Iowa side of the river could begin to flood Interstate 680 between the Mormon Bridge and Interstate 29, as well as Interstate 29 between Crescent and Council Bluffs.

In Council Bluffs, officials are alerting residents who live near water-threatened roadways, said Doug Reed, Emergency Management Director for Pottawattamie County.

The river has begun to flood a parking lot at Harrah's Casino and at Narrows River Park, which will be closed to public access today, Reed said.

Officials are sandbagging around the Omaha Public Power District's Fort Calhoun nuclear power plant. OPPD officials said they are also monitoring conditions around their Nebraska City plant and have built temporary sand berms.

Blair officials said they will close Optimist Park along the Missouri at 8 a.m. today.

Also in Nebraska, the following recreational areas remain closed: all Papio-Missouri River NRD river access sites in Douglas County; the Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge and DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge north of Omaha; and Haworth Park in Bellevue.

Meanwhile, boat ramps at Bazile Creek, Niobrara, Verdel and Sunshine Bottom are temporarily inaccessible because of the lowering of the river level by the corps, according to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

World-Herald staff writer Julie Anderson contributed to this report.

Contact the writer: 402-444-1192, emily.nohr@owh.com

Heavy rainsStorm swells rivers, Omaha metro area remains under flood warning Omaha W-H June 21, 2014



JAMES R. BURNETT/THE WORLD-HERALD

Debris is left along the 36th Street bridge that crosses the Big Papillion Creek after a night of heavy rain. Overnight Friday, Papillion received 7.72 inches of rain and Millard Airport recorded 6.83 inches. "A six-inch rain is at least a once-in-a-hundred-years type of thing," said Scott Dergan, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.



CHRIS MACHIAN/THE WORLD-HERALD

David M. Farr, 29, was swept away by floodwaters Friday night after his car got stuck in this drainage ditch near Fairfax Road just south of Harvell Drive in Bellevue.



JAMES R. BURNETT/THE WORLD-HERALD

Bellevue city worker Rod Post clears debris left along the 36th Street bridge that crosses the Big Papillion Creek after a night of heavy rains.



JAMES R. BURNETT/THE WORLD-HERALD

Bellevue City Councilman Paul Cook checks out the debris left along the 36th Street bridge that crosses the Big Papillion Creek after a night of heavy rains.

Storm swells rivers, Omaha metro area remains under flood warning By Paige Yowell / World-Herald staff writer The Omaha World-Herald

A torrential storm that flooded Omaha-area streets left one Bellevue man dead, the Papillion Creek system nearly running over its banks and roads littered with tree branches, debris and mud. Meanwhile, the Omaha metro area remained in a flood warning as the Missouri River continued to rise. Thank you for reading and relying on Omaha.com for your news and information. You have now viewed your 30 day allowance of 15 free articles.

By midday Saturday the river had reached 27.2 feet at Omaha. The National Weather Service predicted the river would rise above flood stage, 29 feet, by this morning, with lowland flooding in parks

along the Missouri such as N.P. Dodge Park in northern Omaha and Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park in Council Bluffs.

Elsewhere along the river, high water prompted Richardson County to call for a voluntary evacuation of areas in and around Rulo.

Still, the flood threat remained well below the 2011 flood, when water levels were higher and remained high for months.

More rain is expected in the Omaha area Sunday night, although rainfall totals are expected to be much less than in Friday's deluge.

Papillion had 7.72 inches of rain overnight, and 6.83 inches fell at the Millard Airport near 132nd and Q Streets.

"A six-inch rain is at least a once-in-a-hundred-years type of thing," said Scott Dergan, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Rushing water swept away David M. Farr, 29, after his vehicle went into a drainage ditch near Fairfax Road and Harvell Drive in Bellevue about 11 p.m. Friday.

His body was found about 9:35 a.m. Saturday south of Highway 370, in a ditch just under the northbound lanes of the Kennedy Freeway. It was nearly two miles downstream.

Bellevue Police Lt. Keith Bader said the drainage ditch is known to flood. Police suspect that Farr, who lived nearby, turned off Fairfax Road into an apartment complex parking lot, saw that it was flooded, attempted to turn around and accidentally drove into the drainage ditch.

A witness reported seeing a man climbing out of the vehicle and floating on his back before disappearing under the water.

Farr's empty Mazda CX-7 was pulled out of the ditch about midnight. Rescue crews searched for him but did not find his body until Saturday morning.

Farther west, the Big Papillion Creek flowed over the 36th Street bridge Friday night in Bellevue, covering the road with tree branches, garbage and mud after waters had receded. The bridge was closed Saturday morning as crews cleaned up the mess.

Bellevue Public Works Director Jeff Roberts said it's the highest he's ever seen the creek there.

"Our streets superintendent said that's happened a handful of times, but it's pretty rare," Roberts said.

Otherwise, the Papillion Creek system stayed within its banks, said Marlin Peterman, assistant general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. Peterman said the bridge is in a low-lying area without any levees.

The system "was at capacity, so it was right up there. We really dodged a bullet again, and things went well, ... but, boy, that was a lot of rain," Peterman said.

Peterman said that if areas in northern Douglas County had received the same level of rainfall as in Sarpy and southwestern Douglas Counties, there would have been more flooding.

Instead, Eppley Airfield recorded just 1.88 inches of rain, while Offutt Air Force Base near Bellevue saw 3.95 inches.

Dergan said the whopping rainfall totals in Papillion and at the Millard Airport don't count toward the National Weather Service's records. But if they did, both totals would top Omaha's official one-day rainfall record for the past 143 years: 6.46 inches on Aug. 7, 1999, at Eppley.

Bellevue's Haworth Park had areas of standing water Saturday morning, said Bellevue Parks Superintendent Mike Francis. The old Bellevue Marina south of Haworth was under water. The park was closed Friday because of expected flooding on the Missouri River. "It will remain closed until the water recedes and Parks Department staff will begin to get in there and do any cleanup," Francis said.

Saturday, Omaha Public Works was responding to about 30 reports of downed tree limbs throughout the city, some tangled in power lines, said Scott McIntyre, Omaha street maintenance engineer. All were expected to be cleared by the end of the day.

"Other than that, there's some shoulders that are washed out, there's some unimproved roads that have been washed by the heavy rains that we're going to have to address next week ... but overall, at least from a street perspective, we're not too badly damaged," McIntyre said.

Fun-Plex amusement park at 70th and Q Streets was closed Saturday because of flooding that reached up to 5 feet in some areas. All water attractions were flooded, and the park lost power Friday night, said spokeswoman Katie Anderson.

Mud and debris were being cleaned up Saturday, and park management hoped to resume business in the coming days, Anderson said.

The storm forced the suspension of the College World Series game between Virginia and Ole Miss, but fans weren't caught in it.

"Sounds like everybody was pretty much able to get into shelter before that first wave of the storm hit," said Officer James Shade, a police spokesman. "It ran as smooth as it possibly could have."

Dave Fobert, meteorologist with the National Weather Service, said more rain is on the way.

"We kinda stay in a wet pattern into Monday morning," he said.

Omaha W-H 6-23-14

New board off to a flowing start

I was privileged to attend the first official meeting of the newly expanded Natural Resources Commission in Chadron, Neb.

Expanded to 27 members as a result of Legislative Bill 1098, the commission represents various water and natural resources interests throughout the state.

Any body of 27 members with varied inter-ests and experiences could be difficult to operate, dysfunctional at times. However, I was extremely impressed with the professionalism, knowledge, cooperation, courtesy and compe-tence.

It is my humble opinion that this group will serve Nebraska well and do everything possible to make thoughtful and competent decisions to protect natural resources and critical infrastructure. Of course there will be disagreements, spirited debate and difficult decisions. But I have complete confidence that this group is up to the task.

We should thank the members for their willingness to serve.

John Winkler, Cedar Creek, Neb.

Papio-Missouri River NRD

Washington County Pilot Tribune 6-24-14

Water system evaluation goes to city council

Posted: Monday, June 23, 2014 2:18 pm

Water system evaluation goes to city council Tammy Bain features@enterprisepub.com Washington County Enterprise and Pilot Tribune | 0 comments

A much-anticipated water system evaluation has arrived.

At the June 16 Fort Calhoun City Council meeting, City Engineer Lucas Billesbach presented a city water system evaluation to the council, discussing the city hydrants' water pressure and flow.

As far as water pressure, Billesbach said, an acceptable minimum from city fire hydrants is 40 PSI, or pounds per square-inch. Fort Calhoun's hydrants operate between 43 and 129 PSI, which Billesbach said is acceptable, but the fear is in redundancy.

When it comes to water flow, Billesbach said a model in the evaluation opened up each hydrant and used as much water as possible while still maintaining 20 PSI, which is the absolute minimum pressure without potential health concerns from contaminated water. The average flow from each hydrant in the model was 613 gallons per minute, with the potential to reach 1,214 gallons per minute.

While current pressures function in the case of residential fires, the concern lies in larger storage and commercial fires, Mayor Mitch Robinson said in a later interview. Local volunteer firefighters are "very concerned, and they have a right to be," he said.

Billesbach told the city council the water issue fell into the "priority two" category, which suggests the town resolves the issues in one to five years, given that there's "definitely failures and redundancy," but the hydrants are currently operational.

Some recommended changes from the evaluation were installing pressure-reducing valves, which would allow for additional flow, and connection to rural water number two, the Natural Resources District's second water tower, located in Blair.

In his follow-up interview, Robinson noted Fort Calhoun's faulty water tower. To replace the tower would be \$750,000 to \$1 million, he said, and to refurbish it would be \$500,000 to \$750,000.

Bellevue Leader 6-25-14

Replenished gardens at ENVH to help with erosion, water quality



Photo by Adam Klinker

Replenished gardens at ENVH to help with erosion, water quality

El Doty of Papillion and Dan Jackson of Bellevue, both volunteers with Green Bellevue, help plant a portion of one of 10 rain gardens at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home Saturday morning. The gardens will help slow rainwater off the facility's massive roof and parking lot, easing erosion and improving water quality in nearby Quail Creek.



Photo by Adam Klinker

Replenished gardens at ENVH to help with erosion, water quality

Sean Patrick, a member of the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home maintenance staff, waters one of the newly replenished raingardens planted at the home on June 14. Behind him rises the 2.8-acre roof of the home, from which more than 320,000 gallons of rainwater will run off during major storms. The gardens help slow rainwater off the roof and parking lot, easing erosion and improving water quality in nearby Quail Creek.



Photo by Adam Klinker

There are 2.8 acres of roof at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in southwest Bellevue, making for a lot of rain runoff during major storms. By helping replenish 10 rain gardens at the home, Green Bellevue has partnered with several local agencies to help stanch the flow and thereby ease erosion and improve water quality at the site.



Volunteers with and members of Green Bellevue work Saturday morning at replanting a rain and bio-retention garden at the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home in southwest Bellevue. There are 10 such gardens at the home, which help slow rainwater off the facility's massive roof and parking lot, easing erosion and improving water quality in nearby Quail Creek.

POSTED: THURSDAY, JUNE 26, 2014 1:00 AM

Replenished gardens at ENVH to help with erosion, water quality By Adam Klinker / Leader Managing Editor The Omaha World-Herald

During a heavy rain, such as the region experienced on two occasions earlier this month and again in a torrential downpour as witnessed Friday night, the 2.8 acres of roof atop the Eastern Nebraska Veterans Home will shed more than 320,000 gallons of runoff water.

Up until June 14, the water was running almost immediately down a steep ravine to Quail Creek, contributing to the possibility for flash flooding and potentially catastrophic erosion damage both on the ENVH grounds and farther downstream. Water was also getting inside the building at times during periods of heaviest rainfall.

Thanks to donations of nearly \$100,000 raised by Green Bellevue, the local ecological nonprofit, in partnership with ENVH and Big Muddy Workshop, met June 14 to continue work on what is the largest post-construction bio-retention garden project in the state.

And just what does it mean to have the largest post-construction bio-retention garden in the state?

“It means that when rainwater comes off that roof, these plants in these gardens will slow it down, filtrate it, cleanse it and then send it to Quail Creek,” said John Royster, president and CEO of Big Muddy, who joined alongside Green Bellevue volunteers and ENVH staff in planting more than 250 new plants in 10 different gardens around the home’s grounds.

Earlier iterations of the gardens, initially planted in 2011, took a beating in the drought-plagued years of 2012 and 2013, and this winter’s brutal cold, wind and dearth of moisture.

Lisa Swanson with Green Bellevue said a replenishment of the gardens is necessary from time to time and, with about two dozen volunteers on the morning of June 14, the work was knocked out and ready for drought or deluge again.

“These plants help so much with what has been terrible erosion here,” she said. “Working with the veterans home, the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District, the Midlands Community Foundation and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, we’ve raised the money we needed to see this happen and help control the runoff that’s coming off this huge roof.”

There’s also a sizable parking lot at the veterans home, putting another 3.2 acres of pavement into the equation of the water runoff at the facility, Royster said.

Contending with both challenges will now fall to such hardy prairie plants as coneflower, spiderwort, aster, penstemon, black-eyed Susan, bluestem and Joe Pye grass and, Nebraska’s very own state flower, goldenrod.

“These are deep-rooted native prairie plants,” Royster said. “It will greatly help with the runoff and improve the water quality of Quail Creek.”

Referring to the plants as “workhorses,” Swanson said these are the species for which the Great Plains became fixed in the American consciousness.

“These plants are the ones that the people going west saw throughout the prairie,” she said.

“These are the plants that were plowed up in the Dust Bowl. They’re what hold the soil in place and they slowly drain the water. There’s a reason why these plants were on the prairie.”

Bringing them out to this prairie-like corner of Bellevue at ENVH, Green Bellevue is hoping to score another victory for water quality and erosion control.

Tom Blacketer, maintenance supervisor at ENVH, said the gardens did just that during Friday night’s downpour, where he registered 5-1/2 inches of rain falling in a matter of a few hours.

“It was a bit overwhelming, but I’d hate to think of what we’d have without (the gardens),” Blacketer said. “When we first started out here, we would get water in the building and had all kinds of erosion problems. We don’t have those problems anymore. I’d say they’ve definitely served their purpose.”

Back last weekend and digging another hole for a young cluster of bluestem, Green Bellevue Chairman Don Preister noted both the functional import of the project and the aesthetic value of the plants.

“Keeping this water from Quail Creek and slowing it down so it won’t impact people downstream is the top job,” he said. “But it looks pretty, too.”

New section of MoPac Trail opens in Sarpy County



A new section of the MoPac recreational trail built along Nebraska 31 in Sarpy County will open Friday.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District began building the four-mile crushed rock trail in October 2013. The trail segment is critical in meeting the goal of a 50-mile-long recreational trail from Omaha to Lincoln.

Eighty percent of the \$2.6 million required to build the trail segment was provided by federal and state funds. The remainder was paid for by the NRD.

"We are confident that someday soon the MoPac will host numerous bicyclists wanting to test their cross-country trail riding skills between our state's two most populated cities," John Winkler, Papio-Missouri River NRD general manager, said in a news release.

The MoPac is named for the abandoned Missouri Pacific Railroad right-of-way on which large portions of the trail have been built.

The MoPac Trail in Sarpy County now extends from Springfield south to the Platte River along Nebraska 50, then west along Nebraska 31 to the Lied Platte River Bridge – a distance of over 9 miles. The Lied Platte River Bridge, which opened in 2002, features scenic views of the Platte River Valley.

The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District has worked for years to close a nine-mile gap in the MoPac trail in Cass County. Recently, the district and the Nebraska Department of Roads worked out an agreement to use right-of-ways along state roads.

Flooding to dampen holiday fun at some lakes, rivers

POSTED: WEDNESDAY, JULY 2, 2014 1:00 AM

By Julie Anderson / World-Herald staff writer The Omaha World-Herald

River levels across eastern Nebraska and western Iowa will be a mixed bag going into the holiday weekend, which means river enthusiasts will need a little extra vigilance.

Water levels had dropped Tuesday on the lower Missouri River from Plattsmouth to Rulo, but additional runoff was working its way into the system from its tributaries, said Bryon Miller, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Valley.

the Missouri back above flood stage from Nebraska City to Rulo for several days. Those along the river should keep an eye on conditions.

Meanwhile, access to area rivers will be mixed.

Wilson Island State Park in Iowa remains closed for repairs needed after flooding in 2011 and 2014. That includes all activities and park facilities. The anticipated reopening is late July. For updates call 712-642-2069.

The Elkhorn River is running at least twice as high as normal and rarely has been more dangerous, said Rich Tesar, a board member of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. All NRD access sites to the Elkhorn in Douglas County are closed.

Tesar suggests that people boat the Platte River from Platte River Landing on Highway 64 to Two Rivers State Park.

Omaha's N.P. Dodge Park, including the marina, has reopened after flooding last month. The campground, however, remains closed.

Bellevue's Haworth Park, which has been closed since June 20 because of Missouri River flooding, is scheduled to reopen at 10 a.m. today. All camping registrations from that point

on will be honored. All camp loops and services will be open, but public boat docks will remain closed until river levels drop.

Meanwhile, major lakes in the region reported open campgrounds, no boating restrictions and mostly normal water levels.

For example, at Lake McConaughy in Ogallala, capacity stood at 66 percent this week — making for a relatively good balance between water access and beaches for visitors to the big lake.

Branched Oak Lake in Lincoln was as full as the park superintendent has seen it, but no boating restrictions were in place.

And at Okoboji, the Iowa Great Lakes had been in drought before June's storms. Recent rains have restored them to full, but not overly full. Some trees are down, however, and some areas may be muddy.

World-Herald staff writers Roseann Moring, Cody Winchester and Nancy Gaarder contributed to this report.

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In 2014-15 budget, Douglas County Board maintains property tax rate

POSTED: TUESDAY, JULY 1, 2014 5:15 PM

BY Cody Winchester / World-Herald staff writer The Omaha World-Herald

Douglas County's new budget doesn't raise property taxes or dip into reserves.

On Tuesday — the start of the 2014-15 fiscal year — the County Board approved a \$341.1 million budget that keeps the property tax rate at 28.059 cents per \$100 of valuation.

The county's levy makes up about 13 percent of an Omaha resident's property tax bill.

The overall budget is 3.8 percent larger than the current version. Big cost-drivers continue to be employee benefits and health insurance claims, Finance Director Joe Lorenz said. The county also added \$5 million to its road and bridge construction fund, which is not supported by property tax receipts.

On the revenue side, county officials figure that property valuations will be up 1 percent this year, and they're expecting a bump in inheritance tax receipts.

Tuesday, the board made one change to the proposed budget, giving the Community Mental Health Center an extra \$65,000 to hire a caseworker for mentally ill people who otherwise would be jail.

Keeping the mentally ill out of jail means treating people more humanely, board member Clare Duda said — and it saves the county money in the long run.

"We'd be silly not to do that," he said.

Doug Kagan, president of Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom, thanked the board for passing a budget without raising taxes. But he urged the board to do more to address its finances to avoid future tax increases.

Douglas County Board budget:

| Fund | Fiscal year 2013-14 | Fiscal year 2014-15 | Percent change |
|------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Administration | \$1,246,816 | \$1,093,589 | -12.29% |
| Assessor | \$3,418,044 | \$3,356,769 | -1.79% |
| Attorney | \$7,625,482 | \$7,823,556 | 2.60% |
| Clerk | \$1,624,809 | \$1,620,502 | -0.27% |
| Communications (911) | \$5,877,122 | \$5,868,946 | -0.14% |
| Corrections | \$32,900,254 | \$33,176,708 | 0.84% |
| Environmental Services | \$13,692,330 | \$14,923,529 | 8.99% |
| Health Department | \$12,842,239 | \$12,841,540 | -0.01% |
| Public Defender | \$3,994,247 | \$4,131,431 | 3.43% |
| Register of Deeds | \$1,370,304 | \$1,339,444 | -2.25% |
| Sheriff | \$14,458,510 | \$14,544,350 | 0.59% |
| Treasurer | \$5,731,634 | \$5,852,916 | 2.12% |

Source: Douglas County Finance

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World-Herald editorial: Build it, and it might stay 7-8-14

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Construction has begun in earnest on the next headquarters of the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt Air Force Base.

The new complex will provide better space, equipment and reach for the military command that oversees the nation's cybersecurity, nuclear weapons cache and interstellar defense.

Military leaders say the new facility is vital because StratCom's old home could be vulnerable to a major power system failure and can't accommodate future information technology needs.

StratCom has taken on additional important and complex worldwide responsibilities in recent years. The improved facilities will enhance the command's ability to carry out its missions.

"The capabilities this facility will provide us put us on a path to the future," then-StratCom Gen. C. Robert Kehler said at the facility's 2012 groundbreaking.

Taxpayers' investment of about \$1 billion for the new headquarters should help secure Offutt and StratCom's place in the military hierarchy. The modern headquarters will help meet modern threats.

It's also good for the Midlands' long-term economic stability. The last major economic impact study showed Offutt's annual economic contribution to Omaha at roughly \$2.5 billion, the region's largest. It is the metro area's No. 2 employer. It also attracts defense contractors and other private employers that invigorate our economy.

And numbers alone overlook the jolt communities get from having thousands of men and women who serve our country living, working, playing and volunteering here. They've long been a vital part of our region's fabric.

A new StratCom headquarters helps ensure those folks stay and continue their important work. This sort of new investment now, even in an austere time for military budgets, is welcome. It shows that the military knows the value of Offutt and the nearly 10,000 people it employs.

It gives one of the Midlands' most important economic drivers a needed boost. And it does so with an eye toward 21st-century threats.

NRD to honor Omaha police officer who rescued swarm of 5,000 bees



Honeybees(2)-Gary Kula

Gary Kula wore just a T-shirt and shorts to herd the honeybees. He brought along a new hive box and moved the worker bees in by hand. Once the queen goes into the hive, her workers quickly follow. Kula left the hive out until just before dark so any scouts or workers would find their way to the new home.

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NRD to honor Omaha police officer who rescued swarm of 5,000 bees By Cody Winchester and Kevin Cole / World-Herald staff writers **The Omaha World-Herald**

A quick-thinking Omaha police officer is being honored for bravery and beekeeping beyond the call of duty.

Last month, [Officer Gary Kula was called](#) to a home near 90th and Spaulding Streets to remove a swarm of about 5,000 bees.

Kula, a member of the Omaha Bee Club, was unruffled. The off-duty officer arrived in a T-shirt and shorts and began moving the bees into a new hive box.

His heroism caught the eye of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, which will honor Kula for meritorious service in rescuing the bees.

General Manager John Winkler noted that bees are critical pollinators. Kula's actions, he said, "demonstrated his understanding of the value of honeybees."