

# MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General's Manager Report

DATE: April 3, 2003

FROM: Steve Oltmans, General Manager

---

---

A. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION REPORT:** A copy of the I&E Report detailing Information and Education activities of the District for the month of March, 2003, is attached for your review.

B. **MISCELLANEOUS/PERSONNEL ITEMS:**

1. **Lance Olerich** has been hired as the Water Supply Technician for the Dakota County Rural Water Supply Office. Lance will be assisting in the daily upkeep, maintenance and administration of the Dakota County Rural Water Supply System, watershed structure, and assisting with the tree planting and recycling programs. His first day of employment was Marcy 17, 2003.
2. **Bernadet Taylor** has been hired as the Receptionist/Secretary at the Natural Resources Center. Bernie serves as first point of contact for all visitors and phone callers at the Natural Resources Center. Her first day of employment was March 10, 2003.

**WELCOME TO BOTH BERNADET AND LANCE!!!**

3. Attached is a "thank you letter" from Benson West Elementary School thanking Christy Jacobsen for the District's donation for the Teacher Appreciation Week celebration. The District sponsors Benson West Elementary School through the OPS Adopt A School Program.

C. **REPORT ON PURCHASES – CONSTRUCTION SERVICES, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, PERSONAL PROPERTY:** Pursuant to Board direction, attached is a report indicating construction services, professional services and personal property purchases for the month of March, 2003. Please review this report and contact me if you have any questions.

D. **LEWIS AND CLARK NRD CONDEMNATION RESULTS FOR POWDER CREEK LAND RIGHTS:** Attached is a letter from Tom Moser, General Manager of the Lewis and Clark NRD in Hartington, NE. In his letter he outlines land purchased for Powder Creek, which is a project similar in size to Walnut Creek Rec Area. He shows the appraised value, final award and added expenses to the NRD. I thought it would be appropriate to point out that the P-MRNRD is not the only ones having troubles with condemnations.

E. **INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT – WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN:** I have attached a copy of the signed Western Douglas County Trails Plan Agreement between MAPA, City of Valley, City of Elkhorn, City of Waterloo, Douglas county, Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro YMCA, Nebraska Game and Park Commission and the P-MRNRD for your information. The goal is to determine the physical and financial feasibility of construction, operating and maintaining bicycle and pedestrian trails connecting various communities and points of interest in Douglas County.

F. **NEWS CLIPS:**

- I** March 12,2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial - The look of confidence. Efforts to boost Omaha’s appearance through local input merit applause.
- I** March 13, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article - LaVista to address park shortcomings. A national association says the city’s recreational facilities are substandard.
- \* March 14,2003, Omaha World Herald Article – State revisits skirmish over Missouri River
- I** March 15, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article - NRD board approves new rural water plans. With a 10-0 vote, the Papio-Missouri River district will start shopping for customers in April.
- \* March 17, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – Midlands Voices - Legislature can help local governments meet federal mandate.
- 1** March 18,2003, Blair Enterprise - NRD board keeps water project moving
- I** March 18, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Higher sewer fees likely to pay for new system
- \* March 18, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – Midlands Voices – Council would do well to OK federal funds for trail extension
- I** March 20,2003, Omaha World Herald Article –No-water bid comes up *dry* in Sidney
- \* March 22, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – Furthermore ... regarding P-MRNRD plan to provide a water system in rural parts of Washington County
- \* March 23, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – Nebraska’s signature event. Lewis and Clark bicentennial will have particular significance for Omaha area.
- I** March 26,2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Water system seeks funds from County

## March 2003

### Information & Education Report

#### Information

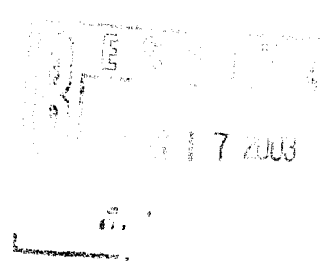
- Hosted Metro Regional Envirothon. Bellevue East, Bellevue West and Creighton Prep qualified for the state contest May 3<sup>rd</sup> in Niobrara State Park.
- Staffed display at the Omaha Home and Garden Show.
- Researched and purchased digital cameras for Walnut Creek and Field Office use.
- Continued work on Update of Back to the River slide show.
- Volunteers delivered fliers on the NRD Volunteer Program to over 3,000 homes in the Chalco Hills/Southwest Omaha area.
- Continued work in preparation for Earth Day 2003 – May 10th at Elmwood Park.
- Gave Speakers Bureau presentations to Dundee Kiwanis, Dundee Neighborhood Assn. And Crown Point Retirement Center.
- Staffed booth at the Omaha Triumph of Ag Expo.
- Helped prepare for and attended 100 year anniversary of National Wildlife Refuge System. Held at Boyer Chute.
- Began preparation for Big Papio Trail Dedication.
- Began work on Spring 2003 Newsletter SPECTRUM.

#### Education

- Held LEP workshop at College of St. Mary
- Delivered goodies to our AAS and Payback Schools for Teacher Appreciation Day
- Presented at all-day Elkhorn Science Festival
- Assisted with Metro Regional Envirothon
- Proofed new Education Brochure
- Presented at all-day Earth Wellness Festival
- Presented Surface Water Program to Gretna Elementary 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade
- Worked on forming a NRD Wellness Committee
- Planned for Visitor's Center Hosts and Naturalist for this Spring
- Sent out confirmation letters to all schools participating in spring Chalco Hills Field Trips
- Up-dated Volunteer Handbook
- Contacted National LEP about presenting at NACEE conference in NE City
- Managed 125 Volunteer Hours
- Continued taking orders for Spring Tree Give-Away
- Wrote article for NE PF newsletter
- Sent out fundraising letter to all NE PF chapters asking for support of LEP
- Revised NRC Room Reservation Form
- Up-dated tree mailing list
- Worked on "Hot Sheet" detailing Chalco Hills and Walnut Creek for NE rest stops
- Worked on LEP task cards
- Continued to work on WCRP grants to cover LEP materials

# 'Benson West School

6652 Maple Street  
Omaha, NE 68104  
402 • 554 • 8633



March 12, 2003

Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources Dist.  
Attn: Christy Jacobsen  
8901 S. 154<sup>th</sup> St.  
Omaha, NE 68138

RE: Teacher Appreciation Week

Dear Christy and our Papio friends:

On behalf of the staff of Benson West Elementary School I would like to thank you for your generous donation to our Teacher Appreciation week celebration. The cookies that you provided were delicious and enjoyed by all. Believe it or not, every single cookie was eaten!

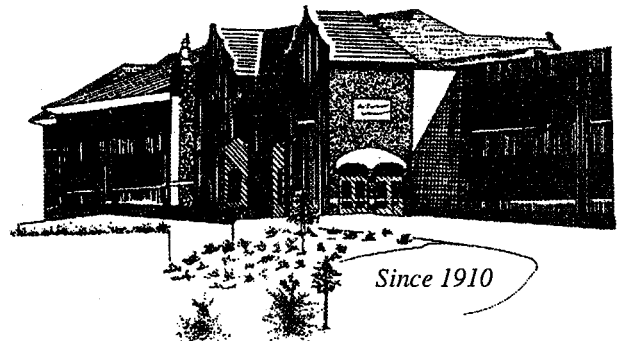
Each and every teacher appreciates the support you provide to Benson West. In addition to the treats during Teacher Appreciation week, the programs and opportunities you provide our students assist us in reaching our goal of "High Student Achievement."

Again, thank you so much for your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha Stofko".

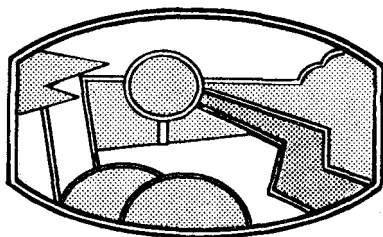
Martha Stofko, Principal



**Report On Purchases**  
**Construction Services, Professional Services, Personal Property**

March, 2003

<b>Date</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Item / Task</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Cost</b>
3/4/03	Household Waste Col. Site	MAPA contract for site and design final payment	Jacobsen/Helgoth	\$5,422
3/6/03	West Branch (144 <sup>th</sup> )	Haul rock riprap from Ft. Calhoun Stone to project site	Midwest Dumpers, Inc.	\$9,775
3/6/03	Big Papio (72 <sup>nd</sup> )	Haul rock riprap from Ft. Calhoun Stone to project site	Midwest Dumpers, Inc.	\$7,740
3/6/03	Big Papio (48 <sup>th</sup> )	Haul rock riprap from Ft. Calhoun Stone to project site	Midwest Dumpers, Inc.	\$11,250
3/6/03	West Branch (144 <sup>th</sup> )	Provide rock riprap (material only)	Ft. Calhoun Stone	\$26,450
3/6/03	Big Papio (72 <sup>nd</sup> )	Provide rock riprap (material only)	Ft. Calhoun Stone	\$20,700
3/6/03	Big Papio (48 <sup>th</sup> )	Provide rock riprap (material only)	Ft. Calhoun Stone	\$28,750
3/14/03	West Branch	Phase 2 Assessment for Sloderbeck Property	Environmental Professionals	\$5,000
3/20/03	Walnut Creek Rec Area	Plans for shelters at Walnut Creek	Ciaccio Dennell	\$12,500
3/20/03	Walnut Creek Rec Area	Mower	Cass County Implement	\$3,200
3/21/03	Dakota Co. Rural Water	Eng. For Waterline Relocation/County Bridge Project	JEO, Inc.	\$5,000
3/27/03	California Bend	Remove and replace corrugated metal pipe	Luxa Construction	\$7,773
3/27/03	MO River Corridor Proj	Interpretive Master Plan for Sarpy County	Big Muddy Workshop	\$7,790
3/28/03	Trails	Trails brochures (\$4,420 reimbursed by MAPA)	Leopard, Inc.	\$5,420
3/31/03	Wash Co. Rural Water	Engineering design for water line extension – Team Bank	HGM Associates	\$6,000
3/31/03	Project Maintenance	Screened rock - \$7.80/ton	Martin Marietta	\$2,810



# LEWIS & CLARK

---

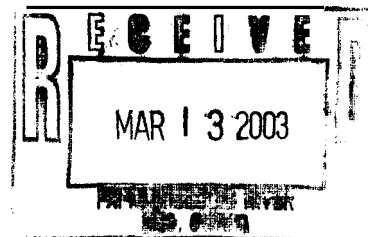
## Natural Resources District

608 N. Robinson  
PO Box 518  
Hartington, NE 68739  
Phone (402) 254-6758  
Fax (402) 254-6759

March 10, 2003

MEMO TO Steve Oltmans

FROM: Tom Moser



Dear Steve:

As requested during the last Manager's meeting, I am sending you the "Blackboard Listing" of Lewis & Clarks Condemnation Results for Powder Creek. Let me know if you have any questions...

### POWDER CREEK LANDRIGHTS 1/03

TRACT	APPRAISED VALUE	FINAL AWARD	ADDED EXPENSE
#1 Curry	\$224,000	\$367,000	\$143,000
#2 Mallory	\$136,000	\$137,225	\$ 21,225
#3 Armstrong	\$26,953	<b>Pending</b> (Trial 4/21)	
#4 Heydon	\$39,835	\$47,000	\$ 7,165
#5 Hohenstein	\$ 72,000	\$ 96,000	\$24,000
		<u>\$7 10,944</u>	<u>\$195,390</u>

# INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT

## WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

---

**THIS AGREEMENT (“this Agreement”)** is made by and among those of the following entities who execute this Agreement on or before July 1, 2003, to-wit: the **METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING AGENCY (“MAPA”)**; the **CITY OF VALLEY, Nebraska (“Valley”)**; the **CITY OF ELKHORN, Nebraska (“Elkhorn”)**; the **CITY OF WATERLOO, Nebraska (“Waterloo”)**; the **COUNTY OF DOUGLAS, Nebraska (“Douglas”)**; the **OMAHA-COUNCIL BLUFFS METROPOLITAN YOUNG MENS’ CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (“YMCA”)**; the **NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION (“NG&PC”)**; and, the **PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT (“P-MRNRD”)**, (those entities who execute this Agreement on or before such date being referred to individually as **“a Party”** and collectively as **“the Parties”**).

**WHEREAS**, each Party is situated in whole or part within Douglas County, Nebraska; and,

**WHEREAS**, the Parties desire to conduct a coordinated study of the physical and financial feasibility of constructing, operating and maintaining bicycle and pedestrian trails connecting various communities and points of interest in Douglas County, including, without limitation, Elkhorn, Valley, Waterloo, Twin Rivers Community Center YMCA, Two Rivers State Recreation Area, schools and existing trails; and,

**WHEREAS**, such study shall evaluate potential trails routes considering, among other things, (a) safety, (b) potential obstructions (rivers, railroads, etc.) (c) wetland impacts, and (d) location of rural dwellings and farmsteads,

**NOW, THEREFORE**, in consideration of the foregoing recitals and the mutual covenants hereinafter expressed, the Parties agree as follows:

**1. Authority:** This Agreement is made pursuant to authority provided in the Nebraska Interlocal Cooperation Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. §13-801, R.R.S., 1943, et seq.), without a separate entity being created, and, whenever possible, this Agreement shall be construed in conformity therewith.

**2. Mission:** It shall be the mission and goal of the Parties to determine the physical and financial feasibility of constructing, operating and maintaining bicycle and pedestrian trails connecting various communities and points of interest in Douglas County.

**3. Administering Agent:** The Parties hereby designate the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District as Administering Agent to administer this Agreement. The Administering Agent shall serve at the pleasure of the majority of the Parties and shall perform duties assigned by a majority of the Parties, which may include, without limitation:

- a) Designating such personnel and assistance which shall be deemed necessary to support the work of the Parties;
- b) Organizing meetings of the Parties and interested persons;
- c) Preparing reports on the work of the Parties;
- d) Entering into contracts on behalf of the Parties as a majority of the Parties directs for the performance of specific actions consistent with both the goals of this Agreement and the respective missions of the Parties; and,
- e) Holding and maintaining the Planning Fund, and making requests for contributions from the Parties.

**4. Fund:** The Parties do hereby create the Planning Fund, to be held by the Administering Agent in an interest-bearing bank account in trust for the Parties contributing thereto, in proportion to their contributions, and to be expended for initial planning of trails projects to meet the mission and goals of this Agreement. The Planning Fund shall be funded and administered as follows:

- a) Within 120 days after the effective date of this Agreement, each of the Parties shall make a contribution to the Planning Fund in the amount shown, opposite such Party's name, in the second column of the following table:

MAPA	\$4,200	30%
P-MRNRD	\$2,800	20%
Douglas County	\$2,800	20%
NGPC	\$1,400	10%
Valley	\$700	5%
Elkhorn	\$700	5%
Waterloo	\$700	5%
YMCA	\$700	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,000</b>	<b>100%</b>



b) Grants or contributions made by non-Parties to any Party shall not be deemed to offset or diminish the obligations of any Party under this Agreement.

c) If any Party fails to contribute to the Planning Fund as requested pursuant to this Agreement, such Party's interest in this Agreement shall be terminated upon written notice of termination given by the Administering Agent to such Party.

d) If there is an uncommitted balance in the Planning Fund after completion of the initial planning of trails projects pursuant to this agreement, such excess shall be distributed to the parties in the proportions shown opposite such Party's name in the third column of the preceding table.

**5. Counterparts.** This Agreement may be executed in two or more counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument. Signature pages of counterpart copies, as executed, shall be maintained as part of the records of the Administering Agent, which, upon receiving signature pages executed by the Parties, shall notify all Parties that this Agreement has been executed.

**6. Effective Date:** This Agreement shall become effective on April 1, 2003, and shall terminate on April 1, 2004.

**7. Voluntary Termination.** Involvement of any Party under this Agreement may be terminated by such Party without cause effective upon 60 days written notice to the other Parties. Termination of a Party's involvement with this Agreement shall not operate to terminate this Agreement nor shall it affect any rights obtained under this Agreement, prior to such notice of termination being given, for costs incurred or moneys advanced, or for actions taken or responsibilities assumed, by another Party during the term of and pursuant to this Agreement.

**8. Amendments and Supplements.** The Parties may amend or supplement this Agreement from time to time as may be deemed necessary to meet the mission and goals of this Agreement.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, this Agreement is entered into by the Parties pursuant to resolutions duly adopted by their respective governing boards.

[Signature pages follow]

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the METROPOLITAN **AREA** PLANNING AGENCY on this 27<sup>th</sup>  
day of February, 2003.

METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING AGENCY

BY Clare Duda

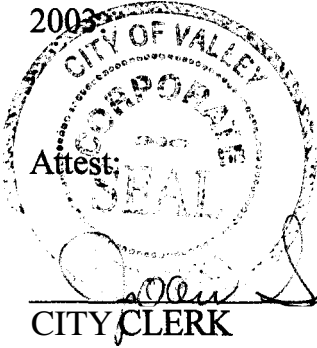
APPROVED AS TO FORM:

M. J. Schub  
MARA atty ASSISTANT CITY ATTORNEY

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the City of Valley, Nebraska on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of March,



THE CITY OF VALLEY, NEBRASKA

BY *Joe Roberts*  
MAYOR

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

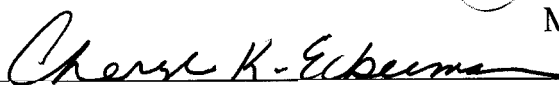
Executed by the City of Elkhorn, Nebraska on this 11 day of March, 2003.

THE CITY OF ELKHORN, NEBRASKA

Attest:

BY

  
MAYOR

  
CITY CLERK

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the City of Waterloo, Nebraska on this 11<sup>th</sup> day of  
February, 2003.

THE CITY OF WATERLOO, NEBRASKA

Attest:

Nancy West  
CITY CLERK

BY Rick S. Oyster  
MAYOR

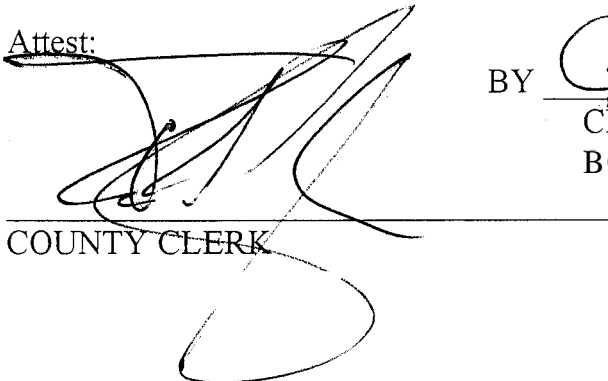
INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the County of Douglas, Nebraska on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of  
February, 2003.

THE COUNTY OF DOUGLAS, NEBRASKA

Attest:



COUNTY CLERK

BY Carol E. H.  
CHAIRPERSON  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Christina A. L. L.  
Deputy County Attorney

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Young Men's Christian  
Association on this 11 day of March, 2003.

OMAHA-COUNCIL BLUFFS METROPOLITAN  
Young Men's Christian Association

By 

INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on this 6<sup>th</sup> day of  
March, 2003.

NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

BY Roger L. Kuhn



INTERLOCAL COOPERATION ACT AGREEMENT  
WESTERN DOUGLAS COUNTY TRAILS PLAN

SIGNATURE PAGE

Executed by the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District on this 4<sup>th</sup> day  
of March, 2003.

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL  
RESOURCES DISTRICT

BY   
GENERAL MANAGER

W-H  
3-12-03

# The look of confidence

Omaha is blessed with impressive community assets that include strong local businesses, cultural institutions, the Henry Doorly Zoo and an impressive burst of riverfront development. But something has been lacking: the encouragement of visual attractiveness.

Public spaces in Omaha have too often leaned toward utilitarian drabness. That may seem like a minor matter, but thoughtful promotion of urban design can do much to convey a sense of confidence, creativity and optimism about a community. As Omaha prepares to open its convention center-arena and welcome an influx of new visitors, community appearance should become a higher priority.

Welcome developments have begun to materialize on this score, including the impressive public-land-

**Efforts to boost Omaha's appearance through local input merit applause.**

scape design of the First National Tower, the sprucing up of Capitol Avenue downtown and the plans for public art projects.

Another example is the community-appearance brainstorming encouraged by the local group "Lively Omaha." The organization has organized planning sessions in which Omahans have talked about new ideas for enlivening the look and ambiance of areas including the Old Market, the Miller Park neighborhood, the area near the planned Missouri River pedestrian bridge and, most recently, the outdoor public spaces at the City-County Building.

Paying attention to such concerns can be an important tool in helping Omaha raise itself to a new level of confidence and attractiveness. Congratulations to Lively Omaha and other groups and individuals who are promoting this worthy cause.

# La Vista to address park shortcomings

■ A national association says the city's recreational facilities are substandard.

3-13-03

By CHRIS OLSON

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

La Vista has too many little parks and not enough larger neighborhood and community parks.

That's one aspect of national standards that La Vista's new parks and recreation master plan will address over the next 12 years, said Assistant City Administrator Brenda Sedlacek.

The National Recreation and Park Association's standards also indicate that La Vista is lacking badminton courts, a formal baseball diamond, nine- and 18-hole golf courses, a golf driving range, handball and racquetball courts, horseshoe courts, an ice hockey rink, a shuffleboard court, an aquatic center, trails, playing fields, restrooms, shelters and picnic tables in its parks.

If unaddressed, those recreational shortages will only worsen. Rapid residential development within La Vista's city limits and potential annexation to 168th Street are expected to more than triple the city's population from 11,699 today to 37,821 in 2015.

The plan, which the city will begin to implement in October, was approved by the City Council this month.

"We won't complete the entire 12-year action plan in 12 years," Sedlacek said. "But it will give us a start and a direction."

One of La Vista's top priorities is a new swimming pool, Sedlacek said.

"We have a new city hall, public works building, library and police station," she said. "Next will be another fire station and a new swimming pool."

La Vista wants to develop a joint-use agreement with the Papillion-La Vista Public

## La Vista parks plan

Eight existing and two proposed mini-parks

13 existing and three proposed neighborhood parks

Two existing community parks (one currently is outside city limits)

Four existing and two proposed sports complexes

One proposed urban park, called La Vista Commons

Four proposed school parks

18 proposed trails

34 proposed tree-lined streets

Schools to share facilities, Sedlacek said.

La Vista will seek to pay for the plan through public and private funding, the general budget fund, general obligation bonds, business support, new and higher user fees and grants, Sedlacek said.

The plan's first-year goals include:

■ Preserving proposed park land for La Vista Commons, bounded by Giles Road, West Papillion Creek, Union Pacific Railroad tracks and 120th Street.

■ Acquiring land for proposed trails from the La Vista Soccer Complex to Big Papillion Creek, Mayor's Park to the La Vista Soccer Complex and West Papillion Creek from Giles Road to Harrison Street.

■ Conducting studies for an aquatic facility, playground safety equipment, a trails and greenways master plan, an Americans With Disabilities Act accessibility plan and a preservation plan for future parkland.

# State revisits skirmish over Missouri River

By DAVID HENDEE

WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — Nebraska is again joining the legal battle over the management of the Missouri River.

Attorney General Jon Bruning said Thursday that the state is asking to step into a lawsuit filed a month ago by a coalition of environmental groups led by American Rivers against the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The coalition claims that the corps' management of the river is causing ecological decline and hardship to some riverside communities. But Bruning said the coalition's demands for lower downstream flow levels would cause substantial harm.

"It was inevitable that we participate in these lawsuits," he said. "We simply can't expect anyone but Nebraska to protect Nebraska's interests."

— Nebraska's position in the lawsuit will be to continue the current operation of the river and to protect and serve all authorized purposes, including barge navigation, to the extent possible.

Nebraska sued the corps last year to protect downstream uses.

# NRD board approves new rural water plans

■ With the 10-0 vote, the Papio-Missouri River district will start shopping for customers in April.

3-15-03  
BY TODD VON KAMPEN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

BLAIR, Neb. — Active shopping for customers for a proposed rural water system will start in April, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board decided Thursday.

The board voted 10-0 to seek signups and hookup fees of \$2,600 through June 30 in a

48-square-mile area south of Blair and west of Fort Calhoun, said Dick Sklenar, the NRD's special-projects coordinator. A subcommittee recommended the step Tuesday.

The proposed system would be west of an existing Papio NRD system that serves Fort Calhoun and southeast Washington County.

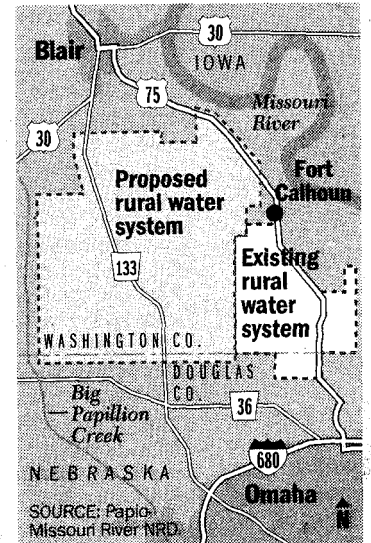
A feasibility study by HGM Associates Inc. of Omaha said a

rural water system would be financially feasible for the entire study area if at least 689 properties sign up for service and pay hookup fees, Sklenar said.

He said even if the threshold isn't reached, a smaller system could be built depending on where people who sign up are located. Those who contributed \$100 to help pay for the feasibility study will have that amount deducted from their hookup fee.

Applications and hookup fees will not be accepted until after the NRD holds a public meeting, likely in mid-April at Fort Calhoun High School.

Sklenar plans to outline the study's findings for Washington County supervisors March 25.



THE WORLD-HERALD

# Midlands Voices

## Legislature can help local governments meet federal mandate

BY NORM JACKMAN AND ALLAN ABBOTT

*Jackman is acting director of Omaha's Public Works Department. Abbott is director of Lincoln Public Works and Utilities.*

The Nebraska Legislature is considering a plan to help cities, counties and natural resources districts pay for the unfunded federal mandate to reduce stormwater runoff and clean up our streams and lakes. This legislation (LB 32), described in a recent World-Herald article, would give local jurisdictions the option to implement a stormwater-management fee. Several key facts require an in-depth look at this legislation.

First, the federal law to control stormwater runoff in urban areas is not an option. It is a mandate. The federal government has issued regulations that local governments must follow to avoid strict penalties. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimated the cost at at least \$3.2 million a year for Omaha and \$1.8 million a year for Lincoln.

These new requirements are over and above the current stormwater activities and do not include any costs associated with storm-flow management and flood control. Given the current budget constraints facing state and local governments, these costs are not within existing budgets.

Second, we need to control stormwater runoff is very real in urban areas. The stress to accommodate additional runoff into local streams increases as new housing subdivisions and commercial developments are built. Stormwater runs off the paving and rooftops, carrying pollutants and degrading stream channels. The runoff increases the flooding potential downstream. Just a few years ago, a sudden downpour caused flooding in the Papillion Creek watershed, killing one person and causing millions of dollars in damages. As more areas develop, it will require less rainfall to create flooding conditions.

There is scientific proof that stormwater runoff increases the potential for polluting our streams and lakes. Over the past year, the Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership, a coalition of cities, counties and the Papio-Missouri River NRD, has studied the effects of stormwater runoff. Preliminary information shows that after a significant storm, the Papio Creek has higher-than-acceptable levels of fecal coliform and other bacteria, plus considerable sediment, nutrients and other contaminants

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality put portions of the Papillion Creek, Salt Creek and a number of the local reservoirs on the list of polluted waters in the state. These pollutants must be properly managed for the creek to meet the water-quality standards.

Allowing local governments the option to create a stormwater fee could address these problems without increasing

property taxes. LB 32 provides an alternative funding source that is fair to everyone living in an urban area. Here's why:

The bill would not mandate a fee; it would give local jurisdictions the option to create a fee to pay for stormwater improvements. Before a local stormwater fee could be instituted, the local city council, county board or NRD board would have to approve it. Federal requirements include substantial public participation in the development of the local jurisdiction's stormwater-management plan.

LB 32 would require that the money collected from a stormwater fee be used only for stormwater improvements to reduce flooding to protect property. The current proposal for a stormwater fee is based on how much water drains off a property. For most homeowners, it would be a flat fee of a few dollars a month.

The fee for businesses and large property owners would be based on the hard-surface area of pavement and roofs, which relates directly to the amount of runoff. This funding method is similar to that used by other public utilities. Special interest lobbyists claim that businesses would pay more than their share. That is wrong. The philosophy of LB 32 is that the more runoff your property causes, the more you pay to fix it.

LB 32 would allow for credits for property owners who invest in efforts to reduce runoff or pollutants attributed to their property.

Stormwater fees are not new. Nearly 400 cities and counties in 38 states already have a similar fee. The consequence of trying to ignore the issue is that the EPA could issue large fines that could slow or, in extreme cases, stop development in a community. The federal government has already used that hammer in other states.

LB 32 is a local-control issue. Local governments, through community discussion, would decide whether a stormwater fee is right for their communities.

No one wants to add fees, but local governments cannot ignore a federal mandate any longer. Stormwater runoff is a serious problem in urban areas, and the federal government has ordered us to fix it. If the Legislature fails to pass LB 32, the federal mandate will not go away, and communities like Lincoln and Omaha will still need to raise the funding necessary to support these programs.

LB 32 would give local communities the ability to select the right funding solution to meet their stormwater-management needs. The result would be better flood control, as well as cleaner and safer streams and lakes for future generations.

# NRD board keeps water project moving

Blair Contingency 3/18/03

By Keith Rydberg  
Reporter

The board of directors of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District has determined a request to provide rural water is feasible, but whether water lines will actually be installed remains unknown.

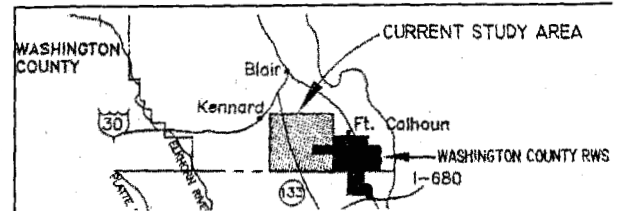
At its Thursday, March 13, meeting, the NRD board voted to continue work on a project that could bring water service from the city of Blair to more than 800 residents living in a 48-square-mile area between

Kennard and Fort Calhoun. The decision was made after the directors heard a feasibility study report from representatives of hgm Associates Inc., the engineering firm that has conducted the study since August 2002. The estimated cost of the project is \$4.9 million.

Chris Koenig, project manager for hgm Associates, said along with determining the feasibility of installing water lines in the area, hgm Associates was also asked to present the most cost-effective alternative.

"There were essentially three

options for us to consider — going with wells in the area, having the city of Blair supply water to the area or having the Metropolitan Utilities District supply water to the area," Koenig said. "We determined the city of Blair was the best option simply from a financial aspect. One of the things we were asked to consider was the water volume that would be required if the entire area was served. We contacted representatives with the Metropolitan Utilities District and the city of Blair in October and they each



provided us with estimates of connection costs and their water rates."

However, while the district has committed to continue addressing the situation, representatives of the district have

said that construction work will not begin on the project until at least 80 percent of all landowners in the area submit an application and \$2,600 fee that will

SEE WATER PAGE 3F

## WATER: Rural proposal advances

FROM PAGE 1

cover the expenses involved with hooking up each residence to the rural water system. Many of the landowners in the area previously contributed \$100 each to the district before the feasibility study began in order to pay for the costs involved with the study and to show there was enough interest from landowners in the area to make the study worthwhile.

"A tentative deadline of June 30 has been established as the date when the applications and hook up fees must be collected. Dick Sklenar, who is the project manager for the district, explained that, while enough interest and money was gathered to warrant the feasibility study, the project is essentially on hold until the June 30 deadline to see if enough interest remains before construction begins.

"Now, we are just in the process of sitting back and waiting for the response we get," Sklenar said. "We cannot afford to run one water line to serve two people, but we can run a line to serve eight people."

If enough people submit applications by the deadline, construction work could begin by summer 2004. Construction will consist primarily of installing pipelines and any necessary attachments and will also include the installation of gate valves and hydrants throughout the area.

A public forum is tentatively being planned in which people involved with the project will answer any questions regard-

ing the feasibility study and the overall project. Sklenar and Koenig will also meet with the Washington County Board of Supervisors to discuss the project at an upcoming meeting.

However, in order to further ensure that the district receives enough applications from landowners, a steering committee of 10 volunteers is in the process of conducting a door-to-door campaign within the 48-square-mile area. While not affiliated with the natural resources district, the NRD has provided the volunteers with application forms and maps of the study area.

Wayne Talbert, chairperson of the steering committee, said while the committee was originally established to gather a approximately 280 signatures necessary for the feasibility study to be conducted, the committee's work is now more difficult because of the larger number of landowners the committee needs to have commit to the project.

"We're trying to make one more push and get the people who perhaps didn't sign up for the feasibility study," Talbert said.

"We're hoping that, once some of these people see the water line will be coming by their houses, they will be more willing to sign up. The way we see it is that, from a cost standpoint, it's the difference between installing a \$10,000 well or paying a \$2,500 application fee. You simply can't beat that."

# Higher sewer fees likely to pay for new system

3-18-05  
By NICHOLE AKSAMIT  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The City of Omaha probably will raise sewer-use fees in the next year to help it comply with new state standards for its wastewater treatment plants that dump into the Missouri River.

To meet the requirements of its latest five-year permit from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, the city is considering installing massive diffusion pipes that would extend to the deepest parts of the river from its treatment plants in Sarpy County and south Omaha.

"We're looking at somewhere in the range of \$20 million to \$30 million in plant improvements to get our permits this time," said Norm Jackman, the city's acting public works director.

He said sewer-use fees would have to increase to fund the work, but no specific rate increase has been determined.

The new permits limit the previously unrestricted amounts of ammonia and residual chlorine in treated wastewater that is pumped into the river.

Jackman said the city needs a diffusion system in the river to help dilute those pollutants. He

See Sewer: Page 2

## Sewer: Fees may rise with new treatment system

Continued from Page 1

described the system as a large pipe — 10-foot-by-10-foot or bigger — stretching to the middle of the river with holes or ports every few feet to discharge the water.

Because the river is constantly flowing, spreading the discharge out across a wider span dilutes the wastewater.

"It allows you to increase your mixing zone and have less environmental impact on the critters in the river and the aquatic life," Jackman said.

Jackman said the city hasn't done a full cost-benefit analysis of a diffusion system. He said the city also could consider treating the water to remove ammonia instead of diluting it. But, he said, two city-hired consultants think the pipe system is a "very cost-effective way" of meeting the new standards.

He said the city also is considering adding sulfur dioxide to chlorine-treated wastewater to remove the residual chlorine or using ultraviolet light instead of

the chlorine to kill bacteria in wastewater.

Craig Horn, a permit writer for the state, said the standards stem from federal water-quality guidelines developed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He said Nebraska wrote its own program to mirror U.S. Environmental Protection Agency guidelines and began enforcing it about five years ago, just after Omaha's wastewater plants received their last round of permits.

As new permits have been issued to municipalities and other entities across the state, they have contained the new standards, Horn said.

The state issued Omaha's permits, complete with the new requirements, in October.

The city is working to further develop its plan for compliance. It must report its progress annually and has until late 2005 to install the diffusion systems or make any other necessary changes.

Jackman said construction of

the diffusion systems probably would need to begin next winter, when river levels are low.

"Once construction starts, we'd need the monies," he said. "So it would be in the next year or so that we'll have to have a visit with the administration and the (City) Council to talk about raising sewer fees."

Extensive sewer work along Omaha's riverfront redevelopment area also is contributing to the need to increase sewer rates, Jackman said.

Although the city envisioned raising sewer-use fees by 4 percent this year to help pay for riverfront sewer work, that rate increase hasn't yet occurred. Jackman said that the city so far has avoided the increase through staffing cutbacks at the plants but that it may be needed later this year. The last time the city raised sewer-use fees was 1994.

For the new work, Jackman said the city likely would issue sewer bonds or borrow from the state's revolving loan fund to ob-

tain construction money and then repay the bonds or loans with the proceeds of increased sewer-use fees over 10 to 20 years.

Omaha sewer-use fees are, based on average water use, as measured by the Metropolitan Utilities District, under the assumption that most of what goes into a home or business is eventually flushed back out into the city's sanitary sewer system.

The average Omaha household currently pays about \$11 a month or \$132 a year for sewer-use fees. If the permit-related sewer work costs \$30 million and the city pays for it over 10 years at 5 percent interest, Jackman estimated a rate increase of about 15 percent would be needed. That would mean an increase of between \$1 and \$2 a month for most homeowners.

The city currently collects about \$34 million a year in sewer fees, which it uses to pay for sewer work and repairs throughout the city.



# Midlands Voices

## Council would do well to OK federal funds for trail extension

BY GARY GEBHARD

*The writer, an Omaha architect, is a founding member of the Eastern Nebraska Trails Network. He has served for 10 years on the Nebraska Department of Roads' trails subcommittee for project funding review.*

The Omaha City Council must decide whether Omaha will accept federal funds to develop design alternatives and then build the Elmwood Trail Extension, which is identified in the metropolitan trails master plan.

This trail, in concept, would connect Memorial and Fontenelle Parks via the historic Happy Hollow and Fontenelle Boulevard corridors. Omaha and surrounding communities have already accepted more than \$10 million in federal funds over the past 10 years. The result is one of the finest trail networks in the country.

It is a developing network, however, in that a few key connections are still desired to make the system work well. Extending trail connections into neighborhoods would make the system more accessible. Though the funds include construction money, the Department of Roads is not obligated to fund unsafe or ill-conceived projects. However, the study and design proposals must proceed to determine the ultimate constructability of the project.

While the general public sometimes wonders just where these trail projects come from, a number of private citizens across the United States, including me, have sung the trails song for 20 years.

This national trail movement has been a true grass-roots effort. It has reached fruition in the last 10 years with funding sources such as the Internodal Surface Efficiency Act and the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century. Nebraska has done well with this funding source as hundreds of communities have built trail projects, repaired transportation buildings and improved scenic byways for the benefit of residents and those of us lucky enough to have visited their towns.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Omaha Parks and Recreation Department and the Pappas-Missouri Natural Resources District for their tireless efforts to sponsor trail projects. We should also thank the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and especially the Nebraska Department of Roads, for their roles in developing a nationally recognized program for transportation-enhancement funding.

Nebraska members of Congress, Republicans as well as Democrats, have striven for 20 years to connect major commu-

nities here in Nebraska and beyond our state boundaries via trails. Special thanks to Congressman Doug Bereuter, a major sponsor of the American Discovery Trail, and to former Sen. Bob Kerrey for his tireless efforts to give Omaha and Council Bluffs the Missouri River crossing that has been missed since the demise of the Ak-Sar-Ben Bridge in the late 1960s.

Approval by the Omaha City Council to accept the funding of the Elmwood Trail Extension design and future construction would allow options to be explored. Developing these options would give the Elmwood Trail neighbors a chance to comment on what works best for them, which in turn would enable the City of Omaha to act most responsibly toward their concerns.

Much is to be gained by all when future trail neighbors take an active role in the trail-planning process. Our state has hundreds of trail projects representing many collaborations between residents and trail-sponsoring agencies. It seems only natural that Omaha residents would welcome the chance to participate in the same process.

The City Council's approval of this funding has the added bonus of sending a message to the State of Nebraska and to our congressional representatives that we support their efforts. Not to accept the funding would send a contradictory message at the state level, as Omaha has already accepted millions for trails. It would make little sense to stop a proven process before seeing any formal plans.

What a shame it would be to create a gap in our metropolitan trails master plan without investigating alternatives. At the city level, we would lose a chance to push trail connections eastward toward a growing, rejuvenated riverfront.

Finally, at the neighborhood level, we would send a message that walking dogs or riding bikes by a house along a public right-of-way is, for some reason, an invasion of privacy. As Nebraskans and as Omahans, how do we really want to answer the question, "Won't you be my neighbor?" Hiding behind a few signs or trees is not the answer.

For me, and for others who value trails and all they offer, the answer is a commitment to a vision which honors the potential of our city.

# No-water bid comes up dry in Sidney

tion to the city — the price they put on not putting an estimated 1.1 billion gallons of water on their cropland.

“We were ready to be trailblazers,” he said, “but the city had other ideas. We can understand that. We respect the answer we got — but this drought is the tip of the iceberg, and people are just starting to understand how valuable our water is.”

City Manager Gary Person said the eight-day community debate reinforces his belief that Nebraska needs to reform its water policy.

“It’s about survival,” he said.

Person said that even in wet years, there is too much demand for not only the limited pool of water in the unique aquifer that lies under Sidney and the southern Panhandle, but also in many other areas of Nebraska.

“We’re always going to be in this situation,” he said.

Person said he favors a state-

wide moratorium on new irrigation wells until the issue is studied.

“But when you talk about that now, the fear factor sets in, and everybody runs out to punch more holes into the ground,” he said. “A lot of this country was made for dryland (nonirrigated) farming. I understand farmers trying to make their property more valuable (by adding irrigation), but we have to look at the big picture.”

Person estimated that the cost of water in Sidney would have to double — to about \$75 monthly for a typical household — and use soar to historic highs to pay the irrigators the price they put on their water.

There also is no guarantee the proposal would work because of the fractured nature of the aquifer. The theory was that water not used by irrigators would make its way to city wells, thus avoiding another year of water-use restrictions.

Sidney faucets, however, are

not in danger of running dry. An engineering consultant says the city has adequate water availability from wells outside the valley to provide drinking water. Also, a few well-located thunderstorms can dramatically raise the water table in the valley.

In addition to drought troubles, Sidney had to find new water sources a decade ago when its old wells failed Environmental Protection Agency standards because of fertilizer-caused nitrate contamination. The city also hopes to pipe in water next year from new wells 18 miles away in the Ogallala Aquifer.

The total bill for those projects is about \$11 million, Person said.

“That’s tough when people have to pay higher water rates to make that up,” he said. “It goes back to water policy. You have to look down the road. You can’t wait until the situation is bad to make a decision.”

gency of the four-year drought gripping much of the Great Plains.

Sidney, a city of 6,300 in western Nebraska, is expected to impose restrictive water use rules next week in anticipation of another hot, dry summer.

“It’s not over,” said Tom Biggs, the farmer who organized nearly two dozen other irrigators to offer a \$600,000 solu-

W-H  
3-22-03

## Furthermore.. .

■ The Great Plains Black Museum is set to reopen in May after a two-year hiatus. Museum supporters including James Calloway and Harry Eure are to be commended for their hard work in promoting the renovation of the 97-year-old structure. The museum fits in well with plans for an art gallery, performing arts theater and jazz museum in the north Omaha neighborhood. Such community vision deserves applause.

X ■ Economic and residential growth is coming, inevitably, to Washington County. It is quite encouraging, then, to see how the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District

has developed plans to provide a water system in rural parts of the county. Such infrastructure could be an important tool in furthering the county's long-term advancement. It would be a welcome development for all concerned if enough property owners sign up so that the project will be financially viable.

■ We're glad to learn of a compromise between schools and the city on keeping the Omaha school resource officer program running. The budget pain on both sides is understandable, but this is one of those programs whose positive outcomes can and do prevent future waste — economic and human.

+

w-H  
3-23-03

## Nebraska's signature event

**T**he national council for the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition lists 15 "signature events," in locales from Virginia

to Oregon, that this year will mark milestones along the explorers' trail. Nebraskans should note that one event will take place here, at Fort Atkinson Historical Park.

The Fort Atkinson event, titled "First Tribal Council" and set for July 31 through Aug. 3, will feature an outdoor dramatic re-enactment of the meeting between the Corps of Discovery and the Otoe and Missouri Tribes. In addition, a bicentennial-related powwow will be held in Omaha, and every tribe along the Lewis and Clark trail has been invited. Invitations have been issued, in fact, to tribes throughout the country.

Four days of commemorative

**Lewis and Clark bicentennial will have particular significance for Omaha area.**

events also are planned in communities along the trail in Nebraska and Iowa. Other events will range from St. Charles, Mo., to Astoria, Ore.

The Corps of Discovery deserves remembrance for the seriousness with which it carried out its charge from President Thomas Jefferson. Because of Lewis, Clark and their colleagues, the nation's knowledge of the West expanded considerably over a remarkable breadth of topics including topography, plant life, animal species, climatic conditions and Native American culture.

The achievements of the Lewis and Clark expedition are well worth marking and saluting. It is a point of pride that Nebraska will host one of the main commemorative events honoring that legacy.

W-H  
3-26-03**Water system seeks funds from county**

BLAIR — Washington County should consider chipping in toward a rural water system so future residents can tap into it and current would-be customers can afford it, county supervisors were told Tuesday.

About 30 people heard Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District officials and consultants review a feasibility study of the proposed \$4.9 million system, which would address water quality and quantity problems south of Blair and west of Fort Calhoun.

The proposed system would get water from the City of Blair and would be large enough to serve all current and projected homes in the fast-growing area, said Dick Sklenar, the district's special projects coordinator. But if the county provided additional funds, he said, the district could install larger pipes and water mains to serve housing developments yet to come.

It also might take some county funds to reduce the \$2,600-per-household hookup fee so more residents can afford to sign up before the deadline, said Jack Holthaus, who lives about three miles south of Blair.

"I think this creates a real hardship in the short time frame for us to raise \$2,600," Holthaus said. But "I am concerned this is our last opportunity. Without water, the county can't grow."

Supervisors said it was too early to discuss committing county funds. But County Board Chairman Duane Wilcox said his board may hold a special meeting sometime after the district kicks off its hookup campaign next month at Fort Calhoun High School. That date has yet to be set. — Todd von Kampen