

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
ACTIVITY REPORT within the P-MRNRD
MARCH 2004

CONSERVATION PLANNING/APPLICATION

- Burt County received 14 requests for HEL determinations and 5 new requests for certified wetland determinations during the month of March.
- Blair field office received 11 HEL/Wetland Determination/ASCS-569 requests for FY2004.
- 12 HEL determinations have been completed in Thurston County, and 3 wetland appeals are ongoing.
- South Sioux City field office completed 4 HEL Determinations and 4 Conservation Compliance plans were revised.
- Blair field office has received 4 applications for construction of conservation practices, 61 tree orders for 10,700 trees to be machine and hand planted in spring 2004, 14 applications for NRD cost-sharing to plant trees, 6 applications for Cropland Conversion/Pasture Renovation using native grasses and 14 requests to use the District grass drills for conservation seeding and CRP.
- South Sioux City field office has received 22 tree orders for 3,850 trees; 7 NRD tree planting projects are scheduled.
- In Dakota County, a wetland conversion determination was appealed to the FSA County Committee resulting in a Good Faith determination which will be further appealed by the producer.
- A 15-acre cropland to native grass pasture conversion has been approved for cost-share in Dakota County.
- In Thurston County, 3 district tree plantings have been planned, 1,675 trees have been ordered, and 9 spring terrace projects need to be completed.
- Burt County has 5 terrace jobs to be staked this spring; 3 of these projects are in the P-MRNRD and 2 are in the LENRD and are large terrace jobs. Burt County has 4 terrace jobs scheduled for next fall.

EQIP

- Blair field office has received 8 applications for: ag waste systems, grade stabilization structures, pasture managements, cross-fencing and waterlines.
- Three Pigeon/Jones Watershed structures, 3 rotational grazing systems and 2 irrigation conversion projects are being planned for EQIP in Dakota County.
- Omaha field office has 11 EQIP applications for: no-till, grade stabilization structures, and ground and surface water conservation.
- Burt County has received a total of 15 applications for EQIP funding; 1 EQIP application for terraces was cancelled (received funding through LENRD).
- In Burt County the EQIP applications consist of the following: 1 application for terraces, 5 applications for grazing land assistance, 3 applications for grade control structures in the Silver Creek Watershed, 4 ground and surface water applications were deferred from last year, 1 animal feeding operation application was deferred from last year and 1 new AFO has been received.

WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP)

- In Dakota County, 6 landowners have been contacted regarding WRP participation; no applications have been completed to date.

- Tekamah has received 5 new WRP applications; the bioengineering team and the landowners will meet on April 14, to evaluate the sites for possible restoration options.
- One WRP easement was recorded at the county register of deeds in Burt County for a new WRP restoration project. The contract includes a total of 19.1 acres and is scheduled to be surveyed and designed this spring for restoration.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

- One CRP contract revision request was completed in Dakota County, 10 continuous CRP projects are underway with practices including filter strips, grass waterways, wetlands and buffers, and contour buffer strips. Also, 2 Pheasants Forever food plot cost-share applications have been received.
- The Walthill field office is working with 3 operators considering signing up for grass waterways.
- Three new continuous CRP contracts were written and approved in Burt County. The practices in these contracts include a riparian buffer strip (11.4 acres), filter strips (11.4 acres), and wetland restoration with filter strips (9.6 acres).
- Approximately 100 acres of filter strips, funded through continuous CRP, have been flagged for seeding in Burt County.
- Six CRP contracts were revised in Burt County to add mid-contract management activities such as prescribed burning, light tillage and inter-seeding of legumes.
- Omaha field office completed nine 862s for continuous CRP/CREP which included approximately 93 acres of grass filter strips and 73 acres of conservation corners. Two new continuous CRP contracts were approved in Sarpy County and another 4 were revised.

SILVER CREEK WATERSHED

- Tree clearing was started for structure 15. Lee Appleby began working under a contribution agreement with the Papio-Missouri River NRD. Lee is overseeing the site inspection for the Silver Creek projects that are partially funded through EQIP funds.

WATER QUALITY

- Douglas/Sarpy Counties abandoned 1 well; 9 applications pending.
- Washington County has 25 applications pending.
- Dakota County abandoned 1 well; 5 applications pending.
- Burt County has 1 application pending.
- Thurston County has 5 applications pending.

CIVIL RIGHTS

- Ralph Arauza and Don Atkinson (NRCS) attended the Civil Rights meeting in Lincoln. In attendance were 10 members of the National Civil Rights Team from Washington DC. Don Atkinson prepared the Indian Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) report and presented it at the Lincoln meeting.

INFORMATION/EDUCATION

- Field office staff from Omaha, Blair and Walthill assisted with NRCS and NRD booths at the Triumph of Agriculture Exposition held at the Qwest Center in Omaha.
- The South Sioux City staff provided new items and photos with captions for the NRD Share Page published in the *Dakota County Star* for the month of March. The news items were: Funds Available for Conservation Work, Conservation Compliance, Students Attend Aquafest Water Festival, One Call Notification Network, and Household Hazardous Waste Collections A Success. Photos were

included of Fifth Graders at the Aquafest and of the Hazardous Waste collection drop off site.

- Andy Bohnenkamp and Jenny Sundberg, NRCS at Tekamah, attended a No-Till Workshop in Norfolk for producers and personnel working with the LENRD no-till incentive program.
- A Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day was held in Tekamah on March 13. The RC&D was allocated grant funding to accomplish this project in several local communities. Several of the volunteers were from the Burt County and the Thurston County USDA offices.
- Jenny Sundberg met with a representative from FSA, Fish & Wildlife Service and the local Pheasants Forever chapter to discuss management options and cost share available through each agency for participants of the Continuous Reserve Program.

DAKOTA COUNTY SERVICE CENTER

- The architect is developing a floor plan for the Natural Resources Center in Dakota City. Agreements with the City of Dakota City have been tentatively approved. The joint maintenance facility for the NRD Rural Water office and the City is on hold for an undetermined amount of time. Space will be made available in the NRC for NE Extension, if they elect to move in at some future time.

TRAINING/MEETINGS

- Staff from all field offices attended the Forestry Training/Meeting in Lincoln.
- Over 40 participants representing a wide range of groups and agencies met at the Omaha NRC on March 17, to discuss programs and goals for Missouri River floodplain restoration. A steering committee has been established to help set direction for this cooperative effort.
- Shelley Stoley, cooperative agreement employee, was in the South Sioux City field office to discuss wildlife habitat creation and natural resource protection issues on March 9.
- Denny Piper and Rod Kinning (NRD) attended a tree workshop in Norfolk.
- Don Atkinson, Walthill, attended consultation meetings with Omaha and Winnebago tribal councils and state office staff.
- Don Atkinson served as a judge at the Indian Nations science fair at the Walthill high school.
- Field office staff from all offices attended RUSLE II (Revised Soil Loss Program) training in York

TRIBAL ASSISTANCE

- Don Atkinson and Dennis Cady, Walthill, provided Jason McCauley (BIA) technical assistance regarding terrace design and suggestions regarding further conservation work needed on another allotment.
- Dennis Cady and Don Atkinson developed a grass and forb roadside seed mixture for the Aberdeen area office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
- Don Atkinson provided a Winnebago tribal councilman technical assistance regarding land he is planning to bid into CRP general signup.

EARTH TEAM PROGRAM

- Don Atkinson and Ralph Arauza (NRCS) developed 3 volunteer job descriptions and provided them to all field offices.



Lower Platte River
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

From the Coordinator..

March 2004
Edition

Monthly Report from the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the period of MARCH 1

Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

Next LPRCA Quarterly Meeting – Tuesday, April 27th, 2004

The time is drawing near again for the next LPRCA quarterly meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 27th, 2004 starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Lower Platte South NRD (LPSNRD) office. Discussion items include the FY04 and FY05 budgets; the Airboat Tour; the Water Quality Open; Strategic Planning for FY05; Project updates; the Water Quality Workshops (Water Wellness meetings); and a host of other informational items. Following the LPRCA meeting, the Cumulative Impacts Study group will meet at 1:30 p.m. to discuss the study including grant funding, priorities, and the GIS.

Cumulative Impact Study Meeting This project is moving forward and the group continues to meet on a monthly basis. A small working group of several primary partners meets in the interim to come up with recommendations for the entire group to consider. Recently, the working group met to discuss the GIS and what time periods we would like to include and which method of determining changes over time to consider. Recommendation/options will be presented to the entire group at the April 27th meeting. A small grants committee will also be meeting soon to look into an EPA grant to cover cost associated with development of the GIS. **NEXT MEETING - - Tuesday, April 27th, 2004 at the LPSNRD starting at 1:30 p.m.**

Sand and Gravel Working Group – P.A.C.E. P.A.C.E. met April 7th at the Aurora City Library. The group discussed the administrative history document that is nearly ready. Another agenda item was public relations and press coverage. The group feels it is ready to do some press releases to reach a broader audience and illustrate the cooperative spirit that P.A.C.E. is all about. There has been some recent negative press about planned mining operations and the perception they are dirty and noisy. John Heaston with TNC said he served in an informal capacity to mediate a potential conflict related to this issue. The group felt P.A.C.E. could continue to serve in this capacity in the future. Two members of the Land Committee for the Platte River Cooperative Agreement were in attendance and gave their support for the efforts of P.A.C.E. Attendees also chose a general logo format and discussed creating a brochure for P.A.C.E. UN-K students are currently working on these items. The PMRNRD has pledged to pay for $\frac{1}{2}$ of the cost of the brochure, which is needed by June 9th for the UN-L Water Tour. Carl Roberts will be taking members of the tour to a reclaimed and an active mine near Linoma Beach. I mentioned that I am on the UN-L Water Tour planning committee and feel that this is a grand opportunity to showcase our area of the Platte River and our efforts to manage and protect the area. The next meeting will be sometime in July at the UN-L East Campus Union in Lincoln.

Annual UN-L Water Tour As a reminder, the UN-L Water Tour will be touring at the Lower Platte River area from Columbus on down to Plattsmouth. The dates of the tour are June 7 - 9, 2004. A rough itinerary is as follows: Tour buses leave Lincoln and Kearney and rendezvous at Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's Jeffery Island wildlife restoration project near Overton. There will be a presentation on habitat restoration efforts for Piping Plover and Least Tern nesting, Lunch will be at the Audubon Society's Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon. The tour will continue to Columbus for a BBQ near the river and an overnight stay. On the way to Columbus, the tour will stop at the Central Platte NRD in Grand Island for a presentation by NDEQ on efforts to contain and clean-up groundwater aquifer contamination that has threatened both private and municipal water wells since last fall. The second day begins with a breakfast presentation on goals of the LPRCA by coordinator Rodney Verhoeff before the tour proceeds to Schuyler. There, the East-Central District Health Department will outline opportunities and challenges presented by immigration and increasing ethnic diversity in the Platte, Colfax, Boone and Nance County area. Later that day, there will be a presentation on control of algae blooms in sand pit lakes near Fremont and the geology of the Platte River's bluffs in regard to suitability for development. Prior to an overnight stay near Omaha's Old Market, the buses will stop at the city's historic Joslyn Castle for a presentation on the Joslyn Castle Institute for Sustainable Communities. The tour's final day begins with a presentation by HDR Inc. providing insight on water and wastewater planning in the Lower Platte River corridor at the Papio-Missouri NRD. Next is a stop at Schramm State Park, where UNL fisheries

biologist Ed Peters will detail research to track the movements and spawning activities of Pallid Sturgeon. A final stop near Ashland looks at sand and gravel mining and sand pit reclamation efforts by Lyman-Richey Corp. real estate broker Carl Roberts. The Tern and Plover Partnership will also talk about their work to enhance and preserve nesting habitat for Least Terns and Piping Plovers. After lunch, buses proceed to Lincoln and Kearney. Registration includes all food, (except on-your-own dining in Omaha), motel, and motor coach expenses. Registration details are available through the Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce at (800) 652-9435. Registration deadline is May 10 and participation is limited to the first 85 registrants. CONTACTS: J. Michael Jess, associate director, UNL Water Center, (402) 472-7570, email mjess3@unl.edu or Steve Ress, communications coordinator, UNL Water Center (402) 472-3305, email sress1@unl.edu.

Water Wellness Workshops/Meetings We have finalized the agenda, dates, and locations for the water quality meetings, which we have named "Water Wellness: Understanding your drinking water and septic systems. Locations, dates, and times are as follows:

Meeting Date	Day of Week	Meeting Time	Meeting Location
May 8, 2004	Saturday	9:00 to 11:30 a.m.	Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center near Gretna
May 12, 2004	Wednesday	6:30 to 9:00 p.m.	Maria's Lighthouse Tavern in Cedar Creek
May 18, 2004	Tuesday	6:30 to 9:00 p.m.	Papillion Gun Club - S. of Papillion by river
June 1, 2004	Tuesday	6:30 to 9:00 p.m.	Yutan Community Center
June 15, 2004	Tuesday	6:30 to 9:00 p.m.	City of Valley Office
June 16, 2004	Wednesday	7:00 to 9:30 p.m.	Dodge County Extension Office - Fremont
June 19, 2004	Saturday	9:00-11:30 a.m.	VFW Hall in North Bend
June 23, 2004	Wednesday	6:30 to 9:00 p.m.	Schuyler City Office Bldg.

National Association of Recreational Resource Planners (NARRP) Conference May 16th-20th, I will be assisting the PMRNRD on several tours of area trails and a classroom presentation for the NARRP Conference to be held in Omaha. My contribution will pertain to the Lied Bridge/Platte River Connection. I will also have the opportunity during the classroom presentation to discuss the LPRCA and our projects. On the first night of the conference, I will be displaying a poster presentation on the Lied Bridge/Platte River Connection. Log on to www.narrp.org for more information.

Earth Wellness Festival On Monday, March 19th, I participated in the earth wellness festival (EWF), which is a fun, educational festival for fifth graders in the Lincoln area to learn about their natural environments. This event is similar to the Children's Groundwater Festival in which the kids have a chance to see demonstrations, participate in activities, and play educational games related to a range of natural resource issues. I built a Plinko board and developed a companion water trivia game for my activity. Shaula Ross, our new GIS person assisted. I would be more than happy to bring the board to other venues for kids. Just give me a call.

Upcoming NRD and Alliance Meetings:

- **NEXT LPRCA QUARTERLY MEETING** - Tuesday, April 27th, 2004* 9:30 a.m. * LPSNRD Meeting Room located in Lincoln.
- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Monday, April 12th, 2004 * 7:00 p.m. - Wahoo @ 511 Industrial Road
- **PMRNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, April 14th, 2004 * 8:00 p.m. - Omaha @ Chalco Hills Rec. Area
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, April 21st, 2004 * 7:00 p.m. - Lincoln @ 3125 Portia Street

Future Meetings - Meetings and Events in the Not-So-Distant Future:

- **60-Mile Radius Committee** - Thursday, April 14th, 2004 * 2:00 p.m. * Joslyn Castle Institute in Omaha
- **Cumulative Impact Study Meeting** - Tuesday, April 27th, 2004 * 1:30 p.m. * LPSNRD in Lincoln

Don't Forget:

Water Quality
Open
Golf Tourney
Wed, Sept 1st,
2004
11 a.m.