

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

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**CONSERVATION PLANNING/APPLICATION**

- Burt County has completed 17 NRD terrace jobs and 2 EQIP terrace jobs for the fall season.
- Burt County has received 3 NRD spring tree plantings for 2,053 trees; they have also received 13 tree orders for a total 1,850 trees to be hand planted this spring.
- Burt County has received 9 new wetland determinations; 2 wetland determinations and 4 Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations have been completed. Neil Jensen, Blair FO, has been working on wetland determinations in Burt County.
- Conservation plans were updated for 12 tracts in Dakota County.
- In Dakota County, 3 applications have been received for tree planting cost-share assistance; 4 tree orders for 850 trees have been received.
- An application for payment has been submitted on 15.4 acres of cropland conversion in Dakota County.
- Thurston County completed 2 terrace projects and conducted field work for 2 certified wetland determinations.
- Douglas/Sarpy Counties completed 3 NRD terrace/waterway projects and approved 4 applications for terraces with underground outlets. One of the approved applications is in the Walnut Creek Lake watershed.
- Washington County has received 86 HEL/wetland determination/non-compliance requests for FY2005.
- Blair field office (FO) has received 55 Conservation Assistance Plan (CAP) applications (\$245,000) for conservation practices in Washington County; 95% of the practices have been laid out and designed; 37 applications (\$161,540) have been processed for payment.
- Blair FO has received 32 orders (4,100 trees) to be planted spring 2005 in Washington County.

**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (EQIP)**

- Burt County has received 5 EQIP applications; 2 for animal waste operations; 1 terrace job; and 2 grade stabilization structures.
- Thurston County received 6 new EQIP applications; construction on 2 ag waste facilities was completed. Also, Diego Ayala from the NRCS Water Quality Team assisted staff in reviewing nutrient management records for 2 contract holders to determine their eligibility for certification.
- Blair FO technical staff advises that EQIP contract payments have been completed for Robert Toebben (animal waste facility), Charles Schneider Trust (terrace system). Thomas Van Dyke EQIP grade stabilization structure has hired a contractor, and the site is being cleared for spring 2005 construction. Sibbersen Farms EQIP grade stabilization structure is in the design, planning and approval stage. Troy Wakefield EQIP diversion and tile outlets have been built. Linda Ciurej EQIP grade stabilization structure will be constructed in spring 2005. Kriete Farms EQIP ag waste system is being designed by a Technical Service Provider (TSP). Potadle Farms EQIP pivot/irrigation waterline/flow meter is completed.

- Omaha FO, Julie Jonsson (TSP), created an ArcView project for Cunningham Lake that captures conservation practices applied to cropland. Also, an ArcView project is being created to target irrigated land in Sarpy and Douglas Counties.

### **WETLAND RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM (WREP)**

#### **WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP)**

- In Dakota County, option agreements to purchase have been sent to owners of 11 WREP parcels; 2 options have been accepted by landowners to date, totaling approximately 270 acres.
- Burt County has received 5 new WRP/WREP applicants for the next application deadline and have submitted these application packets to the NRCS State Office for approval.
- Nine new WRP/WREP option agreements have been signed by producers in Burt County and accepted by the NRCS State Office; 5 of these have been visited to finalize the easement boundaries with the producer and surveyor.
- Neil Stockfleth, South Sioux City, assisted Tekamah field office with 5 WRP/WREP applications.
- Les Smith (TSP), Blair FO, and Denver Long (TSP), Omaha FO, have been contacting landowners in the WREP Missouri River corridor to explain the program and generate interest.

### **CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)**

#### **CONTINUOUS CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CCRP)**

- Burt County completed 1 CCRP field windbreak application.
- Thurston County received 1 filter strip application and 1 waterway application.
- Blair FO, Les Smith (TSP) has been working with 6 landowners that have approved Buffer Habitat for Bobwhite Quail contracts.
- Omaha FO received a new application for a grass filter strip.
- Blair FO has completed 5 CRP contract modifications for reseeding.
- Neil Jensen, RC at Blair, completed a CCRP contract for a Burt County landowner for a filter strip.

### **PIGEON/JONES CREEK WATERSHED**

- An advisory committee meeting was held on December 15, to discuss the NRD's development plans for recreation site #15; 12 members of the Hubbard community were on hand to take part in the discussions.

### **INFORMATION/EDUCATION**

- 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 December. The news items were: Funds Available for Soil, Water and Wildlife Protection; Habitat Buffers (Quail Initiative); Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program; and Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Updates. Photos with captions were included of the archeological investigation for Pigeon Jones Site #5; EQIP cost share available for dams; Dakota County FSA County Committee members.

### **DAKOTA COUNTY SERVICE CENTER**

- The NRC is progressing on schedule. The building is nearly enclosed with walls and roof in place.

### **TRAINING/MEETINGS**

- Neil Jensen, Blair FO, spoke at the Blair Area Farmers monthly meeting on Federal Conservation Programs and NRD Cost-Share Programs.

#### **PERSONNEL**

- Janet (Sam) Thomas reported for duty on December 27, for the Civil Engineering Technician position in South Sioux City.
- Dave Bedlan, Burt County's new Resource Conservationist, also reported for duty on December 27. The staff at the Tekamah field office reports they are "very glad to have him here".

#### **MISCELLANEOUS – from Burt County**

- A huge thanks to everyone that came to Burt County throughout the fall to help us with our workload. We could not have accomplished as much as we did without your help.  
**Thanks a bunch!**

Reported by: Lynn Heng, District Conservationist, NRCS, Omaha, January 11, 2005



## From the Coordinator...

\*Monthly Report for the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the month of December 2004\*

Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

### **NEXT Quarterly Meeting**

The next LPRCA quarterly meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 starting at 9:30 a.m. at the LPSNRD in Lincoln. Contact the LPRCA at (402) 476-2729 with agenda items.

**Platte River Issues Meeting** A recent meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2005 focused on a variety of Lower Platte River Issues. Topics of discussion included W. Sarpy / Clear CK project status, BN railroad bridge debris issues at Hwy 6, Ice Jam Agreement update, FEMA floodplain efforts and expected dates of completion, Review of flood insurance issues for Union Dike area, Sarpy County Infrastructure Study and Comprehensive Plan update, and the LPRCA River Obstruction Project update. Attendees included the PMRNRD, Sarpy County, Senator Nelson's Office, USGS, and the COE.

**Cumulative Impact Study (CIS)** The CIS partner group is finishing up the scope of work for Phase I of the project and expects to work towards Phase II - Data Acquisition and evaluation by spring of this year.

**NACO Conference** I attended the annual Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) December 8 and 9. The conference has different sections for different interests. I chose to attend the Noxious Weed section because of our involvement with the Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA). Cooperative weed management groups like the LPWMA are being organized throughout the state and the nation. This is great for control of noxious weeds, but proving to be more difficult for getting grant funding with all of the competition. Salt cedar has now been added to the Nebraska Noxious Weed List. This invasive species can secrete salt into the soil to kill off native vegetation. Merlin Carlson, head of the Nebraska Dept of Ag, addressed the group on the current status and future of agriculture in the state. We appear to be moving from a commodity production mindset to a food production mindset. Biotechnology is really becoming a big issue in agriculture. More details of the conference are available in a detailed memo I put together. The memo is available upon request.

**NeWRA Meeting** I recently attended a roundtable of the Nebraska Water resources Association (NeWRA) in Lincoln. The featured speaker was congressman-elect Jeff Fortenberry. I took the opportunity to deliver a letter to Mr. Fortenberry asking to sit down and discuss LPRCA and NRD projects. We hope to meet with him soon.

**MoPac Trail** The LPSNRD is working on determination of a route for the MoPac trail to connect the existing trail at



Wabash to the Lied Bridge on the Lower Platte River near South Bend. Part of this process is a series of public meetings to show potential routes and receive public input. There are several possibilities for the route (see at right). Completion of this portion of the MoPac Trail is expected to be sometime in 2007. The PMRNRD has chosen a route on the other side of the river, chosen a contractor, and will begin construction this

year. Once completed, Lincoln and Omaha will be connected by the trail, which is a part of the American Discovery Trail.

**Nebraska Land Trust** The Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) is a new organization created to help preserve natural lands, rural/agricultural areas, and open space in Nebraska. The group is focusing on the Niobrara River and Lower Platte River areas. Already, the NLT has secured over 1000 acres of easement lands in the Lower Platte River area. I've attended the past two board meetings and really believe we can benefit by using the NLT as the mechanism to protect sensitive areas with easements.

**Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan Update** Sarpy County is in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan. This plan contains among other things guidelines for development in the county. They are looking at current and future needs as well as determining which areas are appropriate for development along with the type of development. The LPRCA has been involved in several focus group meetings for the process.

**Drinking Water Protection Program** The Groundwater Foundation has been organizing and presenting community water resources protection and how to apply for funding. I attended one of these programs on December 14<sup>th</sup> in Wilber to get ideas for LPRCA programs.

**Cooperative Weed Group** The Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) group is finalizing details an upcoming project to conduct aerial helicopter spraying of noxious weeds throughout the Corridor. They will also be kicking off an aggressive outreach and education program. I was asked to serve on an outreach committee to accomplish this. The group will also be approaching NRDs and other partners to secure future funding. With the increased competition for weed management grants, the LPWMA is looking to find more stable and long-term sources of funding.

**60-Mile Radius Committee** The final meeting of the steering committee was held on December 16<sup>th</sup> at the Joslyn Castle in Omaha. The final report from this 3-year project is still in draft form, but should be available soon and contains recommendations for addressing growth and land use planning for the areas between Council Bluffs and Lincoln. Many of the documents from the 60-mile Radius Study are available by logging on to [www.ecospheres.com](http://www.ecospheres.com). The sponsor of the project, the Joslyn castle Institute for Sustainable Communities is applying for another grant through the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF) for an additional 3-year grant to implement recommendations in the final report.

**Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** We are ready to proceed with this project after getting an interlocal agreement between NRDs to designate the LPSNRD to serve as sponsor on behalf of the LPRCA. We will have a kick-off meeting in the near future with our consulting firm, HDR to begin the project. This project will determine the level at which human activities impact the resources of the Corridor to the point they are no longer sustainable. We will be looking at existing land use planning, future needs, and determining where development is and is not appropriate as a part of this project. There will be a very strong public involvement component including workshops and meetings.

**Cooperative Ice Jam Group** The annual Ice Jam Preparedness and Ice Jam Removal meeting was held on December 19<sup>th</sup> at the PMNRD near Omaha. Ice Jam Agreement cooperative partners and ice jam observers gathered to cover topics including weather outlook, floodfighting, ice condition reporting, and electronic ice reporting. Ice jam information can be found on DNR's website at "[www.dnr.state.ne.us](http://www.dnr.state.ne.us)".

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OUR MAILING OR E-MAILING LIST?**

Please contact us at (402) 476-2729 or via e-mail at [rverhoeff@lpsnrd.org](mailto:rverhoeff@lpsnrd.org) to be added and let us know you wish to be added. If you are on the e-mail list, you will not receive paper copies except for our newsletter, which is sent out in printed form.

**Upcoming Meetings and Activities**

- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005 \* 5:30 p.m. - LPNNRD Office - Wahoo\*
- **PMNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, Jan 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005 \* 8:00 p.m. - Nat Res Center @ Chalco Hills Rec Area - Omaha
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, Dec 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004 \* 2:00 p.m. - LPSNRD Office - Lincoln @ 3125 Portia Street\*
- **Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) Group Meeting** - Thu, Jan 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005 \* 9:30 a.m. - LPNNRD Office - Wahoo
- **LPRCA Retreat** - Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005 \* 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. \* Camp Kitaki - near South Bend
- **NARD Legislative Conference** - January 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005 \* Embassy Suites \* Lincoln
- **UNL ARDC Nature Trail Partner Annual Meeting** - February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005 \* 1:00 p.m. meeting/3:00 p.m. tour\* UNL ARDC near Ithaca

**\*NOTE the winter meetings times are in effect for the next several months**