

# MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General Manager Report

DATE: May 15, 2006

FROM: Marlin Petermann, Acting General Manager

A. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION REPORT**: A copy of the I&E Report detailing Information and Education activities for the month of April, 2006, is attached for your review.

1. **Christine Jacobsen**, Education/Volunteer Specialist, will be giving a presentation on P-MRNRD education activities at the May 18<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

B. **MISCELLANEOUS/PERSONNEL ITEMS**:

1. **Mike McNaney**, Survey Coordinator, attended the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping Conference, April 21-26, 2006 in Orlando, FL. Attached is a memo outlining some of the highlights of the conference.

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 April, 2006. Please review this report and contact me if you have any questions.

D. **CURRENT AND ON-GOING PROJECTS – P-MRNRD LEGAL COUNSEL**: Attached is a copy of the current and on-going projects for District Legal Counsel, Paul Peters, as of April 17, 2006. I would ask each Director to review this listing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

E. **MISSOURI RIVER PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE UPDATE** – On May 11, 2006 Mayors Fahey and Hanafan announced that the design/build team of HNTB and APEC of Kansas City have been selected to construct the downtown pedestrian bridge over the Missouri River for \$22 million. The recommendation will go to the Omaha City Council in late June, at which time donors of the remaining \$5 million in funding needed to complete the work will be announced. This District has paid \$1 million toward the bridge. Larry Foster, City Park Administrator, will be at the May 18<sup>th</sup> Board meeting to provide an update on the project.

F. **NEW ORLEANS RELIEF EFFORT**: The writer spent the last week of April with a church group “mucking-out” houses in New Orleans, LA. It was a humbling experience seeing the devastation that remained in that City some nine months after Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005, flooded 80% of the area. However, it was an excellent opportunity to see the flood control works (canals, levees and floodwalls) in that community first hand. Attached is an

Engineering News Record article summarizing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' repair efforts that are scheduled for completion June 1, 2006, just in time for the next hurricane season. A photo report of the experience will be presented at the May 18<sup>th</sup> Board meeting.

G. NEWS CLIPS:

- ➔ April 7, 2006, Blair Enterprise Article – Dam meeting draws a crowd.
- ➔ April 10, 2006, Omaha World Herald Public Pulse Letter – Credibility on the line, written by Jon Junge, Omaha, NE
- ➔ April 11, 2006, Douglas County Post Gazette Article – Dam site meeting draws crowd.
- ➔ April 12, 2006, Omaha World Herald Public Pulse Letter – Not 'flood control,' written by Kevin Propst, Washington, NE
- ➔ April 14, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – 3 bridge designs vie to make statement. The plans span the gamut, but each could link Omaha and Council Bluffs for \$22 million or less.
- ➔ April 18, 2006, Omaha World Herald Midland Voices – Missouri River bridge reflects need by many, written by Gary Gebhard
- ➔ April 18, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Nebraska's role in wildlife program unclear
- ➔ April 19, 2006, Ralston Recorder Article – St. Gerald's Catholic students learn outside.
- ➔ April 20, 2006, Lincoln Journal Star Article – Environmental trust gives millions in grants. Money for cleanup of UNL research center near Mead did not bump any projects from the list, but it will affect next year.
- ➔ April 21, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Oltmans fired for lying about affair.
- ➔ April 25, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Bruning praises river decision. The U.S. Supreme Court ends a challenge to the Army Corps of Engineers' management of the Missouri.
- ➔ April 25, 2006, Omaha World Herald Public Pulse Letters:
  - Oltmans will be missed, written by Vicki Krecek
  - Executive privilege, written by Oliver Pierce
- ➔ April 25, 2006, Omaha World Herald Editorial – Lutz, Klug for NRD
- ➔ April 27, 2006, Lincoln Journal Star Article – NRD: State over legal line. Board thinks DNR's Platte River decision should be limited to Platte Basin, says John Turnbull, district manager.
- ➔ April 27, 2006, Lincoln Journal Star Article – Groundwater levels may require farmers to report irrigated acres.
- ➔ April 28, 2006, Omaha World Herald Midland Voices – NRD will continue to fulfill its mission, written by Rich Jansen, P-MRNRD Chairperson
- ➔ May 1, 2006, Omaha World Herald Editorial – As the river flows. If reservoirs are full enough, it is time to drop lawsuits and move forward on managing Missouri River.
- ➔ May 2, 2006, Lincoln Journal Star Article – NRD plan to curb nitrates. The proposed program would reduce nitrate levels in the Valparaiso area.
- ➔ May 2, 2006, Omaha World Herald Public Pulse letter – The right decision, written by Shawn Heitz, Leigh, NE

- ➔ May 3, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Solving water problems will be costly, conference participants say.
- ➔ May 4, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Water issues front, center in NRD race. Three candidates seek the open seat on the Papio-Missouri River board.
- ➔ May 4, 2006, Omaha World Herald Midlands Voices – Lighted river bridge would be practical, written by Stan Lessmann
- ➔ May 5, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – County OKs funds for Carter Lake work. We want to get this lake back to its former beauty.
- ➔ May 8, 2006, Omaha World Herald Picture – New landing site ready for canoeists.
- ➔ May 10, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Papio-Missouri NRD, Klug, Lutz advance.
- ➔ May 10, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Bridge work will block trail access.
- ➔ May 12, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Omahans will love bridge, Kerrey says. Officials see aesthetic and economic value.
- ➔ May 12, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Missouri River to begin rising tonight as cue for spawning. Rise is critical adjacent to Ponca State Park.
- ➔ May 13, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Joe Neary resigns from NRD
- ➔ May 14, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Bridge aims to create picture-perfect scene. Beyond recreation or development, the pedestrian span is called a boon to Omaha's image.
- ➔ May 14, 2006, Omaha World Herald Article – Check 'lake cam' before next picnic

## **April 2006**

### **Information & Education Report**

#### **Information**

- ◊ Continued work on greeting cards for NRDs
- ◊ Continued work on improvement of NRC wildlife dioramas
- ◊ Continued development of TV/Web ads with KETV
- ◊ Continued work on Spring SPECTRUM
- ◊ Attended meetings of NARD I&E group
- ◊ Prepared for NE Envirothon competition
- ◊ Submitted "Midlands Voices" by Chairman Jansen to W-H Editorial staff
- ◊ Began preparation for "Health and Fitness Day" at Heartland Park
- ◊ Began FY 07 I&E planning
- ◊ Taxidermy installed in NRC habitat exhibit. Began work on lighting improvements

#### **Education**

- ☐ Continued to plan Spring NRD programming
- ☐ Continued working with Nebraska Pheasants Forever, LEP volunteers, and location sponsors on Leopold Education Project workshops for 2006
- ☐ Continued promotion of NRD outdoor classroom grants
  - Letters sent to previous grant recipients and all curriculum specialists in District
- ☐ Attended Water Works 2006 Planning Meetings
  - Assembled presenter letters/packets
  - Sorted trees for all students attending Water Works 2006
- ☐ Continued working with LPRCA Outreach & Education Committee on PSA's and Kiosks
- ☐ Presented to Environmental Studies Class from Millard South (4/10/06 & 4/24/06)
- ☐ Continued planning for Earth Day 2006—Held event April 22, 2006
- ☐ Arranged for LEP materials at 3 Pheasants Forever Banquets
- ☐ Managed 65 volunteer hours
- ☐ Sent out Wellness E-mails to staff
- ☐ Presented Enviroscape/Surface Water Programs Benson West 5<sup>th</sup> Graders
- ☐ Continued taking orders for free seedlings, and sending out NRD seed packets
- ☐ Planted Grace Abbott Outdoor classroom Butterfly Garden and Presented Arbor Day Programs
- ☐ Held April WET/WILD/PLT/LEP teacher training at Creighton University
- ☐ Continued work on Outdoor Classroom report
- ☐ Presented flood control presentation to Girl Scout Troop
- ☐ Sorted and handed out 8,000 tree seedlings
- ☐ Held Benson West 1<sup>st</sup> grade field day at Chalco Hills with presentations from the Omaha Raptor Team, and NRD staff
- ☐ Presented tree/wildlife programs at Arlington Elementary Earth Day Festival
- ☐ Presented Nature Hike and Omaha Raptor Team programming to Cornerstone Christian School
- ☐ Started I&E budget for FY 2006-2007
- ☐ Worked with Omaha Raptor Team on web site up dates
- ☐ Mailed Envirothon checks and awards
- ☐ Up dated NRD Statewide I&E group on up coming teacher workshops
- ☐ Sent out press releases on Grace Abbott planting, and Arbor Day tree give-away
  - KFAB ran hourly Arbor Day spots on Monday morning April 24<sup>th</sup>
- ☐ Staffed NRD booth at Benson West Science Night
- ☐ Presented tree/wildlife program at Gretna Preschool

## MEMORADUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: AMERICAN CONGRESS ON SURVEYING & MAPPING  
CONFERENCE, ORLANDO, FL APRIL 20-26, 2006

DATE: APRIL 27, 2006

FROM: S. MICHAEL MCNANEY

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On April 21-26, 2006, I attended the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping Conference (ACSM), held in Orlando, Florida.

My goals of attending the 2006 ACSM conference were:

- To gain information and standards for publishing NRD bench marks on the NGS web site.
- Receive information regarding flood plain mapping and procedures for gathering information to produce the new Federal Emergency Management Agency firm maps.
- Gain additional information on boundary surveys as well as documenting work in a way that will help solidify you position if a boundary dispute should ever arise, and it needs to be defended in court. Also, to learn in depth procedures for American Land Title Association (ALTA) surveys.
- To obtain Professional Development Hours as needed for Registered Land Surveyor licensing renewal
- Gain additional skills for producing high quality maps meshing survey quality data and GIS data together into one system.

Conference Workshops and information gained from attending these sessions.

The class outline I attended follows:

Saturday, April 22, 2006: ALTA/ACSM Land Title Surveys

The ALTA/ACSM Land Title Survey Workshop included detailed information regarding the changes made to the ALTA standards as well as answering many questions in detail about those changes. There was also discussion on the Table "A" optional items and the pitfalls to look for when asked to include some of these items. ALTA surveys can present great risks if proper guidelines are not followed and the surveyor needs to be aware of the potential liability problems and how to protect themselves. This workshop was very informative in these matters.

Sunday, April 23, 2006: The Surveyor's Role in Flood Studies -  
Evidence, Exhibits and Testimony: Boundaries and  
Beyond

This seminar covered the surveyors' role in creating FEMA firm maps. Also covered was FEMA's role in the historical data of prior surveys. We discussed the flood plain certificate procedures and how to establish the base flood elevation.

Monday, April 24, 2006: Geomapping for Data Visualization –  
The Rectangular Land System: Subdivision of the  
Public Lands

The Geomapping workshop was one that basically gave a broad over view of the map making process and how survey data can be used to create high quality maps. This workshop contained a lot of in depth information, which was hard to follow but gave a good base finding additional areas for research.

Tuesday, April 25, 2006: GPS Derived Heights Parts I & II, Development &  
Description of NGS Guidelines & Planning  
And Evaluating a GPS Vertical Survey

This was by far the highlight of the conference for me. This class covered the standards required by National Geodetic Survey (NGS) to achieve orthometric elevations using GPS equipment. I met with the speaker, and he gave me contact information for the State of Nebraska NGS representative. The representative will assist us in getting the NRD bench marks published on the NGS web site.

Wednesday, April 26, 2006: The Expert Witness

This workshop covered the different court systems and how the surveyor can be expected to act as an expert witness and the things to think about as you prepare to testify.

Summary: This was a very informative conference and I was able to gather a lot of useful information in addition to library materials that will help me to achieve the goals and objectives of the Papio-Missouri River NRD Survey Section.



**2006 ACSM Annual Conference and Technology Exhibition**  
**April 21 - 26, 2006 - Orlando, Florida**  
**Workshop CEU/PDH Verification**

**Name** Mike McNaney  
 Papio Missouri NRD  
 8901 S. 154th Street  
 Omaha, NE 68138

**Email** mmmcnaney@papionrd.org  
**Phone** 402-657-2860

**IMPORTANT: List the states you are licensed in, and your license number for each state:**

*Write on back if additional space is needed*

State #1	<u>NEBRASKA</u>	License #	<u>605</u>
State #2	_____	License #	_____
State #3	_____	License #	_____
State #4	_____	License #	_____

Workshop Title	Instructor	Date	Time	Enter	Exit
ALTA / ACSM LAND TITLE SURVEYS	GARY KENT	4/22/06	8:00-5:00	▶▶	
THE SURVEYORS ROLE IN FLOOD STUDIES	WENDY LATHROP	4/23/06	8:00-12:00	▶▶	
GEO MAPPING FOR DATA VISUALIZATION	JOSEPH LOON	4/24/06	8:00-12:00	★	★
GPS- DERIVED HEIGHTS PART I	CURTIS SMITH	4-25-2006	8:00-12:00	▶▶	
GPS- DERIVED HEIGHTS PART II	CURTIS SMITH	4-25-2006	2:00-6:00	★	★
THE EXPERT WITNESS	JEFFERY LUCAS	4-26-2006	8:00-12:00	★	★
ADDITIONAL CEU-REQUIREMENTS					
EVIDENCE, EXHIBITS & TESTIMONY & MORES AND BEYOND	CHUCK WARDYNI	4-23-2006			
THE RECTANGULAR LAND SYSTEMS SUBDIVISION OF THE PUBLIC LANDS	MILTON SEARBY	4-24-2006			

## Report On Purchases

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Updated: April 17, 2006

## **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)
  - Easements (6) for Drainage Project North of Maple
- **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
- **West Branch** (Cleveland):
  - Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96<sup>th</sup> St.) (P)
  - UPRR Bridge (Boyer/Young ROW) Bill of Sale and Temporary Easement (N)
- **Western Sarpy Dike** (Cleveland):
  - Closing with Bundy's (potentially modify ROW/offer) (F)
  - Amended drainage ditch easements on Hickey (First National Property) (P)
  - Hansen ROW Condemnation (W)
- **Floodway Purchase Program** (Woodward):
  - Floodway Property Purchase Agreements as needed (F)
- **Trail Projects** (Bowen):
  - Western Douglas County Trail – Ehrhart Griffin professional services contract (P)
    - ★ Mopac Trail – Purchase Agreements and easements (W)
- **Missouri River Corridor Project** (Becic):
  - California Bend – Appeal District Court ruling on Wright's tenant (Arp) (W)
  - ★ Lower Decatur Bend – Closing for Williams (W)
  - ★ Mo. River Trail – Purchase Agreements and easements (N)

- **USDA P.L. 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed** (Puls/Cleveland):
  - Pigeon/Jones Creek Site Easements – as needed (F)
  - Silver Creek Site Easements– as needed (F)
  - Release of Site S-7 Easement (W)
  - S-27 Interlocal Agreement with SIDs on Dam Rehab/Trail Replacement (W)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites** (Woodward/Petermann):
  - Dam Site 19 agreement (F)
  - ✪ DS 13 Closing with Metro Community College (W)
  - ✪ Shadow Lake ROW Closing (P)
  - ✪ DS 8A Purchase Agreement with Dial Reality (N)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater)** (Woodward):
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Sklenar)
- **Elkhorn River Public Access Sites** (Sklenar):
- **Other:**

# ENR

Engineering News-Record

**Shaky**  
Quake ex-  
perts worry  
about lack of  
recovery plan

**Closure**  
Mississippi  
cable-stayed  
span reaches  
milestone

**Wired**  
Underwater  
cable is key  
link for Long  
Island power

## The Scramble To Protect New Orleans



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MARLIN PETERMANN 043762

PAPID-MISSOURI RIVER NRD 00009

8901 S 154TH 1226

OMAHA NE 68138-3635

McGraw Hill  
CONSTRUCTION

By Tom Sawyer and Angelle Bergeron

## Katrina Analysis Has Designers

# Building Faster and

Intense study of the storm, surge and consequences lead to big changes at rapid pace

June 1 is Judgment Day for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. That's when the world's most powerful organization of civil engineers has pledged to deliver on its promise to restore the hurricane protections defeated last fall when Hurricane Katrina inundated an estimated 151 sq miles of

New Orleans and neighboring parishes.

The Corps will deliver, "but a lot of work is going to go on beyond that date as we continue to make the system better," says Col. Lewis Setliff, commander of the Corps' Memphis District. Setliff heads Task Force Guardian, a strike team gathered from around the Corps to manage the effort to rebuild the system in 10 months to be as good, or better, than it was when Katrina ripped through it, on Aug. 29, 2005.

The worksite is enormous. Thirty-three construction firms with 59 contracts are scrambling to repair 169 miles of breaches, scour and destruction scattered like bomb craters across the 350-mile-long system. The contracts are

worth \$428.4 million, but with the additional costs thrown in, including securing real estate, supplied services, technical review, audits, and 5.5 million cu yd of high-quality clay for levee repairs, the total cost hits \$1 billion.

"It has been pretty much seven days a week since we started in September," says Setliff. A lot of the jobs run around the clock. "We've had two official days off—Thanksgiving and Christmas," he says.

Much of the work of raising levee elevations is an "acceleration to completion" of projects planned around federal funding cycles at a 35% local, 65% federal split through 2017. But now it is all going off at once with 100% federal money under flood control and construction emergency funding, says Col. Richard P. Wagenaar, district commander for New Orleans. In normal times a typical project may take years to plan, resolve real estate and environmental issues, design, bid and build, he says. Under the emergency, all of the work is being compressed into



▲ **Models.** Corps' mock-up of New Orleans 17th Street Canal and lake-front fills a hanger, while sample of its levee gets ready for a twirl.



PHOTOS BY TOM SAWYER FOR ENR



# Smart

▲ **Challenge.** Workers wrestle steel and concrete in solitude and mud in race against time.

months, everywhere at once.

"For each parish we put together a multifunctional team," says Setliff. "We had real estate people, environmental people and structural and civil engineers. Each team has a leader who can make decisions very quickly...the schedule here is of paramount importance." He says that while management has been "intensive," the philosophy is to treat contractors like partners, track their progress closely, monitor constantly and meet frequently, but only "manage by exception—if they start to get off track."

"Our philosophy early on was that we wanted to ensure victory back in Febru-

Probably when people look back at this it will be seen as the wave of the future," Setliff says.

"None of these jobs has worked out the way any of us expected—labor, equipment, so many unknowns," says Wayne Ledet, one of the owners of LL&G Construction, Houma, La., in his job trailer at the Bayou Bienvenue Flood Control Structure repair site. James Drinkwater, one of Ledet's superintendents on another flood control repair, says maintaining a labor force to keep pace with the schedule is his biggest challenge. "I could use five more welders today, but I can't get them," he says.

to stockpile material in order to have enough," adds Ledet. "That's one thing I told the Corps: 'You've got to allow us to stockpile if we're going to get this job done.'" Plugging the 310 ft of breaches at Bayou Bienvenue took 40,000 tons of rock, 50,000 yd of sand and 8,000 yd of clay. "Clay before the storm was \$15 to \$25 per yard; now it's \$45," Ledet says.

Ledet strongly supports the Corps' approach to the work. He says he has built flood control structures and pump stations for 15 years for both the Corps and local governments. Despite the widespread failures throughout the system, he still feels consolidating all levee construction, operation and maintenance under the Corps is the only way to go. "Locals don't understand compaction and quality control," Ledet says. "If they take the levee work from the Corps...it will be all about locals and buddies."

Construction innovations are driven by rapidly improving understanding of the engineering requirements for building survivable hurricane resistant systems. A \$20-million, crash research campaign has been under way since the storm, also under sponsorship and direction of the Corps and centered around its Engineering Research and Development Center in Vicksburg, Miss.

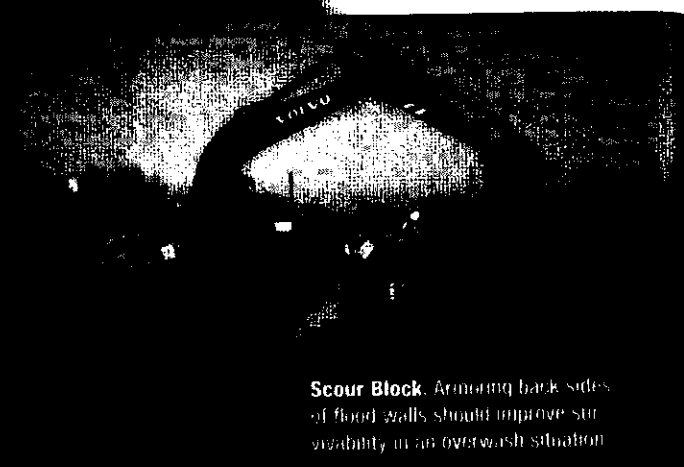
Called the Interagency Performance Evaluation Review Taskforce, the project has pulled together a team of 150 scientists and engineers who are analyzing the storm and the behavior of the flood protection system during it. Their preliminary results are leading to significant changes in design and construction.

"It's a high performance team," says the task force's technical director, John J. Jaeger. Half of the project leaders, including Jaeger, are drawn from experts within the Corps, and half from federal agencies or academia.

They are trying to answer questions about how the system's many structures were designed and built, and what condition they were in when Katrina came ashore. The storm, with its winds, waves and surge, has been modeled with three



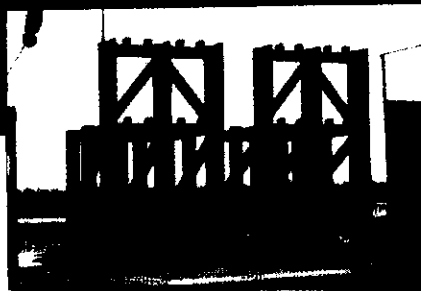
**T-Walls.**  
Thousands of  
H-piles give  
deep bracing



**Scour Block.** Arming back sides  
of flood walls should improve sur-  
vivability in an overwash situation



**▲ Rip-Rap.** Transitions  
where walls meet earth  
are shielded with rock.



**▲ Storm Gate.** Frames for storm  
to block canals are now being plac



**Uplifting.** Clay mined locally or barged-in is  
laid in 12-in. lifts, compacted, and laid again.

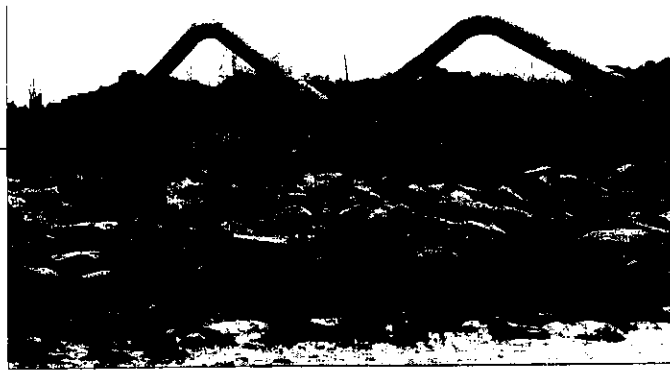


**▲ Compression.** A decade's worth  
struction is rammed into a 10-mon



▶ **Solitude.** Visitors are rare on  
remote sites where contractors  
fight the clock day after day.

PHOTOS BY TOM SAWYER FOR ENR,  
EXCEPT: TOP LEFT BY ANGELLE  
BERGERON FOR ENR; PHOTOS CEN-  
TER FAR LEFT COURTESY OF  
U.S.A.C.E. NEW ORLEANS DIST./LANE  
LEFT; BACKGROUND IMAGE COUR-  
TESY OF USACE; ILLUSTRATION BY  
NANCY SOULIARD FOR ENR



▲ **Not Even Close.** Hours of overwash in St. Bernard Parish floated vessels over walls, ripped out holes and left levee-top gas lines in the air.

computer with 256 parallel processors, using meteorological data from the National Hurricane Center and other sources. The model covers the entire region and is based on 377,815 data points solved in one-second time steps, over six days. It takes 75 minutes for the Cray to run the storm, says Bruce Ebersole, chief of the ERDC flood and storm protection division.

Ebersole says factors in the height of the surge were wind speed and direction and the shape of the land masses and sea bottom. The computer models show how those variables morphed with the movement and changing intensity of the storm, and reveal how serious the set-up for disaster was. "Katrina's winds traveled across the continental shelf and ran against the large bays, piling up the water well ahead of the storm,"



▲ **Analysis.** Resio investigates wave forces on floodwalls.

says Ebersole. "A day-and-a-half out, the water was already up three or four feet. The wetlands were inundated."

Wave behavior also changed dramatically as the storm neared land. The model has raised eyebrows by demonstrating how long-period waves, "which convey a

lot more energy at a given point and can give a 75% greater run-up," began to pile up against the levees lining the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet to the east of the city, he says.

"This is the most rigorous analysis for hurricane winds [the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration] has ever done," Ebersole says. Engineers have gone into the field to retrieve hard evidence such as eyewitness accounts, photographs, stopped clocks, and carefully surveyed high-water marks. By combining those data points with the computer model they have created what they believe is a 95% accurate simulation of how the storm created the surge that sank New Orleans.

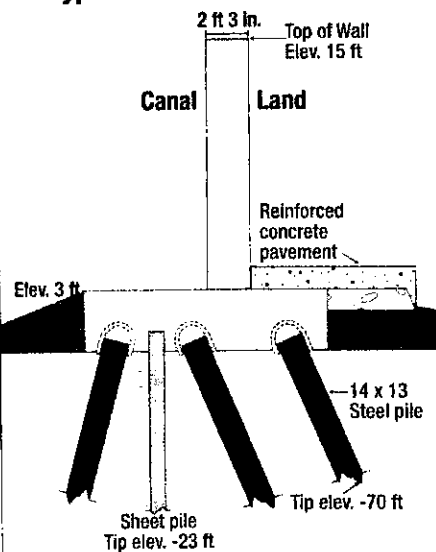
Better, more survivable instrumentation would help but there are few that can survive a hurricane, Ebersole says.

Almost every in-

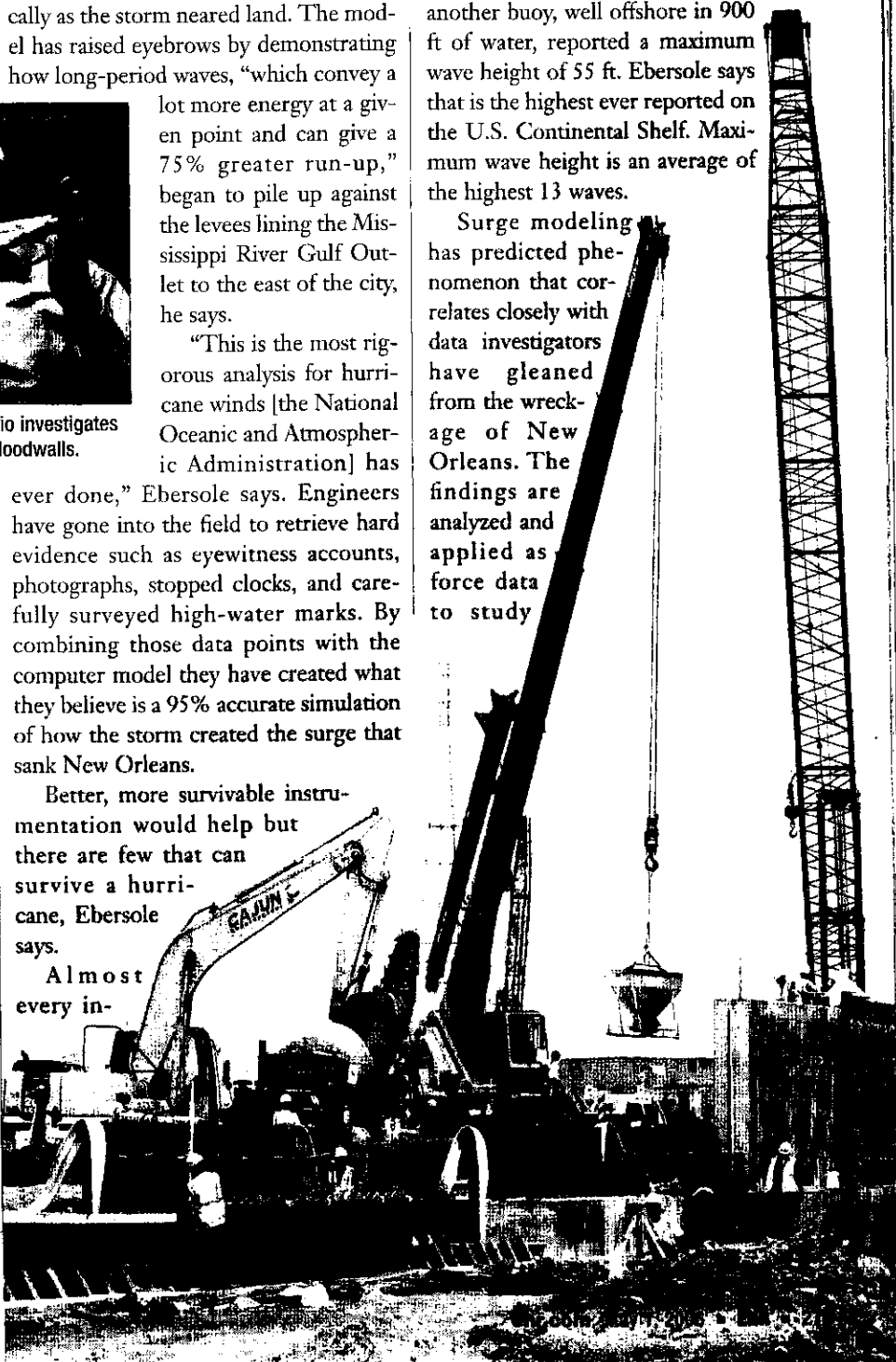
strument in Katrina's path failed before the storm peaked at each location. One of NOAA's 10-meter-dia, saucer-shaped instrument buoys flipped, although another buoy, well offshore in 900 ft of water, reported a maximum wave height of 55 ft. Ebersole says that is the highest ever reported on the U.S. Continental Shelf. Maximum wave height is an average of the highest 13 waves.

Surge modeling has predicted phenomenon that correlates closely with data investigators have gleaned from the wreckage of New Orleans. The findings are analyzed and applied as force data to study

### Typical IHNC T-Wall Section



► **Heavy.** Braced T-walls are replacing I-walls on Inner Harbor Navigation Canal, adding strength.



**Piles.** Supplies are fine, but prices for good quality clay have kept increasing.

the performance of the engineered protections when assaulted by those loads.

In February, members of the team working at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute used the data on a 50:1 scale model of the portion of the 17th Street Canal levee and I-Wall-style floodwall, whose collapse initiated massive flooding of the north side of New Orleans. The model duplicates, at scale, the materials and properties of the structure. Since gravity cannot be scaled in the same way, the model is then encased in a strong, aquarium-like box and swung on a centrifuge to add weight before flood waters flow in.

ERDC scientists are preparing to repeat the experiment. At 81 RPM, at the end of a 6.5-m centrifuge boom, the weight of the 1,000-lb model and box will grow 50 times, to 50,000 lb. At Rensselaer, it took less than six minutes for the I-wall to fail, revealing a design flaw that instantly indicted all 56 miles of similarly built wall in the system.

Contractors now are either replacing the I-walls with heavily braced T-walls or building storm gates to block off outflow canals in Orleans Parish to prevent another storm surge from coming in.

The T-walls are massively braced. A 4,000-ft section along the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal, an area where scouring on the back side during overtopping apparently triggered collapse, is being replaced with T-walls locked down by 2,240 70-ft-long H-piles

angled out in two directions, 5 ft 6 in. on center, according to Stuart S. Waits, Corps IHNC project manager.

IPET's inquest was broken down into nine critical and coordinated investigations, but the starting point was the validation of an elevation baseline for southeast Louisiana. The Corps and NOAA's National Geodetic Survey were already working on that before Katrina. They accelerated the effort using the most current technology, establishing a new datum in October. That led to revelations that large parts of the system were well below design elevation, due to sea level rise, survey or design errors, or subsidence—in some cases of several feet. The Inner Harbor Navigation Canal's floodwalls, for example, were 2.7 ft lower, relative to sea level, than previously believed.

Applying revised elevations to the storm surge and wave actions predicted by IPET's computer modeling, researchers found large expanses of outer protection levees were overtopped by a fast, solid flow of water for hours during the height of the storm.

"It wasn't even close," says Donald T.

Resio, a senior ERDC research scientist. "Obviously, if you have overtopping, you're in trouble," he says. "Scour is a function of velocity and time, and the effects of waves becomes critical. On the backside of the levees during the overwash they had speeds of 15, 20, 25 feet per second. It was almost like a freefall."

One early realization is that armoring the backside of levees, particularly in transition zones and areas of special vulnerability to overtopping, could greatly improve system survivability. "We're getting a lot of good ideas on how to build the future system," he says. "I hope it would be of extreme interest to anybody in coastal areas. There's so much that we need to learn, particularly since sea level is rising. We're certainly seeing a lot of powerful storms, and a one-foot-per-century sea level rise is not going to stop."

Although some areas, like Florida, are obviously exposed, others, like the upper East Coast, are probably more at risk than people think. The fast-moving "1938 Storm" dragged in the highest storm surge ever recorded in the Northeast. Estimates put it at 16 ft above mean

sea level on Long Island and Rhode Island and 12 ft in eastern Connecticut. Such an event today could have enormous consequences for infrastructure like New York City's subway system.

"All this will be used in the future," says Resio. "We're learning all the factors that make a difference. We're trying to give the right answer." ■

**enr.com**

FOR MORE STORIES ON THIS TOPIC  
VISIT THE HURRICANE INFORMATION  
CENTER AT ENR.COM.



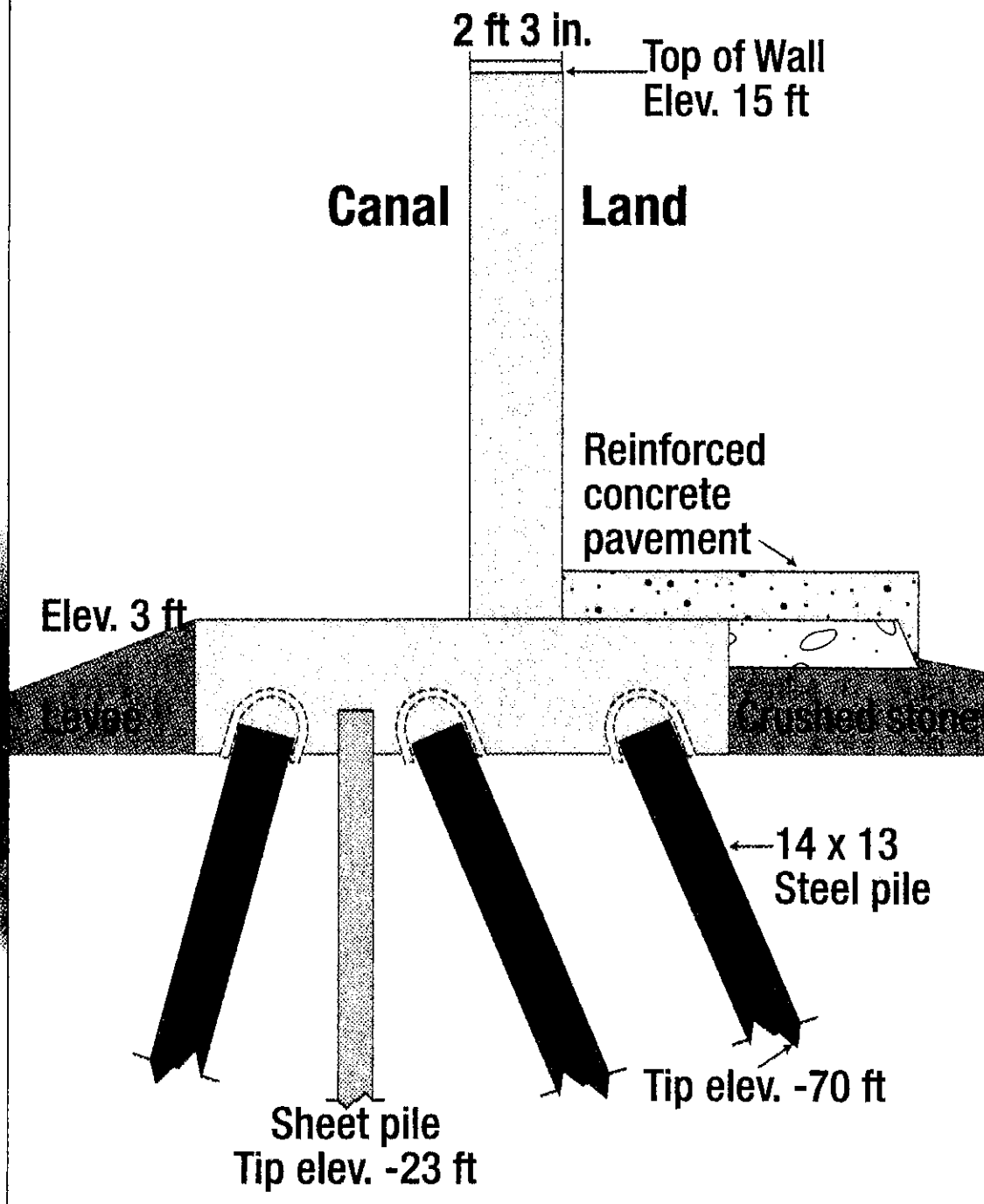
▲ **Relentless.** Contractor crews set jacket for temporary canal gate.



PHOTOS TOP LEFT COURTESY OF USACE; BOTTOM LEFT COURTESY OF USACE; BOTTOM RIGHT BY TOM SAWYER FOR ENR; BOTTOM RIGHT BY MICHAEL GOODMAN FOR ENR

shelf and ran against the large bays, piling up the water well ahead of the storm,”

## Typical IHNC T-Wall Section



► **Heavy.** Braced T-walls are replacing I-walls on Inner Harbor Navigation Canal, adding strength.

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# Dam meeting draws a crowd

*Enterprise*  
4-7-06

BENNINGTON - More than 300 people gathered Wednesday, April 5, in the commons at Bennington High School to talk with members of the HDR study team on proposed dam sites 1 and 3C. The dams would create reservoirs near Kennard and Washington in Washington County.

HDR has contracted with the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District to conduct the study. The purpose of the meeting was to help the study team identify questions the study needs to answer.

And they got plenty.

The group consisted mostly of Washington County landowners, Papio Valley Preservation Association members and other opponents of the dams, who expressed doubt over the stated purpose for the dams for flood control, and in HDR's ability to do an objective report.

Members of the audience asked the study team to look at dry dams as an alternative. Questions ranged from where the money would come from for construction and maintenance, how road closings would affect emergency responders, why recreation is even being included in the study and why they should be at risk of a dam breakage in Bennington to save Omaha.



A large crowd of people, many of them Washington County residents, was on hand for the public meeting in conjunction with a feasibility study for two proposed dams that would create lakes in Washington County.

PVPA member Gary Lambrecht asked the study team why the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District did not attend one meeting to help shape the county's master development plan if NRD officials knew about plans to build a lake in the county. Between better farming practices, such as terraces, and the NRD's help, Lambrecht said area farmers have worked to reduce flood risks to the point where dams

SEE DAMS PAGE 3A

## DAMS: Study should be done in April 2007

FROM PAGE 1  
are not necessary.

The general consensus of the hour-long grilling of the study team was that people do not trust HDR to do the study because of the potential for the company to get the design if it recommends constructing the lakes.

People in the audience also said they do not trust that flood control is the primary driving force behind the proposed lakes. Audience members also stressed the need for Washington County to have representation on the NRD board, which consists mainly of people from Douglas County.

As the forum continued, loud applause and whistles erupted constantly as different people spoke out against the dams, the NRD and even HDR.

Frank Hauck of Omaha was the only person to stand up and speak in favor of the dams. He said 150 family farms would be affected in Washington County, but more than 8,000 families are living in danger downstream.

"This should have been

here 20 years ago," Hauck said. "The people downstream need this help. It's about our lives, our families and our property, too."

Almost immediately, however, someone in the crowd called Hauck an "idiot," prompting laughter and applause in the audience as well as an awkward moment while the mediator tried to reign in control.

"Everyone at the meeting who wanted to get a chance to speak.

The HDR study team will

be taking all of the gathered comments into consideration while conducting the study, which is expected to be finalized in about a year. There will be a second public meeting sometime in September when they will return with some answers to questions asked at the meeting.

The final public meeting is scheduled for December and the study should be completed by April 2007. As they collect and process data some questions may be answered and more raised.

## Credibility on the line

The matter of Steve Oltmans, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, is very disconcerting.

Mr. Oltmans is on paid leave while the state auditor examines his expense records to see if he spent money inappropriately on his mistress. But that pales in comparison to the fact that he lied to his board about his long-term, extramarital affair with former NRD board mem-

W-H 4-10-06

ber Barb Nichols and that he influenced at least one of her votes while she was on the board.

I believe that the credibility of the NRD is at stake.

Mr. Oltmans has brought reproach upon himself and the NRD. If the board wants to save face with the voters, it will have to remove Mr. Oltmans as general manager. That is the only way to show voters that the NRD wishes to operate with high values and standards.

I'm sure that Mr. Oltmans knew the consequences of carrying on such a relationship, including the fact that it could lead to his termination.

**Jon Junge, Omaha**



Ken Dreessen, who owns about 900 acres of land with his brother, Wayne, talks to representatives from Ayres Kayler Marketing at the Papio-MR-NRD meeting at Bennington High School April 5.

## Dam site meeting draws crowd

by Mary Lou Rodgers

It was a night of questions, but not too many answers. At least 200 people from Douglas and Washington counties gathered Wednesday night for a forum on a double dam site proposal that would put hundreds of acres of farmland and family homes under water.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District held the meeting at Bennington High School on April 5 to provide information to the public on a study they are doing of the Papio Creek area from north of Bennington, well into Washington County, about 13 miles in length. The study will look at the possibility of providing flood control to the entire Watershed by building reservoirs at sites 1 and 3C. The study also includes ideas for recreation and development. The resulting lake or lakes would affect the towns of Kennard and Washington, and cover several county roads that run east to west.

Before the meeting, landowners poured in the doors to look at maps

of the study area and to try to get their questions answered. Among them were Wayne Dreessen, his brother, Ken, and son, Tim, who own farmland in the heart of a proposed lake at 173rd and Dutch Hall Road. Wayne and Ken stand to lose 900 acres of land if the lower dam is put in. Tim said his house sits where the dam would be. The rest of the land could be under water, or split on both sides of the lake with no road connecting them.

Even if they were fairly compensated for the land, Tim Dreessen said that isn't the point.

"It's not about money," he said. "We don't want to move. I went to Bennington High School. I want my kids to go there, too."

Ken Dreessen said they already know what it is like to lose land. They had land where Boys Town is now located and had to give it up. That when they bought the land in Washington County.

"The land is to be used and taken care of," he said. "It's not to be taken by developers to benefit themselves.

The people before us took care of the land for us. It is the source of living for these people. Once it goes into this, it's gone."

Merle and Mardelle Andersen also came to the meeting out of concern for their family's future. They own 1,000 acres of land by Kennard.

"We have our fifth generation starting to farm on this land," Mardelle Andersen said. "If this goes through, it will put us all out of business."

According to John Engel of HDR, the engineering firm hired for the study, it will cost about \$600,000 to conduct the study. It is scheduled for completion in spring 2007. The 2004 estimate of the cost of constructing the reservoir sites was \$107 million.

While many people came to the open house just to pick up information and talk to NRD and engineering representatives, 200 or more stayed for the 8 p.m. forum run by Dick Gordon of HDR. At least 30 people signed in to ask questions.

• continued on page 3

## Dam site meeting draws crowd

continued from p. 1

The questions were recorded both at the forum and at the open house stations for consideration in the study.

"The purpose of the forum is for us to learn the issues from you," Gordon said. "We want you to tell us what you think we should study."

In answer to a question about the who the final authority on the project would be, Gordon said it would require federal approval from the Corps of Engineers before the NRD could do it.

Others wondered if solutions other than dams had been pursued and pointed out that dams sometimes failed in other areas. Julie Thacker was concerned about being able to provide emergency fire and rescue protection without east to west access in Washington County.

While most of those who spoke questioned the need and motives for the dams, one man from Omaha said he and his neighbors, about 8,000 people, are concerned about flooding and feel they have to pay a lot of money for flood insurance without having enough flood control in place.

Gary Lambrecht, who farms in areas on both sides of the proposed dam, expressed his frustration that

the NRD had not attended any of the meetings the Washington County Planning Commission held as they prepared a new Comprehensive Plan. Lambrecht said he got on the Commission to help with the plan, one which he said the people of Washington County want.

A man from Fillmore County noted that the Newport Landing lake is in debt, and that this plan would "condemn nice farms." He added that there seems to be collusion between the engineers, the NRD and developers.

In response to another speaker asking if this would be a legitimate study, Gordon urged people to watch HDR and let them prove it.

Sheila Dreessen urged HDR and the NRD to provide more information to the residents.

"I want to know everything, she said. "It's our land, it's our lives, it's our blood."

Information packets were available at Wednesday's meeting, and another public meeting is scheduled for the late summer or fall. Sign-up sheets for one-on-one meetings were provided. They will be held at three locations in half-hour intervals from noon to 8 p.m. The first will be Tues-

day, April 11, at the Village of Kennard Office. The second will be on Monday, April 17, at the Village of Washington Fire Hall, and the third will be on Tuesday, April 18, at the Community Room adjacent to the Bennington Public Library.

Those who have questions and concerns can send them to [papioreservoirs1and3C@hdrinc.com](mailto:papioreservoirs1and3C@hdrinc.com), or by calling John Engel, HDR, at (402) 926-7110 or writing him at HDR, 8404 Indian Hills Drive, Omaha, NE 68144. Information is also available online at [www.papioreservoirs1and3C.org](http://www.papioreservoirs1and3C.org).

Members of the Steering Committee can also be contacted. There are 21 in all, with eight alternates. Among them are Terry Hauck representing the Bennington School Board; Skip Wolff, the City of Bennington; Kent Holm, Douglas County; Jon Reeves, the Village of Kennard Council; Kevin Probst, the Village of Washington; Steve Jensen, City of Omaha; and local landowners Jennifer Andersen and Julie Thacker.

## Not 'flood control' <sup>W-H</sup> <sup>4-12-06</sup>

Although I was happy that a photograph of a meeting about two proposed dams in Washington County appeared in the April 6 World-Herald, I was quite disheartened by the words that were chosen to describe these dams.

The caption mentioned "a proposal to build two large flood-control lakes." The words "purported," "mythical" and "fantasy" could easily have been injected before the words "flood control."

The truth is that these lakes are not for flood control; they are for recreation and high-end lakefront developments. True flood control can be attained with dry dams and other methods — at a much lower cost and with little impact to the farms and residents in the proposed area.

Taxpayers need to understand that the \$100 million price tag will buy them a murky, muddy cesspool filled with nitrate phosphorous and E. coli. Water plus dirt equals mud, not a beautiful blue lake.

Those taxpayers downstream who think these dams will get them out of a flood plain and preclude them from buying flood insurance need to try getting that in writing from their insurance companies, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Metro Area Planning Agency and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Good luck with that.

**Kevin Propst, Washington, Neb.**

# 3 bridge designs vie to make statement

■ The plans span the gamut, but each could link Omaha and Council Bluffs for \$22 million or less. 4-14-06

By C. David Korok  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Towers and an arch punctuate three new proposals for the long-delayed pedestrian bridge linking Omaha and Council Bluffs across the Missouri River.

Each team of builders, architects and engineers pledged that it could build its concept for \$22 million or less.

Mayor Mike Fahey will pick one of three designs for the new bridge. His selection will be subject to City Council approval.

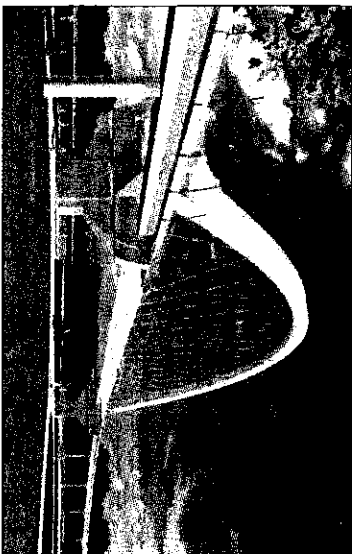
The three proposals are the latest effort to get the bridge built. It comes nearly six years after then-U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey won \$19 million in federal funds

ON OMAHA.COM  
Vote for your favorite design.

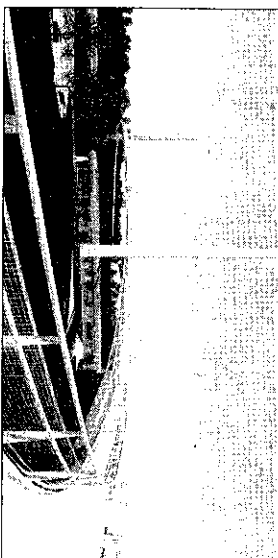
for the project.

The promise from the beginning has been that the bridge would be a signature piece of public art as well as serve joggers and bikers. The bridge would link trails on both the Iowa and Nebraska sides of the

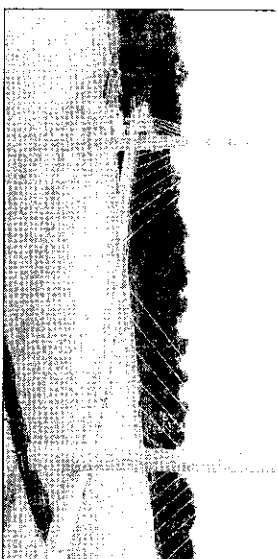
See Bridge: Page 2



**Arch with cables** Designer: Harrington & Cortelyou, Kansas City, Mo. Builder: Jensen Construction Co., Des Moines



**Twin towers and cables** Designer: HNTB Corp., Kansas City, Mo. Builder: APAC-Kansas, Kansas City, Kan.



**Twin towers and cables** Designer: Figg Bridge Builders, Denver. Builder: Cramer & Associates, Des Moines

## Bridge: Goal is an exclamation mark for Omaha

Continued from Page 1

The location of the bridge was conceived as an exclamation mark along Omaha's riverfront between the Gallup University campus and the National Park Service headquarters. It would land in Iowa in a proposed nature park between the riverbank and the levee in Council Bluffs.

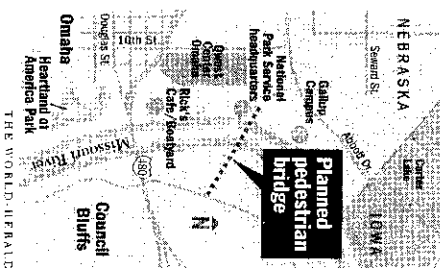
Two of the proposals incorporate the original concept of a curved bridge suspended from two towers that resemble masts. A third proposal uses an arch to suspend the span over the river.

The ultimate choice depends on many factors, not which firm presented the most attractive drawing of its concept, Scarpello said.

City officials have to weigh other considerations, including quality of materials, construction schedules, past experience with the companies and other details.

The plan is for a committee to recommend one of the proposals to Fahey on May 8. Then Fahey will make his choice and send it to the City Council for action.

Council Bluffs, the Iowa and Nebraska Roads Departments, federal agencies and the Papio-



The low bid came back at twice the expected price — \$45 million — and thus the project went back to the drawing board. Early this year, Omaha received permission from state and federal agencies to use design-build procedures rather than bidding a predetermined design and specifications.

Under design-build, a team of companies presents its concept and promises to complete the project at a set price. The city set \$22 million as its upper limit.

The pedestrian bridge has become more controversial as the years have passed, with many citizens questioning the wisdom of spending millions of dollars for a bridge. Critics say it is an example of pork-barrel politics.

Those who defend the spending say that if the bridge isn't built, the money will just go to some other city or state for a pet project. The federal money comes on a use-it-or-lose-it basis.

The firms that made proposals to the city:

- Arch with cables: Harrington & Cortelyou, Kansas City, Mo., designer; Jensen Construction Co., Des Moines, builder.
- Twin towers and cables: Figg Bridge Builders, Denver, designer; Cramer & Associates, Des Moines, builder.
- Twin towers and cables:

HNTB Corp., Kansas City, Mo., designer; APAC-Kansas, Kansas City, Kan., builder.

Arch with cables: Harrington & Cortelyou, Kansas City, Mo., designer; Jensen Construction Co., Des Moines, builder.

The Omaha office of Bair Vermeer & Heecker participated in the arch design.

The three teams will be interviewed about their proposals by city officials on April 27.

Figg was the city's original designer. Figg's contract with the city was terminated when the city lost faith that the project proposed by Figg could be built within the cost constraints.

Scarpello said the initial analysis of the three proposals found that all were within budget.

"We think most people will be pleased with the designs," he said.

City officials were fearful that they would be limited to one or no proposals that met the hope for a bridge that would make an architectural statement.

With the three proposals now in hand, Scarpello said, "we are confident we will get a bridge."

# Missouri River bridge reflects need by many

BY GARY L. GEBHARD

4-18-06

*The writer, an Omaha architect, has served as a volunteer on a Nebraska Department of Roads committee for federal funding of enhancement projects for 14 years.*

I applaud the foresight of the City of Omaha's decision to review and hopefully approve a design for the Missouri River pedestrian bridge.

Letters to the editor again will decry the spending of money on such a project. It is time to repeat why the bridge is desired.

We continue to have bicyclists and pedestrians crossing the Missouri on the Interstate 480 bridge from and to the city centers of Omaha and Council Bluffs. Though the number is small, that number is on the rise with the ever-increasing cost of gasoline.

Some people view the proposed pedestrian bridge as a pet project of some politician. But they don't realize that it is a response to nearly 40 years of citizens requesting that their transportation needs be met.

Historically, the Mormon Bridge was a product of great foresight by Nebraska, in this case territorial Nebraska, as money was applied for from the federal government before Nebraska was a state. The users at that time would have been wagons, handcars and people on foot or horseback. Their needs were the same as today's — a safe crossing of a wide river that paid no mind to what the income level of the user was.

Surprisingly, it took 95 years to actually get the funding and then build the first Mormon Bridge. The original users are long gone, but new users took their place.

We lost the Ak-Sar-Ben bridge in 1967. It was our only pedestrian access across the river other than the South Omaha bridge. Those Ak-Sar-Ben bridge users are still with us, as are their children and grandchildren.

Once again, we want to build a bridge. But this time, the money is here and ready for our use. There are no more federal funding hoops to jump through. The private sector already has started to raise some of the local money that is needed for bridge approach work. We have to locally re-

quest only the federal funds to build the main bridge structure, which is the most expensive and challenging part.

However, some are asking us to turn away this money without realizing that this would just put other people to work on building a bridge in some other city. We don't really want to tell the people of Omaha and Council Bluffs that their pedestrian bridge was built in New Jersey (not that New Jersey doesn't need bridges, too).

The cry for pedestrian bridges is being answered in many places around the country. Yes, people all over the country paid the taxes that provided the money for this project and others like it. A great success story could be told about how our dedicated elected officials brought part of that money back to Nebraska for this bridge.

Considering how the federal government divides tax money into categories, there is no other use possible for this money. The money, if not used for this project, doesn't magically become money for any other type of project one might think up.

It is not a bad thing to use tax dollars to end up with a facility for everyone that will help us save gas, enhance our health and provide a positive, progressive image of the metropolitan area to the country.

It is always easy to criticize those projects that may be for others, but we must look beyond the limitations set by personal interests and work for the common good. In comparison with the six-lane widening of I-80 from Omaha to Lincoln or the work to create the Old Mill overpass system on West Dodge Road, this bridge cost is but a drop in the bucket.

Occasionally, we all need reminding that we share and live together in the same bucket we call home. So let's build the bridge as a strong connection and as a symbol of how we, too, can get the job done. That way, we all can enjoy the bridge before we kick the bucket.

# Nebraska's role in wildlife program unclear

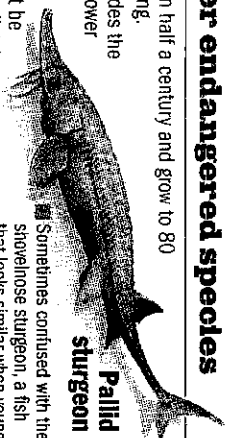
4-18-06

## Platte River endangered species

Can live for more than half a century and grow to 80 pounds and 6 feet long.

Historical range includes the Missouri, Platte and lower Mississippi Rivers.

Endangered since 1990. If caught, must be returned to river immediately.



**Pallid sturgeon**

Sometimes confused with the shovelnose sturgeon, a fish that looks similar when young.

### Piping plover



Little information is available about the piping plover before the early 1980s. Since its listing as threatened in 1986, numbers have varied from a high of 623 adults in 1991 to a low of 117 in 1997.

In 1998, 465 adults were counted.

### Interior least tern

Explorers Lewis and Clark regularly spotted the least tern along the length of the Missouri. By 1975, one count put them at 1,250. The bird was listed as endangered in the mid 1980s.



### Whooping crane



In 1999, there were approximately 180 whooping cranes in the wild.

Tallest of all North American birds. Has a wingspan of more than 7 feet.

Lives for 22 to 24 years.

SOURCES: National Wildlife Federation, aNature.com

DEAN WEINLAUB/THE WORLD HERALD

By DAVID HENDEE  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

NORTH PLATTE, Neb. — A proposed federal and state program to help the habitat needs of four rare wildlife species that depend on the Platte River could be ready this year, an advisory council heard Monday.

But whether Nebraska will participate remains to be seen.

Under the proposal, 130,000 to 150,000 acre feet of water annually would be provided to the central Platte River to enhance habitat for the four species — the whooping crane, interior least tern, piping plover and pallid sturgeon.

The water would be released from Lake McConaughy, or not be used for irrigation downstream, so that it would be available to improve habitat.

"This program needs to happen," said Robert Busch, a member of the Governor's Platte River Advisory Council and a Mitchell farmer who irrigates cropland with water from the North Platte River.

"It's up to you folks from Lake McConaughy east to stand up and be counted," he said.

At issue is a 1997 agreement that commits Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming and the U.S. De-

partment of the Interior to develop a habitat program for the four species in the central and lower Platte across Nebraska.

The program is intended to serve as an alternative under the federal Endangered Species Act for any project in the Platte basin that requires a federal permit or license and would affect river flows.

Without the program, uses for water, such as irrigation, could have to pass muster under the federal law.

That could paralyze all 16 irrigation districts in the Nebraska Panhandle, said Dennis Strauch, manager of the Pathfinder Irrigation District at Mitchell.

Nebraska has the toughest decision to make, said Jim Cook of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, a Nebraska representative on the negotiating committee that includes the three states, water users, environmental groups and the federal government.

Under the plan, Nebraska would be required to roll back its use of water in the region to 1997 levels to make certain there is water for habitat.

Cook said the plan could begin operation in October. The original goal had been December 2000.

The latest timetable hinges on federal studies, including an environmental impact statement and a biological opinion on how the program would affect the species. Cook said the reports are expected within weeks or months.

Federal funding is required. The cash cost of the first 13 years of the program is an estimated \$187 million, up from \$70 million originally.

The federal government would pay \$157 million, with Colorado and Wyoming the rest. Nebraska has no cash outlays, but is providing land and water.

Governors of Colorado and Wyoming are expected to sign the agreement, Cook said. Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman says he wants to hear what Nebraskans think about the deal before deciding.

The advisory council agreed to host two informational meetings this summer on the agreement.

Busch appealed to his colleagues who live downstream from Lake McConaughy, the big irrigation reservoir on the North Platte, to support the program.

Some central Nebraskans on the council voiced skepticism about how much the program will help the species, especially at the expense of water that could be used to irrigate crops.



# St. Gerald's Catholic students learn outside

4/19/06  
By Emily Kampschneider  
Recorder Editor

Young students learn from books. They learn from each other and they learn from their parents.

Yet the students at St. Gerald's Catholic Elementary will also study in a new outdoor classroom garden. The space is designated in the grassy knoll behind the St. Gerald statue on the west side of the school.

Work has already started at the site. They tore up the sod in mid-March and were somewhat halted since the rainstorms. The area was blessed during school Mass on March 29.

Kendra Sullivan, other volunteers and Mary Sheridan are leading the project with the help of St. Gerald's teachers, too.

The students are just thrilled, Sullivan said. She said one day some fifth-grade students walked past the

workers tearing up the sod.

"They were so excited that they were cheering and clapping to the workers," Sullivan said.

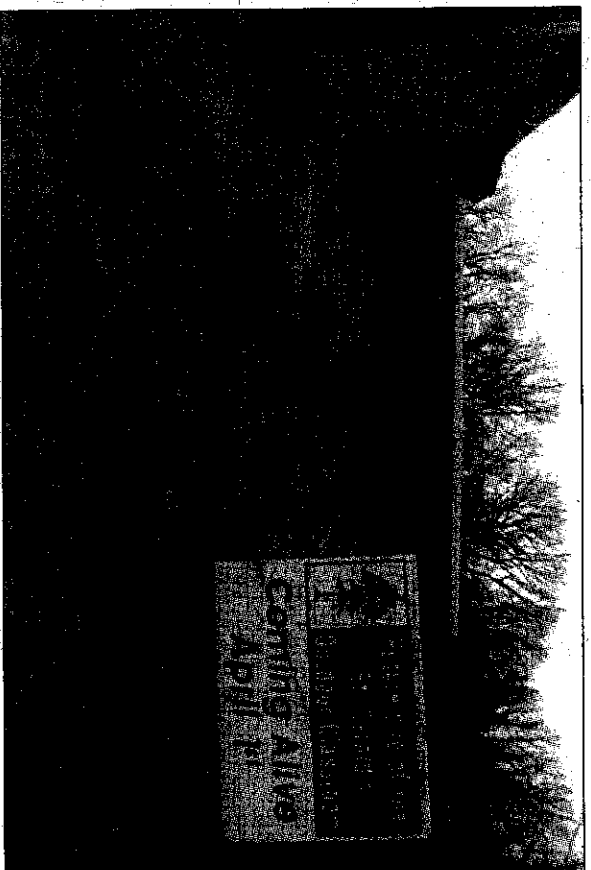
The garden idea sprouted last fall.

"We were lucky enough to have in our community a landscape designer who had designed an outdoor classroom," Sullivan said.

Congregation member and designer, Sara Bailey, volunteered her time to lay out the area.

The garden space is divided into several areas. The list includes a Biblical garden, herb garden, classroom area, prairie grass garden, native wildflower and rock garden, zen garden, spring flowering walk and bird sanctuary, butterfly garden, vegetable garden, three sisters sunflower house and ABC and animal garden.

It will be highlighted with a rainbow Please see **Garden, Page 3**



EMILY K KAMPSCHNEIDER / RALSTON RECORDER  
This area is nestled in between the walls of St. Gerald's Catholic Elementary. It will be growing with plants and flowers this summer.

April 19, 2006

## Garden

from **PAGE 1**

It will be highlighted with a rainbow garden along the outer wall of the school gymnasium. Each grade is assigned a space with an appropriate color.

It should be in full-bloom by this late summer, August or into early fall.

The purpose is to enhance the science curriculum through a hands-on approach, Sullivan said, with a focus on stewardship. The garden committee has sought out volunteers to help the students care for the gardens.

"Our garden is unique because it's in cooperation with senior citizens, retired and empty-nested people from Ralston and our parish," she said.

Sullivan said students would benefit from getting their hands in the mud.

"They live their whole lives on pavement and carpet and they never get in the dirt," she said.

The project budget is set at \$24,000. So far they've collected about half that amount with private monetary donations, service donations and grants. One grant came from the Papio/Missouri National Resources District. Another check came from Girl Scout Brownie Troops #3424 and #3083.

Those seeking more information about the garden or wanting to donate money or to volunteer, should call the school at 331-4223.

# Environmental trust gives millions in grants

Money for cleanup of UNL research center near Mead did not bump any projects from the list, but it will affect next year.

4-20-06  
BY JOE DUGGAN  
Lincoln Journal Star

A controversial decision to pay for pollution cleanup with money from the Nebraska Environmental Trust bumped no projects from the 2006 grants list.

But the plan to pay for low-level radioactive waste removal at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead means fewer applicants will qualify for financing in 2007.

The trust's board of directors this week financed 80 natural resource projects with about \$11 million in lottery profits, trust Director Mary Harding said. As in past years, grant applications far exceeded available money.

Next year, the trust will have be-

## On the Web

A complete list of all 2006 grants can be found on the trust Web site at [www.environmentaltrust.org](http://www.environmentaltrust.org).

tween \$9.5 million and \$10 million, but lawmakers have directed the trust to give \$2.76 million of it to UNL for the Mead cleanup.

The withdrawals could have been larger.

A plan by Gov. Dave Heineman sought to finance cleanups at Mead and several federal Superfund sites around the state.

Trust supporters opposed the plan, saying the trust was designed for innovative natural resources projects that the government otherwise would not finance. Using the trust for pollution cleanup was allowed only after other financing avenues were exhausted.

Eventually, a compromise was struck: The trust would help pay for the Mead cleanup, the state would pay for Superfund projects and members of the Appropriations Committee would support an amendment asking voters to protect the trust's competitive grants

process in the state Constitution.

The amendment failed. The budget recently approved by the Legislature and the governor came up with nearly \$4.2 million to be spent on the Mead cleanup this year.

As a result, the 2006 preliminary grants list approved by the board in February remained intact, Harding said.

Major grant awards in Southeast Nebraska include:

■ \$398,000 for the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department for an addition to the Prairie Building at Pioneers Park Nature Center.

X ■ \$115,000 for the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District for research on ecosystem and land use changes along the lower reaches of the Platte River.

■ \$139,580 for the Nebraska Center for Sustainable Construction to train crews to properly dismantle wood frame and light commercial buildings, as a means of reducing construction and demolition waste.

In its 13 years of giving grants, the trust has distributed nearly \$90 million.

Reach Joe Duggan at 473-7239 or [jduggan@journalstar.com](mailto:jduggan@journalstar.com).

# Oltmans fired for lying about affair

4-21-06

BY NANCY GAARDER  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER



MATT MILLER/THE WORLD-HERALD

Steve Oltmans talks with his lawyer while waiting for the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board to call him at Thursday night's meeting. The board later voted to fire him as general manager.

Steve Oltmans, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, was fired Thursday by a governing board that said it lost confidence in him after he lied about an affair with a former board member.

After deliberating for about 4½ hours, the NRD board voted 6-4 to fire the longtime manager for "a material breach of contract."

Oltmans, who was accompanied to the meeting by his wife,

Barb, left without commenting. His attorney, David Domina, said Oltmans believed that the board members followed their consciences.

Oltmans has a statewide reputation for leadership on natural resources management, and Domina said there will be new ways for him to put his talent to use.

Asked whether Oltmans would pursue legal action, Domina left the door open but said he suspected that Oltmans' actions would be "forward-looking," rather than looking back.

See Oltmans: Page 4

## Oltmans: Board chairman cites lies about affair

Continued from Page 1

Oltmans' troubles began earlier this year when a small group of board members confronted him about allegations of an affair with former board member Barb Nichols.

Oltmans at first denied the relationship, but he later admitted it when Nichols provided the board with photographs and other evidence.

About a dozen people who have bitterly opposed Oltmans

over his plan to dam their valley in Washington County attended the meeting. When the decision to fire Oltmans was made, some whooped and hollered.

Voting to fire Oltmans were John Conley, Dick Connealy, Dorothy Lanphier, Joe Neary, Rich Tesar and Rich Jansen.

Voting against the firing were Fred Conley, Rick Kolowski, John Schwoppe and Jim Thompson.

An earlier motion to place Oltmans on one year of probation

failed.

Assistant general manager Marlin Petermann was named to lead the Papio-Missouri River NRD while the board decides on a permanent replacement.

Oltmans, who was paid \$105,000 a year, had been suspended with pay after the district's board asked State Auditor Kate Witek last month to examine whether he inappropriately spent district money on Nichols.

The results of that investiga-

tion were not released.

Schwoppe, who had hoped to keep Oltmans on board, said Oltmans deserved a second chance.

"Twenty years of what he has done, you just don't throw it away like we did," Schwoppe said.

Rich Jansen, chairman of the board, said the decision was straightforward.

"He lied to us," he said. "That's why we didn't go with probation. It was a tough deal. I don't think I could ever have had confidence in him."

# Bruning praises river decision

**The U.S. Supreme Court ends a challenge to the Army Corps of Engineers' management of the Missouri.**

*AP - 2.5.86*  
By JAKE THOMPSON  
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Nebraska's attorney general applauded the U.S. Supreme

Court's rejection Monday of appeals by environmental groups that had sought higher spring flows on the Missouri River to save endangered pallid sturgeons and piping plovers.

Attorney General Jon Bruning said the high court's decision would end legal challenges for now over how the Army Corps of Engineers manages the flow of the Missouri.

"This is a win for all of Nebraska's interests, including the environment," Bruning said. "The end of litigation gives us a long overdue resolution of conflict in the basin."

The high court refused to

hear an appeal of an earlier ruling by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The appeals court had upheld another earlier ruling supporting the corps' management plans, which include releasing a "pulse" of water into the river during the spring aimed at keeping both endangered wildlife and barge shipping alive.

Environmental groups and

sportsmen in the Dakotas wanted a higher spring rise of water and lower summer flows that they say would resemble centuries-old natural flows of the river and be better for endangered species.

But downstream farming and shipping interests in such states as Missouri countered that allowing a higher spring flow and lower summer flow

See River, Page 2

## River: Court ruling disappoints environmentalists

*Continued from Page 1*  
would cause flooding and end barge shipping.

"We're obviously disappointed, and unfortunately the species aren't getting any better," said Tim Searchinger, senior attorney for the Environmental Defense Fund, one of those seeking the appeal.

Searchinger said market forces virtually have ended barge shipping.

The Missouri River starts in Montana and flows through or

along North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri before emptying into the Mississippi River at St. Louis.

Paul Johnston, spokesman for the Corps of Engineers' office in Omaha, said he was pleased with the high court's decision. "It's affirming that we have been trying to strike a balance," he said.

The corps will press ahead with its recovery work for the endangered species.

It plans to increase water flow in the Missouri this spring. The timing will be determined by the river temperature below Gavins Point Dam in South Dakota or by the start of nesting by interior least terns and piping plovers, Johnston said.

Once the river temperature reaches 61 degrees or nesting begins, the corps will release a pulse of water throughout the river system. If it rains a lot this spring, the corps' plans could change, he added.

Bruning agreed that Mon-

day's court decision supports the corps' new master manual for managing the Missouri River.

Nebraska receives more than \$500 million annually in economic benefits from power production, water supply, flood control and navigation, all of which depend on the river's water flow, Bruning said.

"The court's decision allows us to maintain our level of economic benefits, yet address the needs of endangered species," he said.

4-25-06

## Oltmans will be missed

Nebraska used to have more than 100 separate entities with jurisdiction over surface water. It was a cumbersome, ineffective and expensive system.

Thanks in large measure to Steve Oltmans, who was fired on April 20 as general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, Nebraska consolidated these water jurisdictions into 24 natural resources districts (now 23). Nebraska's system became a model for water management nationally.

While manager of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce's Agriculture Council, I traveled with Nebraska agricultural and agribusiness leaders across Nebraska and to Washington, D.C. Mr. Oltmans was an active participant, making sure that water resources and management were on top of the agenda wherever we went.

Today, I ride horses, hike and bike on trails that exist largely because of Mr. Oltmans' efforts. The Papio-Missouri River NRD is great because of his leadership.

Mr. Oltmans joins kings, princes, heads of state and political, religious and business leaders who have made very bad judgments in their choice of extracurricular activities, though few of whom were fired.

I hope Nebraska will continue to benefit from his tremendous knowledge and ability.

Vicki Krecek, Omaha

## Executive privilege

Poor Steve Oltmans. If he only had been president of the United States. . . .

Oliver Pierce, La Vista

4-25-06

## Lutz, Klug for NRD

**T**he duties of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District include flood-control management as well as soil and water conservation. A familiar aspect of the NRD to most constituents is recreation, including hiking trails and wildlife refuge projects.

The management at the NRD is facing change with the recent firing of its longtime general manager, Steve Oltmans.

The district includes roughly six counties bordering the Missouri River from the Nebraska state line on the north to the Platte River on the south. Subdistrict 10, covering most of western Sarpy County, offers the only primary contest.

Voters would choose well if they advanced Patrick Lutz and David Klug to the November election.

Lutz, a lawyer with natural resources in his educational background, already knows something

about the issues with which the NRD deals. He interned with the NRD while in college and is now in his third term as chairman of his sanitary improvement district. He emphasizes forming alliances with people affected by NRD projects to keep them informed as projects progress.

Klug is a young and enthusiastic candidate who also wants to open up the processes of the agency to greater public input. He would investigate alternatives to the controversial dams proposed for Washington County by the NRD. He said he would tend to favor projects with greater public benefit, such as hiking trails, over improvements that relatively few people use, such as the Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge.

Voters in Subdistrict 10 would set up a worthwhile contest by nominating Patrick Lutz and David Klug in the May 9 primary.

+

# NRD: State over legal line

Board thinks DNR's Platte River decision should be limited to Platte Basin, says John Turnbull, district manager.

4-27-06  
BY ART HOVEY  
Lincoln Journal Star

YORK — Trouble started to take shape in December when state water regulators made a preliminary decision to place a portion of Hamilton County off-limits to new irrigation wells and new irrigated acres.

The stakes were raised a few days later when a farmer in that area asked for a permit for a new well between the Platte and Big

## Inside/5B

Groundwater levels may require farmers to report irrigated acres.

Blue rivers. The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District reluctantly turned him down.

And trouble came to a head this week when the York-based NRD learned that the state decision was final. NRD General Manager John Turnbull announced a lawsuit against the Department of Natural Resources on Wednesday.

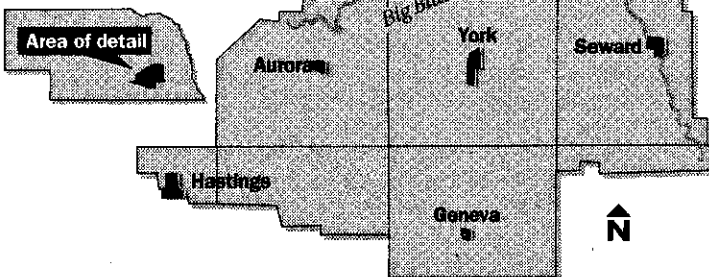
"The board thinks that the Platte River decision needs to be within the Platte Basin," Turnbull said.

In documents filed in Lancaster County District Court, the York-based NRD claims the state's water regulator has exceeded its authori-

See NRD, Page 5B

## Upper Big Blue district files lawsuit

The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District based in York has filed a lawsuit against the Department of Natural Resources. It says the state exceeded its authority in extending a ban on new wells and new irrigated acres along the Platte River into an area the district regards as part of the Big Blue basin. The Platte River runs outside of the Upper Big Blue NRD, which is mapped here.



SHEILA STORY/Lincoln Journal Star

## NRD

Continued from Page 1B

ty with a Friday order. That order extends a ban on new wells and new irrigated acres along the Platte River into an area the NRD regards as inside Big Blue Basin boundaries.

City dwellers might see parallels to a situation where a homeowner builds a new fence and a neighbor says it's on the wrong side of the property line.

In the world of water, the immediate issue is the regulative overlap the state's decision creates between the two basins, Turnbull said Wednesday. "That is what this whole thing is about."

Board attorney Steve Seglin of Lincoln called it "a very specific legal question."

Ann Bleed, acting director of the state Department of Natural Resources, wasn't into arguing the York point of view in the early going.

"At this point, I haven't seen the filing," she said, "and I really don't have any comment."

When the state decided in August to widen buffers meant to protect rivers and streams from the effects of groundwater pumping, many saw legal action by one or more NRDs as a matter of time.

One suit probably will hold everybody's attention for the time being, said Dave Aiken, a water law specialist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"Now that a suit has been filed, I think that an awful lot of people will be content to sort of sit and watch and see how this one plays out," Aiken said.

Adding to the drama, from his perspective, are the expanding efforts to regulate groundwater use in the state that leads the nation in acres irrigated from wells.

"One of the things that people have to realize," he said, "is that the only other state with remotely as much groundwater is California. And in California, it's pretty much everybody for themselves ... there are no real constraints on drilling or anything else."

Turnbull is more concerned about a much closer and smaller slice of geography.

"We've discussed this with the department over a long period of time, that we didn't think these things should cross river basin boundaries."

Now the state has stepped over that line, Turnbull said.

"We don't think that statutes allow them to do that."

Reach Art Hovey at (402) 523-4949 or [ahovey@alltel.net](mailto:ahovey@alltel.net).

## Groundwater levels may require farmers to report irrigated acres

Lincoln Journal Star

Average groundwater readings in the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District have dropped about 10 feet since 2000.

The last .87 of a foot, measured this spring in test wells across the district, hits a threshold that requires farmers to file annual reports on their irrigated acres.

Upper Big Blue Manager John Turnbull said Wednesday a recommendation to begin that reporting would go to the committee level May 11 and probably to the board of directors May 18.

The pending decision affects about 12,000 irrigation wells and about 1 million acres in an area that reaches as far north as Butler County, south into Fillmore County, east to Seward County and west to Adams County.

The most recent drop in average water level covers the 12 months since a similar round of testing in early 2005.

If groundwater levels drop another 2.5 feet to the level they were in 1978, Upper Big Blue rules call for limits on how much water farmers can pump.

## Midlands Voices

### NRD will continue to fulfill its mission

BY RICH JANSEN

*The writer, of Gretna, Neb., is chairman of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. He writes on behalf of the NRD board.*

Recently, the board of directors of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District faced a difficult decision. The choice was to dismiss or retain our general manager, Steve Oltmans.

Steve had done much to position the Papio-Missouri River NRD as a leading advocate for sound natural resources management in our area of Sarpy, Douglas, Washington, Burt, Thurston and Dakota Counties. He had worked long and hard to promote and carry out the programs of the district related to flood control, soil and water conservation, metro trails development, water quality in metro lakes, wildlife habitat, tree planting and much more.

Yet, an improper relationship with a former board member prompted the NRD to do a thorough and thoughtful investigation that ultimately led the district to dismiss Mr. Oltmans. We will now initiate a national search for a new general manager. We anticipate an excellent pool of candidates for this position.

During this time of transition, the NRD board of directors remains committed to our vision, mission, programs and projects. The board also is committed to reviewing policies that were highlighted by the investigation — among them, policies related to staff and board expenses. Rest assured that this review will be accomplished in a timely manner and that the issues will be resolved.

We will look hard at recom-

mendations of the State Auditor's Office to ensure compliance with all auditing procedures and state and IRS requirements. We also will look at the potential need for an audit committee of the board. A thoughtful review of these issues may begin as early as our board's May 18 meeting.

Nebraska has many crucial water-quality and water-quantity concerns that will challenge all natural resources districts in the decade ahead and beyond. Within the Papio-Missouri River NRD, we face a serious threat of flooding along with water-quality concerns, especially in the urbanized, highly populated metro Omaha area.

Even though we will be making a change in our management leadership, your Papio-Missouri River NRD intends to remain a leader among Nebraska's natural resources districts in addressing a multitude of serious resource management needs.

One of the Papio NRD's strengths has always been our coordination with other government and private environmental groups. This will not change. We will continue our efforts to work with cities, counties, towns and villages in the hope of strengthening our partnerships.

The NRD also has been a partner with many non-governmental groups of dedicated individuals who seek solutions to their resource management concerns as well.

The work of the district will continue.



OMAHA DAILY HERALD FOUNDED 1865  
OMAHA DAILY WORLD FOUNDED BY GILBERT M. HITCHCOCK 1885  
OMAHA WORLD-HERALD FIRST PUBLISHED JULY 15, 1889

# Omaha World-Herald

JOHN GOTTSCHALK, *Publisher*

LARRY KING, *Executive Editor* GEITNER SIMMONS, *Editorial Page Editor*

## As the river flows

**S**tates along the lower Missouri River should learn today whether a "spring pulse" of water will come their way next month in the hope of encouraging pallid sturgeons to breed. That is, unless the State of Missouri succeeds in tying further legal knots.

Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court shut off appeals of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' plan to initiate the pulses as part of its balancing of the river's many uses.

Missouri, saying it isn't fair to raise river levels at a prime time of year for flooding, sued on Friday to block the pulse. Some farmers along the river in Nebraska and Iowa likely will cheer Missouri on.

With all respect, however, it's time to call off the lawyers and give the pulses a chance. It appears that the upstream reservoirs will have more than the 36.5 million acre-feet of water today that the corps set as the trigger for a two-day pulse in mid-May. A longer pulse in March was canceled because that target had not been met.

A pattern is developing, by the way. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has the right to release water from Lake McConaughy for a spring pulse on the Platte River to assist breeding habitat for least terns and piping plovers. Fish and Wildlife has held off lately. Both agencies are rightly accounting for the impact of the lengthy drought.

**If reservoirs  
are full enough,  
it is time  
to drop lawsuits  
and move  
forward  
on managing  
Missouri River.**

Midlanders have come a long way from the early 1990s, when the air was thick with allegations that federal officials were enabling greenies who want 19th-century river conditions at all costs and accusations that those selfsame officials were ignoring their legal duty to give species endangered by human activity a fighting chance.

The rivers' management plans reflect a gradual consensus in the Platte and Missouri basins that, though restoring the past may be impractical, blindly continuing the status quo may be unwise, too.

By excusing itself, the high court left in place principles laid down in 2004 by U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson. He agreed that the corps has a prime duty — under its mandate under federal law — to maintain flood control and barge navigation along the Missouri. But recreation and species protection (among other interests) also matter, and the corps' plan addresses them all, he said.

It cannot be known whether the skies will open as during the floods of 1993. Neither is it known whether the spring pulses will be enough to restore the sturgeon's spawning instinct. But it's time to find out.

The corps, after much investment of time and treasure, has struck a reasonable balance in managing the Mighty Mo. If there's enough water for the spring pulse, let's leave the rest to the fish.

# NRD plan to curb nitrates

The proposed program would reduce nitrate levels in the Valparaiso area.

5-2-06  
BY ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS  
Lincoln Journal Star

A host of changes designed to reduce nitrates in groundwater could require Valparaiso-area farmers to get training if they want to apply nitrogen fertilizer to their land.

The proposal is a result of the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District designating a 5.25-square-mile area that includes the town of Valparaiso as a Phase II groundwater management area in August 2004.

The district and residents have since worked to draft a program to reduce nitrate levels in the area before they become a health hazard.

State law allows districts to establish Phase II groundwater management areas when half of the wells in a groundwater monitoring network exceed 50 percent of the federal health standard of 10 parts per million.

Dan Schulz, resources coordinator for the district, said the district tracked nitrate levels in

six wells — three municipal and three monitoring wells — for two years and results show more than half of the wells exceeded 5 ppm.

Nitrate levels in one of the monitoring wells — not a city well — have been as low as 8 ppm and as high as 37.7 ppm.

Nitrate levels in the three municipal wells averaged between 4 ppm and 8 ppm, Schulz said.

Sources of nitrates include runoff and seepage from fertilized agricultural lands, as well as animal feedlots, septic tanks and lawns.

Greg Bouc, who operates the town's drinking water system, said a Phase II designation is a good idea.

"It's proactive instead of reactive," he added. "It keeps the application of nitrogen where it needs to be and it's cost-effective (for the farmers.)"

Valparaiso's three municipal wells currently have a nitrate average of 4.1 ppm, Bouc said, and have never exceeded federal standards.

Valparaiso is about 20 miles northwest of Lincoln.

Nitrogen fertilizer application training is part of a package developed by the Lincoln-based district and an advisory group, made up of people from the area. The package of best

management practices for landowners also includes:

- Cost-sharing incentives for farmers to not apply nitrogen fertilizer in the fall.

- A sampling program so farmers can determine the amount of residual nitrate in the soil before they plant crops.

- Incentives to install meters on wells.

- Cost-share assistance on fertilizer flow meters.

- Making irrigation systems more efficient.

A public hearing on the package is set for 7 p.m. May 31 at the Senior Center in Valparaiso.

Officials from the state departments of Natural Resources and Environmental Quality will present water quality data and discuss rules and regulations for the area.

Landowners in the area also will receive details about the package and how to get involved. Schulz said between 30 and 40 landowners could be affected.

Valparaiso is the district's second Phase II area. The Lower Salt Creek Groundwater Reservoir, between Waverly and Ashland, became such an area on Jan. 1, 2003.

Reach Algis J. Laukaitis at 473-7243 or [alaukaitis@journalstar.com](mailto:alaukaitis@journalstar.com).

## The right decision

W-M  
5-2-06  
Kudos and many thanks to the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District's board of directors for their definitive efforts to uphold and restore public trust to their agency by firing the patriarch of the Papio, the lord of the Lower Elkhorn and the monarch of Maple Creek — Steve Oltmans.

When integrity, honesty and character are determined to be severely compromised or lacking while one serves in the highly responsible position of general manager, the issue of public trust becomes paramount.

Yes, an extramarital affair with an associate is unprofessional, and to lie about it is reprehensible. But to invoke undue influence to sway a vote on a key, critically debated project is absolutely unconscionable.

The actions of the Papio-Missouri River NRD directors serve as a powerful reminder that such type of conduct should not be tolerated in Nebraska.

Shawn Heitz, Leigh, Neb.

S-3-46

# Solving water problems will be costly, conference participants say

By DAVID HENDRE  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

KEARNEY, Neb. — A drought of dollars and rain continues to cloud Nebraska's ability to emerge from a historic dry spell, more than 100 Nebraskans were told Tuesday.

State and local water managers, irrigators and representatives of environmental groups gathered at Nebraska's Water Future conference to discuss issues surrounding the state's struggle to provide Kansas with its legal share of Republican River water.

"From my perspective, it is

the unfunded issue of the decade," said Jasper Fanning, manager of the Upper Republican Natural Resources District, based at Imperial in southwestern Nebraska.

A 1943 agreement limits the amount of Republican River water Nebraska can use. The state is on track to exceed that amount. Failure to comply with the agreement could lead to multimillion-dollar fines or penalties.

All three Republican candidates for governor — Gov. Dave Heineman, Rep. Tom Osborne and Omaha businessman Dave Nabity — addressed the gathering.

The Republican River issue isn't the only water problem that needs money.

Tom Schwarz, a Bertrand-area farmer and a member of the Nebraska Water Policy Task Force, told Heineman that the only way the state's two-year-old water law will succeed is if it is adequately funded.

"The money now is Band-Aids," Schwarz said. "It's not fixing the long-term problems. We need significant spending."

Heineman said the challenge is determining where to find money in the state budget to divert to water management.

"Just as water is a finite re-

source, so is state spending," he said, so spending more money in one area will require cuts from another area.

Heineman asked Schwarz if he supported cutting the University of Nebraska budget or state aid to education. Schwarz said yes.

"We aren't going to have to worry about schools if we don't have water," Schwarz said.

The Legislature took steps this year to begin dealing with the state's water debt to Kansas. It provided about \$2.5 million to lease water from irrigation districts and release it to Kansas.

The state also provided \$2.5 million annually for two

years to help natural resources districts in water-short areas manage their water.

The state also allowed those NRDs to raise their property tax rates by 3 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation next year and 2 cents per \$100 of valuation in fiscal 2008 and 2009.

Osborne quipped that there probably were as many opinions about what to do in the Republican River basin as there were people in the room. About 115 attended the conference, sponsored by the Groundwater Foundation and the University of Nebraska Water Center.

Osborne said the federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement

ment Program he crafted to pay Nebraskans who volunteer to take their irrigated land out of production will provide tens of millions of dollars over the next decade in the Republican basin.

The idled land will help Nebraskans keep water in the Republican and creates new hunting and agri-tourism opportunities, he said.

"Sometimes that raises the hackles on farmers who don't like to let land sit idle," Osborne said, but he added that there is untold potential to market Nebraska's Republican and Platte River basins in metropolitan areas as recreational destinations.

# Water issues front, center in NRD race

■ Three candidates seek the open seat on the Papio-Missouri River board.

By NANCY GAARDER  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Three candidates are vying for the lone open seat on the board of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Each of the three — David Klug, Patrick Lutz and Allen Wilde — hopes to replace Rich Jansen, who is not running for re-election.

The first hurdle they face is surviving Tuesday's primary.

The top two finishers will advance to the November general election.

Incumbents are running in four other Papio NRD elections. Each has only one opponent, so

those races aren't on the primary ballot.

The NRD is responsible for flood control, natural resource conservation and some parks in the Omaha metro area.

Board members serve four-year terms. They are paid expenses plus \$70 per day for each day that they conduct NRD business.

Lutz said land use as it relates to flood control is the most pressing matter facing the district. The NRD must be sure that properties being developed today aren't at future risk of flooding once the entire watershed is developed.

He said his background as a real estate attorney would be helpful in addressing the urban-

## PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NRD

### DAVID KLUG

Age: 29

Political party: Democrat

Occupation: systems administrator / servers

Activities: volunteer, Strategic Art & Space Museum, Salvation Army

### PATRICK LUTZ

Age: 42

Political party: Republican

Occupation: attorney

Activities: American Legion Post 274; chairman, Sanitary and Improvement District 176

### ALLEN WILDE

Age: 54

Political party: Democrat

Occupation: owner, Wilde Construction

Activities: Sons of the American Legion; vice president, Beacon View Homeowners Association

ization of Sarpy County.

Wilde, who lives along the Platte River, said he wants to provide a voice for those affected by the district's work on the Platte levee.

The No. 1 concern facing the district, Wilde said, is restoring credibility with voters after the longtime general manager, Steve Oltmans, was fired over matters stemming from an affair with a former board member.

Klug also cited recovering from Oltmans' firing as a significant challenge.

On the controversial proposal to dam a Washington County valley, Klug said he would "promote the most responsible and safe manner" for moving ahead.

Klug said he is running for NRD as an extension of his history of volunteering.

The candidates are running in a subdistrict that includes all of Sarpy County, except Bellevue.

# Lighted river bridge would be practical

BY STAN LESSMANN

The writer is an Omaha real estate agent and a longtime resident of the metropolitan area.

Six years is a long time in the life of a city. During that time, much progress can take place or much stagnation or even deterioration can set in.

Omahans have seen many positive developments in the last six years. The Holland Performing Arts Center, the Union Pacific headquarters, the First National Bank tower, the National Park Service regional center and the Gallup Organization campus all have been conceived and constructed during that time. They have added real value to our community.

During that same time, the installation of the proposed pedestrian bridge connecting Omaha and Council Bluffs has been stalled. While costly at \$22 million, it was exorbitant at \$45 million. And while it has sparked much conversation and controversy, there's still no bridge. Tangible progress now appears to be in the offing.

The proposed pedestrian bridge would be of value both practically and aesthetically. If built, it also would be relatively pricey. The proposal outlined below would be relatively inexpensive and could be implemented quickly.

Both the Missouri River and the Union Pacific Railroad have been instrumental in the growth and development of the metropolitan area. I'm proposing that these two historically significant entities partner with the three Council Bluffs casinos to create a positive "Gateway to the West" statement.

That statement would be achieved by lighting the Union Pacific Railroad bridge over the Missouri River. The bridge, with its arched spans, is already in place, thus greatly simplifying the process and greatly reducing the cost. The value received relative to cost would be very positive.

The Union Pacific Railroad bridge is an important and expensive property. By lighting it, that bridge would become even more important, because it would be taken to its highest and best use.

The casinos, because of their proximity to both the river and the bridge, would benefit tangibly from the lighting. Because the casinos are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, their casino, hotel and restaurant patrons would derive great enjoyment from the lights.

Therefore, I'm proposing that the casinos fund the installation and annual maintenance costs of the lighting. Blue lights would seem to be

best, given the already existing signage at the Qwest building, the Qwest Center and at Creighton University.

The bridge lighting would complement both Kenefick Park and Lauritzen Gardens. Their setting, along the river and near heavily traveled Interstate 80, already makes a positive statement about Omaha and serves to highlight our city's historical significance and current vitality.

While I appreciate that the casinos contribute to worthy causes through the Iowa West Foundation, it is important to acknowledge that their combined gross revenues in 2005 were in excess of \$430 million. It is conceivable that with the bridge lighting, a significant increase in the number of travelers on I-80, I-29 and I-480 would be attracted to the casinos.

Therefore, one other significant part of this proposal involves the Food Bank. The Nebraska Food Bank network distributes food to 326 agencies in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa. I'm proposing that the three casinos contribute a combined \$200,000 a year to the Food Bank. That would equate to \$182.64 per day per casino. The value to needy citizens would be incalculable.

The pedestrian bridge may yet be built. If it is, it would be a positive addition to the riverfront. But the Union Pacific Missouri River bridge lighting is much more of a natural. The infrastructure is already in place. It would be a perfect public-private, Omaha-Council Bluffs partnership.

Citizens in both communities, as well as visitors and Interstate travelers, would appreciate it every night. And it would further solidify the Iowa-Nebraska riverfront relationship with a ribbon of light.

Because there would be a direct financial benefit to the casinos, they would be able to very directly benefit the communities from which they derive the largest amount of their annual revenue.

Decorative lighting is appealing to everyone. The drive into Omaha from the airport has become much more enjoyable because of the wonderful lighting along Abbott Drive. Lighting that bridge on the south side of the city would be as appealing.

The topography in that area, which is highlighted by the lighting at Kenefick Park, enhances the Omaha aesthetic. The bridge lighting would amplify that aesthetic, making a strong, "Welcome to Omaha" statement.



# County OKs funds for Carter Lake work

By KEVIN COLE

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A series of projects to improve Carter Lake received a boost Wednesday when the Pottawattamie County Board voted to contribute \$163,000.

"We don't want this oxbow lake disappearing, and that's what will happen if we don't act," said Russ Kramer, mayor of the city of Carter Lake, who brought the request before the board. "We want to get this lake back to its former beauty."

Kramer outlined four projects that can be completed on the lake by August. Other measures, he said, will depend on the joint efforts of governmental entities in Iowa and Nebraska.

"If we get Omaha, Carter Lake, Douglas County, Pottawattamie County, Iowa and Nebraska all pulling together to work on the lake, we can have something to be proud of for a long, long time to come," Kramer said. "The first thing people see when they land at Eppley Airfield is Carter Lake."

The four projects of immediate concern are dredging a cove on the southeast corner of the lake that has dried up; stabilizing the shoreline at Wavecrest Park; stabilizing about 110 feet

**"We want to get this lake back to its former beauty."**

*Carter Lake Mayor  
Russ Kramer*

of shoreline near Eighth Street and Avenue R; and building a 100-by-40-foot jetty on the east end of the lake to improve habitat for fish.

The \$163,000 from the Pottawattamie County Board should cover all but a small portion of the projects, Kramer said.

"The average depth of the lake right now is about 3 feet," Kramer said. "We would like to get that to 7 feet by 2008 and maybe even 10 to 15 feet in the long run."

Kramer said he met with Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey in January to discuss improvements to the lake. The lake is on the Iowa-Nebraska state line, with more than 80 percent of its area in Nebraska.

Long-range projects could include an overall dredging of the lake and building rain gardens to filter out impurities and debris at the places where storm water runs into the lake from the cities of Omaha and Carter Lake.

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

## Klug, Lutz advance

An attorney and systems administrator will compete in November for the lone open seat on the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board.

Sarpy County voters on Tuesday nominated Patrick Lutz, a real estate attorney for Koley Jessen, and David Klug, a systems administrator for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska.

Not advancing from the primary was Allen Wilde, owner of a construction company.

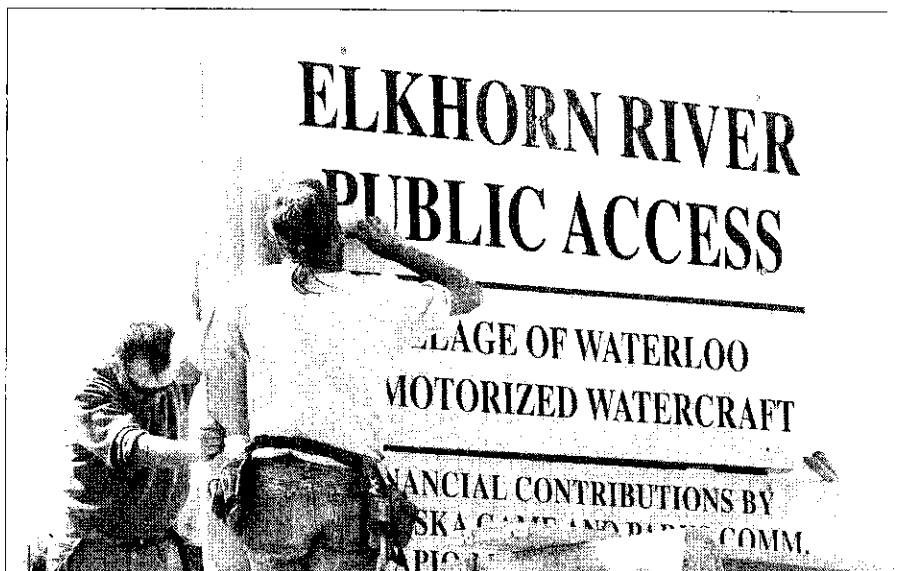
Lutz, a Republican, also has served as a trustee and chairman of a sanitary and improvement district.

Klug, a Democrat, has been an active volunteer at the Strategic Air and Space Museum.

Incumbent Rich Jansen did not seek re-election.

This subdistrict of the NRD serves all of Sarpy County except Bellevue.

## New landing site ready for canoeists



George Dostal, left, and Jim Dostal of Dostal Construction in Gretna erect a sign on the Elkhorn River in Waterloo, Neb. The sign directs the public to the new canoe landing site near West Maple Road. The 6.72-acre site was donated by Ed Robinson, whose family founded the Robinson Seed Co. in Waterloo. A grant from the recreational trails program of the Federal Highway Administration and funds from the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District paid for the development.

## Bridge work will block trail access

Bicyclists and pedestrians will be unable to travel between the West Papio and Keystone Trails during all or part of May 15 to May 17.

According to the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, the bridge connecting the trails will be closed for maintenance. The bridge spans the Big Papillion Creek near 36th Street and the Twin Creek area.

Because of the bridge's location, a safe detour is not feasible, according to the NRD. Barricades will block the trail.

— Nancy Gaarder

# Missouri River to begin rising tonight as cue for spawning 5-12-06

By HENRY J. CORDES  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Though most people probably won't notice the higher water levels of the Missouri River over the next two weeks, wildlife biologists are hoping endangered pallid sturgeons will.

The Army Corps of Engineers will initiate a first-ever "spring rise" tonight on the Missouri, releasing increased amounts of water from Gavins Point Dam near Yankton, S.D.

The higher river levels are an effort to artificially mimic what used to occur naturally from mountain snowmelt, a process interrupted a half-century ago when the river was dammed for flood control and barge traffic.

Scientists hope the spring rise will provide a spawning cue for the pallid sturgeon, an endan-

gered river bottom-dweller that stopped reproducing naturally in the wild decades ago.

Biologists are still uncertain what action of man may have disrupted the fish's reproductive process.

Teams of scientists from the corps, the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Virginia will monitor key stretches of the river in the weeks ahead to try to determine what impact the spring rise may have on the sturgeons and the river.

"We are committed to the protection and recovery of threatened and endangered species like the pallid sturgeon," said Brig. Gen. Gregg Martin of the corps, which manages dams on the Missouri. At the same time, Martin said, the corps will maintain other river uses.

*See River: Page 2*

## **River:** Rise is critical adjacent to Ponca State Park

*Continued from Page 1*

The spring rise is not expected to create much flooding risk. At its height, the spring rise will raise water levels in Omaha by about 2½ feet — not nearly enough to breach levees. It would take significant rainfall in addition to the rise to produce flooding.

Paul Johnston, a corps spokes-

man, said officials reviewed long-term weather forecasts before deciding to proceed with the rise.

Missouri has filed a lawsuit in an effort to stop spring rises, although no order trying to block the current rise had been sought in the courts as of Thursday.

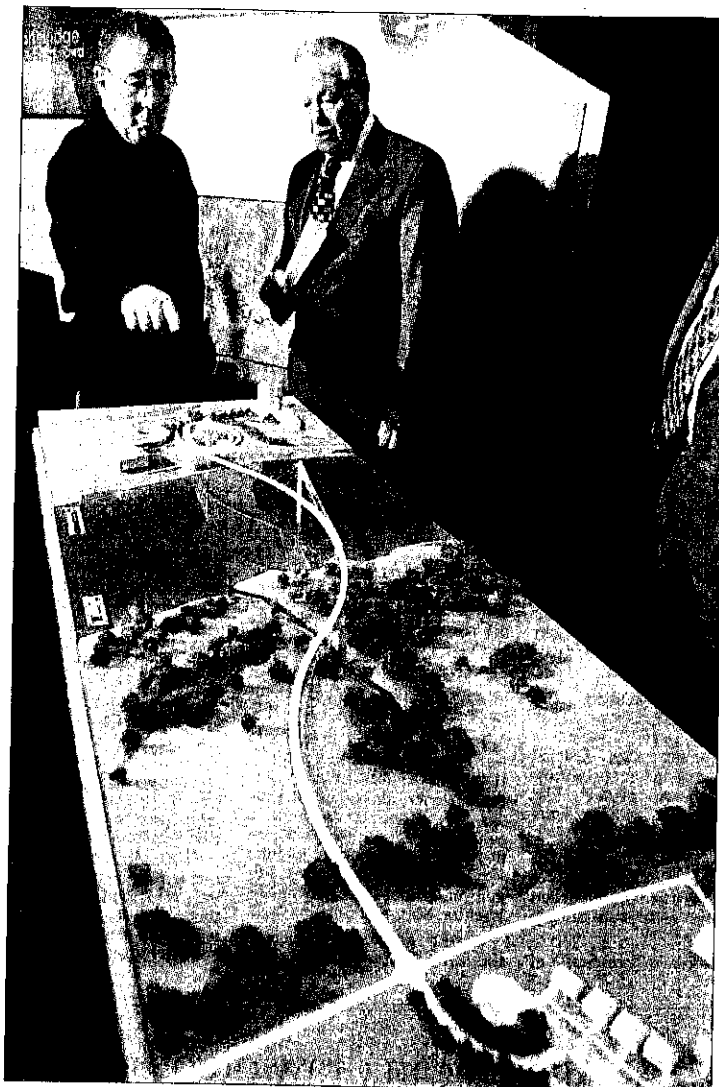
Though Missouri has maintained that the spring rise would

increase the risk of flooding in that downstream state, current forecasts call for the river in Missouri to be 4 feet lower than it is now, even with the rise. That's because of falling water levels on many tributaries that feed into the river in Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas.

The rise is considered particularly critical on the 60-mile

river stretch from Gavins to Sioux City, Iowa, including the Ponca State Park area in Nebraska, where the river is unchannelized and more natural.

The river will draw down water levels on major Missouri River reservoirs in South Dakota, North Dakota and Montana by about two-tenths of a foot, corps officials said.



Council Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan, left, and Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey view the new bridge design Thursday. The model is pictured from the Bluffs side toward Omaha.

# Omahans will love bridge, Kerrey says

By C. DAVID KOTOK

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

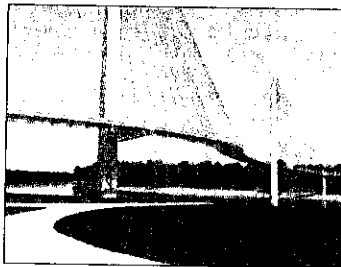
Omahans will come to love the pedestrian bridge, says former Sen. Bob Kerrey, and they may find it cuts their gasoline costs while shaving inches off their waists.

The former Nebraska governor and U.S. senator was among those who renewed the back-to-the-river movement nine years ago and won \$19 million in federal funds to help finance the bridge in 2000.

"It is what I envisioned," Kerrey said after viewing architectural concepts of the bridge design that Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey selected earlier Thursday.

"I applaud Mayor Fahey and others who have sustained this effort," said Kerrey, who gave up his Senate seat in 2001 to become president of the New School University in New York. "I believe it will add tremendous economic and social value to Nebraska and Iowa."

Fahey and Council Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan hailed the bridge Thursday as an economic catalyst, an architectural statement and a vital link as the two mayors stood in front of large pictures of the sus-



Twin spires will rise from the Missouri River in the bridge design by HNTB Corp. of Kansas City, Mo., which was selected Thursday.

pension bridge with its 200-foot towers.

Kerrey noted the bridge's importance in connecting the nearly 150 miles of bicycle and pedestrian trails running along both sides of the Missouri River.

Construction could begin as early as this fall with completion tentatively scheduled for November 2008, Fahey said.

See Bridge: Page 2

Continued

# Bridge: Officials see aesthetic and economic value

*Continued from Page 1*

The announcement came more than two years after the original plan collapsed when bids came in at twice the project's \$22 million budget.

From the beginning, the bridge sparked debate over whether the project, which is largely funded with federal money, is a proper expenditure or a pork-barrel project. The project also will receive some state and private funds.

Fahey and Hanafan said the completed bridge will win over doubters and be an important architectural addition to the riverfront.

"I can assure residents of

Omaha and Council Bluffs that, upon completion, this bridge will be the icon that we have been looking for over the past few years," Fahey said.

Hanafan said the bridge will be "an economic development tool for all of us."

Two Kansas City area firms were selected for the project. HNTB of Kansas City, Mo., is the designer, and APAC of Kansas City, Kan., is the general contractor. The team was selected partly because of its joint experience with cable-stay suspension bridges in Milwaukee, Wichita, Kan., and Boston.

Omaha has been searching for a way to build the bridge

without using local tax revenues. Instead of seeking bids for a predetermined design, the city asked for a design-build proposal in which teams propose a design and promise to build it for a set price.

The delays were expensive. More than \$4 million has already been spent.

Fahey said he and Hanafan are close to reaching their target of \$5 million in financing from private foundations, corporations and individuals.

They already have commitments for about \$3.5 million, Fahey said, and he is confident that additional commitments will be in hand when the final contract goes before the Omaha

City Council in June.

In making his pick, Fahey stayed close to the original plan for a curved suspension bridge. The bridge will stretch from a plaza north of the National Park Service building in Omaha to a landing on the levee in Council Bluffs.

John K. Green, a citizen member of the review committee, said the committee chose the design because its two towers best symbolized the partnership between the two states and two cities.

The HNTB design also took the Iowa landing all the way to the levee, making it more beneficial to Council Bluffs, Green said.



W-14  
5-13-06

## **Joe Neary resigns from NRD**

Joe Neary, who is in his third term on the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District Board, is resigning.

Neary, who represents north-central and northeast Omaha, is leaving at the end of the month. He recently married Deborah O'Donnell, and the two moved to an area of Omaha that is outside his district.

Rich Jansen, chairman of the district board, said the board would take applications and name a replacement. More than two years are left in Neary's four-year term.

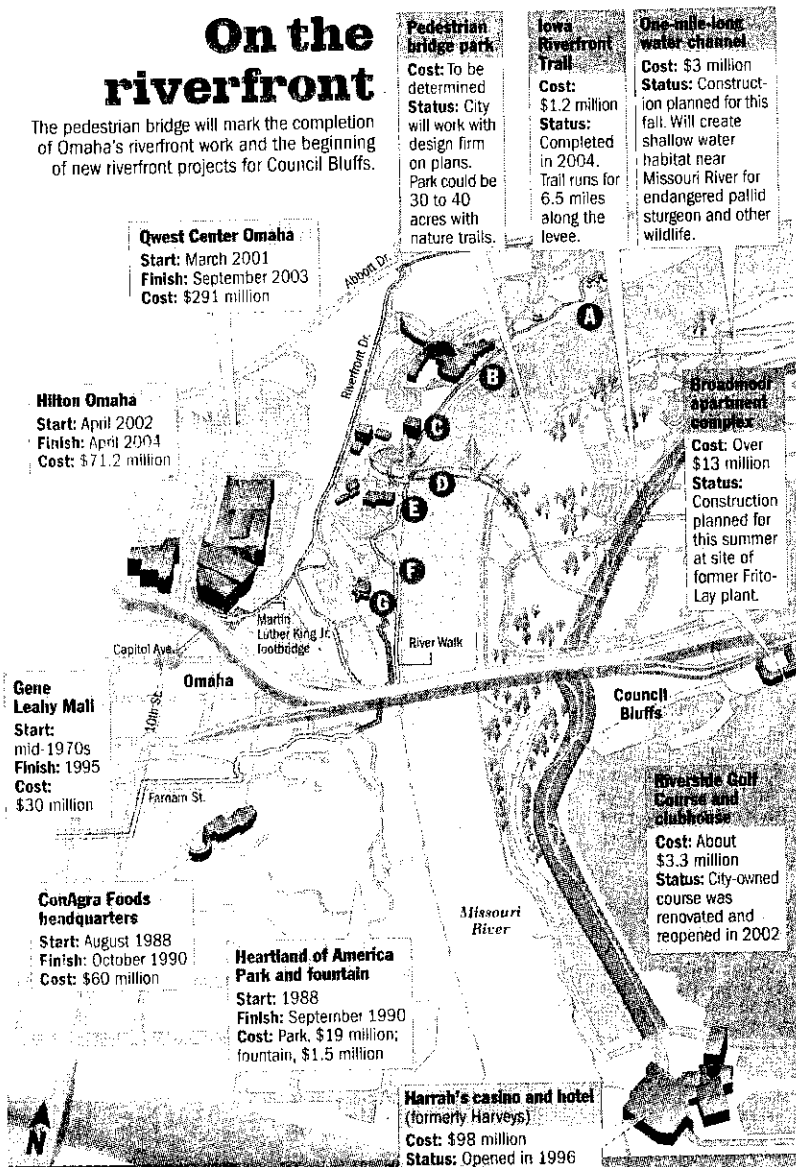
The board also is preparing to create a committee that will search for a replacement for longtime general manager Steve Oltmans.

— Nancy Gaarder

# Bridge aims to create picture-perfect scene

## On the riverfront

The pedestrian bridge will mark the completion of Omaha's riverfront work and the beginning of new riverfront projects for Council Bluffs.



■ Beyond recreation or development, the pedestrian span is called a boon to Omaha's image. 5.14.06

By C. DAVID KOTOK

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The pedestrian bridge linking Omaha to Council Bluffs may not be a civic necessity, but it is far from frivolous.

The bridge is partly responsible for the \$60 million condo project on Nebraska's riverfront. Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan believes the bridge will lead to similar development on the Iowa side of the river.

But the bridge is more than an economic development tool or a new place for recreation.

"It has all the features of Omaha's postcard," said former Mayor Hal Daub. "It gives us sizzle."

Sizzle may be the correct word, especially at night, as the bridge's 200-foot-tall, three-sided towers are bathed in light. The cables that hold the bridge 52 feet above the river also will be lit.

Omaha needs some sizzle because right now Omahans consider their city dowdy. In a world where metro areas compete for people and jobs, beauty counts.

The Gallup Organization surveyed urban residents around the country last year. Residents were asked to rate the "beauty and physical setting" of their city.

Only 15 percent of Omahans rated their city "very good" for its beauty and physical setting. Its peer cities — Austin, Texas; Minneapolis; Portland, Ore.; Raleigh-Durham, N.C.; and Salt Lake City — gave their cities a combined 59 percent for beauty.

Gallup's Steve Schulz said beauty is an important part of "what attracts people to a city and why they stay." His Omaha office overlooks the Missouri River on Gallup University's new campus.

"We have a natural resource that will be leveraged by the bridge," Schulz said.

Schulz and others say Omahans don't appreciate the city's attractive elements.

Design has been important to downtown Omaha's renaissance. It can be seen in the graceful rise of the First National Tower, the dramatic atrium in the new Union Pacific

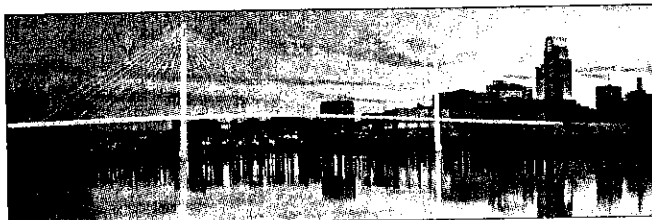
See Bridge: Page 2

## At the water's edge

- A Miller's Landing Park**  
Start: June 2002  
Finish: Spring of 2004  
Cost: \$5.8 million
- B Gallup University**  
Start: April 2002  
Finish: August 2003  
Cost: \$75 million
- C Riverfront Place (condos)**  
Start: June 2005  
Finish: Fall of 2006  
Cost: \$60 million
- D Pedestrian bridge**  
Start: Fall of 2006  
Finish: November 2008  
Cost: \$22 million
- E National Park Service building**  
Start: May 2003  
Finish: June 2004  
Cost: \$12.7 million
- F Lewis & Clark Landing**  
Start: 1998  
Finish: May 2003  
Cost: \$8 million
- G Rick's Cafe Boatyard**  
Start: Spring of 2001  
Finish: November 2002  
Cost: \$2.2 million

SOURCES: City of Omaha Parks & Recreation; Council Bluffs Parks, Recreation and Public Property Department  
Report by JEANNE HAUSER  
THE WORLD-HERALD  
Graphic by MATT HANEY  
THE WORLD-HERALD

At night, the pedestrian bridge's twin spires and cables will be bathed in light, as depicted in this artist's rendering.



UNTRICORP

# Bridge: Span could become Omaha's 'postcard'

*Continued from Page 1*

headquarters and in the undulating roof line of the new convention center etched in blue lights and the tilted eyebrow roof on the new arena.

"The bridge appears to me as a piece of art," said Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey. He compared it to the geodesic Desert Dome at the Henry Doorly Zoo, which appears behind center field during broadcasts of the College World Series.

"Those types of large pieces of art differentiate your city," Fahey said. "This brings more allure to downtown."

It's probably overreaching to compare the pedestrian bridge to the St. Louis Arch, a national monument towering 630 feet over that riverfront. The bridge will not dominate the Omaha skyline as the Arch does in St. Louis.

"We wanted to complement everything else that is going on," said Chris Brown, who was raised in Omaha and is the project manager for bridge designer HNTB of Kansas City, Mo.

Brown has watched Omaha's

downtown and riverfront change in ways that leave Kansas City residents envious.

More than \$650 million in public and private dollars have transformed Omaha's riverfront.

Greg Peterson, a former city planner who is a consultant on the bridge project, has been involved with the back-to-the-river movement since plans were hatched for the Gene Leahy Mall in 1971.

"Each piece adds something," Peterson said.

Perhaps the most important move came in early 1995, three days into Daub's first administration.

At 5:30 in the evening, Peterson got a call from the new mayor. Peterson was to come down from his 11th-floor office to the mayor's third-floor suite.

The elevator stopped at the eighth floor, and Ken Bunger, an assistant city attorney, stepped on.

Daub's message to both men was simple. He wanted the century-old Asarco battery plant gone and modern development in its place.

Today, it's hard to recall that the old industrial plant once stood where Lewis & Clark Landing and Rick's Cafe Boatyard now welcome jazz enthusiasts on summer nights. Taking down Asarco opened the way for the Qwest Center Omaha to be built on old Union Pacific yards.

Development marched north with the rusting tanks at the Omaha Docks replaced by the National Park Service building, the Riverfront Place condos and the soon-to-be started pedestrian bridge.

Gallup then decided it wanted to locate where Aaron Ferer & Sons had processed scrap metal for decades.

The bridge marks the final piece of the riverfront puzzle for Omaha. Now the emphasis is on spreading west from the river into the north downtown area between Cuming Street and Interstate 480.

Council Bluffs and Omaha have followed different paths to development along the river. The Bluffs used Ameristar and Harveys — now Harrah's — casinos to set things in motion a

decade ago.

Now the Bluffs is turning to a different kind of recreational activity with improvements to the golf course, new bike trails, park land and new apartments at the site of the former Frito-Lay plant.

Hanafan said a nature park is planned between the riverbank and the levee. The bridge would land on top of the levee.

With all the talk of the bridge as an icon and Omaha's new postcard, the likelihood that it will be a people magnet could be overlooked.

The cable-stay bridge will be unique on the Missouri River.

People will flock to it for bike rides or just to stroll halfway across and stand over the river, predicted Brown, the bridge designer.

The impact will be dramatic, he said, comparing Omaha's new pedestrian bridge to the Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge leading into Boston. When that bridge opened in 2002, nearly 250,000 people went to take a look.

**World-Herald staff writer Tom Shaw contributed to this report.**

W-H  
5-14-06

## **Check 'lake cam' before next picnic**

Most people look out the window to see whether the weather's nice enough for picnicking or fishing.

But now would-be picnickers and anglers can learn the precise weather conditions at popular Omaha metro area lakes by checking the computer.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District has installed a "lake cam" and weather station at Wehrspann Lake at Chalco Hills Recreation Area.

Anglers, walkers, bikers, picnickers and others can check wind speed and direction, temperature, humidity, heat index, hourly and daily rainfall amounts at [www.papionrd.com](http://www.papionrd.com).

The webcam also provides a view of the lake from the NRD headquarters. The recreation area is west of Highway 50 and Giles Road in Sarpy County.

— Nancy Gaarder