

MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General's Manager Report

DATE: October 8, 2004

FROM: Steve Oltmans, General Manager

A. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION REPORT**: A copy of the I&E Report detailing Information and Education activities of the District for the month of September, 2004, is attached for your review.

B. **MISCELLANEOUS/PERSONNEL ITEMS**:

1. **Martin Cleveland** attended the 2004 American Public Works Association International Public Works Congress and Exposition on September 12-15, 2004 in Atlanta, GA. A memo detailing highlights of the conference is attached.

2. Thank You Letters and Notes:

- Thank you note from State Senator Ed Schrock thanking the District for coordinating the metro stormwater tour for state senators in the morning and hosting the Legislative Hearing on August 31, 2004.
- Thank you letter from Barbara Foster, Economic Development Specialist, U.S. Small Business Administration, thanking the District for the use of the Board Room for a bank training session.

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 September, 2004. 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 September 13, 2004. I would ask each Director to review this listing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

- E. **PAPIO CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP MEETING:** The Papio Creek Watershed Partnership met on September 30, 2004 at the Natural Resources Center. Items of discussion were: watershed study action items; preparation for NPDES Phase II permits; Glacier Creek Project; and stormwater legislation. A copy of the meeting minutes are attached for your review. NPDES Permit Subcommittee meetings are scheduled for October 7 and 21, 2004 and the next PCWP meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2004. There is also a public form scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2004 at 7:00 p.m.
- F. **REPORT ON WORKERS COMP SITE AUDIT:** A Workers Comp Site Audit was conducted by Robert Tims, Risk Control Consultant from St. Paul Travelers Insurance Co., on September 3, 2004. Staff members **Pat Teer, Tom Pleiss and Jean Tait** met with Mr. Tims to review district operations and loss prevention activities. Mr. Tims determined that prior recommendations had been completed and there were no new recommendations submitted at this time. A copy of the report is attached.
- G. **UPDATE ON TRAILS MARKING PROJECT:** Attached is an e-mail from Mary S. Riley regarding the status of the Rotary Centennial Trail Marking Project. She notes that fund raising is the focus now. In order to qualify for a \$35,000 Kiewit Foundation grant, an additional \$15,000 must be raised by December 31, 2004. Also a grant application has been submitted to the AAA Foundation and the Omaha Community Foundation. A copy of the project summary of pledges and receipts is also attached.
- H. **NEWS CLIPS:**
- ❖ September 8, 2004 - Omaha World Herald article – Regional approach to population challenge urged. “Rapid growth and limited resources are on a collision course” in a 13-county area around Omaha, a study concludes.
 - ❖ September 8, 2004 - Sioux City Journal – Dakota City plans groundbreaking for new Natural Resources Center
 - ❖ September 12, 2004 - Omaha World Herald article – Youth hunting program is scaled back after complaints
 - ❖ September 13, 2004 - Omaha World Herald article – Drought could be tough break for NRD incumbents. A UNK student’s study shows that as dry conditions worsen, re-election bids fail at higher rates.
 - ❖ September 16, 2004 – Omaha World Herald editorial – The people’s river. Condos are fine, but public access should remain a priority for the Missouri.
 - ❖ September 16, 2004, Omaha World Herald article – New water-use plans in works, managers say.
 - ❖ September 16, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – Urban planners say change can come soon.
 - ❖ September 16, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – Trial’s design calms most dissent (Happy Hollow Blvd. Trail)
 - ❖ September 17, 2004 – Lincoln Journal Star article – River basins ‘overappropriated.’ The state designation means a moratorium on new wells and new irrigated land.
 - ❖ September 17, 2004 – Blair Enterprise article – County postpones California Bend vote.
 - ❖ September 17, 2004 – Blair Enterprise article – Rural water system progresses; work begins on new water tower.

- ❖ September 21, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – Grants to jump-start Standing Bear trail.
- ❖ September 21, 2004 – Blair Pilot Tribune article – County could control fate of dams. Supervisors must approve road closings.
- ❖ September 23, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – Lake McConaughy is bouncing back.
- ❖ September 24, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – New drought strategy urged.
- ❖ September 24, 2004 – Omaha World Herald – More Commentary – Here’s how pumping groundwater can lower a river, by Roger Patterson and Ann Bleed, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.
- ❖ September 29, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – New law aims to get a handle on water conflicts. The legislation is expected to prevent and resolve disputes over the valuable resource.
- ❖ September 29, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – Conservation efforts honored.
- ❖ September 30, 2004 – Omaha World Herald editorial – An important honor. State Master Conservationists will protect and preserve environment for the future.
- ❖ October 4, 2004 – Omaha World Herald article – More well water to be tested. Corps to focus on areas around Mead Superfund site.

/pt/SO/GM Reports/2004/October

September 2004

Information & Education Report

Information

- Completed and published 2004 Annual Report in Omaha W-H Newspaper on September 26th
- Continued update of Trails Brochure.
- Updated photos on Reservoir display
- Completed "Trails" Video and continued work on "Overview" program.
- Updated web site pages.
- Attended NARD Annual Meeting.
- Began work on Fall 2004 SPECTRUM.

Education

- Arranged for volunteers from Papio-NRD to help with Water Quality Open
- Attended web x-tender archive training
- Trained 25 pre-service teachers in Project Learning Tree and Water Education for Teachers
- Met with Butterfly Garden Chair at Fullerton Magnet School
- Printed and mailed Cultivation Newsletter
- Attended NARD conference
- Continued planning for Fall Teacher Workshops (NATS, CU, & CSM)
- Made nametags for September Board Meeting
- Purchased booth space at Pheasant Fest 2005
- Continued planning Fall in-school programs
- Edited, and Printed Walnut Creek Camping Regulations
- Started planning for Willowdale Elementary Environmental Day
- Presented Nature Hike and Animal Adaptations program to Omaha Home School Group
- Attended Community Volunteer Network Conference
- Started on presentation for All Employee's Meeting

MEMORANDUM

TO: The File

FROM: Martin P. Cleveland

SUBJECT: 2004 APWA International Public Works Congress and Exposition

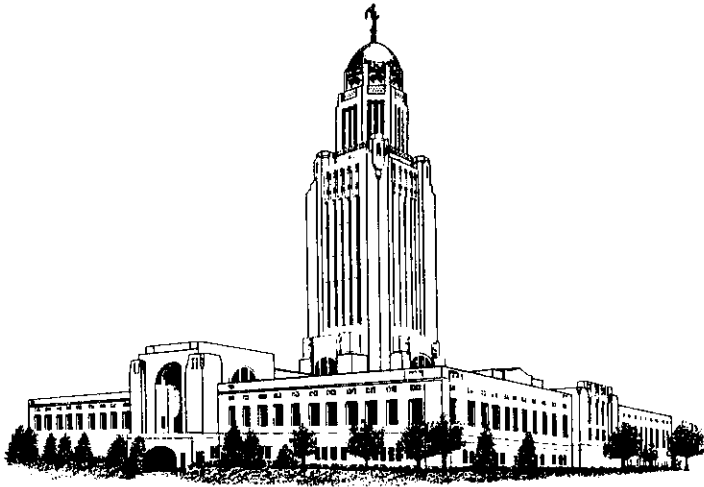
DATE: September 21, 2004

On September 12 to 15, 2004, the writer attended the 2004 APWA Annual Conference held in Atlanta, Georgia. The conference consisted of concurrent sessions and an equipment/vendor show.

The writer attended the following sessions:

1. Infra Guide: Best Practices for Municipal Infrastructures by Sylvain Boudreau, National Research Council, Canada.
2. Design – Contract – Build Delivery System by Don Trim, Wade-Trim Associates.
3. True Success: A Philosophy of Excellence by Tom Morris, Morris Institute.
4. Federal Case Law on ADA Requirements for Public Roads by Hector Barron, City of Sacramento, CA.
5. Time Has Value: The A + B Bidding Process by Jerry Holder, HNTB Corporation.
6. Avoiding the Pit Falls of Public Participation by Kristina Ray, Katz and Associates.
7. Water Reuse – Present Uses and Future Possibilities by Joseph Beck, Chesterfield County, VA.
8. Lighten Up and Laugh – For the Health of it by Craig Zablocki, Positively Humor.
9. Managing “Spikes” in Design and Construction Work Loads by John Brown, Berryman and Heniger.
10. Aquascape Solutions for Stormwater Management and Treatment by Bruce Phillips, PACE.
11. From Paper to Digital – Tracking a Major Transportation Program by Russell Bentley, PBS & J.
12. Groundwater Replenishment in Orange County by Abdul Rashidi, Montgomery Watson.
13. Curing the Big Headache of Small Excavation Reinstatements by Frank Mathews, MBW Inc.

Cc: Steve Oltmans, Marlin Petermann and Pat Teer, NRD



*Senator
Ed Schrock*

*Nebraska
Unicameral Legislature*

Dear Steve:

The Natural Resources Committee and staff thank you, your staff and board members for hosting us last week. The morning tour was very informative and enjoyable, and provided valuable information to the committee.

We also appreciate you accommodating us in the afternoon for the hearing. You have a beautiful facility, and it's a pleasure to be there. And finally, many thanks for the delicious lunch you provided.

With personal regards,

Ed

Ed Schrock



U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Nebraska District Office

11145 Mill Valley Road

Omaha, Nebraska 68154-3949

PHONE: (402) 221-7212 FAX: (402)221-3680 Email: barbara.foster@sba.gov

September 22, 2004

Natural Resources Center
Chalco Hills Recreation Area
8901 So. 154th St.
Omaha, NE 68138

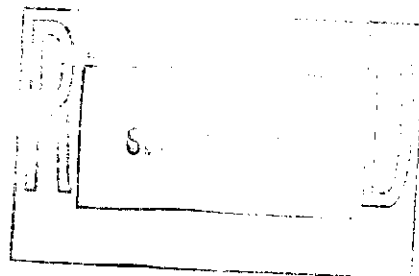
RE: Training Room

We, the Small Business Administration, held a bank training session in your Board Room today, which was well attended.

I just wanted to thank you very much for the use of your facility for our training purposes, it worked out very well.

Sincerely,

Barbara Foster
Economic Development Specialist



September, 2004

7



Updated: September 13, 2004

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

- **Big Papio Channel Project - West Center Road to West Dodge Road (Woodward):**
- **Little Papio:** (Cleveland)
- **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
- **West Branch** (Cleveland):
 - Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96th St.) (W)
 - ★ Purchase Agreements, deeds (90th to Giles) (W)
- **Western Sarpy Dike** (Cleveland):
 - Closing with Bundy's (potentially modify ROW/offer) (F)
 - Amended drainage ditch easements on Hickey (First National Property) (P)
 - Cabin ROW Documents, as needed (P)
 - ★ Three Cabin ROW Condemnations (W)
- **Floodway Purchase Program** (Woodward):
 - Floodway Property Purchase Agreements as needed (F)
 - Flood Mitigation Planning and Mapping Assistant Agreement w/ Blair (W)
- **Trail Projects** (Bowen):
 - Bennington Trail Interlocal Agreement (P)
 - Western Douglas County Trails Agreement (W)
- **Missouri River Corridor Project** (Becic):
 - California Bend – Final settlement with tenant (Wright's) (W)
 - Lower Decatur Bend – Appraisal Review, ROW documents and habitat easements (P)

- **USDA P.L. 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed** (Puls/Cleveland):
 - Pigeon/Jones Creek Site Easements – as needed (W)
 - Silver Creek Site Easements– as needed (W)
 - Release of Site S-7 Easement (W)
 - ★ Papio Site S-27 (Fox Ridge Estates) Trail Easements (W)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:**
 - Dam Site 19 agreement (Petermann) (F)
 - Dam Site 13 Agreement (Petermann) (F)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater)** (Woodward):
 - NRD Bonding Authority Legislation (P)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Sklenar)
 - ★ South Sioux City Waterline Purchase Agreement (W)
- **Elkhorn River Public Access Sites** (Sklenar):
- **Other:**
 - Interlocal Agreement with Bellevue for Missouri Riverfront Development (P) (Becic)

**PAPILLION CREEK
WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**

MEETING MINUTES



**Meeting on Comprehensive Stormwater Management
September 30, 2004 - 10 AM to Noon - Board Room
Natural Resources Center, 8901 S. 154th Street, Omaha, NE**

Attendants

The following were in attendance: Laurie Carrette Zook (HDR), Lyle Christensen (HDR), Kent Holm (Douglas County), Mark Wayne (Sarpy County), , Douglas Kellner (TD² representing La Vista), Robert Hayes (Boys Town), David Goedeken (Bellevue), , Dan Freshman (Ralston), Bob Sink (Omaha), Marty Grate (Omaha), Nina Cudahy (Omaha), Pat Slaven (Omaha), Chester Black (Omaha), Geoffrey Goodwin (Omaha), Tom Bragg (UNO), Barbi Hayes (Hayes Environmental), Steve Tonn (Douglas/Sarpy County Extension), Robert Hall (NRCS), Mike Kemp (Offutt AFB), Michael Crisco (NDEQ), Donna Luckner (NDEQ), Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD), and Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD).

Purpose

A Partnership meeting was held on the above date in order to discuss topics stated in the attached agenda. The meeting began at approximately 10:10 AM.

1. Introductions

- Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) opened the meeting and everyone introduced himself or herself. An agenda and sign-up sheet were distributed.

2. Watershed Study Action Items

- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) handed out minutes from the Partnership Subcommittee meeting on September 16, 2004 and reviewed plans made for a future public meeting to be held on November 17, 2004. He also noted that the subcommittee decided issues could be divided into 3 focus groups similar to Omaha by Design: **“Clean Watershed”**, **“Green Watershed”**, and **“Safe Watershed”**. Lyle Christensen handed out and quickly reviewed a draft presentation outline for the public meeting. He noted that certain policy issue questions would need to be presented to the public for their feedback. Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) suggested that we will need to take a position on these issues and then let them react to it. Marty Grate (Omaha) made a few suggested changes to the outline including the fact that the policy issues need to focus on both water quantity and water quality. HDR agreed to make a few changes to the outline before the next Subcommittee meeting on October 7, 2004.

- Nina Cudahy (Omaha) explained that the Partnership would have a booth at the Omaha Home Expo at the Qwest Center on October 1 – 3, 2004. She displayed the new banner for the booth which announced the Public Forum on November 17, 2004.

3. Preparation for NPDES Phase II Permits

- Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) introduced Geoffrey Goodwin (Omaha) and explained that he was here to provide an overview of Omaha's plan review and grading permit process. Goodwin explained that Omaha had 2 types of grading permits which corresponded with NPDES Phase I (greater than 5 acres) or II (between 1 and 5 acres) size construction sites. He noted these permits would apply to any stripping or grading activity in Omaha's jurisdiction. The responsibility to comply with the permit falls on 4 different parties: the applicant (developer), contractor, engineer, and inspector. Goodwin then described Omaha's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) review process. He said that they currently look mainly for detention basins which protect the exterior of the site and minimize sediment leaving the site. He also noted they use the current Sediment & Erosion Control Manual for specific design criteria and computations. Goodwin concluded by explaining that grading permits are not issued until deficiencies in the SWPPP have been addressed and are acceptable. Marty Grate (Omaha) suggested that other communities use this brief description of Omaha's review process to investigate their own personnel needs to perform this duty. Paul Woodward noted that if they have any questions, they can contact Geoff Goodwin at 444-5220 or ggoodwin@ci.omaha.ne.us. Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) noted the NRD provides technical review assistance on many of these sediment and erosion control plans and is willing to do the same for other entities.
- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) explained that Omaha had prepared a proposed update to the PCWP website and it was currently available for review. Nina Cudahy (Omaha) made CD copies available to those present. Comments or suggestions concerning the website need to be provided by the Partnership Subcommittee meeting on October 7, 2004.
- A recent draft of the Stormwater Management Ordinance dated September 16, 2004 was handed out and Marty Grate (Omaha) explained that it had been approved by Omaha's legal counsel. He requested that other entities also review the draft and let him know if it won't work for them. It was concluded that all initial comments from other entities concerning the draft ordinance need to be provided by the Partnership Subcommittee meeting on October 21, 2004.

4. Glacier Creek Project

- Tom Bragg (UNO) introduced himself and reviewed that the purpose of his presentation today was to give the Partnership an overview of Glacier Creek Environmental Education Complex, a potential project as it might relate to future watershed planning. He introduced the existing 160 acre Allwine Prairie Preserve located in the NE corner of State Street and Military Road and reviewed the current need to expand this historic

prairie landscape to maintain a desirable viewshed. He noted that many other groups were currently in support of this expansion effort including the City of Omaha which has included it in their Park Master Plan. Dr. Bragg also pointed out that this is essentially an unaltered watershed which could be used as a control to compare future water quality data. Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) informed Dr. Bragg that the Partnership would gladly consider including the site in the Watershed Master Plan, but it is still 2-5 years away from completion.

5. Stormwater Legislation

- Information including testimony presented at the Nebraska Legislature's Natural Resources Committee hearing on August 31, 2004 and a revised draft bill was handed out. Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) reported that the committee participated in a tour of stormwater issues in the Omaha Metro including sites such as Wehrspann Wetland, MUD's Treatment Plant construction site, Zorinsky Basin 3, Cole Creek, 64th & Dupont CSO, and the new sewer screens along the Missouri Riverfront. At the hearing, NDEQ explained that other 1st class cities within the state had been recently sent a letter notifying them that they need to apply for an NPDES permit. Other testimony concerning development below dams was also reviewed and Petermann noted that there was going to be a NRCS/NRD public meeting on the rehabilitation of 3 such dams in the Papillion Creek Watershed tonight in Bellevue.

6. Financial Report

- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) handed out and reviewed a summary of the Watershed Fund which included new annual contributions. The first payment is due July 1, 2005 and requests will be made shortly. He noted that contributions this year will generate another \$434,500 by July 1, 2004 and will create a balance of over \$625,000 to spend on implementing NPDES Permit activities during that time.

7. Other Items of Interest

- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) explained that recent drafts of Omaha by Design's (OBD) recommendations included references to the Partnership's efforts in relation to their "Green Omaha" focus. An earlier brochure explaining aspects of "Green Omaha" was handed out. Woodward also noted that the upcoming schedule for releasing the OBD planning study included a public meeting on October 20, 2004 at 6:30 PM in the Scott Conference Center located at 6450 Pine Street.
- Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) briefly reviewed the current status of HDR starting the water/waste water study for the Platte/Elkhorn River drainage area in Sarpy County and a small area in Douglas County. He also explained that similar to the Partnership encouraging local jurisdictions to put a moratorium on any new sewage outfalls until TMDLs are created and proper standards can be developed, the NRD recently recommended that a proposed development in Douglas County planning a new sewage

outfall in the Elkhorn River wait until study results can better direct regional sewage treatment for that area.

- Pat Slaven (Omaha) updated the Partnership on the latest issues being addressed by the Cunningham Lake Watershed Council. She also noted a technical advisory committee meeting is planned for next Wednesday, October 6, 2004. A future public meeting to review upcoming recommendations by the Watershed Council will probably be held in November.
- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) distributed application forms for the newly formed Nebraska Floodplain and Stormwater Managers Association. Woodward and Laurie Carrette Zook (HDR) are both officers of this association. Petermann encouraged those interested to become members.
- The annual Nebraska Association of Resources Districts meet in Kearney on October 4 and 5, 2004. Michael Crisco (NDEQ) made a presentation on the Partnership and NPDES permitting.

8. Next Meeting Dates

- The next Partnership meeting will be held on Thursday, November 4, 2004 at 10:00 AM in the Board Room of the Natural Resources Center. NPDES Permit Subcommittee meetings will be held on Thursday, October 7 and October 21, 2004, at 10:00 AM in the Board Room and Lower Level Conference Room respectively of the Natural Resources Center. The upcoming public forum is scheduled for Wednesday, November 17, 2004, at 7:00 PM.

9. Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:50 AM. An agenda, attendance list, and the handouts passed out at the meeting are available to those members who were not present at the meeting upon request.

Please contact Paul Woodward at 444-6222 regarding any questions or comments concerning these meeting minutes.



7600 College Boulevard
Overland Park, KS 66210
September 8, 2004

Ms. Patricia Teer
Administrative Coordinator
Papio Missouri River
8901 South 154th Str
Omaha, NE 68138-3621

Location Surveyed:	8901 South 154th Str Omaha, NE 68138-3621
State of Assignment:	NE
Person Contacted:	Patricia Teer, Administrative Coordinator
Date of Survey:	September 3, 2004
Coverages:	Workers' Compensation
Producer:	Dunbar Peterson Ins Agcy
Job #:	0155-010846
SAI #:	2162B3074
Writing Office:	004T

Dear Ms. Teer:

This letter confirms my survey of Papio Missouri River. The purposes of the survey were to gain a better understanding of your operations and to discuss your loss prevention activities.

LOSS ANALYSIS

Loss analysis is a very important tool to help you identify some of the areas to focus your safety efforts. A thorough review of previous losses will allow you to determine the cause of accidents and make the necessary changes to prevent them in the future.

There have been no accidents reported in several years.

PRIOR RECOMMENDATION STATUS

Based on my survey, the following status is provided for any previously submitted recommendations.

<u>Rec #</u>	<u>Recommendation Topic</u>	<u>Status/Agreement</u>
03-1	Blood borne Pathogens Program	Completed
03-2	Accident Investigation	Completed

This report is based upon the information supplied by customer personnel and/or on the conditions and practices observed at the time of the visit. The report may not list all unsafe conditions and practices; others may exist. This report is not an endorsement of and it may not be used to endorse or promote any practices, procedures, or products. The survey activities or any recommendations in this report are designed to assist the customers named in the report in the management of their own safety activities and should not be construed as legal advice. The responsibility for making changes in the operations, procedures, or for implementing any recommendations is the customer's. All warranties are hereby disclaimed and no liabilities are assumed to any party for any damages that may arise from the use of or reliance upon information contained in this report.

As a result of this survey, the following recommendations are being submitted for your attention at this time.

RESUBMITTED RECOMMENDATIONS

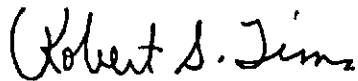
No recommendations are being resubmitted.

NEW RECOMMENDATIONS

No new recommendations are being submitted at this time.

I appreciate the time and courtesy extended to me during my visit by Jean Tait, Purchasing, Tom Pleiss, Safety Coordinator, and you. If I can be of further assistance in any way, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Tims
Risk Control Consultant
913-661-3679

SIC Code # 95120
0155-010846/CFH

Distribution:

Orig: As Addressed

1 cc: Dunbar Peterson Ins Agcy
1902 Howard
Omaha, NE 68102

1 cc St. Paul Travelers
Alternative Markets Division
P. O. Box 42021
Hazelwood, MO 63042-1021

Oltmans, Steve

From: Mary S. Riley [marysriley@cox.net]

Sent: Thursday, September 09, 2004 11:29 AM

To: Warren Whitted; Bob Perrin; Brett Wawers; Dale Mathre; Dan Hamann; Dick Sturgeon; Eli McNichols; Bowen, Gerry; Jim Muegge (Western Douglas Cty.); John Furstenberg; Joy Kerr; Karen Mulder; Kent E. Holm; Larry Lavelle; Marcuzzo Ted; Mark Ryan; Mary Linn Sonnemaker; Roger Humphries; Ron Mortensen; Steve McCollister; Oltmans, Steve; Vicki Sempek; Egr, Emmett; 'Bob Walker'

Subject: Update on Trails Marking Project

There has not been a recent Trails Marking project meeting or report to committee members, so this is an update on where we are today.

Fund raising is the focus right now - in order to qualify for a \$35,000 Kiewit Foundation grant, we must receive all pledges AND raise an additional \$15,000 by 12-31-04. There are still a lot of pledges outstanding, but we have received \$5,800 toward that additional \$15,000. Attached is an updated report on where we are today with pledges and receipts. If you wish, we can send you a list of members of your Rotary club who have contributed to date.

Chairman Brett Wawers has also submitted grant applications to the AAA Foundation and the Omaha Community Foundation but we have not had a response from either to date. During the past few months, Brett has written letters to club presidents and past presidents asking for their support within their clubs in this fund-raising effort. In mid-August, Brett attended the quarterly meeting of the Metro area Rotary club presidents/execs to report on progress to date and to again encourage completion of pledges as well as personal calls to solicit additional support from club members so we can meet the requirements of the Kiewit grant and complete the project. As a members of the project committee, you are encouraged to make personal appeals for financial support of this project.

Markers are installed in half the trails. The contractor has just received the markers for the next trail and is beginning their installation. The goal is to complete the marker installation by the end of November 2004, before the ground is frozen, but the work will continue only as there is the cash on hand.

We have had very good community and media response and publicity about the project. Administrators, police and fire officials from several Metro area communities spoke in support and appreciation of this project at the dedication ceremony on the Keystone Trail on June 5, 2004, which was National Trails Day. Representatives from most of the Metro Rotary Clubs attended and assisted at this event, which was greatly appreciated.

Council Bluffs Rotary Club has dropped plans for their original Centennial Project and are joining the trail marking project. They have started fund raising within their club for the trails in their area - their cost will be about \$40,000 - and have applied for a grant from the Iowa West Foundation.

September 8, 2004
 Rotary Centennial Trails
 Marking Project
 Summary of Pledges and Receipts

Rotary Club	Number of Members	Total Pledged	Pledge / Member	Receipts to 9-7-04	Balance Due
Bellevue	31	\$4,800	\$155	\$4,800	\$0
Downtown	360	\$15,000	\$42	\$12,150	\$2,850
Millard	64	\$9,000	\$141	\$9,000	\$0
Morning	50	\$7,500	\$150	\$3,000	\$4,500
North	18	\$1,800	\$100	\$150	\$1,650
Northwest	43	\$5,000	\$116	\$2,250	\$2,750
South	18	\$1,800	\$100	\$0	\$1,800
Suburban	190	\$8,450	\$44	\$8,450	\$0
West	150	\$50,000	\$333	\$31,095	\$18,905
Western Douglas County	37	\$4,500	\$122	\$3,000	\$1,500
Receipts/Rotary Clubs	961	\$107,850	\$ 112.23	\$73,895	\$33,955
% of pledges received				69%	
Other Donations					
Omaha Peddlers Club		\$500		\$500	\$0
Suburban Rotary - Additional		\$0		\$894	
Northwest Rotary - Additional		\$0		\$1,500	
Bellevue Rotary - Additional		\$0		\$500	
Non-Rotarians		\$0		\$2,975	
Receipts/Others		\$500		\$6,369	
Total		\$108,350		\$80,264	

Regional approach to population challenge urged

■ "Rapid growth and limited resources are on a collision course" in a 13-county area around Omaha, a study concludes.

7-8-04
By C. DAVID KOTOK
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

of nearly 1 million people over the next 50 years, a three-year study concludes.

The full Flatwater Metroplex report on how to meet the challenge of a population that will double, to more than 2 million

people, by 2050 will be released Thursday during a 10 a.m. meeting at the Scott Conference Center on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus.

"Rapid growth and limited resources are on a collision course" for the area, which also covers 119 smaller communities in nine Nebraska and four Iowa counties.

The report was prepared by the Joselyn Castle Institute for

Sustainable Communities, founded by Cecil Steward, the former architecture dean at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In the preface to the report, Steward writes that accelerated growth is inevitable.

"The dynamics of four counties — Douglas, Sarpy, Pottawattamie and Lancaster — seem destined to insure a steady-to-dramatic growth potential for the flatwater region," Steward writes.

Among the issues that demand cooperation now are conflicts over water, low-density housing development and the loss of valuable agricultural land.

On balance, Steward concludes, "there are more positive features of the Flatwater Metroplex than negative. . . . There are more reasons for pride and optimism than for fear and desperation."

The new focus on the down-

town areas in Omaha, Council Bluffs and Lincoln are positive signs highlighted in the report.

The counties covered in the Flatwater Metroplex are Burt, Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Lancaster, Otoe, Saunders, Sarpy and Washington in Nebraska and Fremont, Harrison, Mills and Pottawattamie in Iowa.

The Thursday session at the conference center at 6450 Pine St. is open to the public with a \$10 registration fee.

Dakota City plans groundbreaking for new Natural Resources Center

By Michele Linck
Journal staff writer

DAKOTA CITY — A ground breaking ceremony is planned for 7:30 p.m. Thursday at 15th and Broadway streets for a new one-stop, multi-agency Natural Resources Center in this county seat.

The Natural Resources Center will house the offices of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, the NRD, Dakota County Rural Water Project office, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Natural Resources Center will also have a meeting room which will be available for public use.

Dakota City donated land near its City Hall for the 9,000-square-foot, roughly \$960,000 project. Dakota City Mayor Chuck Carson will speak at the ground breaking and present the land title to NRD officials.

The NRD currently shares office space at 901 W. 21st Street in South Sioux City with the two U.S. Department of Agriculture agencies.

Housing the agencies under one roof offers efficient and convenient service to their clients and provides a good work environment for the employees, they say.

The Papio-Missouri NRD has led the way in what has become a national trend in housing the agencies' offices together. In 1996, the NRD expanded its headquarters at Chalco Hills Recreation Area to include federal, state and local resources agency offices.

The NRD Board of Directors will hold its monthly meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, immediately following the ground breaking. It is expected to award the contract at that time to the low bidder, Halman Construction Inc. of Sioux City.

While the offices in the new Resources Center will serve Dakota County, the Papio-Missouri River NRD has staff and offices in all six counties it serves, which are those on the Missouri River north of Omaha.

The NRD claims the co-location with the USDA offices provides maximum efficiency in carrying out resources development programs and projects.



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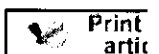
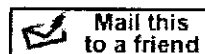
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 September 12, 2004

Youth hunting program is scaled back after complaints

BY NANCY GAARDER
 WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A new youth hunter education program has been scaled back after facing opposition from neighbors worried about competition for waterfowl and concerns about safety.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission had big plans for Vencil's Island, at the mouth of the Platte and Elkhorn Rivers: outdoor science and biology classes, and mentored waterfowl, deer and turkey hunting, using either guns or bow and arrow.

The 450-acre property between Lincoln and Omaha was seen as ideal for giving city kids a better shot at learning to hunt.

But last week, the board of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, which owns the property, reined in those plans. Kids will be allowed to hunt waterfowl for two days and to hunt turkey and deer with a bow and arrow.

Want to Enroll?

• To enroll your child in the hunter education program call (402) 471-6133.

NRD board member Joe Neary pushed unsuccessfully for greater access for youth.

"The board paid \$1 million on that piece of real estate," he said. "To let it just sit there and do nothing, I think, is ridiculous. My perception is that we're going to turn down youth for a few neighbors - and I don't buy that."

Leading the opposition to expanded youth hunting was landowner and waterfowl hunter Chuck DiDonato. He threatened an injunction if the NRD allowed kids extensive access.



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"I would not have put in in excess of \$300,000," DiDonato said, "if I knew competiiti would be built (next door)."

The NRD, he said, should limit the land's use to its original purpose, habitat preservation.

At issue is the last mile or so of the peninsula that juts into the confluence of the Pl and Elkhorn Rivers. The Natural Resources District bought the property from Alvin Glasshoff to develop into habitat for endangered species.

Glasshoff said he had hoped to sell it to someone for a hunting resort. The NRD ne the land to compensate for habitat damage the district is causing with nearby improvements to levees.

The purchase caught the eye of Game and Parks officials because the land offers hunting close to Omaha and Lincoln. Scaling back the plans, said Jeff Rawlinson, outdoor education specialist, means that one to two dozen youths, instead of almo 100, will be able to use it.

The first group of kids will head out in the next week or two, he said, to hunt deer w bow and arrow.

While Game and Parks officials are grateful for the access that they have been giv Mark Vrtiska, waterfowl program manager, said neighbors are being "extremely se

"There is competition from the Wyoming line to the mouth of the river," Vrtiska said "Having (three) blinds in place to allow youth waterfowl hunting is like a drop in the bucket."

But DiDonato doesn't believe the program is just to benefit youth. Some people, he want to hunt the prime ground under the "ruse" of youth mentoring.

"The guys who are the maddest," he said, "are the ones who want a shot at trophy bucks."

Also, some of the NRD shoreline is so treacherous, DiDonato said, that he wouldn't his own grandchildren there.

"I'm not selfish," he said. "I'm inviting Game and Parks to use my property. It's safe got better habitat."

He said he would provide kids breakfast and lunch, even dinner and a place to bur with a parent - at no charge.

DiDonato owns 40 acres next to the NRD property. While there are a number of commercial hunting properties nearby, DiDonato says his is not one of them; his property is limited to use by friends and family. As for himself, he hunts migratory waterfowl, not deer, turkey, rabbits or the like.

Rich Jansen, chairman of the NRD board, crafted the compromise to limit youth hu

Jansen said the issue isn't about youth, but the NRD's credibility. The proposal presented last week by Game and Parks and the NRD staff, Jansen said, was bro than what the NRD board had agreed to earlier.

"I want the public to know that when we agree on something, that's what we're goir do," Jansen said. "My main concern is to get trust back."

Board member Rich Tesar, who sells and outfits hunting and fishing equipment, al voted to restrict youth hunting. He's not against kids, he said, adding that he plans

serve as a youth mentor for Game and Parks to assure the program's success.

"I don't think it's unreasonable for the neighbors or NRD board to say 'let's go slow said. "I'm sure it will expand."

Kim Hawkins of Hawkins Construction owns land nearby. He said opening the NRD property to mentored hunts sounds fine.

"Hunting teaches respect for nature, respect for safety," Hawkins said. "It's getting tougher and tougher. Anything that is done to encourage children to hunt properly ; to get them acclimated is wonderful."

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Drought could be tough break for NRD incumbents

■ A UNK student's study shows that as dry conditions worsen, re-election bids fail at higher rates.

9-13-04

KEARNEY, Neb. (AP)—Natural resource district members seeking re-election this fall could see their efforts dry up as the state's drought persists, according to the findings of a University of Nebraska at Kearney student's summer research project.

Cynthia Waskowiak, a political science and psychology major from Ravenna, Neb., was one of more than 30 students involved in the third annual Independent Research and Platte Studies Seminar.

Waskowiak collected drought index statistics for the past 25 years in the six natural resource districts along the Platte River in Nebraska.

She then compared that data with election results every four years in each district.

What she found spells bad news for NRD incumbents.

As drought worsened, the number of natural resource district members voted out dramatically increased.

For example, the area drought index in 2002 was a

minus 2.2. That year, 10 board members were voted out of office. By comparison, only two board members lost their seats in 1984, when the drought index stood at 4.35.

Waskowiak concluded that in times of stress — such as a lack of water — voters may feel that, while they can't control the weather, they do have some control over who is or isn't elected to office.

"The most important thing to consider, I guess, for elected officials is to remember that drought and other similar weather conditions really do have an impact on their outcome, so that is something they should definitely consider when they're campaigning," Waskowiak said.

The UNK senior said she plans to expand her study to all natural resource districts in the state.

She and the other students involved in the summer research projects were to present their findings this week in UNK's Nebraskan Student Union.

New water-use plans in works, managers say

9-16-04
By DAVID HENDEE

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The clock began ticking Wednesday for the formation of water-use plans for central and western Nebraska.

But water managers in the region — where the state officially declared Wednesday that demand for water exceeds supply — were already deep into the issue.

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources' declaration of overappropriated basins came as no surprise to managers of natural resources districts who have been working on the problem for years.

"It'll be a very seamless transition because of the proactive approach we've taken out here," said Rod Horn, manager of the South Platte NRD in Sidney.

NRDs in the overappropriated area — the Platte River basin west of Elm Creek, the North Platte basin and Pumpkin Creek, and the South Platte basin and Lodgepole Creek — now have three to five years to develop plans to integrate the management of groundwater and surface water in their areas.

That means they must find a way to reduce the use of all sources of water in their areas

to a level where it is sustainable over the long term. The goal is to bring existing uses of groundwater and surface water into line with uses as of July 1, 1997.

"It's not going to be easy," said Ron Cacek, manager of the North Platte Natural Resources District in Gering. "There are a lot of competing interests for water."

The state natural resources department believes that if nothing is done, existing water users increasingly will be faced with less water. The current drought has aggravated the problems.

Months and years before the state's new water law went into effect in July, however, the NRDs started issuing moratoriums on new uses of groundwater. They included stays on drilling of new irrigation wells and expanding irrigated acres.

Kent Miller, manager of the Twin Platte NRD at North Platte, said the ability of the overappropriated areas to reduce water use among everyone depends on the success of the new management plans.

"A lot of folks think the integrated management plans have to be done overnight," he said. "They're not going to be done overnight, but they're the key to all of this working."

W-H

9-16-04

The people's river

Council Bluffs officials have a fresh opportunity to plan the east bank of the Missouri River. Access for the general public should be a high priority.

The opportunity comes as a result of a developer's difficulties in obtaining financing for a two-tower condominium project across the river from Lewis and Clark Landing.

Matt Buchanan, a Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce official, said, "I still think there are other opportunities out there that can be just as significant."

Surely he is right. And surely the range of significant opportunities includes projects that would accommodate the public, as Council Bluffs officials have noted in incorporating green space into their previous riverfront plans.

A development such as the reinvigoration of the Missouri River frontage in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area can benefit from a healthy mix of uses. A

**Condos are fine,
but public access
should remain
a priority
for the Missouri.**

business anchor here. Light commercial activity there, accommodating a recreation-seeking crowd. And, yes, perhaps, a residential component

as part of a carefully planned mix of amenities.

But first, last and always should be a commitment to public access. Riverfront vistas are finite. The more private developments our cities allow along the Missouri, the less room we leave for the public.

The more we transform the riverfront with concrete, glass and plastic, the less value it will have as a place for Midlanders and their guests to enjoy the natural beauty of their surroundings. That philosophy may have received more attention on Omaha's side of the river in recent years.

Bluffs plans already have incorporated the public's needs to a commendable extent. Now that the plans may have to be redrawn, continued attention to those needs would be a plus.

Urban planners say change can come soon

9-16-04
BY JEFFREY ROBB

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Omaha can start becoming a more attractive city within about five years, leaders of an urban design initiative say.

Urban planners for Omaha By Design presented a list of recommendations for transforming Omaha to their steering committee Wednesday.

Included are ideas to dress up certain areas of Omaha, encourage a new look in neighborhoods and build shopping centers with a main street feel.

Jonathan Barnett, the initiative's lead consultant, said Omaha transformed its downtown and riverfront within about six years. Other parts of the community, he said, can have their appearance transformed within five to seven years.

"This community has done it before," Barnett said.

The planners presented their suggestions privately, and committee members debated and refined the goals. After the meeting, leaders publicly discussed a few of the concepts.

One idea involves a higher design standard for important sections of Omaha, such as downtown, 72nd and Dodge or the city's western gateway off West Dodge Road.

In the suburban fringe, planners also hope to encourage a new style of neighborhood design. Homes, for instance, might be built in a more traditional style, with a garage to the side of the house, not out front.

If that idea takes hold, suburban Omaha could see changes within three to five years, said Omaha Planning Director Bob Peters.

Retail centers, planners said, already are changing, with the new Village Pointe and smaller shopping centers that incorporate more plazas. The Omaha By Design proposals will move shopping centers more strongly in that direction, Peters said.

The full proposal will be unveiled Oct. 14, followed by a community meeting Oct. 20. The Planning Board will take up the recommendations Nov. 3.

A City Council vote is scheduled for Dec. 7.

Trail's design calms most dissent

9-16-04

By JULIA MCCORD

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Dundee-Memorial Park neighbors got a look Tuesday at the city's final plan for the controversial recreational trail along Happy Hollow Boulevard.

They asked lots of questions, and some of them were pointed.

But landscape architects' effort to minimize the trail's impact and preserve the historical character of the neighborhood through ornamental signage and railings won over most people.

"They did a good job of not chopping down trees," said Gary Wence, who lives on the corner of Burt Street and Happy Hollow Boulevard. "It's a good compromise."

The Happy Hollow Trail is Omaha's first attempt at constructing an inner-city recrea-

tional trail. The firm of Beringer Ciaccio Dennell Mabry did the design.

Dave Ciaccio and Omaha Parks chief Larry Foster held five informational meetings about the proposed trail last fall. Despite heated opposition, the City Council voted to go ahead with it in December.

Tuesday's open house at Dundee Presbyterian Church was the last public meeting.

Construction will begin in October. Completion is slated for June 2005, Ciaccio said.

Ciaccio and assistants Todd Maiellaro and Kevin Strehle answered questions for more than two hours Tuesday from a steady stream of visitors.

The new trail will begin just west of the Dodge Street overpass, run east along Dodge Street and north along the west side of

Happy Hollow Boulevard to Underwood Avenue.

From Underwood, it will follow Happy Hollow to Metcalfe Park and then turn east to the Northwest Radial.

The trail from Dodge to Underwood will be an 8-foot-wide ribbon of concrete. From Underwood to Metcalfe Park, it will follow existing sidewalks and put bikers into the street in designated lanes or routes.

Several people were upset Tuesday that at least six trees planted by the Dundee-Memorial Park Association along Happy Hollow will be relocated.

But they were pleased that ornamental steel safety railings along Elm Creek, between Dodge and Underwood, will be painted a deep "Dundee green" with gold accents.



THE WORLD-HERALD

River basins 'overappropriated'

The state designation means a moratorium on new wells and new irrigated land.

9-17-04
BY ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS
Lincoln Journal Star

The state Department of Natural Resources has designated three river basins in Nebraska as overappropriated under LB962, the state's new water policy law.

The department's order, issued Wednesday, designates the following basins as overappropriated,

meaning the demand for water exceeds the supply:

- Platte River basin above the Kearney Canal Diversion.
- North Platte River basin, including Pumpkin Creek.
- South Platte River basin, including Lodgepole Creek.

Deputy Natural Resources Director Ann Bleed said the orders had been expected because under LB962 the department had until Wednesday to designate any river basin, sub-basin or reach (segment of a waterway) it deemed overappropriated.

She said the designations placed a moratorium on new irrigation wells and on increasing the number

of acres irrigated by surface water and groundwater. Those moratoriums take effect Sept. 25.

Many areas in the three river basins already are under moratoriums. For example, no new surface water rights have been granted since 1993 on the Platte River upstream from its confluence with the Loup River, according to natural resources specialist Tina Kurtz.

The department plans to work with the affected natural resources districts in the designated basins to develop integrated management plans for surface water and groundwater use. That could take between three and five years.

The first step will be to bring ex-

isting uses of groundwater and surface water in line with uses as of July 1, 1997, the date listed in a proposed cooperative agreement among Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming. The three states are working on a long-term plan to manage the Platte River system to provide water and create habitat for endangered and threatened species.

Duane Woodward, a hydrologist with the Central Platte Natural Resources District based in Grand Island, said the district would have to examine its integrated management plans and look at how overappropriated areas could be managed for the future. The affected area in his district stretches about 50 miles

along the Platte River from Elm Creek to Gothenburg.

"We will be looking at the issues of surface water usage to see how much it is overappropriated and how much we need to cut back on existing uses in place since 1997," Woodward said.

LB962 went into effect July 16. Under the law, the Department of Natural Resources is still responsible for the administration of surface water rights and NRDs are still responsible for administering groundwater use.

Reach Algis J. Laukaitis at 473-7243 or alaukaitis@journalstar.com.

County postpones Calif. Bend vote

By Keith Rydberg
Reporter

An attempt to turn the California Bend area northeast of Blair into a recreational area has been delayed for at least two weeks as the Washington County Board of Supervisors has asked for time to look at the proposal.

California Bend, located approximately one mile northeast of Blair on the Missouri River, was modified last year in a \$4.19 million project that created a habitat of plants and grasses that are native to Nebraska. The project was a cooperative effort between the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that attempted to bring birds and animals back to the Missouri River.

Now that the project has been completed, the city of Blair has approached the NRD about possibly modifying the bend further to allow for public access. NRD officials said they are willing to consider public access, so the city is asking the Washington County Board of Supervi-

sors to join an interlocal agreement between them and the NRD to develop a master plan for the development of the bend. The cost of the master plan has been estimated at \$12,000 with the interlocal agreement proposing the county, city and the NRD pay \$4,500 to help cover the cost of the master plan.

The additional \$1,500 that will be raised will be used to fund any extra expenses that may arise.

Steve Oltmans, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, said the district believes a master plan is necessary in a project like this to help define what people want to see at the bend and how it would be developed and maintained. Oltmans added the project is likely several years away. The master plan is expected to take six months to one year to complete.

"A master plan will allow us to segment out what pieces are covered by the city and the county as far as how maintenance is concerned," Oltmans said.

Although the county board was not concerned about the financial obligation of joining the partnership, County Attorney Ed Talbot requested the vote on the agreement be tabled so he could review how land was acquired for the California Bend project. Talbot said he was concerned that while land was acquired from nearby property owners to create the wildlife habitat, the original agreement between the district, the Corps and the landowners may not have allowed the land to have other uses.

Supervisor Jeff Quist expressed a similar concern when he said allowing public access on the bend could defeat the original purpose of the revitalization.

"We really need to be cautious about getting humans in there again," Quist said. "I think we really need to look at what this project was designed for first."

Board Chairman Harlo Wilcox offered a different opinion.

"I wonder if we are not blowing this out of proportion," Wilcox said. "It seems a shame

to have that and not be able to use it. I feel this will not just be used by the people of Blair; it will be used by the people of Washington County."

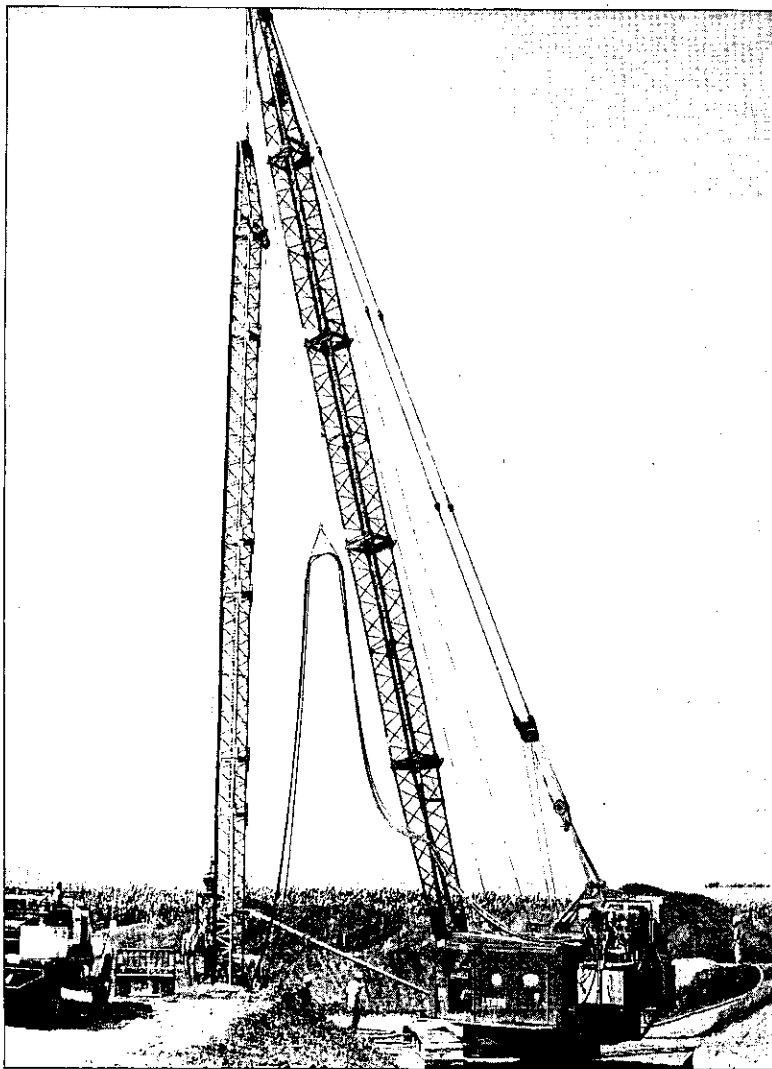
Blair City Administrator Rod Storm said because the bend lies outside the city limits of Blair, the county's cooperation in the matter is necessary.

"From our standpoint, we feel it is something that needs to be done," Storm said. "We feel the county needs to be involved just because a good part of it could impact what you, as a county board, could face in the future."

This gives the county an opportunity to participate and the county should be participating, in my opinion, to help provide some of the needs for the people of Blair and Washington County. I think once limited public use is allowed for California Bend, you will see a tremendous amount of activity."

The county board tabled its vote on the proposal until its next meeting. The Blair City Council this week unanimously approved the interlocal agreement and funding for the master plan.

Enterprise - Blair Ne
9-17-04



Part of the new rural water system will be a water tower that will be built near the intersection of Highway 133 and County Road 26. Work has begun on the project and is expected to be completed in about a year.

Rural water system progresses; work begins on new water tower

By Keith Rydberg
Reporter

If all goes well, the final plans for a rural water system south of Blair could be completed by the end of the month.

The 30-mile distribution system, estimated to cost \$3.3 million, will be located between Nebraska Highway 133 and U.S. Highway 75 from Blair south to country roads 32 and P32. The system will serve 265 properties in the coverage area with water supplied by the city of Blair through water lines installed by the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Project Manager Dick Sklenar said the NRD board members have approved the preliminary plans for the proposal that show where the water lines will be located. Representatives from the NRD will meet with the county's rural water supply committee later this month to finalize plans for the system. Once the final plans are approved, Sklenar said the NRD is planning to start advertising for bids

by late October with the construction contract possibly awarded in November. The project is expected to be completed by next summer.

Sklenar also said progress is continuing on the watertower that will hold 1 million gallons of water for the rural water customers. Located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Nebraska Highway 133 and County Road 26, the watertower is expected to be completed by September 2005. Workers with Landmark Structures have been working on the tower for two weeks after the company was awarded the \$1.38 million contract at the NRD's Aug. 12 meeting.

While the location of the water lines has been determined, the NRD is currently working to oversize many of the water lines in the water system in an attempt to plan for future county development. The oversizing is being done by the NRD at the county's request with the county offering to loan the NRD \$200,000

for the costs involved with oversizing the water lines. Although the county's assistance will not totally pay for the estimated \$235,000 necessary to increase the size of the lines, Sklenar said the extra cost is likely something that can be worked out with the contractors.

"Most of the water lines have been oversized because of the tremendous growth in Washington County and the likelihood that growth will continue over the next several years," Sklenar said. "There is really no reason for concern until we start opening bids."

The main trunk line, which will run parallel to county roads 32 and P32, will be 12 inches wide and was enlarged to allow for a connection between Blair's water supply and the Metropolitan Utility District's water supply

in Omaha. While Blair will be the main water supplier for the rural water system, the MUD supply would be used as a backup water source in case of an emergency. Water lines running north and south in the system area will be oversized to a width of 8 inches.

While the 8-inch lines were oversized primarily to anticipate future growth, the lines will also be used by the Fort Calhoun Fire Department. Sklenar explained the department has asked the district for permission to place eight to 10 fire hydrants along the north-south water lines that are within Fort Calhoun's fire district. The hydrants will mainly be placed at county road intersections, with the department paying the district for the use of the water lines.

Grants to jump-start Standing Bear trail

The sound of whizzing bike tires could fill the air at Standing Bear Lake earlier than expected.

The Omaha City Council is expected to approve a plan today to use more than \$400,000 in federal grant funds awarded by the Nebraska Department of Roads for the first phase of a new trail around the lake.

The city will pay for the rest of the \$1.1 million project. When finished, the 3.5-mile, 10-foot wide concrete trail will circle the lake.

Under the new schedule, work on both phases of the trail is scheduled to begin next year and be finished by early summer 2006, rather than late 2006.

Parks Director Larry Foster said the new trail will replace the grass pathways and deteriorated asphalt that are now in place.

"This will give it the sort of first-class feel our trail surfaces have across the city," Foster said. — **Joseph Morton**

Pilot Tribune - Blair Mo - 9-21-04

County could control fate of dams

Supervisors must approve road closings

By Keith Rydberg
Reporter

A resolution meant simply to show opposition to a dam proposal is being seen by some as an obstacle that cannot be overcome.

At the Aug. 24 meeting of the Washington County Board of Supervisors, the board members unanimously approved a resolution that states the board is opposed to a proposal by the Papio-Missouri River Natural

Resources District to build two dams and flood-control reservoirs in the county.

Although the NRD board has not made a formal response to the resolution, Richard Connealy, who represents Washington County on the district board, said he thinks the board's resolution has ended future consideration of the Washington County dams.

Because the lake would require all east-west county roads between Nebraska highways 36 and 91 to be closed, Connealy said the county board could place the project in jeopardy if the supervisors do not allow the closures through their authority.

"We have to have the blessing of the county board before

we can do anything," Connealy said. "As far as building dams in Washington County, we are not going to do it if the county board doesn't want them. If I had to say right now, I would say the dams in Washington County are probably not going to be built."

In the meantime, opponents of the proposal are continuing their fight. Todd Andersen of rural Kennard, whose farm would be affected by the lake, said he heard Connealy make a similar comment earlier but remains skeptical that the Washington County dams are no longer being considered.

"He seems to be jumping at the chance to tell everyone that, but I don't trust him very far," Andersen said. "I can't under-

stand why he was one of the guys who was in favor of this and suddenly he seems to have changed his mind. I guess I'll just say I don't believe it."

While Steve Oltmans, general manager of the NRD, explained the district's board of directors will make the ultimate decision regarding the proposal, he was surprised at Connealy's statement. Declining comment on whether he agreed with Connealy's statement, Oltmans said the county's formal opposition to the dam proposal is a "major factor" in developing the project and could cause difficulties if and when construction begins on the dams.

"There isn't a lot of flexibility

SEE DAMS PAGE 3A

DAMS: Road closures may be key factor

FROM PAGE 1

ity there," Oltmans said. "Washington County accounts for one-fourth of the total watershed, or about 100 square miles of the total watershed. There really isn't any alternative if the supervisors choose not to allow road closures."

Oltmans said while there has been no further progress made on the study since the Aug. 12 meeting, with no action likely for several months, the district is looking at potential dam sites in Douglas and Sarpy counties and is working with developers in those counties regarding the potential impacts those dams may have. Oltmans said while he has heard comments the district is focusing primarily on Douglas and Sarpy counties at the expense of Washington County, the district is simply being proactive in planning for Washington County's future development.

"The opposition we have been receiving is a typical response we get from property owners living on the northern side of the watershed in a proposal like this," Oltmans said. "We're looking at more houses in the watershed now. Thirty years ago, Sarpy County was basically a rural county. Now, that is not the case. Within the next 25 to 50 years, I see the same thing happening to Washington County."

Lake McConaughy is bouncing back

9/23/04
By DAVID HENDEE

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Lake McConaughy is starting a winter rebound that may yield a 15-foot rise in the drought-stricken reservoir.

Irrigation releases from the western Nebraska reservoir stopped a week ago, and after this weekend no water is expected to be allowed through Kingsley Dam for nearly two months, according to the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District.

"The lake is 4,000 acre-feet up already, and it'll pick up steam as we get the diversion dam shut off and stop the flows to Sutherland Reservoir," Jeremie Kerkman, the Central engineer who

supervises McConaughy, said Tuesday.

Lake McConaughy, the state's largest reservoir, dropped to an all-time low elevation of 3,197.6 feet above sea level Sept. 14. The previous low of 3,198.2 feet had been set in 1956.

The lake is now up about three-tenths of a foot and slowly climbing. It is expected to top out at 3,211 feet before irrigation releases resume in May 2005.

For a few more days, however, Central is releasing water from McConaughy to the Nebraska Public Power District's Keystone Diversion Dam for delivery via a canal to Sutherland Reservoir.

Sutherland Reservoir needs

to be full enough for use by NPPD to cool its Gerald Gentleman Station, the state's largest electricity generating plant.

After ending releases this weekend, no more water is expected to be drained out of McConaughy until flows to Sutherland Reservoir resume November through January, Kerkman said.

Central estimates that McConaughy's storage volume will peak next spring around elevation 3,211 feet, or just over 500,000 acre-feet. The lake has a storage capacity of 2 million acre-feet.

Central owns and operates McConaughy. It provides water to irrigators in south-central Nebraska and generates electricity.

New drought strategy urged

By DAVID HENDEE

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Gov. Mike Johanns and other Western governors say the United States can't afford to wait any longer to create an active federal drought strategy.

The governors also urged Congress to provide nearly \$3 billion in emergency aid for drought-related crop and livestock losses.

"The emergency drought relief would go directly to struggling farmers and ranchers in need of immediate assistance, and that's important," Johanns said Thursday.

"It is also high time to put a system in place that provides a coordinated federal drought response so we don't have to hope and hold our breath when faced with drought disasters."

Johanns said an integrated system would improve overall management of drought by helping predict drought cycles and their severity. He said it also would ensure a consistent federal response that states can count on when drought hammers the agricultural economy.

Western Nebraska and much of the American West is in a fifth consecutive year of drought.

Sens. Chuck Hagel, a Republican, and Ben Nelson, a Democrat, are co-sponsors of a \$2.9 billion federal aid package for farmers and ranchers whose crops and fields have been decimated by the drought or hurricanes. The Senate approved the proposal last week.

The governors co-authored a letter Tuesday urging Congress

to not only provide the drought relief but also to adopt the National Drought Preparedness Act in the Homeland Security appropriations bill.

The act would create the National Integrated Drought Information System to improve drought monitoring and forecasting. It also would create a National Drought Council to coordinate and integrate federal drought assistance.

The National Drought Mitigation Center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln would play a key role in the new system, Johanns said.

Other governors signing the letter were Judy Martz of Montana, Bill Richardson of New Mexico and Mike Rounds of South Dakota.

Here's how pumping groundwater can lower a river

BY ROGER PATTERSON AND ANN BLEED

The authors, of Lincoln, are respectively the director and deputy director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

Nebraska has reached a crossroads in the use of water, our most important natural resource.

In the last two decades, demands on water use have

Midlands Voices

reached the limits of the supply in some of Nebraska's river basins. Disputes have arisen internally and with our neighboring states. Surface-water appropriators on the Republican River and Platte River systems have raised concerns that groundwater pumping has depleted their surface-water supplies.

In 1998, Kansas sued Nebraska, complaining that Nebraska's groundwater pumping was causing Nebraska to be out of compliance with the 1943 Republican River Compact. In 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the compact regulates portions of groundwater use.

In 2001, litigation over the impact of groundwater pumping on surface-water supplies was initiated in regard to Pumpkin Creek, a Panhandle tributary of the North Platte River.

The common thread in each of these situations is the hydrologic connection between surface water and groundwater and how to manage this combined resource.

In response to these growing concerns, the Legislature formed a 49-member Water Policy Task Force. In 2004, the Legislature adopted the task force's recommendations and passed Legislative Bill 962.

LB 962 addressed the issue of managing hydrologically connected water supply and demand by amending the Groundwater Management and Protection Act to provide for proactive, integrated management of hydrologically connected surface and groundwater supplies.

Under Nebraska law, the local natural resources districts have been responsible for managing groundwater use. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources has been responsible for administering surface-water supplies and ensuring the state's compliance with interstate compacts. LB 962 did not change this basic institutional structure.

LB 962 does require that the Department of Natural Resources and the NRDs work together to jointly develop and implement integrated management plans to manage hydrologically connected surface-water and groundwater supplies.

The key to developing a successful integrated management plan is an understanding of how the state's groundwater supplies interact with the state's surface-water supplies.

Unlike surface-water flow, which is relatively easy to understand because it is readily observed and easily measured, groundwater flow is hidden and difficult to measure. Groundwater moves much slower than surface water, often only a few feet per year.

This slow movement of water occurs through the pore spaces between the sands, gravels and other subsurface materials below the ground. These materials that store and transmit water are

called aquifers.

To visualize an aquifer, think of a sandbox filled with sand. Now, pour water into the box. The water fills the empty spaces between the grains of sand. That is what happens with groundwater in an aquifer.

If there is a drain hole on the side of the sandbox, water will flow toward the hole until the sand is drained. The drain is like a river.

If you dig a hole in the sand in the middle of the box, you may see water in the hole. If you scoop water out of the hole with a cup, water will move into the hole from the surrounding sand. That hole is like a pumping well. Scooping water out of the hole in the sand reduces the amount available to go out the drain hole.

Water in Nebraska's streams comes from two sources: (1) runoff from local precipitation and, in some cases, Rocky Mountain snowmelt; and (2) discharge from groundwater aquifers.

While there are multiple aquifers in Nebraska, the High Plains Aquifer complex is the primary source of groundwater. This groundwater reservoir is mostly comprised of the Ogallala formation and overlying sands and gravels.

The Ogallala formation itself contains a complex mixture of sands, gravels, sandstones, silts and clays, much of which is well-suited for holding and moving groundwater. This formation was deposited over millions of years.

In the natural state, water is removed from the groundwater system by evaporation, by consumption by plants and animals or by flowing out of the system to a stream. People also remove water from the integrated system, either by diverting it directly from a stream or by pumping it from wells (see graphic).

Much of what we know about groundwater movement comes from extensive geologic and climatological investigations over the last 100 years. In addition, we use groundwater models to further our understanding of the system and to make estimates of how much water might be available in the future under different management scenarios.

These groundwater models use available information such as groundwater levels, precipitation, pumping and stream flow to calculate water levels and flows everywhere in the aquifer. The model is constructed so that it matches all the real-world observations of the groundwater system.

How does water use affect the overall supply?

Though different in many respects, there are a number of basic principles common to both surface-water and groundwater systems.

■ First, where groundwater aquifers are in hydrologic connection with surface-water streams, the two must be viewed as a single, integrated system. The addition of water to either the aquifer or the stream will result in an increase to the other over time. Likewise, the removal of water from either the aquifer or the stream will result in a decrease to the other over time. The integrated system constantly seeks a state of balance.

■ Second, as a general rule, the amount of water entering any system over the long term must equal the amount leaving the system, including any change in the amount stored in the system. In the shorter term, if inflows exceed outflows, the excess is stored and the water levels in the aquifer rise. Conversely, if the outflow is greater than the inflow to the system, water levels in the aquifer decrease.

■ Most importantly, there is not an unlimited supply of water in this system.

We all know that large portions of the state do not receive a lot of rain. In these areas, pumping may cause outflows from the integrated system to exceed the inflows to the point where streams dry up and wells go dry.

In other words, if pumping causes the outflow from the system to exceed the inflows, then other outflows such as stream flow, evapotranspiration (the use of water by plants, especially trees and shrubs in river valleys) and groundwater flow to other parts of the aquifer will be reduced until a new equilibrium is achieved.

In an integrated surface-water/groundwater system, depletions to stream flow can occur either by wells intercepting water that otherwise would have flowed to the stream or by causing water to move from the stream to the well.

The bottom part of the graphic diagrams a stream-aquifer relationship that is fairly typical of many of Nebraska's streams. If a well starts removing water from the aquifer, the well will intercept water that otherwise would have resulted in providing water to the stream.

As the well continues to pump, more water is removed from the system and less water reaches the stream. Eventually, if the pumping continues, water actually will flow from the stream toward the well.

Generally speaking, both surface-water diversions and groundwater pumping remove water from the system. But the short term impact of each on the stream can be dramatically different.

A surface-water diversion immediately depletes the stream by the total amount diverted. When the diversion is stopped, the depletion to the stream stops immediately.

When a well starts to pump, there is also an immediate depletion.

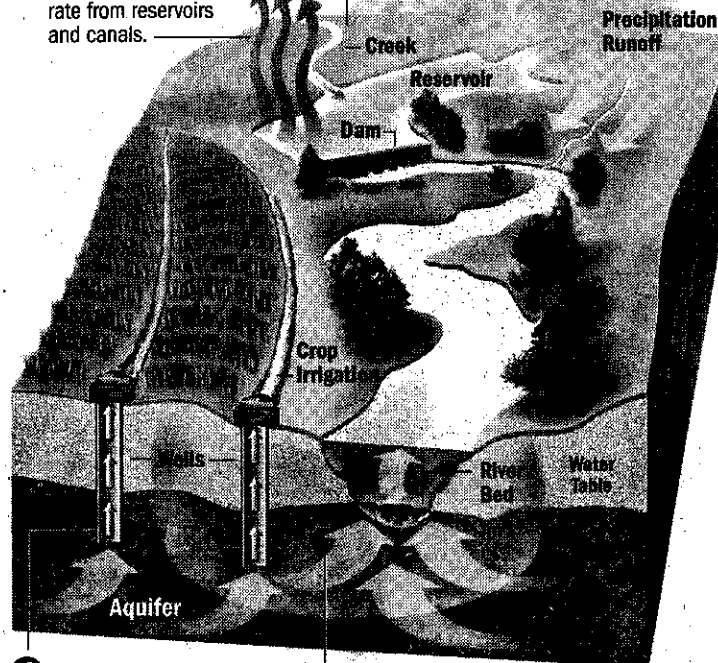
Stream flow

River and stream flow can be affected in many ways. Rainfall shortages and overuse can set off a chain of events that compounds the problem.

1 Precipitation is the largest contributor to most rivers and streams. Precipitation absorbed into the ground also replenishes aquifers.

2 Creeks or tributaries carry precipitation and spring runoff to the rivers and streams.

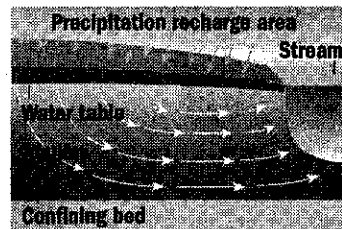
3 Dams contain rivers and streams, creating reservoirs. Some water is often diverted by canals for agricultural use. During dry periods, water evaporates at a high rate from reservoirs and canals.



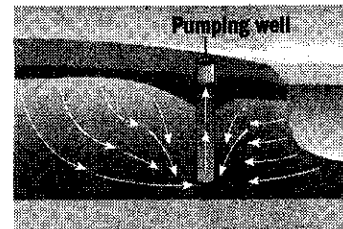
4 Irrigation wells tapped into aquifers can lower the water table when more water is being used than is being replenished.

5 Rivers and streams can exchange water with aquifers. When the water table is high, groundwater flows into rivers. When the water table is low from lack of precipitation or overuse from wells, water from rivers and streams may replenish aquifers.

How wells affect stream flow



Rivers and streams naturally interact with unconfined aquifers, exchanging water levels at times of dry or wet conditions.



When wells are placed too close to rivers or streams, the natural exchange is interrupted and water is drawn from the river when the aquifer is down.

SOURCES: Jim Goeke, hydrologist, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; U.S. Geological Survey; Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

tion to the stream caused by the instantaneous dropping of water levels everywhere in the aquifer. But although the drop in the water table is substantially close to the well, the drop decreases away from the well until it is so tiny it cannot be observed.

Also in contrast to a surface-water diversion, after the well is turned off, depletions to the stream will continue to increase, often for many years, before they start to decrease.

For example, in a system like the Republican River Basin, a single well far from the river may not draw any significant amount of water from a river for 25 years and may take only 20 percent of its water from the river after 100 years. The well, however, will keep on taking water from the river hundreds of years after pumping stops.

This lag between the time water is pumped from the groundwater and the time the depletion is observed in streams is referred to as the "lag effect."

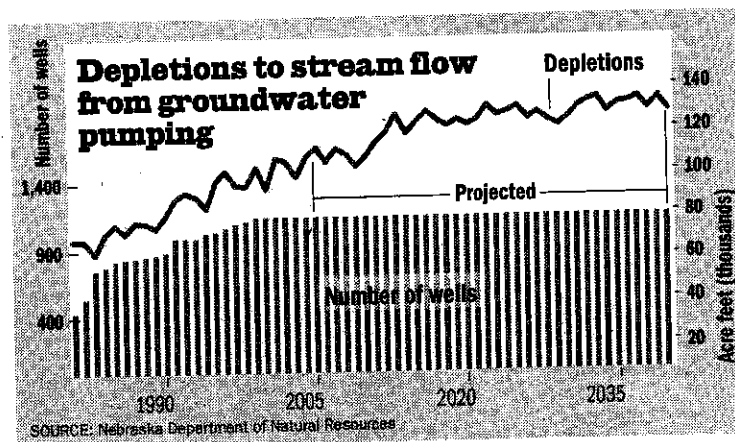
Some people assume that the lag effect is the result of the velocities at which water moves through the groundwater system; that is, if the groundwater velocity is 100 feet per year, it will take 50 years to see the impact on a stream of a well 5,000 feet from the stream.

This is not the case. An individual water molecule does not have to move from the stream to the well to cause an impact on the stream. Changes in water table elevation and aquifer pressure, not the velocity of water, determine when and how much a well will affect the stream.

To understand this concept, picture a person squeezing a toothpaste tube. If you squeeze at the bottom of the tube, toothpaste comes out the other end, even though the toothpaste hasn't moved through the entire length of the tube. Groundwater responds to changes in water table elevations and pressures in a similar fashion.

Because of the lag effect, a pumping well's impact on a stream will not be noticeable for some time after the well has started pumping, and it will be even longer before the entire impact of the well arrives at the stream.

For example, the chart depicts the modeled impacts of well pumping on a stream. The first part of the curve shows the increased amount of stream depletion caused as well development increases. After the year 2000, the number of pumping wells



DEAN WEINLAUB/THE WORLD-HERALD

was held constant. Nevertheless, the stream depletion continues to increase until a new equilibrium is reached.

In reality, it is not easy to observe the impact of wells on stream flow. Often, variations in precipitation, pumping patterns and stream flow are such that only after many years can the impacts of pumping on stream flow be observed.

A long wet period lowers the demand for water, can partially refill available aquifer storage and mask the impacts of pumping. In contrast, dry periods, like the current drought, highlight the impacts of pumping.

In some cases, the impacts of pumping on groundwater tables are noticeable. But in others, changes in water-table elevation cannot be seen until stream flows have significantly declined.

Finally, not all the water diverted from a stream or pumped by a well is consumed and removed from the integrated surface-water/groundwater system.

Only the water that is actually consumed through evaporation or evapotranspiration is removed. The remaining portion of what was pumped returns to the system as surface-water runoff to a stream or as recharge to an aquifer. For this reason, what really matters is how much water is consumed.

For example, if the consumptive use of an acre of corn is 24 inches in a given year, 10 inches is supplied by local precipitation and the remaining 14 inches is supplied by pumping irrigation water. It doesn't matter significantly if 18 inches or 25 inches of water is pumped on to the field. In either case, only 14 inches will be consumed. The remaining 4 to 11 inches will return to the system as surface-water runoff or recharge to the aquifer.

To conserve water, it is the amount of water consumed, not just the amount of water pumped, that must be reduced.

Thus, unless the actual consumption of water is decreased, increasing the efficiency of an irrigation system will not automatically decrease the consumptive use of water.

Of course, increasing the efficiency of an irrigation application system has many other benefits, such as decreasing fuel and fertilizer input costs and protecting water quality.

In summary, under LB 962 where groundwater and surface water are hydrologically connected, the stream-aquifer system must be treated as one integrated resource. It is clear that if water is consumed, water will be removed from the system. There is no free lunch.

It is equally clear that the physical differences in how the use of hydrologically connected surface water and groundwater impact the system require different management techniques.

The management tools for both groundwater and surface water must, however, be coordinated to reach the common goals and objectives for the combined resource.

New law aims to get a handle on water conflicts

■ The legislation is expected to prevent and resolve disputes over the valuable resource.

By DAVID HENDEE
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

KEARNEY, Neb. — More disputes could arise as Nebraska's new water law evolves in coming years, a water lawyer said Tuesday.

"For whatever reason, LB 962 caught a lot of people off guard," said Don Blankenau.

Legislative Bill 962, which became operational in July, makes the state and natural resources districts more active in anticipating and preventing conflicts between groundwater users and surface water users. In places where conflicts exist, the law sets out principles and timelines for resolving disputes.

Most NRDs and cities work well together and quickly resolve conflicts, Blankenau told the annual meeting of the Ne-

braska Association of Resources Districts. Still, he said, "everyone knows that when a city and an NRD clash, it's loud and ugly."

Blankenau commented during a panel discussion on public water issues. The discussion revolved around a recent feud between the City of Sidney and the South Platte Natural Resources District.

The dispute centered on a city project in 2002 to drill wells in a new field northwest of the Pan-handle community and pipe water 17 miles to town. The South Platte NRD asked that the project comply with provisions in state law requiring the district's consent.

The city last year filed two lawsuits in Cheyenne County District Court and six months ago agreed to a settlement. The

wellfield and pipeline project, meanwhile, went forward.

Rod Horn, general manager of the South Platte NRD, said it was the district's goal to work with the city because the need for a new source of water in Sidney was obvious.

"There was a communication meltdown," he said. "It was a very difficult time."

Lash Chaffin, utilities director of the Lincoln-based League of Nebraska Municipalities, said cities and NRDs are logical allies. The hurdle is helping busy city officials learn all they can about water issues, he said.

The meeting agenda of any city council typically includes at least one item with the potential to inflame a community, Chaffin said.

"Issues are so complex and fast moving that municipal officials are rarely as informed as you would imagine them to be," he said. "A broad range of planning for issues is falling to the

wayside (and) elected officials of cities are becoming increasingly frustrated animals."

He suggested that city councils and NRD boards take time for joint retreats to listen to each other.

Steve Oltmans, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River NRD based in Omaha, said in an interview that perhaps cities of a certain size should be required to have comprehensive long-range water-supply plans.

"The key here is it's ridiculous to have these conflicts," he said. "If cities want to do economic development, it makes sense for them to be able to say what their water plan is for the next 40 or 50 years. If Sidney had that, they probably wouldn't have had the conflict."

Blankenau said that finding high quality water is increasingly difficult and expensive for communities as landowners recognize the premium value of the resource under their land.

Cities must show prospective

new businesses and industry that water is available for growth, Blankenau said. He proposed that NRDs and cities work to develop pre-approved water-supply plans so cities can quickly respond to business queries.

Competition can be cutthroat. Chaffin said an eastern Nebraska city recently asked him to fax a copy of a state map showing central and western Nebraska areas where water supplies are overdesignated.

Chaffin assumed that the employees wanted to show their city council that water-short areas of the state were not nearby. Instead, the city used the map to tout the community as water-rich to a prospective new business.

"It's sad and it shows the realities of the world you live in today and the importance of working together," he said. "That's a multimillion (dollar) decision based on an accurate map created by the state that is being misused."

9/29/04

OMAHA WORLD-HERALD

Conservation efforts honored

By DAVID HENDREE

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

KEARNEY, Neb. — Tree planters and grassland conservationists are among recipients of annual awards presented by the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts.

Tree Planter Award: The Williams family for establishing and improving wildlife habitat on 800 acres of land near Clarks. The families of Monte Williams of Clarks and his son, Lincoln Williams of Lincoln, have planted more than 49,000 trees since.

Outstanding Grassland Award: Gene, Rod and Steve Krab of Paxton for 23 grassland sections in Keith and McPherson Counties. They have planted more than 200 acres of cropland back to grass.

Outstanding Community Conservation Award: The City of Chadron for its parks. About 3,000 trees were hand-planted after a devastating 1986 hailstorm. Plots in parks demonstrate drought-resistant grasses. Community garden plots are available.

NARD Director of the Year: Dean Rasmussen of North Loup, a board member of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District since its inception in 1972.

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An important honor

An enduring and increasingly important fact of Nebraska life is its fragility. The state, its economy and its people depend in large part on a thin skin of soil, a limited amount of water and an uncertain climate.

That is one reason why The Omaha World-Herald and the University of Nebraska every year search out and honor individuals, families and community groups that husband those precious resources wisely for the future. The honorees this year are typical of the state's finest conservationists and serve as outstanding examples for their neighbors to follow.

Families from five areas of the state were designated Master Conservationists. They include:

■ The Lerwick family of Lyman, whose 3,600 acres of pasture and crops such as wheat and sunflowers are entirely no-till.

■ The Loseke Ranch of Ericson, where family members manage 4,900 acres and have planted 3,200 trees in the past three years.

■ The Sullivan family of Wallace, whose construction of some 20 miles of terraces and use of fallow and no-till methods on their 5,000 acres have helped prevent erosion.

■ Don and Pat Adelman of Madison, whose no-till farming and tree-planting practices on their 3,000 acres have paid off in conservation benefits.

■ Jerry Barger and Tammy Steid-

State Master Conservationists will protect and preserve environment for the future.

ley of Greenwood, whose widespread planting of grasses and legumes, use of tile-drained terraces and wise management of their 2,200 acres, including use of the Con-

servation Reserve Program, have reduced soil erosion and pollution runoff.

Clearwater (Neb.) High School also won an award for its outdoor classroom program, led by teacher Jeff Meyer. An unused piece of weedy wasteland was turned into an educational classroom where elementary school students can watch birds and older students can learn about conservation and the environment.

The Omaha Raptor Team and the Audubon Society of Omaha were honored for their care of nonreleasable predators, such as owls, hawks and falcons, and an associated education outreach program that last year involved 13,000 children and adults.

The final honoree was the Schuyler FFA chapter, whose adviser is Tom Wheeldon. The community youth group has worked for four years designing windbreaks for landowners.

Conscientious, forward-looking people and groups such as these epitomize the idea of not just taking from the land but living in harmony with the natural order. Their commitment will help Nebraska preserve and protect its environmental heritage well into the future.

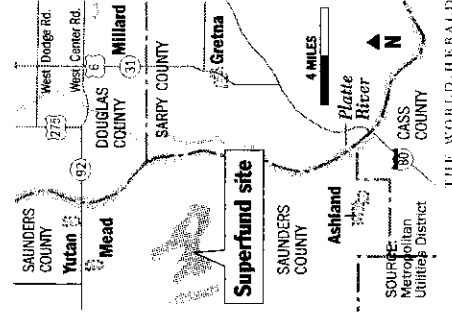
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More well water to be tested



Corps to focus on area around Mead Superfund site

BY NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

MEAD, Neb. — Months after a Nebraska environmental official described the situation as urgent, the Defense Department has agreed to test additional drinking water wells around the Mead Superfund site.

The testing of as many as 40 more wells will begin this week, said Mary Lyle, project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of

Engineers. The wells are within about a mile of the pool of explosives, solvents and other chemicals in the aquifer below the former Nebraska Ordnance Plant.

In April and again in June, Brian Zurbuchen, then with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, asked the Corps of Engineers to expand testing because pollutants appeared to be "extremely close" to wells.

The corps handles environ-

mental cleanups at former military sites and tests wells quarterly at Mead. Zurbuchen, who recently took a job with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, was asking the Corps of Engineers to test farther out from the site.

In an internal Department of Environmental Quality e-mail in June, Zurbuchen noted that he had told the corps that the contaminants posed a public health threat and that examination of the wells should not wait until

the September quarterly tests.

Nonetheless, the corps did not sample the additional wells in June. Lyle said the corps did not have time to get materials ready and did not think the threat was serious. In September, the corps did add to the testing the four wells at greatest risk. Results of the tests are expected in November.

Because of the persistent concerns of residents and the state, Lyle said, the corps will run the tests. *See Mead, Page 2*

Mead: Corps says it doubts any wells are tainted

Continued from Page 1
tests this week that the state has requested.

"We doubt that any wells are contaminated," she said. "And we wanted to prove that by sampling."

Chris Funk, whose well will be tested, said the corps should have moved more quickly.

"It's taken letters to the governor, showing up at meetings, yelling and screaming," Funk

said. "It's not like we're asking for anything that's difficult. All we're asking is that they test our water so that we know we and our children are OK."

About 80 people attended an August public meeting on the cleanup, and their anger with the corps was visible.

The corps will continue testing the wells annually for at least the next three years and more often if a problem is found. If the water is determined un-

safe for drinking, the corps will provide clean drinking water.

The EPA will run companion tests for radiological constituents, perchlorate and semivolatile organic compounds. That's because the property also once housed a landfill and a fireworks factory and was a disposal site for low-level nuclear waste from the University of Nebraska system.

Perchlorate is a chemical used in rocket fuel, munitions, fireworks and fertilizers. It can cause thyroid illnesses and developmental problems in children.

Scott Marquess of the EPA said it's good the corps has elected to move forward.

"It's better now than not at all," Marquess said. "Is it soon enough? That, Marquess said, 'comes with what the testing shows. If it shows that people have been exposed, then it's not.'"