

MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General Manager Report

DATE: October 10, 2006

FROM: Marlin Petermann, Acting General Manager

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

B. **MISCELLANEOUS/PERSONNEL ITEMS**:

1. **Martin Cleveland**, Construction Engineer, attended the 2006 American Public Works Association International Public Works Congress and Exposition on September 10-13, 2006. The conference was held in Kansas City, MO. Attached is a memo detailing the highlights of the conference.
2. Attached is a thank you note from Joyce Schoeppner, thanking the District for the use of the Group Shelter at Chalco Hills for the 50th Reunion of the Tech High School Class of 1956.

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

D. **CURRENT AND ON-GOING PROJECTS – P-MRNRD LEGAL COUNSEL**: Attached is a copy of the current and on-going projects for District Legal Counsel, Paul Peters, as of September 18, 2006. I would ask each Director to review this listing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

E. **REPORT ON MISSOURI RIVER CLEAN UP**: The Missouri River Clean Up was held on September 23, 2006. Following is a report written by Mark Brohman from the Administration Division of the Nebraska Game and Park Commission.

Missouri River Cleanup Big Success

Around 130 people showed up on the banks of the Missouri River in Omaha on Saturday, September 23rd. Missouri River Relief, a non-profit group based in Columbia, Missouri, organized the river clean-up event. They organize trash

cleanups all along the Missouri River. Big river cleanups pose many challenges and Missouri River Relief has the infrastructure and experience that guaranteed a successful outcome. Their staff of 26 provided the expertise to pull off such an event. This was their first event upstream of St. Joseph, Missouri.

A total of 17 boats were on hand from NGPC, the Corps of Engineers, the Iowa DNR, and the National Park Service. The Commission provided six boats with two staff per boat to the effort. NGPC staff from Gerald Mestl's Missouri River crew included: Jerrod Hall, Oliver Cox, Schyler Sampson, Ryan Ruskamp, David Adams, Ken Hatten, Adam Thiese, Josh Wilhelm, Cameron Goble, Eric Andres, Bill Garvey, and Josh Gonsior.

Also representing NGPC was Mark Brohman from the Administration Division, who is also a board member of Back-To-The-River, a primary sponsor of the event. Other volunteers included employees from the Corps of Engineers, Bass Pro Shops, Ameristar, Papio-Missouri NRD, National Park Service, and Council Bluffs Mayor Tom Hanafan. A group of Omaha Central High School National Honor Society students helped out and a lunch was cooked by a local Omaha Boy Scout troop on the banks of the river after the morning cleanup ended around 11:30 am.

Missouri River Relief coordinated the logistics of the event and provided the volunteers with a briefing on the project and a safety orientation, then split the group into smaller groups of eight to twelve people to board boats and get dropped off on predetermined locations along a twenty mile stretch of the Missouri River adjacent to downtown Omaha/Council Bluffs. Volunteers were given a pair of gloves, "I Cleaned the Big Muddy" tee shirt and trash bags. When bags were filled, they and items too large for bags were left along the shore to be picked up in the afternoon by River Relief staff. There were 280 bags and a total of around 7000 pounds of trash collected. Some of the more interesting items found included: 3 refrigerators, 5 air conditioners, 30 tires, 3 sections of chain link fence, a car door, a picnic table, a typewriter, car seat, 2 propane tanks, 2 car bumpers, 2 mattresses, a Christmas tree, 2 televisions, a wake board, a weed eater, an antique baby doll, and much more.

The event was covered by several local media sources (television, newspapers, and radio). Other sponsors included both the City of Council Bluffs, the City of Omaha, Douglas County, Bass Pro Shops, Ameristar, Harrah's, MidAmerican Energy, Rotella's Bakery, EPA, and Wal-Mart.

- F. **REPORT ON WORLD O' WATER:** On September 17, 2006 the Papio-Missouri River NRD co-hosted the second annual World O' Water festival at Chalco Hills Recreation Area. Over 1,000 people attended the event designed to educate kids and parents about the concern for improved water quality. The Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership, Keep Omaha Beautiful and the Pfizer Company were the other major sponsors. The event emphasized hands-on learning and the presentations satisfied requirements for scouting badges. The third annual World O' Water festival has been scheduled for September 16, 2007.

G. **NEWS CLIPS:**

- ➔ September 7, 2006, Papillion Times article – Rick Turner honored with Gift of Time Award
- ➔ September 14, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – NRD support for dams appears likely NRD: \$300 million plan would build 29 dams.
- ➔ September 15, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Vote on policies for dams delayed – Members of the NRD board cite confusion about what their approval would mean. Dams: Meeting away from Omaha irks opponents.
- ➔ September 15, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Dissatisfied board delays vote on dams Papio NRD panel was asked to OK a set of six plans, one of which says the district “shall” develop 29 structures.
- ➔ September 16, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – NRD has 5 finalists in running for top job
- ➔ September 17, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – NRD opposes Platte River pact.
- ➔ September 17, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Don’t sign the Platte River plan without knowing its total cost.
- ➔ September 17, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Irrigators’ pain won’t be limited to retirement of post-1997 acres.
- ➔ September 17, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Protests are all wet – Groundwater backer faults state because it didn’t stop new wells along the Platte River? How interesting.
- ➔ September 18, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – This monkey is all business.
- ➔ September 19, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Douglas County West, Papio NRD tax rates cut.
- ➔ September 21, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Outdoor assets can pay off – Nebraska’s land and water could spur growth, report says.
- ➔ September 26, 2006, Omaha World Herald – County questions dam plan – Dams: Douglas County Board has doubts on plan.
- ➔ September 28, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Hold feet to the fire.
- ➔ September 28, 2006, Omaha World Herald article –Kudos to board
- ➔ September 30, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Good stewards all – Statewide, Nebraskans honored for environmental contributions and activities.
- ➔ October 3, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Plattsmouth official up for NRD job.
- ➔ October 4, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Cure sought for Carter Lake’s ills.
- ➔ October 4, 2006, Douglas County Post Gazette Letter to the Editor – Dams are not needed.
- ➔ October 5, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Candidates have deep roots in county.
- ➔ October 5, 2006, Omaha World Herald Public Pulse Letter – A curious choice.
- ➔ October 5, 2006, Plattsmouth Journal article – Winkler bids farewell to Plattsmouth.
- ➔ October 6, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Winkler a tough loss at Plattsmouth helm.
- ➔ October 7, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Dams front and center in NRD races.
- ➔ October 10, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Bennington OKs new subdivision.

September 2006

Information & Education Report

Information

- ◇ Continued media relations work in regard to PCWP
- ◇ Continued work on a new Chalco Hills exhibit for the NRC
- ◇ Began work on the Fall 06 SPECTRUM
- ◇ Organized and assisted with a watershed tour for the League of Women Voters
- ◇ Held the "World O' Water" Festival at Chalco Hills. Approximately 1,200 attended.

Education

- ☐ Facilitated Project Learning Tree and Project Water Education for Teachers workshop
- ☐ Attended Water Works 2007 committee meeting
- ☐ Met with Omaha North to coordinate programming
- ☐ Presented Bird Banding to Millard South Environmental Studies Class
- ☐ Presented Nature Hikes to
 - World O! Water (8/17)
 - Brownie Troop (8/19)
 - Fullerton Magnet School (8/20)
 - Fullerton Magnet School (8/27)
- ☐ Met with publisher on changes for Cultivation and Water Works mailings
- ☐ Started book/education discussion on "Last Child in the Woods"
- ☐ Coordinated with Adopt-A-School for 2006-2007 programming and grant assistance
- ☐ Assisted with NACEE grant application to Nebraska Environmental Trust
- ☐ Secured Arbor Day Farm/Lied Lodge Bed and Breakfast Package for NARD Auction
- ☐ Continued to coordinate Geocache applications for Chalco Hills/Walnut Creek
- ☐ Delivered seeds to NGPC
- ☐ Researched Green Hearts information and set up meeting with Ken Finch
- ☐ Continued coordinating NARD I&E meeting at Papio NRD in October

MEMORANDUM

TO: File

FROM: Martin P. Cleveland

SUBJECT: 2006 American Public Works Association (APWA)
International Public Works Congress and Exposition

DATE: September 17, 2006

On September 10-13, 2006, the writer attended the referenced conference held in Kansas City, Missouri. The conference included a wide variety of public works topic concurrent sessions and an extensive exposition with over 400 exhibitions (equipment manufacturers, material suppliers, consultants, and government agencies). Over 3,000 attendees from the United States and other Countries (e.g. Canada) attended the conference.

The writer attended the following sessions:

1. We Can Rebuild – Levee disasters (Wyoming Valley, PA) and the aftermath by Larry Mathena Jr., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
2. The Future and Public Works – The next 30 years by Joseph Coates, Consulting Futurist, Inc.
3. Revolutionizing Aggregate Surfaced Road Design by Stephen Valero, Tensar Earth Technologies.
4. Project Delivery Incorporating Design/Contract Build by Jeffrey Beard, ACEC.
5. A Wake Up Call: Flooding in New Orleans predicted but not prevented by Col. Jeffrey Bedley, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Gasper Chifci, PBS &J.
6. Lessons Learned in the History of Natural Disasters by Larry Lux, Lux Advisors, Martin Reuss, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Brian Usher, City of Zion, IL.
7. New Orleans Flood Protection System – was Katrina the Culprit by Raymond Seed, University of California at Berkeley.
8. Sustainable Stormwater Design – a Case Study by Kenneth Peregon, O'Boyle, Cowell, Blalock and Associates.
9. North Kansas City Levee District – Management Operations and Maintenance of a 100 year Old Levee System by Leon Staab, Burns and McDonnell Engineering.
10. Hybrid Vehicle Technology: What's Available and Where We are Headed by Phillip Mailey, GM and Gary Wright, Ford.
11. Conquering Your Massive Workload by David and Janet Grouchy, Grouchy Enterprises.
12. Playing the Game of life by Archie Manning, Former NFL Player.

Thank You,

Dear Bernadette 9-8-06

On behalf of the class
of 1956 of Seck High, We
want to thank you for
your part in making our 50th
reunion our best ever.

The group shelter was
a perfect setting for our
picnic. Thank you for
reserving it for us.

Sincerely,
Joyce Schoepfer
Seck High Class of 1956

September, 2006

Updated: September 18, 2006

Current and On-Going Projects P-MRNRD Legal Counsel

⊕ = Top Priority

F = Future Work – No Assignment

N = New Assignment

O = Others Handling

W = Work in Progress

P = PFP's Portion Completed

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

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



MITCH BEAUMONT / PAPILLION TIMES

Rick Turner, the most recent recipient of the city's Gift of Time award, with the Walnut Creek Amphitheater in the background.

Rick Turner honored with Gift of Time award

By Mitch Beaumont
Times Managing Editor

As he looks at the empty hillside that will one day soon will hold concert goers, Rick Turner is mindful of the hard work many people have put in to making the Walnut Creek Amphitheater project a reality.

"I wouldn't say I'm one of the hard workers on it," Turner said. "We have some who are hard workers on it, but I've been on the decision side of things, which is easy. I try to help out Ken (Molzer) and try and promote our programs."

As Turner accepted the Gift of Time award at last week's Papillion City Council meeting, he learned for the first time the city will be kicking in \$225,000 to help complete the project he helped direct for a number of years.

"That's fantastic news," he said.

Turner and his wife, Ramona, and their two daughters moved to Papillion in 1991 when he was transferred to Offutt Air Force Base. He retired in 1998, but the family chose to stay in the area.

"I chose Papillion because I liked the small town atmosphere," he said. "It's a nice small town next to the big city, which was convenient."

He's a computer guy by trade, but Turner loves his music and that's what got him involved in various volunteer capacities in the early 1990s. He started playing with the Papillion Area Concert Band and when a member couldn't make it to a Papillion Community Foundation meeting, Turner was asked to fill in for him.

"And I've been going ever since," Turner said.

Since 1999 he has served on the foundation's board of directors, helping the organization plan

for Papillion Days and create its Web site.

Papillion is certainly far different now than it was in 1991 when Turner moved to the area, but through all the growth and development, local leaders have stayed true to the community's foundation.

"That development has helped fuel the growth of the town, and that's been good because they didn't forget their roots," he said. "(The city) holds on to the roots even while they are moving forward and that's important to keep the city's identity and lets those people who have lived here for a long time know they are appreciated."

His volunteer efforts today are no different than how he spent his spare time in the Air Force.

"My first assignment, my boss lived across the street from me, and he asked me if I wanted to help out at church," he said. "I got involved because I felt compelled, but I also found it to be rewarding."

It is that reward now that keeps Turner an active volunteer, he said.

"It gives you lots of stories," he said of volunteering. "I still remember one of the first times I played with the PAC Band. We were upstairs in the Sautter house, it was below 20 degrees and there was no heat, but it was a lot of fun. You carry those memories of things you would never have done at any other time. And you get to meet lots of great people. The people who volunteer usually turn out to be the best people."

In the end, Turner still loves Papillion's small town atmosphere.

"I like looking out over a corn field, I like seeing a windmill. I like seeing barns and I still see that around here."

NRD support for dams appears likely

■ Some worry that the plan would shift too many costs from developers to taxpayers.

9-14-06

By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

With key questions unanswered, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District today is likely to endorse spending about \$300 million on 29 new dams in Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

No study has been done to determine whether the benefits of the dams justify the costs.

No guarantees can be made that property taxes, which already have risen to pay for dams, won't increase again — especially since the district also proposes to spend an additional \$100 million on dams in Washington County.

And the plan contains compromises that keep it from going as far as it could toward its original goal: reducing water pollution.

"I'm terribly concerned," said district board member Rich Tesar, who is leaning against the plan but believes the board will approve it.

The plan, Tesar says, transfers too many costs from developers to taxpayers.

"I don't think we're forcing developers to do enough," he said.

Local government officials hammered out the plan in meetings, most with developers, their attorneys and consultants such as engineering firms.

The plan remains largely unchanged following a series of public meetings, though the district plans to add a provision saying it will build the dams only if it has the money.

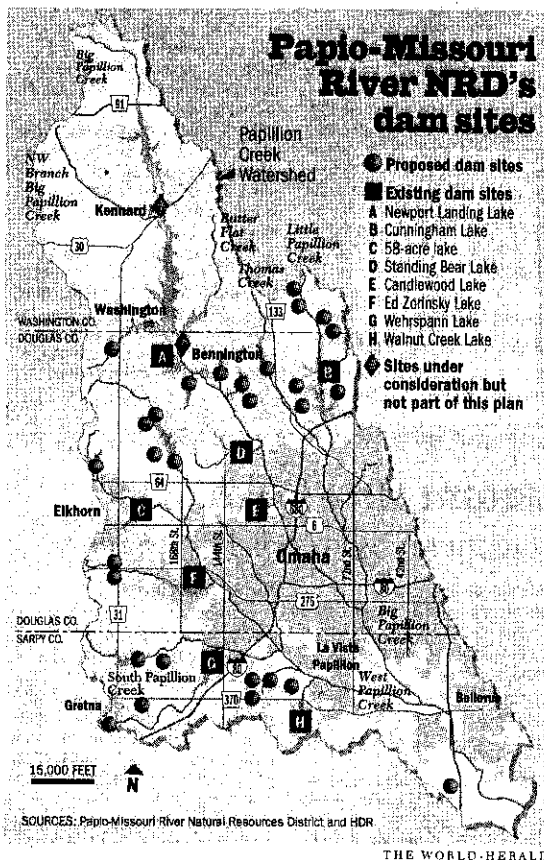
The plan commits the district to building dams to catch storm runoff from urban landscapes. However, it does not require developers to include features — such as wetlands and small silt ponds — that reduce the amount of runoff generated.

"Everyone compromised," said Bob Doyle, an attorney who represents developers. Developers didn't get everything they wanted, he said, and the cities didn't, either.

So far about half the local governments that must approve the plan have done so, including the City of Omaha and Sarpy County. Douglas County has yet to do so.

"If we wait until we have something perfect, we'll never do anything," said Marlin Peter-

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NRD: \$300 million plan would build 29 dams

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mann, acting general manager of the Papio district.

That's not good enough for Shawn Melotz, an accountant who would lose some of her Douglas County property to dams proposed by the district.

"If they're so concerned about flooding, why aren't they dealing with the real issues?" Melotz said. The dams' costs can't be justified, she said, especially if more isn't done to control development.

The proposal grew out of a federal mandate that communities across the country reduce urban water pollution from storm runoff. Urban runoff contains oil, pesticides and other pollutants that enter waterways and then work their way up the food chain.

As local officials evaluated their options, the Douglas-Sarpy County plan expanded to include flood control.

If the plan proceeds as intended, a new fee paid by developers would cover about one-third of the cost of building the dams. Taxpayers would pay the remaining two-thirds.

If the dams aren't built, developers would have greater responsibility for reducing runoff from their property. To do so, they would have to use some of their land for small ponds and

other projects that would filter runoff.

With the dams, builders will be able to develop a greater percentage of their property. Furthermore, development will be allowed around every one of the proposed lakes, which should increase the earnings developers will make on those properties.

Doyle said developers aren't getting as good a deal as it appears. The fees they'll be paying — \$500 per residential lot and higher for commercial projects — more than offset the savings they'll receive or the money they'll make, he said.

The fact that developers will be able to develop more of their property serves the public, Doyle said, because it expands the tax base and stimulates the local economy by generating more business for homebuilders.

Marty Grate, environmental services manager for the City of Omaha, said that even when developers pick up more of the tab, the costs still roll over to taxpayers through the general obligations of property owners in sanitary and improvement districts or through annexation.

"A lot of these costs will end up on taxpayers, regardless," Grate said. "I don't see anyone getting a sweetheart deal."

Besides, the lakes will accom-

Meeting

The board of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District will meet at 8 tonight at its Dakota County Service Center, 1505 Broadway, Dakota City, Neb.

plish more than just flood control and improved water quality, Doyle and others said. Like Zorinsky Lake, they will improve the quality of life by giving people more places to play and relax.

If the lakes aren't built, the land will simply be converted to housing, Petermann said, worsening the flood potential in the Omaha area.

Jim Thompson, chairman of the Papio district board, and fellow board member Rick Kolowski, say they believe the district is acting prudently.

"Thirty years from now, people will say this was the right way to go," Kolowski said. "It makes sense."

None of the dams would be built until some kind of benefit analysis is done, Thompson said.

The district doesn't have a history of rigorous cost-benefit analyses on dams. One wasn't done for the two lakes totalling \$9 million in Sarpy County, nor for the \$23 million lake on the drawing board in northwest Douglas County.

The Army Corps of Engineers, under federal law, could not spend \$300 million on dams without doing a cost-benefit study, said spokesman Kevin Quinn.

Melotz said she believes the district isn't doing such an analysis because it would find the costs aren't justified.

Such was the case, she said, when the federal government attempted to build a dam on her family's property years ago.

"There are a lot better ways to spend \$400 million," she said.

Petermann disputed the value of such a study. Once a study was completed, he said, officials would still be left with a controversial decision.

"This is really not about 29 dams, it's about the safety of three-quarters of a million people and billions of dollars in property," he said.

Cost-benefit analyses assess the value of property in the path of flooding. Is it billions, as Petermann contends? Or less?

Will the dams cost more than the property they'll protect, as Melotz says is possible? How much would flooding be reduced? By inches? By feet?

Thompson said those questions miss the point.

"What value do you put on a lack of flooding?" he asked. "You can't put a value on saving someone's life."

Vote on policies for dams delayed

■ Members of the NRD board cite confusion about what their approval would mean.

9-15-06
BY NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

DAKOTA CITY, Neb. — A dissatisfied Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board on Thursday again delayed a decision on whether to endorse almost \$300 million in dams as part of a regional stormwater plan.

In calling for the delay, board member Rick Kolowski said too much confusion remains among board members about what their vote would signify.

The board is being asked to approve a set of six policies, one of which says the district "shall" develop 29 dams. One of the points of confusion is the degree to which the district would be obligated to build all 29, especially since a statement has not been inserted into the policies tying construction to the availability of money.

Paul Peters, attorney for the NRD, advised the board that approving the policies would not obligate the district to build the dams.

"There is no mandatory part of any of this," he said. "It's written to be nonenforceable."

Dam opponents took no comfort in the delay.

Shawn Melotz, a Douglas County resident who opposes the dams, said she thinks the vote was delayed because there weren't enough yes votes at the meeting. Three of the 11 board members were absent, and it was possible that had the remaining eight voted, they would have deadlocked.

Board member Rich Tesar
See Dams: Page 2

Dams: Meeting away from Omaha irks opponents

Continued from Page 1

said he thinks the board eventually will approve the plan. Tesar said he wants to see dams built but will not endorse this plan if it does not require better development practices.

The plan is intended to reduce water pollution to meet federal guidelines, as well as to reduce flooding.

For opponents of the dams, Thursday's meeting seemed further proof that the district is either turning a deaf ear to their concerns, or, worse, subverting

the process.

The meeting was held in Dakota City, some 90 miles north of Omaha, making it difficult for a number of Omaha-area residents to attend. Dam opponents had unsuccessfully asked the NRD to hold the meeting in Omaha, as it usually does, or delay the discussion until one of its Omaha meetings.

The NRD holds one meeting each year in Dakota City to give residents in the northern part of the district an opportunity to attend the meeting.

About 25 people traveled to Dakota City to voice their opposition to the proposal.

Also of concern to the opponents was the absence of board member Dick Connealy, who has tended to vote against dam-related business. Had the board taken an up-or-down vote, Connealy's vote would have been critical.

Cynthia Timmermier, a citizen who opposes the dams, asked board Chairman Jim Thompson to revoke Connealy's

excused absence. Thompson refused.

Timmermier and other residents raised concerns about Connealy's attendance record.

Timmermier said she had talked with Connealy earlier in the evening and learned that his work schedule should have allowed him to make the meeting.

Connealy, who represents the area that could be most affected by the NRD's dam plans, could not be reached for comment.

"What's happening is not right," Timmermier said.

Dissatisfied board delays vote on dams

9-15-06

■ Papio NRD panel was asked to OK a set of six plans, one of which says the district "shall" develop 29 structures.

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One of the points of confusion is the degree to which the district would be obligated to build all 29, especially since a statement has not been inserted into the policies tying construction to the availability of money.

Paul Peters, attorney for the NRD, advised the board that approving the policies would not obligate the district to build the

dams. Nor would a companion, written agreement between the NRD and metro area governments, he said.

"There is no mandatory part of any of this," he said. "It's written to be nonenforceable."

Dam opponents took no comfort in the delay.

Shawn Melotz, a Douglas County resident who opposes the dams, said the vote was postponed because there weren't enough "yes" votes at the meeting. Three of the 11 board members were absent, and it was possible that had the remaining eight voted, they would have deadlocked.

Board member Rich Tesar said he that believes that the NRD eventually will approve the plan. Tesar said he wants to see dams built but will not endorse this plan if it does not require better development practices.

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See Dams: Page 2

Dams: Board delays a vote

Continued from Page 1
flooding.

For opponents of the dams, the location of the meeting was further evidence that the NRD is turning a deaf ear to their concerns.

The meeting was held in Dakota City, about 90 miles north of Omaha, making it difficult for a number of Omaha-area residents to attend. Dam opponents had unsuccessfully asked the NRD to hold the meeting in Omaha, as it usually does, or postpone the discussion until one of its Omaha meetings.

The NRD holds one meeting each year in Dakota City to give residents in the northern part of the district an opportunity to comment on district issues.

About 25 people traveled to Dakota City to voice their opposition.

Also of concern to the opponents was the absence of board member Dick Connealy, who has tended to vote against dam-related business.

Cynthia Timmermier, a citizen who opposes the dams, asked board chairman Jim Thompson to revoke Connealy's

excused absence. Thompson refused.

Connealy has missed four of nine meetings this year, which concerns opponents of the dams. More people in his area would lose their homes and land than in any other if the NRD builds all the dams it proposes.

Timmermier said she had talked with Connealy earlier in the evening and learned that his work schedule should have allowed him to make the meeting.

Connealy could not be reached for comment.

A motion by Kolowski called on the board to meet again to discuss the issue and included the option of going into closed session.

That caught the attention of board member Dorothy Lanphier: Why would we need to meet behind closed doors? she asked.

Kolowski referred the question to Peters, who approved retaining that option, and the motion was approved.

World-Herald staff writer Kevin Cole contributed to this report.

7-17-06
**NRD opposes
 Platte River pact**

GRAND ISLAND — Directors of the Central Nebraska Natural Resources District have weighed the costs and benefits and have concluded that the price of the three-state Platte River habitat recovery program is too high for them.

On Friday they voted unanimously to oppose the program and to ask Gov. Dave Heineman to avoid any state commitments to the program.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, a three-state accord, would guide Platte Basin entities in complying with the Endangered Species Act while retaining their access to federal water, land or funding.

The program is intended to protect the Platte River habitat for whooping cranes, piping plovers, least terns and pallid sturgeons. They are all considered threatened or endangered species, jeopardized in large part by irrigation.

Jim Cook of Lincoln, a lawyer with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, was unfazed by the opposition. He said the Gering-based North Platte NRD supports the program.

Cook said the governor intends to make a decision about the state's participation by Dec. 1. — AP

NRD has 5 finalists in running for top job

7-16-06

By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Five finalists have been named for general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

The candidates are seeking to replace Steve Oltmans, the district's general manager who was fired this year for a "material breach" of his contract.

Oltmans' undoing began when he lied to some board members about an affair he had with a former board member.

The finalists:

Steven K. Frost, regulatory analyst and environmental scientist for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment; Ronald Hopp, director of parks, recreation and public property for the City of Council Bluffs; John R. Miyoshi, general manager of the Lower Platte North Natural Resources district; Marlin Petermann, acting general manager of the Papio district; and John Winkler, Plattsmouth city administrator.

A subcommittee of the Papio district board has interviewed two of the candidates and will interview the remaining three next week. The subcommittee will forward a selection to the full board for consideration at its Oct. 12 meeting.

Oltmans' successor will not face an easy task. The district is on the cusp of an ambitious dam-building initiative and could face bitter fights over condemning people's property.

Here is a brief look at the candidates:

■ Frost has 25 years of water management and administrative experience. He has been mayor of Garden City, Kan., and a water commissioner for Kansas.

He is executive director of the Ogallala Aquifer Institute. As regulatory analyst for Kansas, his focus has been on safe drinking water.

■ Hopp has been head of the Council Bluffs Parks Department since 1998 and presided over improvements to city parks, including the Riverside Golf Club clubhouse, recreation trails and the riverfront, including the pedestrian bridge.

■ Miyoshi has been with the Lower Platte North district since 1984 and general manager there since 1994. He has dealt with a number of water-related issues, including the controversy over Metropolitan Utilities District's use of the Platte River aquifer to supply water to Omaha.

The Lower Platte North district is undertaking the \$30 million Sand Creek restoration and construction of Lake Wanahoo.

■ Petermann has been with the Papio district since 1974. He has assisted with the Omaha By Design initiative and worked on flood control and other projects.

An agricultural engineer by training, he has taken the lead on pushing through the district's plan to build 29 new dams.

■ Winkler has a background with public-private partnerships, including the \$45 million million marina under way on the Missouri River in Cass County.

During his tenure, he said, Plattsmouth's property tax rate dropped over a three-year period and the city saved \$2 million through various efficiencies.

Don't sign the Platte River plan without knowing its total cost

9-17-06

BY DONALD G. BLANKENAU

The writer, of Lincoln, is a lawyer whose clients include the Central Platte Natural Resources District.

In a Sept. 10 editorial, The World-Herald urged Gov. Dave Heineman to sign the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. That position ignores critical issues that make moving forward with the plan fiscally and politically reckless.

To begin with, the Platte River plan is voluntary. It is not a federal law or "commitment." Nebraska's decision thus should be based on whether its benefits outweigh its costs.

After years of painstaking work to negotiate this discretionary program, Nebraska is being pressured to sign without a cost-benefit analysis. Given the scale of potential costs to Nebraskans, such an analysis is essential. No federal agency or business would engage a project like this without one, and Nebraska should not do so, either.

The Platte River plan itself is the product of efforts to renew federal licenses for Kingsley Dam and related structures. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

After years of fruitless talks, Nebraska agreed to help develop a "reasonable and prudent alternative" that would allow the licenses to be issued. Because Wyoming (then defending itself in court against Nebraska over North Platte River use) and Colorado were concerned about having to provide water to Nebraska, they also took part.

The "reasonable and prudent alternative" that allowed the Kingsley licenses to be issued was the Platte River Cooperative Agreement of 1997. Its terms required the parties to develop and implement a recovery program for key species.

Under the Cooperative Agreement, the new plan's precursor, Nebraska was to mitigate or offset any post-1997 river depletions. These depletions included those caused by groundwater use, even though those users are not necessarily subject to the Endangered Species Act.

Accordingly, the Cooperative Agreement impacted all water

Midlands Voices

users in order to aid those subject to the federal act. Initially, the parties were given three years to develop the program. Had that deadline been met, the potential costs probably would not be at issue because further groundwater irrigation development would have been limited. Unfortunately, the parties could not reach agreement until now.

The World-Herald reported (Aug. 24 news story) that post-1997 development of groundwater irrigation related to the Platte totaled 450,000 acres. All Nebraskans will pay to retire those acres (even if they are not subject to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act).

What will it cost to retire those acres? The World-Herald reported possible costs of up to \$500 million for overuse in both the Platte and Republican basins (Aug. 8 news story).

New Mexico's similar experience offers some real-world insights into the potential costs facing Nebraska. New Mexico is in the process of retiring 18,000 acres of irrigated land. New Mexico's action, unlike Nebraska's, is required by federal law.

While it is not complete, New Mexico officials estimate it will cost \$100 million. If Nebraska's per-acre cost is half that of New Mexico's, Nebraska taxpayers would pay billions.

New Mexico offered this advice: (1) Have a clear and complete plan detailing how the mitigation program will operate; (2) prepare a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis; (3) involve the legislature from the beginning. To date, Nebraska has followed none of this advice.

To be sure, the Platte River plan would bring benefits. Panhandle irrigators would avoid the expense of Endangered Species Act consultation, and some species would enjoy more favorable habitat conditions (although biologists claim other species are likely to suffer less favorable conditions under the plan). These and other benefits are important but unquantified.

Furthermore, these benefits may be available through other, less expensive measures. These should be considered within the scope of a cost-benefit analysis.

Finally, because the Platte plan requires significant state spending over an extended period, the Legislature should be immediately involved. The governor cannot unilaterally bind the Legislature to future expenditures. Involving the Legislature now ensures its commitment to the plan if the cost-benefit analysis is favorable.

Equally importantly, the governor should not be forced to make a decision before the costs and benefits are known, only to be judged for doing so later. Involving the Legislature now ensures accountability later.

Forcing the governor to decide now would handicap the effectiveness of the legislative and executive branches and not yield sound water management.

Irrigators' pain won't be limited to retirement of post-1997 acres

9-17-06

BY STEVE SMITH

The writer, of Imperial, Neb., is director of WaterClaim, a water policy research group representing groundwater irrigators.

Is the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program a good deal? WaterClaim says the answer is "yes" and "no."

The answer is "yes" because it creates a framework that protects surface irrigation and the environment. The answer is "no" because:

■ It does not go far enough in addressing the groundwater-irrigated acres added along the Platte since the Platte River Cooperative Agreement was concluded in 1997.

■ It changes when the river flows. The Platte never has flowed the way it is now proposed to make it flow.

■ Over the long term, the proposal will force the shutdown of more than one-third of the current groundwater irrigation wells in the Platte basin.

■ Nothing in the agreement addresses the costs associated with retiring up to 500,000 Platte-related acres added since 1997. It only addresses the pre-1997 costs.

Should the agreement be signed? Perhaps, but not until

all of the costs — not just the pre-1997 ones — are identified.

Who is responsible for paying for the cost of eliminating post-1997 development effects? Public discussion of this responsibility has never taken place. There are no cost estimates for eliminating these thousands of irrigated acres. They are not a part of the new Platte program.

Do we eliminate them all now, or do we only address the cost of the small impact they have today and let a future generation deal with the much larger effect they will have 20 years from now? I can assure you that the next generation will condemn this one for creating a water debt and obligating our children to pay most of the costs.

In 1997, Nebraska agreed to not allow any new water uses yet did nothing to stop development. Many of the people who invested thousands and millions of dollars didn't even know the state had made an agreement about their activities.

Is changing when the Platte flows a good idea? Perhaps, but

the plan does not restore the river to something it used to be. It creates something new. You can look at the data for yourself at www.waterclaim.org. Look at the site's study of the Platte River at Grand Island.

Nebraska is committed to retire all these irrigated acres not only because of the earlier Cooperative Agreement but also because of Legislative Bill 962, passed in 2004. The new Platte plan assumes that Nebraska will, at Nebraska's expense, deal with the effects of the post-1997 acres as these effects happen and simultaneously implement the additional requirements of the new program.

The Platte agreement provides for federal enforcement mechanisms, changes when the river flows, eliminates additional groundwater irrigation acres in future years — over and above the effects of retiring the post-1997 acres — and gives some additional protection for surface irrigation.

Should we sign this new agreement? Perhaps, but know that it is just a part of a very large economic commitment, most of which has had no discussion in public.

Sunday World-Herald

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Protests are all wet

Water-use conflicts will have far-ranging effects on Nebraska's agricultural economy and state budget picture. That much was obvious even before groundwater irrigation advocates Donald G. Blankenau and Steve Smith weighed in today on the More Commentary page.

But a curious statement appears amid their critiques of the pending Platte River Recovery Implementation Plan. It comes from Smith, the director of Imperial-based WaterClaim, who says regarding the 1997 Cooperative Agreement that presaged the current plan (emphasis added):

"In 1997, Nebraska agreed to not allow any new water uses yet did nothing to stop development. Many of the people who invested thousands and millions of dollars didn't even know the state had made an agreement about their activities."

With respect, whose fault is that?

The World-Herald, for one, has hardly been silent about the Cooperative Agreement's provision that groundwater wells along the Platte would be protected if drilled before the deal's signing — but not after.

A news story on Sept. 28, 1997, said the deal "calls for protecting existing flows from any new depletions, such as pumping from wells connected to the river" (emphasis added). This newspaper's coverage of the three-state plan has noted this point often in the years since.

Also, an Associated Press story in The World-Herald on March 19, 1998, said eight counties "concerned about a cooperative agreement" — the 1997 pact — were joining forces with Nebraskans First to guard against "federal government regulatory actions — including restrictions on irrigation."

Groundwater interests in the Platte valley have never liked the three-state talks to divide responsibilities for managing the Platte to improve habitat for endangered bird species. It's hard to believe they didn't know that if Nebraska failed to prevent new wells from being drilled, the state would have to pay the piper at some point.

But suppose the state had barred new well-drilling statewide after 1997. Does anyone seriously believe irrigators would have welcomed that move over a multi-million-dollar tax bill? Please.

Irrigators two years ago fought Legislative Bill 962, which strengthened the state's hand in managing the overtaxed Platte and Republican basins. They fought in 1996 against LB 108, the state's first-ever legal recognition that groundwater and surface water can be interconnected. Nebraskans First formed earlier, in a futile effort to prevent cities along the Platte from asserting water rights.

Of course they fought. Surface-water irrigators have coexisted since the late 1800s under the principle of "first in time, first in right." But (so the attitude went for

**Groundwater
backer faults
state because
it didn't stop**

**new wells along
the Platte River?
How interesting.**

years) you've got water under your land? Sink a well. Take all you want. May you and yours prosper.

One fact from a World-Herald news story of Nov. 4, 2003, is striking. The Cen-

tral Platte Natural Resources District, which Blankenau represents, was mulling a well-drilling moratorium back then.

A Central Platte NRD board member protested in 2003 that a moratorium would "give up our groundwater for more Platte River water when it's ours to begin with" (emphasis added).

Such a claim just might explain why that NRD, as of that time, had issued 845 well permits for more than 60,000 acres of farm fields since 1997 — the year the first three-state deal was inked. State officials now say some 450,000 additional Nebraska acres in the entire Platte basin started drinking groundwater after 1997.

Nebraska and its towns have prospered from irrigation. Shutting off wells will hurt. As painful as such considerations are, they are not the issue. The issue is this: Can Nebraska afford any longer to act as though the Platte is a one-state river and the water under groundwater irrigators' feet is theirs and only theirs?

And what is the value of Nebraska's word? Blankenau says the state didn't legally commit to the three-state deal in 1997. But Colorado, Wyoming and the federal government would be surprised to learn that Nebraska didn't make a moral commitment to cooperate.

The proposed Platte River plan would commit its parties to being good neighbors who realize none of them can make unlimited claims on the Platte system. But if the deal falls apart, does anyone really think federal regulators would fail to resume their full-court press to return the Platte to the birds?

Yes, Nebraska well could face a nine-figure bill to restore Platte-related groundwater irrigation to 1997 levels. Only about one-tenth of that cost, state officials say, can be attributed to the three-state deal alone. The state already is committed to the remainder under LB 962, which lawmakers passed when they saw that well-drilling — in the Republican basin, lest one forget, as well as the Platte — could no longer go on unrestrained.

This tough fiscal pill adds yet another item to the long list of competing priorities before the Legislature. But the word went out in 1997: New well-drilling along the Platte has to cease.

Unfortunately for Nebraska, it did not. Now the bill is coming due.

To back out on the three-state deal now could lead Nebraska's partners to justifiably say: "You say it's your water? Fine. You make things right for the birds all by yourself." That just might hasten the doomsday scenario some irrigators are so fond of repeating.

This monkey is all business

Jimmy the snow monkey makes plenty of new friends Sunday at the World of Water educational festival at Wehrspann Lake. The festival — sponsored by Keep Omaha Beautiful, Pfizer and the Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership — featured canoeing, science experiments and prizes. Jimmy, who belongs to Wild Encounters of Gretna, was a part of the exotic animal demonstration.



RUDY SMITH/THE WORLD-HERALD

Douglas County West, Papio NRD tax rates cut

7-19-06

By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Tax rates set by the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and the Douglas County West school district include slight dips.

The natural resources district's property tax revenues will grow about 5.6 percent because valuation is up across the district, which anticipates taking in \$16.6 million in property taxes, up from \$15.7 million last year.

Overall, the district expects to spend \$37.33 million on this year's budget, with a significant chunk of money going toward flood control and dam construction.

In the Omaha area alone, the district proposes to spend \$8.3 million on its program to build dams in partnership with developers. The newest dams on the drawing board are at 168th Street and Military Avenue; 114th Street and Highway 36; and 180th and Ida Streets.

Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District

General fund budget: \$37.33 million, up

20 percent from previous year.

Tax rate: 3.844 cents, down 1.7 percent from last year.

NRD property taxes: \$38.44 for a home valued at \$100,000, down 65 cents from last year if the home's value is unchanged.

Highlights: The district plans to undertake flood control projects, including property buyouts, levee improvements and dam construction. Also in the budget is money to extend the MoPac hiking and biking trail from Highway 50 to the Lied Bridge and to build a horse trail along the MoPac.

Douglas County West

The board of the Douglas County West Community Schools Monday night approved its 2006-07 budget — the second since it was reorganized last year from the Valley and Waterloo school districts. The district's operating budget, tax rate and enrollment are all down from the previous year.

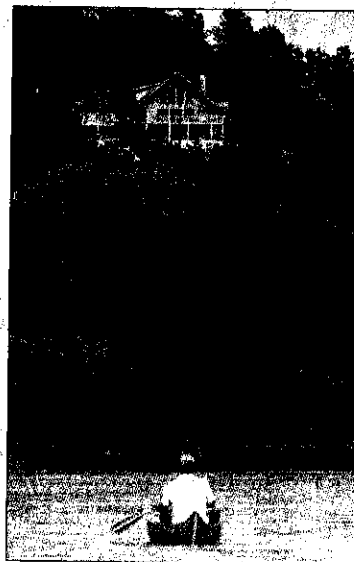
General fund budget: \$8.1 million, up 0.4 percent from last year.

Tax rate: \$1.16 per \$100 of assessed valuation, down 3 cents from last year.

School district property taxes: \$1,163 for a home valued at \$100,000, down \$31 from last year if the home's value is unchanged.

Highlights: While it tries to attract more students from even beyond its Valley and Waterloo communities, the Douglas County West school district will have to "tighten its belt" through staff reassignments, sharing duties and changing work schedules for a couple of years, said Superintendent George Conrad. Enrollment is down 45 students from 725 to 680 this year.

World-Herald staff writer Chris Olson contributed to this report.



Ponca State Park, on the Missouri River in northeast Nebraska, the Niobrara River in the northern part of the state and Lake McConaughy in the west are among the recreational resources that could generate more jobs and help stabilize communities, according to a new report.

Outdoor assets can pay off

Nebraska's land and water could spur growth, report says

By DAVID HENDEE 7-21-06
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

MAHONEY STATE PARK, Neb. — Nebraska will be left in the dust this century unless it gets more aggressive in using land and water to generate jobs, incomes and community stability, says a new report on how the state could tap its natural resources.

The higher quality of life found in communities with access to superior outdoor amenities is so valued that it's the equivalent of a second paycheck to many people, said Ernie Niemi, an economist and primary author of the report released Wednesday.

Don Gabelhouse, fisheries chief of the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, put it this way: "People, especially entrepreneurs, want to live in nice places."

Niemi said Nebraska has its own distinctive style of attractions potentially capable of driving economic growth. That includes rivers and reservoirs, scenic farmsteads and frontier landscapes, state parks and cultural heritage sites, plus opportunities for fishing, hunting and wildlife viewing.

Locations with potential

According to a new report on Nebraska's natural resources and economic development, nine areas have untapped potential for growth:

Omaha's riverfront	Pine Ridge region
Missouri River trails	Lake McConaughy
Niobrara River	National wildlife refuges
Middle Platte River	Wetlands
Ponca State Park	

Source: ECONorthwest report: "Natural-Resource Amenities and Nebraska's Economy"

The report made no recommendations. Its purpose is to launch a statewide discussion — from small towns to the statehouse — on how to better take advantage of Nebraska's outdoor assets.

Rob Robertson, vice president of government relations for the Nebraska Farm Bureau, said maximizing opportunities in rural areas is good for ag-

riculture.

"We hear a lot from farmers and ranchers about their urban cousins' interest in hunting and fishing and recreation. If there's a way for farmers and ranchers to be part of that, we definitely want to be part of the discussion," he said.

Dan Curran, business development chief for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development, said community leaders need to know that recreation is a big lure to Americans seeking a certain quality of life.

"If it's bike-riding or hiking, people young and old are seeking places where they can enjoy that, and then they move there," he said.

Nebraska needs to do a better job of using rivers, lakes and landscapes to spur economic growth because the state's powerhouse agricultural industry is a poor jobs incubator, Niemi said.

There has been a prevailing attitude among Nebraska landowners who see land and water primarily, if not exclusively, as economically important only when producing crops and livestock, Niemi said.

See Report: Page 2

MIDLANDS

OMAHA WORLD-HERALD

Report: State urged to focus on recreation potential

Continued from Page 1

That attitude is changing, he said, but much potential remains untapped as Nebraska fails to fully seize its recreational opportunities.

Niemi said the findings don't diminish the economic importance of agriculture or those who own and manage Nebraska's land and water. He distinguished between agriculture's overall size and its ability to induce growth. There can be no doubt about the industry's dominance in many areas of the state's economy, he said.

"This dominance, though, does not automatically give the industry an ability to generate enough new jobs and incomes to boost the overall economy," he said.

Most growth in jobs and incomes occurs in and near urban centers.

Niemi said Nebraska's success in attracting productive workers will depend greatly on the state's ability to provide newcomers with recreational opportunities sufficiently attractive to persuade them to locate here rather than elsewhere.

That argument surfaced earlier this year in a short-lived

proposal to dam the Platte River near Ashland to create a resort lake midway between Omaha and Lincoln.

Advocates had touted the giant reservoir as a potential magnet for companies that would help keep the state's sharpest young minds at home. Opponents challenged the job-creation argument and said a lake would be too expensive, destroy Ashland and jeopardize water supplies for Lincoln and Omaha.

Niemi said farmers play a key role in a future outdoor-oriented Nebraska because 97 percent of all land in the state is privately owned. Some Nebraska landowners boost their income by renting opportunities to hunt, fish or watch wildlife.

Adam Switzer of Burwell and Kelly Krier of Kearney are among those already taking advantage of the opportunity.

Switzer's family cattle operation generates about half its income from its six-year-old Calamus Outfitters operation, offering canoeing, fishing, guided hunting and trail rides on a 12,000-acre Sand Hills ranch. Demand increases each year, he said.

In two weeks, a Kearney-area

organization will launch Country-Adventures, an online marketplace connecting the public to privately owned activities such as canning salsa, birding, vineyard tours, airboat rides, target shooting and others.

"It'll be an agri-tourism eBay," said Krier, the marketing director.

More than 300 farmers statewide have launched agri-tourism enterprises. Lease earnings for hunting in Nebraska are generally enough to pay real estate taxes, about \$2,400 per landowner on average, Niemi said.

The study was inspired by efforts in recent years to determine the value of water for irrigated agriculture and for recreation as Lake McConaughy, the state's largest reservoir, declined to historic low levels.

A University of Nebraska-Lincoln study last year indicated that there may be opportunities for some farmers to increase their net earnings by exchanging water for growing corn and other crops for cash to help keep water in McConaughy for recreational activities.

The new study was conducted

by ECONorthwest, an Oregon-based economic consulting company, for the Game and Parks Commission, the Nebraska Economic Development Department, the Center for Rural Affairs, American Rivers, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Water Center and the offices of U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, D-Neb., and U.S. Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, R-Neb. It cost nearly \$100,000.

Chad Smith, director of American Rivers' state office, said agriculture, healthy natural resources and growing communities can co-exist. "We can still grow all the corn and cattle we want," he said, "but we also can capitalize on rivers, grasslands, the Pine Ridge and the (state) park system."

Still, recreational opportunities similar to Nebraska's are found across the Great Plains.

"If Nebraska is to realize the full benefits ... it must distinguish itself from the crowd," Niemi said.

Mountains and ocean beaches — even when trampled or hard to reach — might be so rare and dramatic they can lure people to live nearby, Niemi said.

"Nebraska," he said, "doesn't have this luxury."

"It seems to me they are building (dams) for the developers, not the public. Flood control has become a secondary issue — that's just how they justify what they do."

By Nancy Gaubler
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Douglas County may break with local governments in the metropolitan area that are supporting an ambitious dam-building proposal.

A majority of County Board members say they are dissatisfied with the way the dam proposal has been handled.

Their criticism ranges from a lack of public input to concerns that property taxes would increase. They want the proposal revised before signing off on it.

"It seems to me they are building (dams) for the developers, not the public," said board member Clare Duda. "Flood control has become a secondary issue — that's just how they justify what they do."

The dam-building initiative, led by the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, grew out of an effort to find a

County questions dam plan

9-26-06

By Nancy Gaubler
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Douglas County Board members, voicing concerns about property taxes and a lack of public input, want the proposal to be revised.

29-dam plan commits the county to more than what is needed to meet the federal law.

"It's gotten too convoluted," she said. "I'm not sure where, how or why all these dams came into play."

Duda agrees.

Under the Clean Water Act, "they are trying to get themselves a whole lot more power. I'm absolutely opposed to that."

Duda said, referring in part to the district's effort to be granted bonding authority by

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MAIN NEWS

OMAHA WORLD-HERALD

Dams: Douglas County Board has doubts on plan

Continued from Page 1

So far, about a half-dozen local governments have approved the dam plan, meaning they've endorsed giving the district bonding authority — the ability to take on a large debt and pay it off over time. The district needs such authority if it is to build all of the dams.

"We don't want them to have bonding authority, and we don't want them to build these dams," Duda said.

Duda and others voiced fears that the dams will create too much debt for property taxpayers, while stripping some people of land for the benefit of development. All of the lakes would be ringed by development, and some would be semi-private. The district would have the right to use eminent domain to take land for the lakes.

Because of its concerns, the Douglas County Board has delayed voting on the plan.

The district's acting general manager, Martin Petermann, has said the district needs bonding authority if it is to manage the debt the dams would create. He says the district can pay

off that debt for the 29 lakes without increasing property taxes. However, he said, it is possible that taxes might rise if the district also builds the two huge lakes in Washington County.

The district's board chairman, Jim Thompson, said the district is focused on getting the maximum benefit out of the storm water requirements. Dominating water, he said, is an integral part of the solution to urban runoff.

"You can't really separate the two," Thompson said. "You can't take the runoff and say do something else with it."

Runoff can be controlled in a number of ways. Because the Clean Water Act requires governments across the country to reduce runoff, a number of studies are looking for the most effective way of doing so.

Duda and fellow board member Mike Doyle have met with Washington County Board members to seek common ground on storm water controls and the dams.

Washington County is on record opposing the two lakes that are separate from the 29-dam plan. Those lakes would flood

the Big Papio Creek Valley in the county. Because of vigorous landowner opposition, the Washington County Board voted to prohibit the district from flooding affected county roads, effectively blocking the dams for now.

Boyle said he won't sign onto the district's dam plan.

"This dam issue is preposterous," he said. "It's outdated, way too expensive, and there are many other environmentally friendly ways to control heavy rainwater."

Board member Kathleen McCallister wants the board to do something to control flooding but said she lacks faith in the resources district.

"How do we find a happy medium, if there is one, that can reconcile the real flooding threat in the metropolitan area (without doing so) on the backs of people who feel they're being railroaded," she said.

The federal government requires public input in the development of any storm water plan. Douglas County Board member Chris Rodgers said the public needs to have more opportunity to be involved, especially with the prospect of some

families losing their land.

It isn't clear how much impact any action by Douglas County would have.

The district already has budgeted \$3.25 million to begin buying land in northwest Douglas County for three new dams. The City of Omaha has approved policies supporting the dams.

Marty Grate, environmental services manager for the city, said he believes the county's concerns can be addressed.

"The idea of the partnership was to have regionally common goals," he said.

County Board member Kyle Hitchens said some dams may be necessary to address storm water runoff, but not the 29 proposed by the resources district.

While he personally could accept the plan as written, he is going to push for revisions because of the public outcry.

"I get the feeling that most people would have it amended, so that's the position I'll support," he said. "If the NRDC truly believes that their dam program is needed to affect storm water runoff, then they should be willing to a look at some modifications."

Hold feet to the fire

In regard to the Sept. 26 news story about how Douglas County Board members are dissatisfied with the handling of the "dam plan," I appreciate that this board is looking at the big picture.

Clare Duda is my county commissioner, and I am grateful for his seeing through the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District's plan to build dams for the benefit of developers, not for flood control.

Aside from the fact that dams will create additional water-quality issues, the NRD has not fully addressed the long-term costs of these structures. It also concerns me that acting General Manager Marlin Petermann expects us to believe that putting the NRD in debt would not increase our property taxes. Let's be realistic.

The news story also states that NRD board Chairman Jim Thompson believes damming water is a solution to urban runoff. Any intelligent person can recognize that dams in Washington County and northern Douglas County cannot control runoff from storms occurring inside the Omaha city limits.

With elections around the corner, voters need to pay attention to the box they check on their ballots. NRD board members like Mr. Thompson need to be replaced with forward-thinking representatives like those on the Douglas County Board.

Betty Mohr, Omaha

Kudos to board

Thank you, Douglas County Board, for seeing what we have said all along.

Wayne and Shelia Dreessen

Kennard, Neb.

W-H

9-28-06

OMAHA DAILY HERALD FOUNDED 1865
 OMAHA DAILY WORLD FOUNDED BY GILBERT M. HITCHCOCK 1885
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LARRY KING, *Executive Editor* GEITNER SIMMONS, *Editorial Page Editor*

MIKE REILLY, *Managing Editor*

Good stewards all

Many Midlanders are aware of and working toward conservation and wise use of the state's land and water resources.

This year, four families and three community groups in Nebraska were honored for their outstanding contributions with Master Conservationist awards, sponsored by The World-Herald and the University of Nebraska.

X ■ Information and education are the contributions of the Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area Clean Lakes Council in Springfield. Council members have taken the lead in educating residents in the watershed about practices that either would help preserve the beautiful park or harm the lake.

Their community is better for their activities, which include helping to develop a primitive campsite used by Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and to start a program for park visitors to remove their own trash.

■ The Cedar Canyon Schoolyard Habitat Project, at a country school southwest of Gering, is a model of good ecological stewardship for the Scottsbluff-Gering community and other schools.

Students, parents and volunteers reconfigured a weed patch into a 60-foot by 100-foot nature area, pond and natural habitat, watered by runoff from the school roof. It has become an important place for students to learn about animals, plants and the environment.

■ Robert J. Piontkowski and his employer, Loup City, were honored for their recovery of Jenner's Park. Once a privately owned showplace of the community, it fell into disuse and disrepair until the city bought it in 1972.

**Statewide,
Nebraskans
honored for
environmental
contributions
and activities.**

Piontkowski has spent much of his working life and a lot of his own private hours renovating the park, which has regained its status as a focus of community

pride. Loup City celebrates Rob Piontkowski Day every year to mark his work.

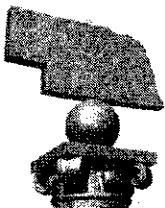
■ The Laux family in Bridgeport has a large cattle and cow-calf operation and grows corn and other crops. Since buying the land in the late 1960s, the family has worked hard to improve eroded land and conserve water.

■ The Hellbusch family in Belgrade has farmed for a hundred years and now holds 3,000 acres of land. During that time, the family has worked to control soil erosion, plant trees and implement sediment basins to fight runoff losses.

■ Todd and Kim Tyler of Clarks bought 900 acres along the Platte River. The land was soggy and marshy, and the Tyler family enrolled it in the Wetland Reserve Program and is returning it to its native condition. It will be used for grazing and habitat when the restoration is done.

■ Steve Grudzinski of Loup City established his 2,000-acre cow and calf operation 20 years ago. Since then, he has planted thousands of trees to provide windbreaks, protect livestock, control snowdrifts and enhance wildlife habitat. Managed grazing has kept the pastures healthy.

These men, women and children are fine stewards of Nebraska's resources, helping not only themselves and their communities but also the entire state, which benefits from sound management practices. Each award winner deserves plaudits for contributing to "the good life."



**Nebraska
Excellence**

Plattsmouth official up for NRD job

10-3-06

BY NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The city administrator of Plattsmouth, Neb., has been named the finalist for the position of general manager at the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

The district's board is expected to approve John Winkler for the position when it meets Oct. 12.

Winkler, who also functions as Cass County's economic development director, said he has had an eye on the top job at the Papio NRD for a while. It's a "dream opportunity," he said.

The NRD is charged with natural resources protection and flood control. It is one of the major sources of funding for recreational facilities in eastern Nebraska.

"The NRD affects so many aspects of life in different ways," Winkler said. "What a great opportunity to have a lasting impact long after I'm gone."

Conservationists and outdoors enthusiasts need not fear

that his economic development background would make him partial to development over resource protection, he said.

"Conservation programs, trails development, these all affect quality of life of every citizen, and those are the things that attract me."

Winkler, 40, said he wants to get up to speed as quickly as possible on the NRD's proposal to spend up to \$400 million building about 30 dams in the metropolitan area. Until then, he said, he can't offer an educated opinion on the plan.

Board members who served on the selection committee said they were impressed by Winkler's energy and creativity.

"He possesses a lot of the leadership qualities we want in a general manager," Tim Fowler said. "He's very bright

— one thing that really stood out in my mind is his passion and energy, it really showed through."

Rich Tesar said he expected no problems in getting the full board's approval of Winkler. "There has seemed to be a consensus of many board members that we needed new blood and new energy," Tesar said.

A salary and starting date for Winkler have not been set. Winkler said he hopes to begin by sometime in November. He has been the Plattsmouth administrator since 2001.

Winkler will replace the district's longtime general manager, Steve Oltmans. He was fired this spring after the board lost confidence in him.

Oltmans' undoing began when he lied to board members about an affair with a former board member.

Cure sought for Carter Lake's ills

10-4-06

By ELIZABETH AHLIN

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

COUNCIL BLUFFS — Community leaders want to develop a plan to improve water quality and draw tourists to Carter Lake, which has been damaged by pollutants and low water levels.

A public meeting to discuss a watershed management plan to "cure" Carter Lake will be at 7 p.m. Thursday, at Carter Lake Elementary School, 1105 Redick Blvd. The City of Carter Lake and the City of Omaha are sponsoring the meeting.

The Carter Lake Preservation Society has been working with

watershed experts from Nebraska and Iowa to help draft the plan. Digging wells near the Missouri River and pumping water into the lake are among the recommendations that came out of a study commissioned by the cities of Carter Lake and Omaha.

Jeanne Eibes, a member of the preservation society, said she hopes the work is completed by 2008. But construction can't begin until Carter Lake receives funding.

Steve Tonn, an educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Douglas and Sarpy Counties, has been

working with the preservation society. He said the meetings will help determine not only the community goals but also a course of action.

The lake has low water levels, too much silt and high levels of harmful algae, E. coli bacteria and mercury.

Eibes acknowledged that Carter Lake is "not an inviting place." But she envisions it becoming the jewel of Abbot Drive.

"We've got to do something about this," Eibes said.

A second community meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Oct. 24 at Carter Lake Elementary.

Letters to the Editor

Dams are not needed *Do. Co. Post Gazette 10-4-06*

It is about time someone has figured out the 29 dams are not needed. I have been to about every steering committee meeting H.D.R. and the N.R.D. have had and there is no one at these meetings that wants these dams. The end. This raising of taxes is going to be felt by the whole state, for a select few and mostly developers. The time has come for our legislature and county boards and city boards to step up and say enough is enough.

If this bonding authority ever gets through the legislature, it will be an open checkbook for the N.R.D.'s. So, people, vote out the incumbents on these N.R.D. boards. The time of raising taxes by these directors of the N.R.D. from \$31 million to \$37 million in a year for their budget is ridiculous.

Thank you Douglas County Commissioners, for finally realizing what we have said for so long

— Wayne and Shelia Dreessen, Kennard

A curious choice *W-H 10-5-06*

In regard to the Oct. 3 news story titled "Plattsmouth official is finalist for NRD job," it is even more apparent that the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District is more concerned with economic development than with the conservation of our natural resources.

Why else choose a finalist who is Cass County economic development director (as well as Plattsmouth city administrator) over someone who is more in tune with wisely managing our natural resources? The answer is obvious.

This NRD is mostly concerned with building dams and subsidizing the developers who will benefit from water-based developments around proposed dam sites. Maybe it should redirect John Winkler's job application to the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce. That seems more fitting.

Jennifer Andersen, Kennard, Neb.

SARPY COUNTY BOARD DISTRICT 5

have deep roots in county

By JOE DEJKA

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

One thing's for certain.

The next man elected to the Sarpy County Board in District 5 will be a farmer.

Democrat Steve Cockerill of Springfield and Republican Rich Jansen of Gretna, who are vying for the seat, are both farmers.

That may surprise some people, given how quickly Sarpy County farm fields are being converted to houses and businesses.

But the current District 5 commissioner, Republican Tim Schram, is also a farmer, and an auctioneer. Schram chose not to run again after 12 years on the board.

The district that includes the western and southern reaches of Sarpy County is experiencing rapid housing growth, particularly near Chalco and Gretna, and seeing a burst of commercial development along Interstate 80. But it still holds most of the county's farmland.

Since 1986, the seat has been held by a Republican. In that year, Cockerill's uncle, Frank R. Cockerill Jr., ran unsuccessfully for the seat as the Democratic nominee.

Cockerill, 44, is not looking to follow in his uncle's footsteps. He describes himself as a straight talker out to serve all the district's residents, regardless of party.

Steve Cockerill



Age: 44

Party affiliation: Democrat

Address: Springfield

Occupation: Farmer

Education: Platteview High School, 1980

Previous offices held, sought: none

Family: Wife, Barbara; one stepson

"I'm not playing party politics," he said. "I don't care if they're Democrat, Republican or independent. I like everybody."

His top priorities, he said, are cutting taxes, keeping Sarpy County a good place to raise a family and maintaining public services, including law enforcement and emergency services. The biggest challenge, he said, is allowing economic growth while maintaining rural appeal and a small-town atmosphere.

He would like to see people

Rich Jansen



Age: 57

Party affiliation: Republican

Address: Gretna

Occupation: Farmer and owner of Platte Valley

Implement

Education: Gretna High School, 1967

Previous offices held, sought: Western Sarpy Drainage Board, 1978-94; Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board, 1994-present

Family: Wife, Mary Ann; four children

work together on issues facing the county.

"There's too much arguing," he said. "Let's just knock it off and get along."

Like Cockerill, whose father ran feedlots in the county, Jansen, 57, is deeply rooted in the county.

Jansen is the face of the Sarpy County Fair, the county's

annual ode to agriculture, having served on the fair board since 1979 and as its president since 1988.

Jansen lists public safety as his top priority, through strong law enforcement and the development of safe roads and intersections. A close second among his priorities, he said, is "fair taxation."

He said a slowing economy, indicated by a slowdown in housing growth, warrants a cautious approach to county budgeting.

Last year, Jansen said, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District's budget went up 8 percent or 9 percent, and its board of directors didn't have to raise the tax levy.

"Right away, some of those guys say how big of heroes we are because we didn't raise the mill levy," he said. "I don't know who they're trying to fool."

Jansen has been on the NRD board since 1994 but did not seek re-election this year.

His other priorities, he said, are to improve storm water control to prevent flooding and to make sure that sanitary sewers are adequate to serve new development.

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Winkler bids farewell to Plattsmouth

Patti Jo Peterson
Managing editor

The search is on for a new Plattsmouth city administrator as John Winkler nabs a new job as general manager of Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Although district board members will officially give their approval Oct. 12, Winkler announced his decision to accept the job Monday.

"I will start in November," Winkler said. "I asked for a little extra time to help the mayor and council with the ethanol plant and the marina projects."

The city of Plattsmouth hired Winkler as administrator in 2001. Winkler said he appreciated having the opportunity. "I was green and new and they took a chance on me," he said.

He also serves as Cass County Economic Development director and has been instrumental in projects including planning the new senior/community center, developing the city's comprehensive plan, overseeing Chicago Avenue road upgrades, upgrading the city's 4-Mile Industrial site and wooing prospective industries and businesses to the area.

Winkler admits taking the NRD position was not an easy decision to make. "I have mixed emotions. I love what I'm doing in Plattsmouth and feel like I've grown up here."

The general manager position, however, was too good an offer to pass up both financially and career-wise. Winkler will nearly double his salary and will be involved in not only administration and economic development, but environmental and conservation projects as well.

The Papio-Missouri River NRD serves nine Nebraska cities and five counties: Sarpy, Douglas, Burt, Thurston and Washington.

"The NRD affects so many aspects of life in different ways. It has a huge impact on the quality of life in the Omaha area. It's a chance to have an impact long after I'm dead and gone," he said.

Looking for a new city

Winkler: Leaves Plattsmouth for NRD management position

From page 1

administrator is a bittersweet situation, according to Plattsmouth Mayor Paul Lambert. "John is a very valuable employee to the city but you have to feel good for him and his family," Lambert said. "I hate to see him go but I understand it. The city will always be indebted to him for what he has done in the five years he was here."

Lambert said the city will emphasize economic develop-

ment and government efficiency in their search for a new administrator.

Due to Winkler's accomplishments, the mayor said the city is in a better position to recruit quality candidates than it was five years ago.

"John brought the city to a place where we will get some good applicants," the mayor said. "To his credit, he helped people to realize the potential and pride we can have in Plattsmouth — residents and visitors. Many people interested in development are aware of Plattsmouth and the potential we have here."

Lambert said he didn't think Winkler's responsibilities as city

administrator and county economic development director would be split into two positions.

"We may reshuffle some responsibilities," he said. "We will do some searching and we are going to have to find somebody. Last time we used a company to narrow down the search for us. We will move ahead."

The mayor reiterated that Winkler will help with existing projects until a new person is hired.

"It could take a long time, but hopefully not. Having someone hired by the first of the year would be my goal."

Although Winkler said some developers are nervous about

working with a new administrator, he confident a good replacement will be found.

"Maybe it's good Plattsmouth can get new blood and a different direction," he said.

Winkler added his decision to leave had nothing to do with Wal-Mart's decision to not build here.

He noted, however, that the city has some challenges to meet regarding new developments.

"Sometimes Plattsmouth can be its own worst enemy," he said.

Winkler said he would continue to live in Cass County. "Who knows? Maybe I'll run for county board sometime."

Winkler a tough loss at Plattsmouth helm

10-6-06

By JOHN FERAK

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The City of Plattsmouth must replace its popular administrator as it also faces a heated mayor's race and the loss of a national retailer.

John Winkler, 40, has worked for Plattsmouth for five years. He also has served as executive director of the Cass County Economic Development Council since April 2005.

Winkler is expected to be named general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District when the district's board meets Oct. 12. Winkler said he expects to start his new job in November.

"Everyone understands this is a great opportunity to better himself," Mayor Paul Lambert said. "I certainly hope we get someone else on the caliber of John Winkler."

Jeanene Wehrbein, Plattsmouth Chamber of Commerce director, said the city must hire someone with Winkler's energy.

"He's done a yeoman's job," she said. "He did so much, above and beyond the city administrator's job to promote the community, to put our foot in the door on projects."

Winkler recently found buyers to fill the remaining vacant land in the city's new industrial park, including a proposed ethanol plant.

Winkler made \$66,300 as city administrator and an additional \$12,000 from his economic development post for the county.

"John's going to be a huge loss for Plattsmouth and for Cass County," said John Plucknett, president of the Cass County Economic Development Council. "Plattsmouth and Cass County are so much linked at the hip, so it's a natural to kind of tie those positions together."

Winkler said the city should wait until after the November election to name his successor because the outcome of the mayor's race will set the tone for the future.

Lambert faces Councilman Terry Tilson in the race.

Lambert was a proponent of a proposed Wal-Mart store in Plattsmouth, a position shared by the majority of the City Council. Tilson opposed the project. Wal-Mart ultimately scrapped its Plattsmouth project, citing rising building costs.

Lambert said he expects a new city administrator to be named by year's end.

Tilson said he wants to attract a city administrator who spends more time at City Hall.

"John's forte was economic development. John Winkler was great at that," Tilson said. "I would prefer someone more hands-on with city department heads and the day-to-day affairs of the city."

PAPIO MISSOURI RIVER NRD

Dams front and center in NRD races

By Nancy Gaarder

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The November general election will be the first chance for Omaha-area voters to make their thoughts known on an ambitious dam-building proposal from the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

Five positions on the 11-person NRD board are up for election.

The four incumbents running — Fred Conley, John Conley, Tim Fowler and Jim Thompson — support the policies calling for dams. In the fifth race, the incumbent is not running, so two newcomers are vying for the Sarpy County seat.

The Papio NRD is charged with water and soil conservation in six counties along the Missouri River: Dakota, Thurston, Burt, Washington, Douglas and Sarpy. It helps build, maintain and improve levees, drainage ways and dams while also providing recreational facilities.

Board members serve four-year terms and are paid \$70 a day for each day they conduct board business. Starting in 2007, they'll earn up to \$3,600 a year, plus expenses.

The district is proposing to spend about \$300 million on up to 29 dams in one plan, and \$100 million on two dams in a separate plan. All dams would be in Sarpy, Douglas and Washington Counties.

To build them, the NRD is seeking authority from the Legislature to incur long-term debt. Property taxes, which have already increased to pay for dams, could rise again. The district is prepared to use eminent domain to obtain land if necessary.

Omaha has experienced deadly flooding in the past, and the district says this plan is the best way to address future risk. Working with developers, as this plan requires, is the most affordable way to finance the plan, according to the NRD.

The candidates:

Subdistrict 2

Joel Cloutd cited the dams when asked why he is running.

"It's a terrible injustice to taxpayers and landowners that we're going to be taking on such debt over the next 30 years and beyond," he said. "I think there are better ways to control flooding."

Subdistrict 2 covers northeast Omaha.

Incumbent Fred Conley said the vote that the board will be taking on the dams will not commit the NRD to all 29.

"I'm not set in stone," said Conley. "These are policies and they're just like any other policies, they're subject to change over time."

Conley also serves on the Metropolitan Community College board.

State law allows people to serve in more than one elected position at a time, depending on the position. Both the NRD and community college boards are considered "low" offices in state law, so there is no conflict serving on both.

Subdistrict 4

In midtown Omaha, voters have a choice between incumbent John Conley and former board member Barb Nichols.

Nichols grew up on a Burt County farm and said she knows firsthand how the NRD uses its power of eminent domain after it built a dam on her family's property.

"Eminent domain needs to be used wisely, or it's easily abused," she said.

The district hasn't made the case that all 31 dams are needed, she said, or that other options wouldn't be better.

Given that developers will benefit from these dams, too, much of the planning has been done "behind the scenes," Nichols said.

She is concerned that taxes will rise and that land will be taken from people against their will.

In April, the NRD board fired longtime general manager Steve Oltmans after revelations of his affair with Nichols when she served on the board.

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

John Conley said the dams are crucial to protect the Omaha area.

"The need for flood control is extreme," he said. "And it becomes greater as more and more farmland is converted to development."

Conley took issue with the way the dam proposal has been presented. It is not a "plan," he said, but a set of "policies" that aren't site specific.

"There is no plan on the table," Conley said. "There is a policy statement."

And he questions the \$300 million cost figure.

"It is misleading to start off with that kind of cost estimate," he said. "To assume that we're going to bear that kind of cost is unrealistic."

According to NRD materials, 29 dams "shall" be funded through a combination of a new developers' fee and existing tax revenue. The developers' fee is expected to cover one-third of the cost, while the NRD would cover the remaining two-thirds.

The documents currently project the total cost of the 29 dams at \$282.5 million, which would place the NRD's share at about \$188 million.

Subdistrict 6

Daniel Genrich is vying for this east-central Omaha seat held by Jim Thompson.

Genrich said he would be better able to make an informed decision on the dams once he is in office and has access to more information.

He said the Douglas County Board has raised "some good questions" about the plan. The County Board has declined to endorse the dam proposal over concerns about property taxes, property rights and public input.

Thompson pointed to the growing urban area as the reason for building more dams.

"Because of the significant

development in the metropolitan area," he said, "we have got to come up with a plan to address flood control and storm-water runoff."

Thompson said he is hopeful that all the dams won't have to be built.

Subdistrict 8

Steve Robertson said he became interested in the NRD after a relative's home was flooded along Cole Creek.

Some dams are needed, he said, but he doesn't know enough to have an opinion on the NRD proposals. The magnitude and cost of the dams give him pause.

"I don't want this to be a burden on people," he said. "The district's mission is to preserve, protect and enhance, and I want to make sure that occurs."

Incumbent Tim Fowler, also running for this southern Douglas County seat, said the dams are essential to protecting the Omaha area from flooding.

"Flood control is our business — that's what we're here for," Fowler said.

The metro area is in the Papillion Creek watershed, and Fowler said that puts it in a "dangerous place."

"One of these days we're going to have a flood, and a lot of people will be hurt," he said. "I don't want someone to point a finger back at this board and say you didn't do enough."

The proposed dams are designed to help reduce the additional risk of flooding as more farmland in the upper part of the Papillion Creek watershed is converted to rooftops, parking lots and streets.

The dams would not address flood risks that arise from heavy rains directly over the Omaha area.

Subdistrict 10

Incumbent Rich Jansen is not seeking re-election because he is a candidate for the Sarpy County Board. As a result, NRD voters in central and west Sarpy County are guaranteed a new representative.

After attending a few board meetings, both David Klug and Patrick Lutz say they have concerns about the way citizens opposing the dams have been treated.

"People are able to get up and speak their minds, but it has the feeling that it's more for show," Klug said. "It doesn't seem like what they're saying is being taken seriously."

Klug said concerns about the possible use of eminent domain prompted him to run. He's not against the dams, he said, but believes there are other solutions, such as dry dams, that aren't fully being considered.

Lutz questioned the NRD's desire to obtain bonding authority. The number of dams involved "seems overwhelming," he said.

"There are a lot of alternatives to just damming up storm water," he said.

Fred Conley



Age: 58
Party affiliation: Democrat
Address: 3354 N. 37th St.
Occupation: Community development consultant

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Nebraska at Omaha; law degree, Creighton University

Previous offices held: Omaha City Council, 1981-93; Papio NRD board, 1975-77 and 1999-present; Metropolitan Community College board member, 2005-present

Family: Married, three children

Patrick Lutz



Age: 43
Party affiliation: Republican
Address: 10626 Ridgemont Circle
Occupation: real estate attorney

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; law degree, Creighton University

Previous offices held: Trustee and chairman, Sanitary and Improvement District No. 176

Family: Married, three children

John Conley



Age: 71
Party affiliation: Republican
Address: 1011 S. 91st Circle
Occupation: Retired manager of engineering,

Metropolitan Utilities District
Education: Bachelor's degree, Iowa State College

Previous offices held, sought: Papio NRD board, 1999-present

Family: Married, three children

Barb Nichols



Age: 55
Party affiliation: Democrat
Address: 1335 S. 156th Court
Occupation: Freelance grant writer

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Previous offices held: Papio NRD board, 2001-05

Family: Single, three sons

Joel Cloudt



Age: 35
Party affiliation: Republican
Address: 3413 Nebraska Ave.
Occupation: Floor covering mechanic, farmer

Education: Bennington High School

Previous offices held, sought: First bid for office

Family: Single

Jim Thompson



Age: 55
Party affiliation: Democrat
Address: 1001 S. 35th Ave.
Occupation: Self-employed, remodeling

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Minnesota

Previous offices held, sought: Papio NRD board, 1997-98 and 2003-present.

Family: Married, three children

Tim Fowler



Age: 43
Party affiliation: Republican
Address: 3413 S. 48th Ave.
Occupation: Defense contractor, Ausgar

Technologies of San Diego

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Previous offices: Papio NRD board, 2003-present

Family: Married, five children

Steve Robertson



Age: 39
Party affiliation: Republican
Address: 7914 Heritage Circle
Occupation: Owner, Dairy Queen

restaurants

Education: Attended University of Nebraska at Omaha

Previous offices held, sought: First bid

Family: Single

David Klug



Age: 29
Party affiliation: Democrat
Address: 1611 Cottonwood Ave.
Occupation: Systems administrator,

Blue Cross Blue Shield

Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Nebraska at Omaha

Previous offices held, sought: First bid

Family: Married

Daniel Genrich

Age: 35
Party affiliation: Democrat
Address: 2620 S. 38th St.
Occupation: Electrophysiology nurse, Nebraska Medical Center
Education: Bachelor's degree, University of Nebraska Medical Center
Previous offices held, sought: First bid
Family: Married

Bennington OKs new subdivision

10-10-06

By CHRIS OLSON

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Plans are under way for a \$50 million housing development near Bennington that may include a lake.

Monday night, the Bennington City Council unanimously approved a redevelopment plan and contract with Dial Land Development Corp. for an 85-acre subdivision on the eastern edge of the city.

X The rolling land, now used for farming, is adjacent to a 10-acre parcel that Dial sold to the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District for one of 29 proposed lakes.

In August, the city annexed the housing site, which will extend its zoning authority as far east as 144th Street and, to the north, halfway between Pawnee Road and the Washington County line.

The Dial development, called Ridgewood, will add up to 375 housing units, including more than 250 units for the elderly.

The development plans 124 single-family homes, priced at \$200,000 to \$350,000, said Dial

project manager Mike Kahre.

An apartment building will have 59 independent units for senior citizens and 68 assisted-living units, including 16 units for people with memory loss, Kahre said. A second building with the same accommodations will be constructed as demand indicates.

Grading is expected to begin this fall and continue next spring, and groundbreaking for single-family homes is planned for next fall, said Patrick Day, Dial's president.

The developer will extend the Omaha sewer line that serves Bennington. The subdivision will receive water and natural gas from the Metropolitan Utilities District.

Turn lanes will be constructed on Nebraska Highway 36 and Bennington Road to improve access to the development, said John Krager, the project's engineer for Schemmer and Associates in Omaha.

The entire project is expected to be completed in the next five to six years, Day said. Development of the adjacent NRD lake could accelerate the sale of homes. X