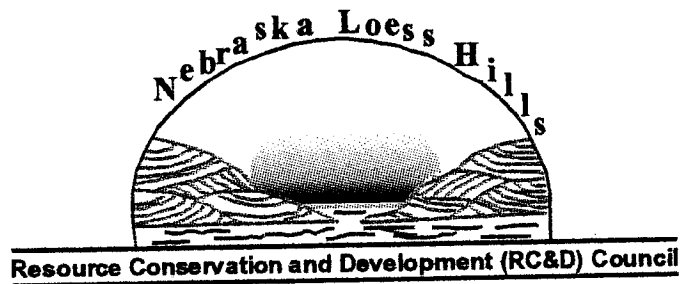


Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D (Resource, Conservation, & Development) Council Area Plan 2004-2008



Vision Statement

People working actively and in cooperation to strengthen communities.

Mission Statement

Manage and conserve natural resources and develop human capital for present and future generations.

Draft letter from Governor Johanns

Mr. Jon Bailey
President
Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D
408 North Oakland Avenue
Oakland NE 68045

Dear Mr. Bailey,

The Board of Directors for the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D is to be commended for their volunteerism and community involvement. In 2002, Board Members volunteered 1,245 hours working on projects adopted by the RC&D for the betterment of the RC&D Area. The Board completed 19 projects with another 43 ongoing. The Board also worked with 134 partners in 2002. This shows the depth of the projects and the ability of the RC&D to involve others. Most impressive, however, was the 3,647 hours donated by volunteers, other than Board Members in 2002.

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D has been presented a varied list of needs and opportunities as identified in your 2004-2008 Area Plan. Your actions are certain to make a positive difference in the area through accomplishment of your goals and objectives.

Please accept my thanks and encouragement for the projects undertaken by the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D and for future projects you'll be adopting. Your efforts are important to the success and future of your 6-County area and for Nebraska.

It is my pleasure to endorse the Nebraska Loess Hills Resource Conservation & Development Council's Area Plan for 2004-2008.

Sincerely,

Mike Johanns
Governor

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Loess Hills Resource Conservation and Development Council, it is my honor and privilege to present our 2004-2008 Area Plan. In it you will find our goals and objectives for the next five years to make the six counties of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D a better place for all.

The area of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D is a beautiful and interesting place, filled with a variety of communities and people. Growing urban communities with high-tech businesses and traditional rural small towns with locally-owned businesses and neighboring farms; the Omaha and Winnebago Tribes and their heritage and culture; and the burgeoning new immigrant populations of many of our communities all help weave a rich tapestry in our area. All the stitches in this tapestry contribute to life in our RC&D area, and it is our pleasure to be involved with them all.

Since the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D's establishment in 1992, over 100 projects involving environmental conservation, economic development and tourism have been undertaken. The next five years promise to be as active. We look forward to being an active participant in our area, and to helping address the challenges facing our area and its people. The continual need for economic development in our communities, the aging infrastructure in our communities, and the constant need for stewardship of our natural resources are issues we pledge to respond to through partnerships and collaboration with communities, service providers and the private sector.

This plan and the activities of our RC&D council depend, of course, on a strong set of volunteers. It is their work and commitment that have allowed the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D to be a force for progress in our area, and it is their continued energy and dedication that will allow the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D to achieve even more in the next five years. Our Board of Directors, partners and volunteers are perfect examples of the Scriptural admonition "Do not grow weary in doing good, for in new season you will reap, if you do not lose heart." Over years of seeking Congressional authorization and in facing the challenges of our area, our volunteers have never wearied and have never lost heart. The efforts of the council's Board of Directors, partners and volunteers over the past years cannot be thanked enough, and we look forward to more.

Finally, the efforts of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D staff - Coordinator Kent Neumann and PSA Laurie Peterson - in helping put together this Area Plan and assisting in the work this Plan entails are welcome and applauded. Often they are the face and voice of the RC&D, and they always represent us well.

The next five years promise to be an exciting and challenging time for the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D. Please join us in making the Nebraska Loess Hills Area an even better place to live, raise a family and do business.

Jon Bailey
President
Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D

**Prepared by the Nebraska Loess Hills
RC&D Council,
on behalf of the following sponsors:**

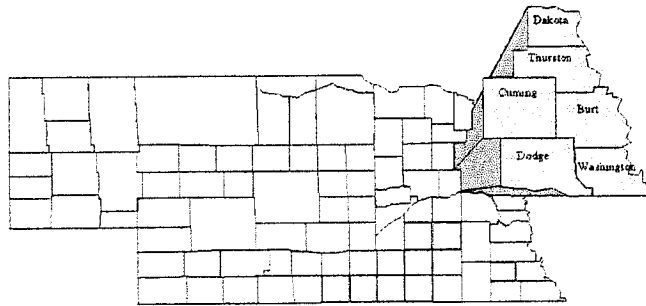
**Burt County Board of Supervisors
Center for Rural Affairs
City of South Sioux City
Cuming County Board of Supervisors
Dakota County Commissioners
Dodge County Board of Supervisors
Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District
Lower Platte North Natural Resources District
North Bend AmVets Post #20 Memorial Committee
Omaha Tribe of Iowa and Nebraska
Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
SIMPCO (Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council)
Thurston County Board of Supervisors
Washington County Board of Supervisors
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska**

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Vision

People working actively and in cooperation to strengthen communities.

Mission

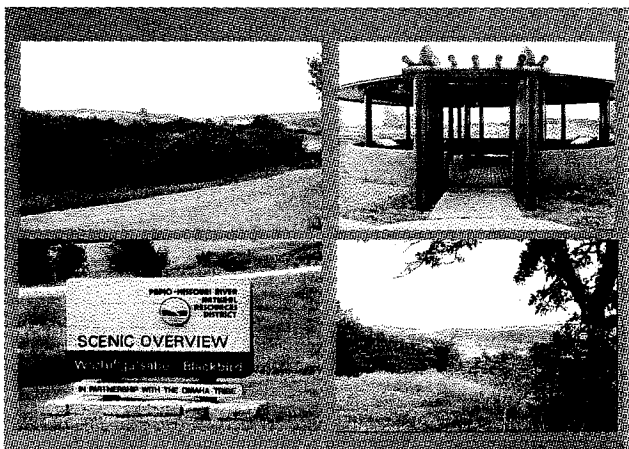
Manage and conserve natural resources and develop human capital for present and future generations.

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Area consists of six counties in Northeastern Nebraska – Burt, Cuming, Dakota, Dodge, Thurston, and Washington Counties and includes the Omaha and Winnebago Indian Nations. The RC&D gets its name from Loess (pronounced “luss”). Loess is “wind-blown” sediment and is the parent material for many soils in the RC&D Area as well as other areas across the state.

Goals for the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D include:

- GOAL A** **ENHANCE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITES FOR AREA RESIDENTS**
- GOAL B** **INCREASE AWARENESS OF RC&D**
- GOAL C** **PROMOTE TOURISM AND DEVELOP RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**
- GOAL D** **ENHANCE AND PROTECT AREA NATURAL RESOURCES & PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.**
- GOAL E** **FACILITATE IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE & COMMUNITY RESOURCES.**
- GOAL F** **DEVELOP HUMAN CAPITAL**

Some of the past projects undertaken by the RC&D Board of Directors include:



PROMOTE TOURISM



PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP



ENHANCE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITES



ENHANCE AREA NATURAL RESOURCES

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination write: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Area Description

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D consists of six counties – Burt, Cuming, Dakota, Dodge, Thurston, and Washington – encompassing 1,671,808 acres in East Central and Northeastern Nebraska. The Omaha and Winnebago Indian Reservations occupy all of Thurston County and small portions of Burt and Cuming Counties. The area is predominately rural with a population of 100,358 (2000 U.S. Census). About two thirds of area residents live in 38 communities. The largest communities are: Fremont– 25,174; South Sioux City – 11,925; and Blair – 7,512. The median size community in the area is 693. The area hosts 37,823 households. Per capita income for the RC&D area is \$24,927. 10.3% of area residents live in poverty.

The six-county Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Area covers approximately 2600 square miles and is bordered on the east by the Missouri River and the Platte River on the south. A third major river, the Elkhorn, flows through three counties in the southwest part of the area. All three rivers provide recreation for Nebraska and Area residents as well as habitat for several threatened or endangered species such as the Bald Eagle, Piping Plover, Interior Least Tern, and the Pallid Sturgeon. The Missouri River is the primary source of domestic and municipal water supply for several large cities and communities in Nebraska and neighboring states. About 100 miles of Missouri River shoreline border the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Area.

All soils begin as rock or “Parent material”. Destruction of certain properties of parent material leads to unconsolidated forms of “rock” in which soils are forming. Soils can be moved by wind, water, gravity, man/animals, or glaciers. Those soils transported by wind are either loess (pronounced luss), or aeolian sand (windblown sand). Except for the “Sand Hills” where soils formed in aeolian sand, loess is the parent material for many soils throughout Nebraska. A large portion of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Area lies in the Loess Uplands and Till Plains Major Land Resource Area (102B). About 15% of the area lying along the Missouri River Valley is in the Iowa and Missouri Deep Loess Hills Major Land Resource Area (107N). A small area in southwestern Washington and southeastern Dodge counties is located in the Nebraska and Kansas Loess Drift Hills Major Land Resource Area (106). All three Major Land Resource Areas are characterized by rolling to hilly topography with narrow to moderate ridge tops dissected by numerous drainage-ways. Predominant soils are typically well-drained upland soils with silty clay loam surface layers formed in loess with underlying material of silty clay loam or silt loam. Water erosion (sheet & rill, ephemeral, and gully) is the primary resource concern on these soils.

Warm summers and cold winters characterize the climate of the area. Monthly average high temperatures are in the 20s (degrees F) in January and 80s (degrees F) in July. Annual precipitation averages 24”-26”, with 60% of the precipitation occurring during the May to October growing season.

**That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology,
but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics.
That land yields a cultural harvest is fact long known, but latterly often forgotten.**
- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 1948

Population Trends

Table 1 below presents population trend data for the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D (NLHRC&D) area. As Table 1 indicates, the population in the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D region grew by over 8 percent from 1990 to 2000, a rate nearly identical to the state. Population growth in the RC&D area from 1960 to 2000 was slower when compared to the state. Despite the region's population growth during the 1990s, individual county data show a different story. Individual county data show a tale of two regions – distinctive rural and metropolitan sub-regions within the RC&D area. Burt, Cuming and Thurston Counties – the most rural counties of the area – showed negative or slightly positive population growth. Dakota and Washington Counties – parts of Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (Sioux City and Omaha, respectively) showed substantial population growth. Dodge County – a mixture of very rural and urban – showed strong positive population growth, but at a lower level (likely because it began with a higher population base). The general population trend of the RC&D area appears strong – 5 of 6 counties gained population during the 1990s (and the county that lost population lost only 1 percent of its population). The 1990s witnessed a reverse in some respects of the long-term population trend since 1960 where half of the region's counties were losing population.

Location	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	% Change 1960- 2000	% Change 1990- 2000
Nebraska	1,411,330	1,485,333	1,569,825	1,578,417	1,711,263	21.3	8.4
NLHRC&D	86,606	89,452	95,591	92,770	100,358	15.9	8.2
Burt Co.	10,192	9,247	8,813	7,868	7,791	(23.6)	(1.0)
Cuming Co.	12,435	12,034	11,664	10,117	10,203	(17.9)	0.8
Dakota Co.	12,168	13,137	16,573	16,742	20,253	66.4	21.0
Dodge Co.	32,471	34,782	35,847	34,500	36,160	11.4	4.8
Thurston Co.	7,237	6,942	7,186	6,936	7,171	(0.9)	3.4
Washington Co.	12,103	13,310	15,508	16,607	18,780	55.2	13.1

Table 1. Population 1960-2000

There is no general trend apparent for the source of population gains or losses in the region. Census data show that three counties – Dakota, Dodge and Washington – are among only 14 Nebraska counties to have both net migration (people moving into or out of a county) and natural population increases (births greater than deaths). Cuming and Thurston Counties both had natural increases larger than out-migration (i.e., the number of people moving out of the county were offset by the natural population increase). Burt County had net in-migration smaller than the natural decrease (i.e., the number of people moving into the county was not offset by the natural population decrease). Thurston and Cuming Counties were the only counties with negative migration during the 1990s – more people moved out of the county than moved in. However, both counties had larger natural population increases – more births than deaths. Burt County, while experiencing positive migration, had more deaths than births.

Age

Table 2 below may provide an explanation for differences in natural population changes. Table 2 outlines the median age of the counties in the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D area. Burt County has a significantly higher median age than any other county in the area. Simply put, the people in Burt County are significantly older than other people in the area, making natural population increase less likely in Burt County than elsewhere in the area.

Location	Median Age
Nebraska	35.3
Burt County	42.2
Cuming County	39.2
Dakota County	31.4
Dodge County	37.9
Thurston County	29.8
Washington County	37.1

Table 2. Median Age, 2000

Table 3 below contains information for the age distribution of the population of the Loess Hills RC&D area and for Nebraska as a whole. These data suggest the RC&D area is not significantly different than the state as a whole – slightly more young people and elderly and slightly less “working age” adults.

Age Group	Nebraska (%)	Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D
Under 5	6.8	6.8
5 to 19	22.6	23.6
20 to 34	20	17.4
35 to 54	28.6	28
55 to 64	8.2	8.8
65 to 84	11.6	13
Over 85	2.0	2.4

Table 3. Age Distribution, 2000

“Good judgement comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgement”. Will Rogers

Income

Per capita income for the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D (NLHRC&D) area is \$24,927 for 2000, the last year for which data are available. The area per capita income is below that of the state as a whole, and as Chart 1 below shows, many of the counties in the area are significantly below the Nebraska and area averages; in fact, only Washington and Cuming Counties are above the state average.

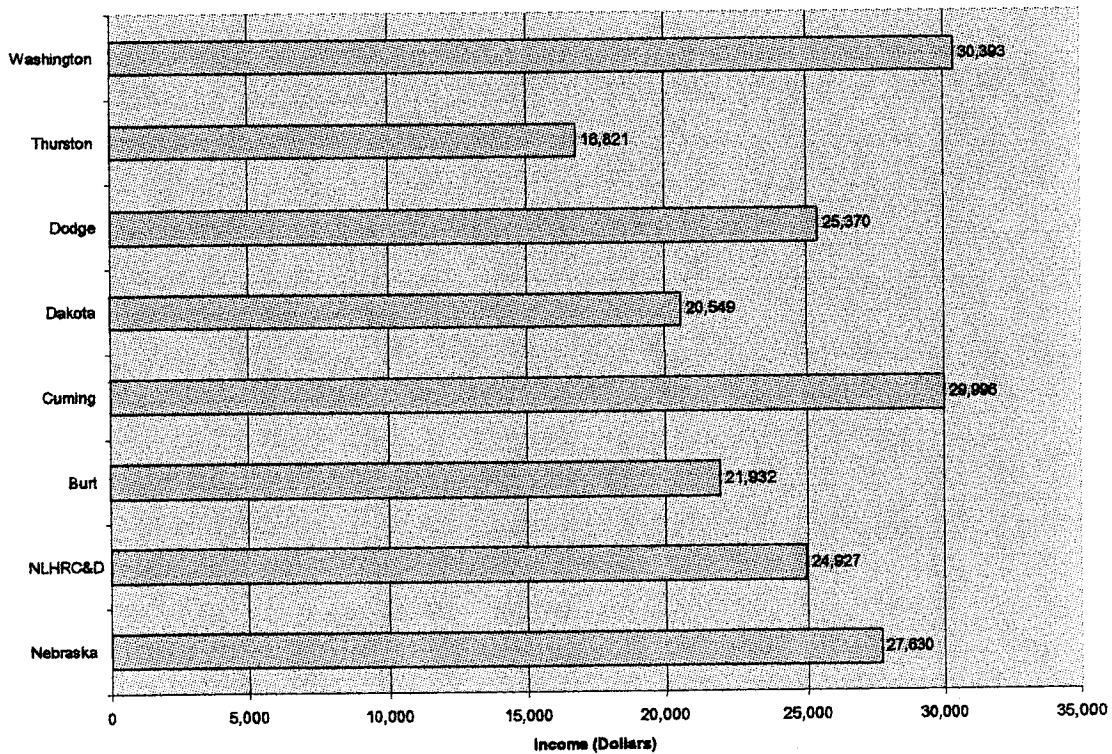


Chart 1. Per Capita Income, 2000

"As a Westerner, having grown up with a father who spent his entire career with the Soil Conservation Service, I have a great respect for an institution that takes seriously the responsibilities of environmental stewardship. Many of you will go into fields that involve those responsibilities very directly. Fellow citizens will look to you to set a standard for how we should treat the land and life around us." from remarks by Vice President Cheney at the University of Missouri at Columbia Agricultural School Commencement Ceremony.

Demographics and income data in this document were obtained from the 2000 U.S. Census.

Median income provides a different perspective of income levels in Nebraska and the Loess Hills RC&D area. Chart 2 below outlines the median household income levels for the state and each county in the RC&D area. Except for Washington County, all the counties in the RC&D area are below the Nebraska median household income level. Burt, Cuming and Thurston Counties are significantly below the state level.

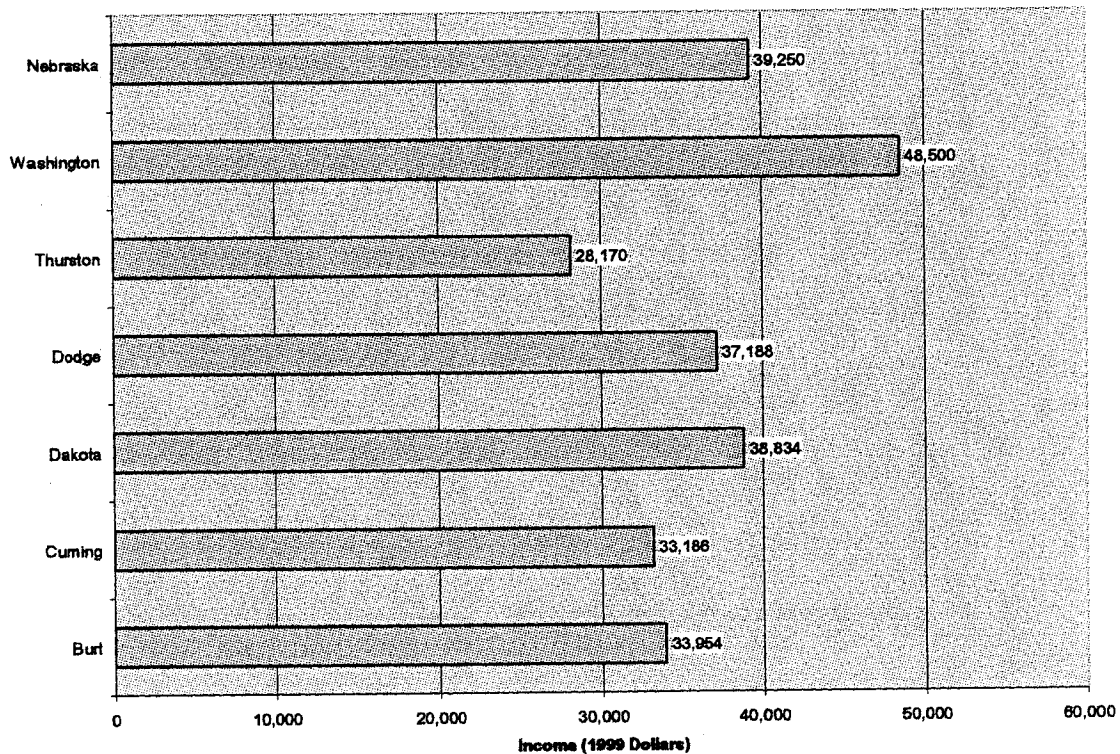


Chart 2. Median Household Income, 2000

Poverty

Table 4 below outlines the percentage of residents and children in each county in the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D area that are below the federal poverty level. Dakota and Thurston County have poverty rates significantly higher than the state levels; all other counties are below the state levels.

Location	% All Persons Below Poverty	% Persons Under 18 Below Poverty
Nebraska	9.7	11.8
Burt County	8.9	9.8
Cuming County	9.0	9.8
Dakota County	11.4	14.6
Dodge County	8.6	10.3
Thurston County	25.6	32.6
Washington County	6.0	8.0

Table 4. Poverty Rates, 2000

History and Past Activities

- October 9, 1991 - The first informational meeting about the RC&D program was held for area residents at the Legion Hall in Walthill.
- March 1, 1992 - A steering committee was formed which proceeded to develop bylaws and secure articles of incorporation, and apply to the Secretary of Agriculture for authorization.
- September 23, 1992 - After numerous Steering Committee meetings, meetings of the Application and Bylaws Committees, twelve informational presentations, and six public participation meetings, the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council was formed.
- September 24, 1992 - an application for authorization from the RC&D Board of Directors was submitted to (then) SCS State Conservationist Ron Moreland, which was forwarded to (then) U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan.
- November 16, 1992 - Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation were adopted.
- January 11, 1993, the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council became incorporated in the State of Nebraska.
- October 18, 1993 - the Council presented their second proposal for authorization to SCS State Conservationist Ron Moreland.
- August 10, 1994 - The Nominal Group Process was used to develop and prioritize Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for the group's first Annual Plan of Work (approved by the RC&D Board of Directors on September 28, 1994).
- April 11, 1995 - A logo development contest was held, and a winner was selected – it was a pencil drawing of our current logo. (Color was added to the logo in 2001).
- October 15, 1997 - Another application for authorization was submitted to Dan Glickman, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.
- December 3, 1997 - Received a Federal Tax Identification Number from the IRS.
- April 13, 1998 - The Internal Revenue Service determined the Nebraska Loess Hills Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council Incorporated, to be exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c)(3).
- September 7, 2000 - The Board of Directors, despite being passed over for funding numerous times, was persistent and submitted another application for funding.
- January 4, 2001 - Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman authorized the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D.

For nearly nine years, while waiting for Authorization from Congress, the Board of Directors was busy working on the following goals:

- Improve Income for Area Residents
- Tourism Development / Promotion
- Solid Waste Management
- Natural Resource Concerns
- Infrastructure / Community Concerns

As of August 19, 2003 the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D has approved 108 projects since they began accepting requests for assistance more than 11 years ago.

Public Participation Plan

This Area Plan has been prepared with assistance from numerous individuals, communities, and organizations. Several methods were used to obtain and prioritize needs and opportunities.

- The RC&D Board of Directors utilized a mail survey to gather public input. The survey was mailed out to XXX random individuals. XXX of these surveys were returned for a return rate of XX%. The mail survey was developed, mailed, tabulated, and summarized by the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill (NE).
- The Board also solicited public input by the use of informational meetings.
 - A public meeting was held in cooperation with the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Commission (SIMPCO) and HIWAY (Homer's Involvement With Adults and Youth).
 - A staff person from the Center for Rural Affairs facilitated two additional Resource Providers Input Forums. Staff from USDA Rural Development and the Cooperative Extension Service attended and took part in these sessions. Also attending were representatives from Cities, Villages, Farmers, Bankers, Natural Resources Districts, Civic Organizations, private business, and retired individuals.
- The Board held a special Board meeting in June of 2003 to prioritize public input, as well as to add their own input in developing the Goals, Objectives, and Action Items for this document. Board Members represent the 6 counties in the RC&D Area, the Omaha Tribe of Iowa and Nebraska, the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, the 3 Natural Resources Districts, as well as individual, civic, and special interest groups. An area representative from the Nebraska Economic Development District was also present at the special meeting to help develop goals and objectives.
- Additional information was obtained from a project adopted by the Loess Hills RC&D for three communities in the RC&D Area. The project, called "Project HOPE", is coordinated by the Center for Rural Affairs. The HOPE communities in this project are: Bancroft, Lyons, and Oakland. This project included mail surveys of its own and the results of those mail surveys are also incorporated in this document.

"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work". Thomas Alva Edison

Needs & Opportunities

Land Conservation

Portions of three Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) fall within the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Area. They are, the Papio-Missouri River NRD (roughly 45% of the RC&D Area), the Lower Elkhorn NRD (roughly 45% of the RC&D Area), and the Lower Platte North NRD (roughly 10% of the RC&D Area). All three NRDs identify Soil Resource Management as their top Natural Resource Concern.

Some land conservation concerns gathered from the public include preservation of topsoil; expanded use of green space; land use according to capability; non-point source pollution; and stewardship. Natural Resources Districts, working with their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices, utilize a variety of local, state, and federal programs to address land conservation. Some of the various programs available to address these concerns include, the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Program (NSWCP), NRD programs and funding, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP), and Pheasants Forever programs and cost-share.

These programs are available to landowners who wish to install such practices as, Riparian Buffer Strips, Grassed Filter Strips, Terraces, Grassed Waterways, Grade Stabilization Structures, Windbreak Plantings, Food Plot Establishment, Wetland Restoration and Improvement, and Wildlife Habitat Establishment. Technical Assistance in developing and applying these programs is available through NRCS, NRD, Nebraska Game & Parks, Cooperative Extension Service, and Pheasants Forever.

NRCS and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) oversee Highly Erodible Land Conservation Provisions as outlined in the Farm Bill. Compliance with these provisions provides eligibility to local land users to qualify for USDA Farm Programs benefits.

Water Management

All three NRDs identify Water, and Water Related Issues as High Priority Concerns in their districts. The NRD concerns are quite similar to those of the public. They include groundwater quality and quantity, conservation, delivery infrastructure, elimination of mosquito habitat, well head protection areas, well abandonment, security, regional water delivery, irrigation management, flood control and prevention, sedimentation, storm water drainage improvement, and improvement of water-based recreation to name a few.

NRCS, in partnership with NRDs and many other agencies, is the primary source for technical expertise and assistance required to address the resource needs and priorities identified by a locally led conservation effort. Some of the same programs listed under Land Conservation are also effective at improving surface and ground water quality. For example; the Silver Creek Watershed in Burt County is an Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Geographic Priority Area and NRD Special Project Area addressing resource concerns related to water quality. The Boyer Chute National Wildlife Area expansion area in Washington County hopes to re-establish thousands of

acres of wetlands. The Pigeon-Jones Creek Watershed in Dakota County was established to address flooding and sedimentation concerns. The North Blackbird Creek Watershed in Thurston County has been an EQIP Geographic Priority Area Watershed to address the loss of riparian areas along that stream. The Well Abandonment Incentive Program is a cost-sharing program offered through the Natural Resources Districts to help share the cost of properly sealing and abandoning old and unusable wells with local landowners.

NRCS and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) oversee Wetland Conservation Provisions as outlined in the Farm Bill. Compliance with these provisions provides eligibility to local land users to qualify for USDA Farm Programs benefits.

Land Management

Use of the term, "Land Management" invokes various perceived thoughts, emotions, and ideas. For purposes of this discussion, public input has determined that "Land Management" includes: livestock waste management and odor control; lawn & garden waste; pesticide container recycling; landfill pollution; planning & zoning; annexation (land-lock issues); floodplain management; abandonment of land, roads, and houses; need for recreational areas, and re-establishment and improvement of the forest resource.

Livestock waste disposal is a major environmental concern. Concentration of livestock has allowed many producers to remain economically competitive. However, animal concentration also increases the concentration of nutrients, pathogens, and odors.

Disposal of solid waste is a serious problem in the RC&D area. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued requirements in October of 1991 regarding closure of unlicensed landfills and the creation of environmentally safe ones. The Nebraska Unicameral has addressed the issue with legislation in LB1257, incorporating the federal requirements and adding graduated reductions in waste volume. Restrictive city and county budgets compound the problem of dealing with solid waste reduction and disposal mandates. Toxicity and biodegradability of solid waste must be addressed because of their potential negative impact on groundwater resources. Increased and improved recycling programs should be created to reduce waste volume.

Public input indicates that the RC&D would have the most impact working to improve such things as recycling efforts (lawn and garden waste, pesticide container recycling), promoting household hazardous waste collections, promotion of and expansion of area recreational areas, and by working to re-establish and improve the forest resource.

Community Development

The general public was invited to take part in several public meetings. At these meetings, of the four general focus areas presented, Community Development received the most suggestions for needs and opportunities. Some of the needs identified include: Non-profit assistance for betterment of communities; economic development; entrepreneurial training; adequate infrastructure; facilitation services; youth opportunities and jobs (especially for girls); affordable/appropriate housing; information technology (T-1 lines and beyond); communication; social & civic institutions; leadership training (adults and youth); business retention and diversity (ag and non-ag); recreational opportunities for all

ages; volunteer programs; need for maintaining the tax base; community pride (don't always expect the "government" to do it for you); Main Street businesses; business transition; jobs for residents (keep workers in our own communities); opportunities for young adults and youth; need to "sell" our communities; need for parks and recreation; improve quality of life; communities are going to have to work together; transfer of wealth; and "If we believe in our communities – we should be willing to pay for it"! During the Resource Providers Input meetings, it was emphasized that "economic development" is not always "community development". Communities should consider whether or not proposed actions will actually improve the quality of life for area residents, and what side effects can be anticipated.

There are many areas under Community Development for the RC&D to concentrate its efforts. Improvement of quality and number of jobs for young adults and youth seems to be a priority. Business development and expansion is also seen as a need. As one person said, "Economic Development is not always Community Development"! It will be a challenge to attract and expand businesses in the area that pay a good wage, keep employees in their own communities, instill community pride, and yet convince neighboring communities to work together for the betterment of the region.

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D has been presented with a varied list of needs and opportunities. The most opportunity for the RC&D to make a positive difference seems to be in Land Management and Community Development, although fewer and more specific challenges present themselves in Land Conservation and Water Management. These Needs and Opportunities have been considered in developing the goals, objectives, and action items, which will serve to guide the actions of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D over the next five years.

Evaluation Plan

The following questions will be addressed annually to determine the level of success the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D has had in working toward meeting the needs and opportunities identified in this document:

- Have the Goals & Objectives identified been addressed?
- Has an Annual Plan been developed?
- Have the goals, objectives, and action items in the Annual Plan been addressed?
- Is the progress measurable and documented?
- Is the RC&D Database up-to-date?
- Has an Annual Report been prepared and submitted to the NRCS State Conservationist?
- Are the RC&D finances in order?
- Has form IRS-990 been filed?

"For in the final analysis, our most basic common link, is that we all inhabit this small planet, we all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's futures, and we are all mortal". John F. Kennedy

Goals, Objectives, & Action Items

GOAL A: ENHANCE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR AREA RESIDENTS.

OBJECTIVE I: Provide Resources on Economic Development Services to Area Communities and Residents.

Action Item a: Promote the REAP program to area residents.

Action Item b: Partner with the Center for Rural Affairs to present the Heifer Project to area producers.

Action Item c: Work with staff from Project HOPE to bring the program to 3 area communities.

OBJECTIVE II: Promote Creation of Small Businesses and Support Retention of Existing Businesses.

Action Item a: Select and promote an "Artist of the Month"

Action Item b: Action Item a: Promote the West Point Broadband Project and assist with grant searches.

Action Item c: Assist Bell Creek Beef develop an Internet marketing plan and provide searches and grant-writing assistance.

OBJECTIVE III: Promote/Expand Area Farmers' Markets

Action Item a: Assist and Promote the North Bend Farmers' Market

Action Item b: Assist and Promote the Oakland Farmers' Market

Action Item c: Determine if there is sufficient interest in developing a South Sioux City Farmers' Market.

GOAL B: INCREASE AWARENESS OF RC&D

OBJECTIVE I: Promote RC&D Services

Action Item a: Prepare Monthly news releases about monthly meetings.

Action Item b: Prepare and distribute Monthly mailing and newsletter.

OBJECTIVE II: Strengthen & Improve Long-Term RC&D Viability.

Action Item a: Develop a plan to improve/secure Finances.

Action Item b: Develop a plan to increase Board Member Involvement.

GOAL C: PROMOTE TOURISM AND DEVELOP RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.

OBJECTIVE I: Support/Promote Local and Regional Tourist Attractions.

Action Item a: Support the Lewis & Clark Scenic Byway (Hwy 75)

Action Item b: Assist the Outlaw Trail Scenic Byway (Hwy 12)

Action Item c: Promote, support, and contribute to the Lewis & Clark First Council Monument.

Action Item d: Support/maintain the Tourism Display at Jackson.

OBJECTIVE II: Support & Facilitate Community-Based Recreational Opportunities.

Action Item a: Support the Elk Creek Watershed Project – a project of the Papio-Missouri River NRD.

Action Item b: Support and Promote the Big Elk RV Park and Campground operated by the Omaha Tribe.

Action Item c: Support and promote development of community and local hiking/biking trails.

GOAL D: ENHANCE AND PROTECT AREA NATURAL RESOURCES & PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.

OBJECTIVE I: Assist Communities in Applying for Grants and other Funding Sources to More Effectively Manage Solid Waste.

Action Item a: Conduct Scrap Tire Collections with grant monies.

Action Item b: Conduct Household Hazardous Waste Collections in all 6 counties by 2005. (Dependent on grant monies).

OBJECTIVE II: Develop & Promote Community-based Recycling Programs.

Action Item a: Investigate and assist in developing a Cuming County Solid Waste Reduction Plan and grant application.

Action Item b: Conduct a Used Printer & Toner Recycling Program.

Action Item c: Conduct a Pesticide Container Recycling Project in Dakota and Thurston Counties.

Action Item d: Investigate and assist in developing a used oil collection in Burt, Cuming, and Thurston Counties.

OBJECTIVE III: Cooperate with Partners to Study and Promote Efficient use of Surface and Ground Water.

Action Item a: Cooperate with partners to carry out the Wayne State Stream Monitoring Project.

Action Item b: Support the Crystal Cove Restoration Project.

OBJECTIVE IV: Improve Protection and Security Measures to prevent Acts of Bio-Terrorism.

Action Item a: Provide grant-writing assistance to the Logan East Rural Water District to improve security and monitoring capability.

Action Item b: Assist the Lower Elkhorn NRD in development of an educational brochure on maintaining a secure water delivery system for Logan East Rural Water System.

GOAL E FACILITATE IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE & COMMUNITY RESOURCES

OBJECTIVE I: Civic Organizations

Action Item a: Provide grant-writing assistance to the North Bend Veterans Memorial.

Action Item b: Promote Gifts in Kind project to non-profit partners.

Action Item c: Provide grant administration assistance to the Decatur Development Corporation – Portal to Decatur.

OBJECTIVE II: Transfer of Wealth

Action Item a: Investigate potential of becoming a member of the Nebraska Community Foundation.

Action Item b: Investigate the potential for the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D to become a “community foundation”.

Action Item c: Promote the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D as a non-profit foundation.

OBJECTIVE III: Assist Communities in Meeting Public Facility Needs

Action Item a: Conduct grant searches and provide grant writing and planning assistance to develop Handicap Access at the Cuming County Fairgrounds.

Action Item b: Conduct grant searches and provide grant-writing and planning assistance to develop Handicap Accessible Restrooms at the Rosalie Town Hall.

Action Item c: Facilitate the Oakland Depot Restoration Project.

GOAL F DEVELOP HUMAN CAPITAL

OBJECTIVE I: Cultural Appreciation

Action Item a: Conduct grant searches and provide assistance to the AiKiRuti Healing Garden in Winnebago.

Action Item b: Secure funding and support construction of the Winnebago Bison Turnout.

Action Item c: Promote 200th Anniversary of the Omaha Tribal Pow Wow in Macy in 2004.

OBJECTIVE II: Facilitate Regional Leadership Training

Action Item a: Participate in planning for 2003 Nebraska Rural Institute to be held in South Sioux City in Sept. '03.

Action Item b: Participate in planning for the Midstates Community Development Conference to be held in March 2004 in South Sioux City.

OBJECTIVE III: Youth Leadership & Entrepreneurial Training

Action Item a: Conduct grant searches and provide assistance to the AiKiRuti Youth Program.

Action Item b: Conduct Youth Leadership Training for HIWAY.

OBJECTIVE IV: Volunteerism

Action Item a: Encourage Board Members to contribute more than 1,000 volunteer hours working on approved RC&D projects.

Action Item b: Encourage volunteers, other than RC&D Board Members to donate more than 200 hours.

The Annual Plan of Work will further identify action items as individual projects as they are approved and implemented.

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council agrees that the RC&D Program will be conducted in compliance with the nondiscrimination provisions as contained in Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (Public Law 100-259) and other nondiscrimination statutes; namely, Section 504, of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15, Subparts A and B) that provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, or handicap/disability be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial (or technical) assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with Federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for procurement, suspension, and debarment, and State review.

The Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to effectively use the assistance provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council

By: _____
Council President

Date: _____

Attest: _____
Council Secretary

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D Council
on _____, 2003.

.....
U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Nebraska NRCS State Conservationist hereby acknowledges the attached Area Plan of the Nebraska Loess Hills RC&D meets requirements of Public Law 97-98 in order to receive assistance from USDA.

Acknowledged:

Nebraska NRCS State Conservationist

Date _____



Lower Platte River
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

From the Coordinator...

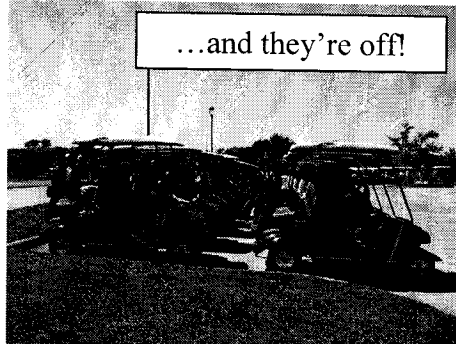
Monthly Report from the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the period August 1, to August 31, 2003

Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

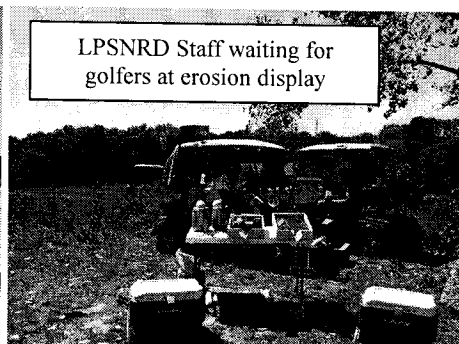
Water Quality Open – Golf Tournament and Educational Excursion

September 4th - - I included this event in the August report since it is still fresh in everyone's mind. What a great experience - Perfect weather, 144 golfers (36 4-person teams) and many others all in one spot learning about the Alliance and water resources issues. All of this along the banks of the Platte River where these participants got a first-hand view of the area. When you then bring in a friendly game of golf, you end up with a nice setting to encourage the learning process with a large, diverse audience. I think everyone had a great time and hopefully learned a little about water resources. There were displays from the NRDs in the Alliance, NDEQ, USGS, and one on the Lewis and Clark Expedition in honor of the anniversary of the expedition. I had a display from the LPRCA in which I played the new video and distributed handouts on our studies and projects. We also had a variety of displays from our sponsors. Sponsors contributed over \$2,500 dollars to the Water Quality Open. There were several displays along the course on GPS/GIS, USGS programs, and soil erosion and water quality. Additionally, there were several signs along the way with water resources trivia.

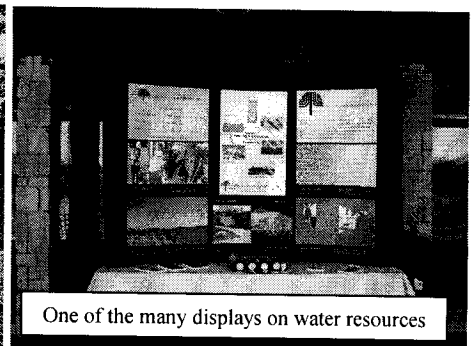
Following golf play, there was a burger and brat buffet dinner and prizes were handed out to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 10th, and 15th place finishers. The 10th and 15th places were awarded to give more people a chance to get a prize. We also had a variety of flag prizes and Union Bank donated several door prizes to give away. Below are a few pictures of the tournament, participants, and the course itself:



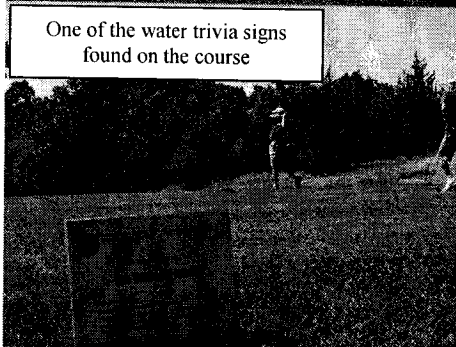
...and they're off!



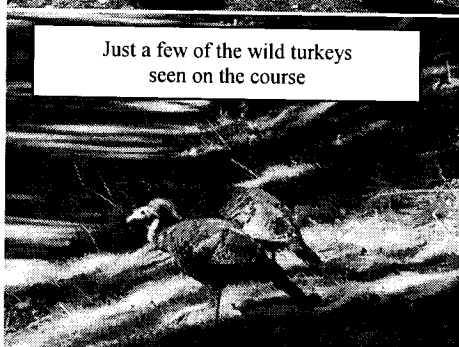
LPSNRD Staff waiting for golfers at erosion display



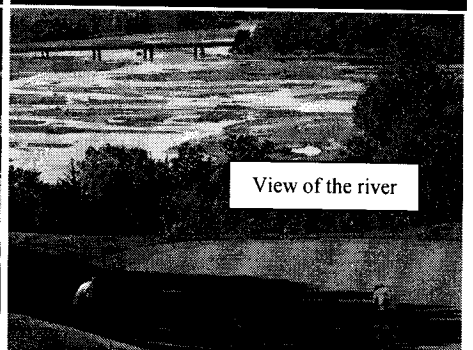
One of the many displays on water resources



One of the water trivia signs found on the course



Just a few of the wild turkeys seen on the course



View of the river

Upcoming NRD and Alliance Meetings:

- **NEXT LPRCA QUARTERLY MEETING** - Tuesday, September 30th, 2003 * 10:00 a.m. * LPNNRD Meeting Room located in Wahoo. NOTE - new meeting place.
- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Monday, September 8, 2003 * Hearing at 6:30 * BOD Mtng at 7:00 p.m. - Wahoo
- **PMNNRD Director Workshop/Committee Mtngs** - Tues, Sept 8, 2003 * starting at 6 p.m. Omaha - Chalco Hills Rec. Area
- **PMNNRD Director Tour/Board Meeting** - Thursday, September 10, 2003 * Tour - 12:30 p.m. * BOD Mtng at 8 p.m. Dakota City Council Chambers
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, September 17, 2003 * 7:00 p.m. Lincoln

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

- **JCI Flatwater Conference** - September 11, 2003 * 9 a.m. * Peter Kiewit Conference Center - Omaha
 - **Rail Summit** - September 13, 2003 * 1 to 5 p.m. * NDOR - Lincoln
 - **NARD Conference** - September 21-23, 2003 * Kearney Holiday Inn and Convention Center
-

Monthly Activities:

- ◆ **Water Supply/Wastewater Meeting** - If you've been reading the papers about the River Utilities board or RUB, then you may know that the group is in the stage of developing a cooperative agreement. A couple of the parties to the agreement have a few issues that need to be addressed before the agreement is signed by everyone and the RUB can commence their meetings. The RUB will be looking into water and wastewater needs and options for the area from Ashland to Louisville.
- ◆ **60-Mile Radius Club** - I was unable to attend the last meeting due to our golf tourney, but I will be co-chairing an environmental discussion group as it relates to development at the upcoming JCI Flatwater Conference on September 11, 2003.
- ◆ **Lower Platte Weed Management Area** - I attended this month's meeting where the group decided to submit a Nebr. Env. Trust Grant application to get ATVs for 8 of the 10 counties in the corridor. The ATVs are necessary to transport spraying equipment and access remote sites infested with invasive species and noxious weeds. Many areas are difficult to get to on foot and are too large to use a backpack sprayer. I volunteered to be on the grant committee and we've been working with a grant writer for the past several weeks to put together the grant application including creating a map of the area and getting partner support letters.
- ◆ **Golf Tourney Activities** - Wow, I didn't realize what it took to put on a golf tournament. I think the LPRCA and its members will be very happy with the positive attention this got us. Everyone I talked to thought it was a great event and they learned a thing or two about water resources. Thank you to all of those who helped and participated!
- ◆ **Sand and Gravel Working Group** - This is a new group that I just got involved with. This group is made up of sand and gravel pit operators, conservation entities such as TNC, and resource management groups such as NRDs and the LPRCA. The focus is to bring together these groups to design plans for reclamation of mining operations PRIOR to commencement of mining. In this manner, we can talk about how to preserve the natural qualities of the area and guide the operations to implement conservation measures. The group originally started in the Central Platte area and now is expanding to include the Lower Platte area.