

MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General Manager Report

DATE: September 8, 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 August, 2006, is attached for your review.
- B. **MISCELLANEOUS/PERSONNEL ITEMS**:
1. The Region II Secondary Principals Organization has selected **Rick Kolowski** as the High School Principal of the Year. Congratulations!!!!
 2. Attached is a thank you note from Linda Meigs, Chair, Florence Futures, thanking the Board for their support of the Florence Futures feasibility study.
- 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 August, 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 August 14, 2006. I would ask each Director to review this listing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
- E. **NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST FUND PRESENTATION**: On August 17, 2006, Chairperson Jim Thompson accepted a certificate of recognition on behalf of the Board from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The recognition was to commemorate the Trust's granting of over \$100 million since their existence. The ceremony was held at the Gene Leahy Mall and was attended by Mayor Mike Fahey, Lisa Beethe, Interim Trust Director, and several other grant recipients in the area. The District recently received another grant in the amount of \$440,000 to assist in the construction of wetland projects along the Missouri River in partnership with the NRCS and The Nature Conservancy. To date, the District has received nearly \$3 million in funding from the Trust for habitat restoration/enhancement projects mostly along the Missouri River Corridor.
- F. **REIMBURSEMENT FROM CORPS OF ENGINEERS FOR ALL HAZARDS MITIGATION PLAN**: The District recently received a reimbursement from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the amount of \$15,000. This refund is part of the \$205,000 that the NRD paid the Corps to prepare the All-Hazards Mitigation Plan including an inventory of

structures that are prone to flooding. The Corps realized several efficiencies during the project by utilizing a database system to store all the flood hazard and mitigation information. This database will serve as a valuable tool for assessing future mitigation strategies, especially potential floodway buyout projects. THIS IS A FIRST. We applaud the Corps for refunding this savings.

- G. **DS 13 SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2006:** HDR Engineering certified that Dam Site 13 near 192nd and Dodge was substantially complete on September 1, 2006. With this notice the Dial Realty Corporation, SID #521, has been notified that they have until November 11th to pay \$1,035,000 to the District as their contribution toward the construction of Dam Site 13. Excavation work to grade the reservoir pool and fill the Omaha Park site is ongoing and should be complete by October 1st.
- H. **2007 NARD BASIN TOUR – LOWER PLATTE NRDS:** The annual NARD Basin Tour for 2007 (normally in June) is being sponsored by the Lower Platte South NRD, Lower Platte North and the Papio-Missouri River NRD. The tour will focus on projects in the Lower Platte River Basin. These projects may include: Platte River Connection Lied Bridge, Western Sarpy/Clear Creek Levee Project, new MUD well field and water plan; LWS well field and water plan, Mead superfund site, Lake Wanahoo Project and the Joint Antelope Valley Project.
- I. **NEWS CLIPS:**
- ➔ August 3, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Board chided for voting in secret – Papio-Missouri NRD directors righted the matter, the state attorney general says.
 - ➔ August 4, 2006, Enterprise Newspaper article – County should join Papio Partnership.
 - ➔ August 5, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Lake Plans will provide good fishing.
 - ➔ August 6, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Helping Nature Take its Course – Reclaiming the River.
 - ➔ August 8, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – State assessing cost of excess irrigation –Price tag for overuse of rivers could hit \$500 million.
 - ➔ August 9, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Easements may help protect Platte lands.
 - ➔ August 9, 2006, Omaha World Herald article -- Florence group tries again for visitor center Study.
 - ➔ August 10, 2006, Papillion Times article – High water mark.
 - ➔ August 11, 2006, Enterprise Newspaper article – County should not join Papio Partnership.
 - ➔ August 11, 2006, Enterprise Newspaper article – Joining partnership is dam endorsement.
 - ➔ August 12, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – NRD sets aside money for dams.
 - ➔ August 16, 2006, Burt County Plaindealer article – Tekamah eligible for fed \$ - plan makes city eligible.
 - ➔ August 19, 2006, Omaha World Herald – Hold them accountable.
 - ➔ August 20, 2006, Omaha World Herald – NRD Board Infuriating.
 - ➔ August 21, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Bicyclists support pedestrian bridge.

- ➔ August 23, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Council funds bridge monitoring – Frank Brown’s reversal enables the city to hire watchdogs for construction of the pedestrian span across the Missouri River.
- ➔ August 24, 2006, Omaha World Herald article – Water task force hears cost to boost Platte flows.
- ➔ August 25, 2006, Blair Enterprise editorial – County represented in Papio Creek plans.

/pt/GM Reports/2006/September

August 2006

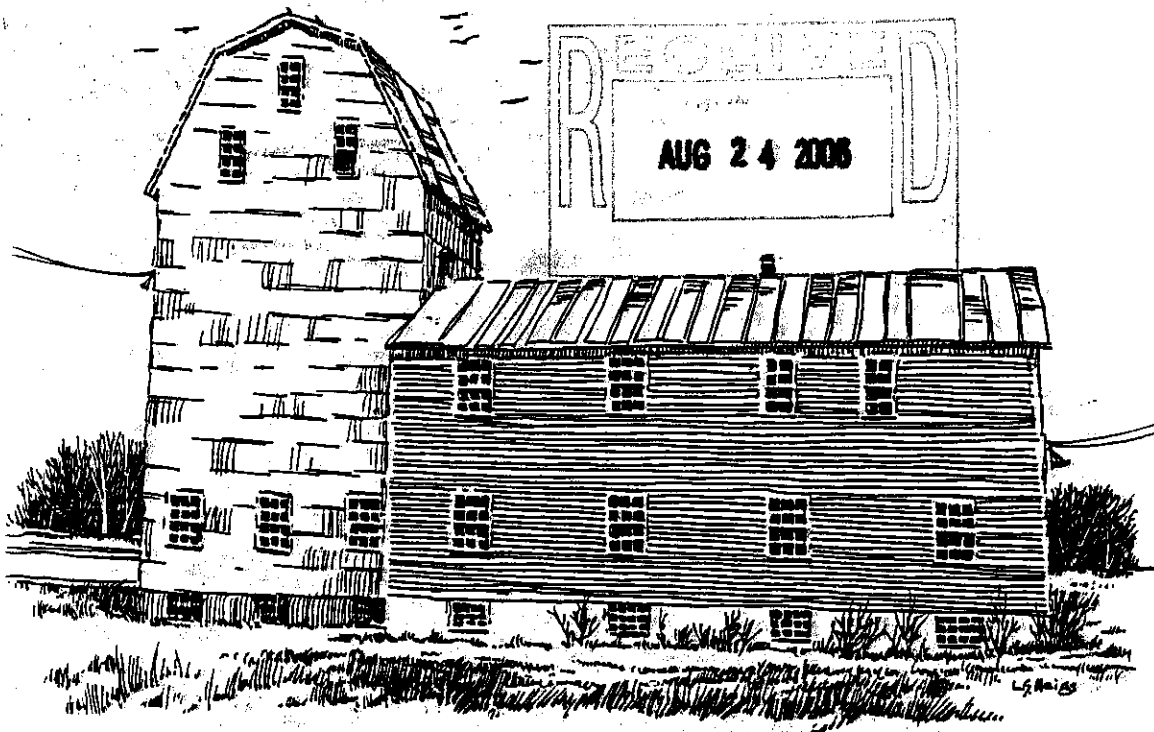
Information & Education Report

Information

- ◇ Prepared and staffed a booth at the Sarpy County Fair
- ◇ Completed work on the Annual Report for publication in the World Herald on September 24
- ◇ Reviewed proposal for outreach assistance on PCWP
- ◇ Continued work on Chalco Hills Exhibit
- ◇ Published SPECTRUM
- ◇ Continued work on NRD greeting cards
- ◇ Set up display at LPRCA golf/education event
- ◇ Continued work on web site updates
- ◇ Staffed State Fair booth for NARD

Education

- ☐ Met with LPS NRD and NRCS about Education opportunities for the district
- ☐ Signed letter of support for Nebraska Leopold Education Project
- ☐ Finalized work with Bazell Ringnecks to supply Sand County Almanacs to their members
- ☐ Finalized May LEP educator workshop, and June LEP facilitator workshop
- ☐ Coordinated summer teacher scholarships
- ☐ Started working on 06-07 issue of Cultivation
- ☐ Started planning for College of St. Mary PLT/WET teacher workshop
- ☐ Started planning for October Statewide I&E meeting to be held at Papio-Missouri River NRD
- ☐ Coordinated Outdoor Classroom Grant information with Walthill office
- ☐ Started planning book/education discussion for staff and area educators
- ☐ Started working on NET grant with NACEE
- ☐ Coordinated the transition of business partners from Omaha Raptor Team to Wildlife Learning Encounters



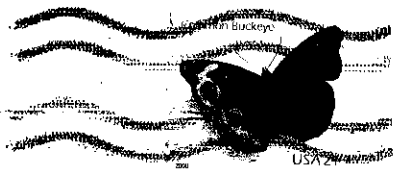
Dear Richard and
the NRD Board -

Thank you for the
Support and confidence
in the Master Plan
Study for Historic
Florence. With the
promise of your help
we have launched into
a new phase with a
Request for Proposals.
Jim Thompson's expertise
& experience is greatly
appreciated. In addition to our Board.

Sincerely - Linda Meias, Chair, Florence Futures.

The Florence Mill, 9102 North 30th Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68132

Richard Jansen
Chairperson
Pawnee-Missouri River
NRD
8901 So. 154 St
Omaha NE
68138



August, 2006

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Updated: August 14, 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 (P)
- **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):
 - ✳ Provide title opinion for West Dodge Road access site (W)
- **Other:**
 - ✳ Arlington Wastewater Interlocal Agreement (Bowen) (W)



Engineer's Certificate of Substantial Completion

Project Name: Papio Dam Site 13	HDR Project No.: 20486
Project Owner: Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District	Owner's Project No.:
Project Contractor: McArdle Grading	Date of Contract:

This Certificate of Substantial Completion Applies to:

☒ All work under the Contract Documents: _____ The following specific portions: _____

September 1, 2006

Date of Substantial Completion

The Work performed under this Contract has been reviewed and found to be substantially complete. The Date of Substantial Completion of the Project or portion thereof designated above is hereby declared and is also the date of commencement of applicable warranties required by the Contract Documents, except as stated below.

A list of items to be completed or corrected, is attached hereto. The failure to include any items on such list does not alter the responsibility of the Contractor to complete all Work in accordance with the Contract Documents. The date of commencement of warranties for items on the attached list will be the date of final payment unless otherwise agreed to in writing.

The responsibilities between OWNER and CONTRACTOR for security, operation, safety, maintenance, heat, utilities, insurance and warranties shall be provided in the Contract Documents except as amended as follows:

Amended Responsibilities _____ ☒ Not Amended

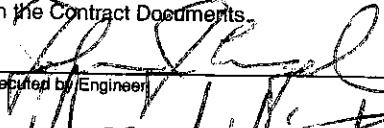

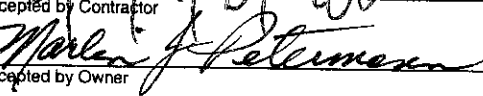
Owner's Responsibilities:

Contractor's Responsibilities:

The following documents are attached to and made part of this certificate:

Remaining Work Items – Dated September 1, 2006

This certificate does not constitute an acceptance of Work not in accordance with the Contract Documents nor is it a release of Contractor's obligation to complete the Work in accordance with the Contract Documents.

Executed by Engineer		Date	9/1/06
Accepted by Contractor		Date	9/6/06
Accepted by Owner		Date	9/6/06

REMAINING WORK ITEMS – SEPTEMBER 1, 2006

- 1. Fix gate leak**
- 2. Tighten bolts on outlet structure hand rail**
- 3. Install bollards around piezometers**
- 4. Install outlet channel erosion matting near gas transfer station**
- 5. Seeding and mulching after final touch ups**
- 6. Repair outlet channel and riprap placement at north end**
- 7. Trail repairs and seeding near commercial and Lyman Richey property**
- 8. Rodent guard on embankment drain #1**
- 9. Replace NDOR fence and gate south of Dodge**

Board chided for voting in secret

■ Papio-Missouri
NRD directors
righted the matter,
the state attorney
general says. 8-3-06

BY NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board violated state law by voting in a secret ballot to fill a board vacancy, Attorney General Jon Bruning said.

The board voted 5-4 on July 13 to name Richard Patterson to the position, reversing a committee recommendation that Mark McColley be named.

McColley had been the voters' second choice in the 2004 election, when incumbent Joe Neary won a narrow victory. Patterson was not on that ballot.

The board position, which represents north-central Omaha and northern Douglas County, became vacant in May when Neary resigned after moving out of the district.

In a letter to the district, Bruning said he will not seek penalties against the board because it rectified its mistake that same night.

After the board selected Patterson over McColley, it confirmed Patterson by passing a resolution on a roll call vote. That vote, which considered only Patterson's name, was 7-2 in favor of him.

Jim Thompson, one of the board members who supported McColley, acknowledged Wednesday that the board erred when it voted by secret ballot.

See Vote: Page 2

Vote: NRD board's secret

ballot is called illegal

Continued from Page 1

"We've been admonished. We can't hide that; I don't want to hide that," Thompson said. "We will be changing our policy."

The board cast the secret ballot in full view of its attorney, Paul Peters, who declined to discuss the vote.

"I have to confine my giving of legal advice to the board," he said.

That Patterson even had a chance at the vacancy appears to be owing to objections raised by citizens attending the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, a board subcommittee had reviewed the six people who had applied for the job, forwarding only McColley's name to the full board for consideration.

Shawn Melotz, a northern Douglas County resident who

frequently attends district board meetings, told the board that it was violating its own policies by considering only McColley.

The policy requires that the board pick from two finalists, she said. After she objected, the board added Patterson to the mix and ended up selecting him.

McColley, vice president of the Omaha Federation of Labor and a member of the Nebraska

Ethanol Board, could not be reached for comment. He had been endorsed for the position by Gov. Dave Heineman.

Patterson is president of the Greater Omaha Federal Credit Union and serves on the boards of several civic organizations, including the Mid-America Council of Boy Scouts and the Durham Western Heritage Museum.

County should join Papio partnership

It was two years ago this month that the Washington County Board of Supervisors called off a proposed deal with the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District to join the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership.

The unanimous vote not to join the newly forming partnership, intended to study flood control and water management in the Papio Creek watershed, was a protest against what the county board of supervisors felt was unfair treatment and lack of information from the NRD about proposals to build two large reservoirs in Washington County.

It has been a stormy two years since that August 2004 vote, with packed meetings, heated arguments and even lawsuits related to the dam proposals in Washington County. Needless to say, there's been a freeze in relations between the county and the NRD.

But a thaw may be coming. Last month, Washington County Supervisor Jeff Quist made the first diplomatic move when he attended an NRD board meeting and asked for a renewed dialogue on the water issues, including alternatives to the proposed dams.

Last week, two NRD representatives attended the Washington County Board meeting to ask the county to reconsider joining the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership to look at possible alternatives to building the big reservoirs. The price tag for the county to take a seat at the discussion table is \$15,000, a fee based on population and land area in the watershed (Omaha pays \$184,000).

Hopefully, the county supervisors will vote to join the partnership and be a part of the discussion about the future of flood control in the watershed and in our county.

In light of the revelations

of two years ago, joining the watershed partnership seemed out of the question for Washington County at that time (although some privately wondered even then what good it did for the county to cut itself off from a group whose decisions could affect the very proposals they were protesting).

Twenty-four months later, some of the situations and some of the key players have changed. The time seems right for Washington County to take a seat at the table and assume a role in the discussion.

The perception seems to persist that joining the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership is some kind of an endorsement of the dam proposals. It is not.

It is a way for Washington County to be represented in the ongoing discussions—and the resulting decisions—about the future of the watershed and, more specifically, of Washington County.

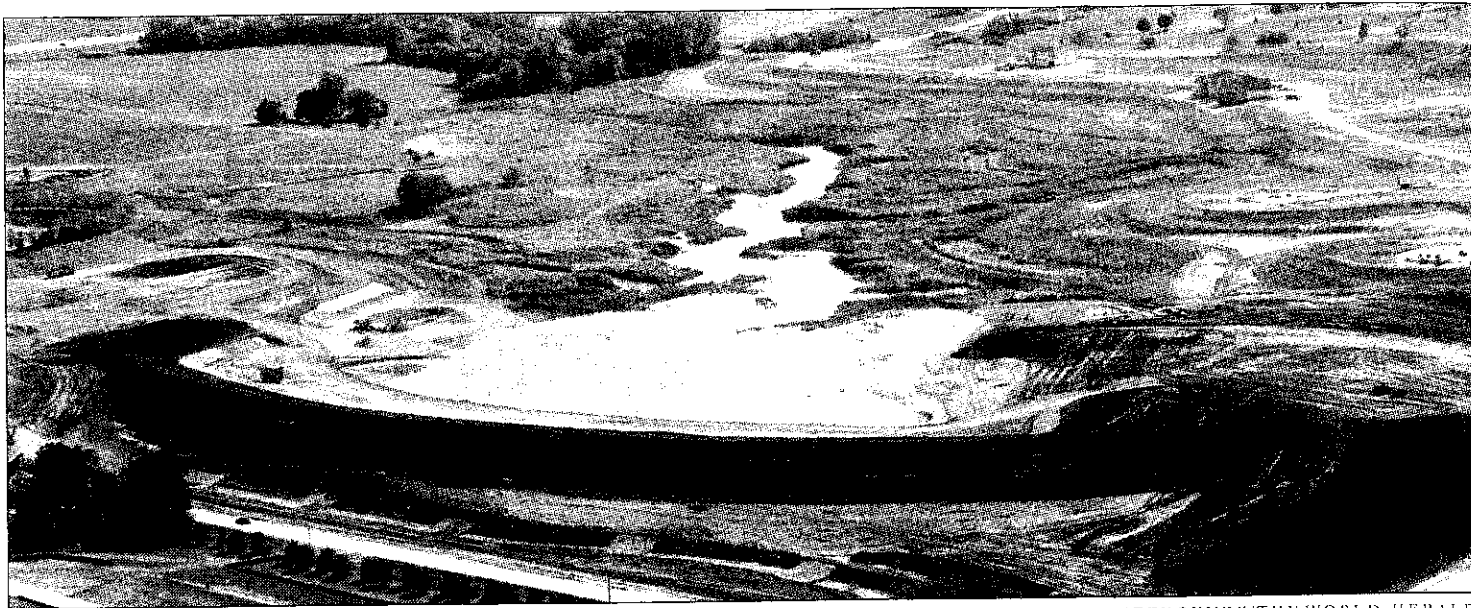
The watershed partnership also provides other valuable services that could benefit the county.

Joining the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership does not mean the proposals for reservoirs in Washington County are going to go away. There are those who still believe strongly in their value, just as there are those who believe just as strongly against them.

What it does mean is that Washington County will have more of a say in the final decision and will be able to participate in discussions that could find alternatives to the big dams.

That's a good investment of \$15,000.

EDITORIALS represent the opinion of Enterprise Publishing. Contact publisher Mark Rhoades at mrhoades@enterprisepub.com or editor Doug Barber at news@enterprisepub.com or call them at 426-2121 with comments or questions.



JEFF BUNDY/THE WORLD-HERALD

The City of Omaha plans to make its newest lake, near 192nd Street and West Dodge Street, deep enough to provide good fishing.

Lake plans will provide good fishing

By NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A developer and the City of Omaha will have to dig a little deeper, literally, to make Omaha's newest fishing lake just that — fishable.

And the extra cost of deepening a 60-acre lake at 192nd Street and West Dodge Road does not bode well for fishing at some of the other 28 flood-control lakes that the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District proposes to build.

According to the NRD, about \$250,000 is being spent to make fishing possible at this lake because the City of Omaha is planning a major park along the lake's shoreline.

The money for the fishing project is coming from a state grant, the company developing land along the lake, and the city.

For most of the other lakes proposed, it's unlikely that there will be a similar effort to find funding, said Paul Woodward,

The City of Omaha is planning a major park along the shoreline of the lake near 192nd Street and West Dodge Road.

Papio NRD project manager.

Nor should people expect the NRD, which is proposing to spend \$300 million buying land and building the dams, to set aside money for making significant fishing improvements at those lakes. The NRD generally limits its spending to dam construction, Woodward said.

Whether a lake makes for good fishing depends on the depth of the water, which is determined by the contours of the land.

In the case of this lake, the land on either side of the creek valley sloped too gradually toward the creek to create sufficient depth, said Steve Scarpello, Omaha parks director. Some of the money will go toward excavating dirt near the shoreline to deepen the water level.

The NRD, Woodward said, does not plan to deepen all the other lakes to accommodate fishing. Nor does the district plan to install boat ramps.

Based on the natural contours of the land, the lake at 192nd Street and West Dodge Road would have been about 5 to 6 feet deep, Woodward said. When the work is done, the lake should be about 9 or 10 feet deep, he said.

Keith Hurley, fisheries biologist for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, said the lake will be stocked with fish that are suitable for a small lake — bluegill, catfish and bass.

The water quality should be "outstanding," he said, because of the type of soil in the region. He likened it to water in Standing Bear and Zorinsky Lakes.

Construction of the lake is ex-

pected to cost about \$8 million, Woodward said, with the NRD bearing most of that cost.

Dial Realty Development Corp. is contributing \$1.6 million toward lake construction. Additionally, it will provide a share of the money for deepening the lake.

The state is providing more than \$200,000 to build a boat ramp, parking lot, jetties to protect the ramp and scouring out the lake. A state grant will underwrite most of the city's costs.

Fix-hoops star Bart Koford finds his calling, Sports

Sunday World-Herald

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER OWNED BY EMPLOYEES



HELPING NATURE TAKE ITS COURSE



Jason Miller, left, and Eric Andres catch flatheads that have been lightly shocked. They will weigh and measure the fish, and also collect part of their gills to analyze growth.

RECLAIMING THE RIVER

■ A costly effort is helping to restore the wild and natural elements of the industrial ditch known as the Missouri.



A large flathead fish snagged in the Army Corps of Engineers' program to restore river habitat.

By HENRY J. CORDS
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

PONCA, Neb. — As a boat carrying Missouri River biologists moved up the shallow backwater, two least terns swooped overhead and dived headlong into the murky waters.

It was typical behavior for the tern, an endangered shorebird that nests on river sandbars and forages in shallows for minnows to feed its young.

What was unusual about the pristine, natural scene was that neither the opaque backwater where the birds hunted nor the nearby sandbar where their young were nesting existed two years ago.

Both were created by man. It's part of a costly effort to mitigate some of the environ-

mental impacts caused a half-century ago when man first dammed the Missouri River for flood control and attempted to turn it into a highway for barges.

Federal appropriations for restoration of natural habitat on the Missouri River have grown dramatically over the past decade, from about \$2 million to more than \$50 million this year.

Much more could be around the bend. The total price for future decades of restoration work has been put at nearly \$3 billion, making the Missouri one of the largest environmental restoration projects in the country.

Additionally, other federal, local and private funds have been tapped for Missouri River restoration. In Nebraska alone, funding for wetlands restoration under programs

See River: Page 5



River: Harnessed, the Mighty Mo lacked seasonal ebb and flow

Continued from Page 1

in the federal farm bill has grown fivefold in the past three years.

All along the nation's longest river — particularly in the lower states of Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri and Kansas — engineers are reviving wetlands and woodlands, restoring sandbars and shallow-water habitat, and bringing back chutes, side channels and backwaters long ago walled off from the main channel.

Though much of the work is in the interest of endangered species like the tern, hundreds of wildlife species are benefiting from the new habitat. The new backwater near Ponca is home to turtles, frogs and juvenile fish and frequented by deer, blue heron and migratory birds.

"Any critter who uses the river is going to use this backwater," said Gerald Mestl, Missouri River program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The improved habitat also is creating more opportunities for hunting, fishing and enjoying natural tranquility. The Ponca backwater, on land owned by Ponca State Park, is a perfect example, with a new nature trail weaving through it.

Work on the river also is helping to restore some of the human bond that was lost when a wild and natural river was largely transformed into an industrial ditch.

"People were forced away and became disconnected from the river," said Chad Smith of Lincoln, an advocate for the Missouri on behalf of the environmental group American Rivers. "Restoring habitat is a great way to rebuild those connections and get people to think of the river as an asset."

The Missouri that Lewis and Clark found flowing between present-day Nebraska and Iowa 200 years ago looks nothing like the Muddy Mo of today.

It was wide, meandering and even muddier, with thousands of acres of shallow backwaters, side channels, islands and braided sandbars.

Each spring, waters from the thaw surged downriver and brought new life, creating new sandbars, scouring old ones, and flooding wooded bottomlands and backwaters. The entire river and its valley was a haven for wildlife.

But in the middle of the 20th



Zach Kaiser, left, and Mike Duchscher replenish data equipment in a blind on a sandbar north of Ponca, Neb. They keep track of birds' nests there.

century, under orders from Congress, the Army Corps of Engineers harnessed the wild Missouri.

Between 1944 and 1960, the corps spent hundreds of millions of dollars building six flood-control dams on the upper Missouri. Below Sioux City, Iowa, the corps straightened and narrowed the river, timing dam releases to create a canal for barges down to St. Louis.

Farmers claimed and cleared riverside land that no longer flooded most springs, and power plants and other industry set up in the former bottomlands.

Though the level of barge traffic that was promised never materialized, the changes produced many benefits, including significantly reducing the chances of catastrophic flooding. Missouri River floods hit Omaha in 1881, 1920, 1943 and 1952.

But over time, it became clear something had been lost.

The projects eliminated more than 90 percent of river habitat used by birds, fish and other wildlife. Water flowing down the river wasn't as warm, carried less silt and lacked seasonal ebb and flow — all qualities native river species depended on.

Several species were pushed toward extinction, and most other wildlife also suffered.

Casey Kruse, a biologist who heads corps efforts to aid endangered wildlife on the Missouri, said it's unfair to be overly critical of those who, a half-century ago, designed and built the Missouri River projects.

Coming out of the Great Depression, jobs and economic

progress were Congress' primary concerns. The projects predated the environmental awareness of the 1960s that led to the passage of the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

"Back then, the environment wasn't even on the radar screen," Kruse said. "Now, we can look back and say 'We overdid it.'"

That acknowledgment led to efforts to restore some of the Missouri's natural attributes while preserving most benefits wrought by the dams.

Beginning in the early 1990s, state and federal officials began restoring wetlands along the river, tapping federal farm programs that pay farmers to convert former croplands back into wetlands.

In Nebraska, the effort stepped up significantly three years ago when the state qualified for funds under an enhanced federal wetlands program. That has helped increase annual spending on wetlands restoration in Nebraska from \$1.5 million to \$8 million a year.

Under the Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program, the federal government purchases easements from willing floodplain farmers — usually ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,600 an acre.

The federal government also pays most or all of the restoration costs, which usually include grading of the land to get down to the river-influenced water table and planting native grasses.

The farmer maintains ownership of the land and can even lease out hunting rights on it. In many cases, the land was marginal for farming anyway, because it was often overly

wet.

"A lot of the farmers are just tired of fighting the river," said Patrick McGrane of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, which runs the wetlands program. He recently visited the site of a wetland restoration in Nebraska's Burt County.

While that new wetland had yet to mature, a privately created one nearby showed the promise of such conversions. It was swarming with songbirds, mallards, blue-winged teal and shorebirds, and a deer stopped in to take a drink.

In Nebraska alone, federal programs over the past two decades have restored 25,000 acres of wetlands along the Missouri.

The corps began its own larger-scale restoration work in the early 1990s, pledging to bring back thousands of acres of habitat. While there were some successes, including Boyer Chute near Fort Calhoun, Neb., the effort lagged until six years ago.

That's when the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued an opinion that three species — the tern, the piping plover (another shorebird) and the pallid sturgeon, an ancient fish — were in danger of disappearing from the Missouri basin without intervention.

The wildlife officials called for dam release changes, including surges of water in the spring and lower summer flows, to naturally create and expose more sandbar and shallow water habitat.

The altered dam releases were bitterly opposed by some farmers, power companies and barge interests.

In exchange for scaled back flow changes, the corps negotiated with wildlife officials to instead engineer more habitat. The Bush administration ratcheted up funding for the corps' restoration program, from \$10 million in 2000 to \$55 million this year. President Bush's 2007 budget calls for \$85 million.

The backwater near Ponca was one of the first pieces of the new habitat push.

Two years ago, dredgers dug out the old river chute for the backwater and needed a place to put the dirt and sand. On a hunch, the corps decided to drop it in the river to see if it could create usable sandbar habitat for terns and plovers.

To the delight of corps officials, the endangered shorebirds began nesting on it so quickly that the corps had to pull back heavy equipment before workers could even finish grading the sand.

Numerous other backwater and side channel restorations are in the works, including restoration of a chute across from downtown Omaha. Some of the pricier future work could involve alterations of some of the dams themselves, allowing the release of warmer water and providing a way for silt to get around the dams.

All the changes speak to shifting priorities — a change evident among some of those who have benefited from the tamed Missouri.

Burt County farmer Lloyd Olson remembers when two miles of wetlands and cottonwood forest stood between his farm and the Missouri River — land teeming with ducks, deer and other wildlife.

All that changed 50 years ago, when new dams upriver kept the Missouri in its banks each spring, opening up thousands of acres of former floodplain to farming.

Olson and other farmers cut down acres of cottonwoods, replacing them with corn and soybeans. "It was a way to make a living, I guess," he said.

Olson, 76, laments what was lost — one of the reasons he decided to enroll 60 acres in the federal wetlands program.

The payment was nice, he said. But he did it because he wants his great-grandchildren to hunt for mushrooms in riverside cottonwood groves the way he did as a kid.

Said Olson: "It's just the right thing to do."

State assessing cost of excess irrigation

BY NANCY GAARDER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

KEARNEY, Neb. — Overuse of the Platte and Republican Rivers by irrigators could end up costing the state \$110 million to \$500 million, depending on the policy choices that lie ahead.

"It may turn out to be quite a bit different," said Ray Supalla, the University of Nebraska agricultural economist who came up with the preliminary estimates.

"But I don't have any reason to think the numbers are out of line."

Supalla's economic analysis of potential costs, made public Monday, found that they vary widely, depending on several factors. Those include whether irrigators are paid all that they might ask for their water rights,

and how quickly and extensively the state addresses the problem.

The cost to taxpayers would decrease if the state restricts how much it compensates irrigators.

Action is required on the two rivers for different reasons, but problems on both involve exten-

sive irrigation.

Based on an assumption by Supalla that irrigation along the Republican would have to be reduced by 100,000 acre-feet, the state could owe anywhere from \$64.8 million to \$333.8 million to meet its obligation under a compact with Kansas and Colorado.

Based on Supalla's assump-

Price tag for overuse of rivers could hit \$500 million

tion that irrigation along the Platte River would have to be reduced by 75,000 acre-feet, costs could range from \$45.5 million to \$168.1 million to meet requirements of Nebraska's water law and the Federal Endangered Species Act.

A committee of the state's Water Policy Task Force asked

Supalla to conduct the study.

The task force needs information on the potential cost to Nebraska if it participates in a three-state agreement with Colorado and Wyoming to provide water in the Platte River for endangered species in central Nebraska.

That agreement is pending. It requires Nebraska to roll back the number of irrigated acres in the Platte basin to July 1997 levels.

See Rivers, Page 2

Rivers: Numbers sure to change, state official says

Continued from Page 1

Nebraska's participation requires the governor's signature. Gov. Dave Heineman said he plans to make a decision after a series of public meetings on the issue next month and in October.

The water task force also is seeking information on the cost of implementing a 2004 state law to prevent conflicts between irrigators who pump water from the ground and those who irrigate from rivers.

In both cases, farmers could be paid to retire farmland from production, paid to not irrigate,

or paid to accept requirements to use less water on their fields.

Supalla said he used the latest information available in making his assumptions.

Much uncertainty surrounds the numbers, which were released Monday at a committee meeting of the state's Water Policy Task Force.

One thing that is certain is that numbers will change as more is known, said Jim Cook, a Nebraska Department of Natural Resources attorney.

The difference between the low-end and high-end figures has to do with these questions:

■ Should irrigators be paid market value for their irrigated land or should they get a premium? Supalla estimated that the premium on the land could be 50 percent or more.

■ Should the state confine its efforts to solving water problems over the short term — say, 10 years — or should it reach for a longer-term solution over 25 or 50 years?

■ Should costs be paid up front or spread out?

A surprising finding of Supalla's was that communities should not expect long-term substantial economic hardship if land is taken out of irrigation

— as long as the land removed from irrigation isn't concentrated in any one area.

Supalla based that finding in part on the economic impact that increased irrigation has had on those same communities.

The committee and task force will continue to work with these and other numbers to better gauge the effect of irrigation restrictions on the state.

Ultimately though, committee members said Monday, the decisions rest largely with the Legislature and governor.

World-Herald staff writer David Hendee contributed to this report.

Easements may help protect Platte lands

8-9-06

By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Easements could become a tool for protecting from development some of the highest priority natural areas in the lower Platte River corridor.

Several thousand acres along the Platte River bluffs in Sarpy County are under intense pressure, with skirmishes already occurring between property owners and developers.

Tuesday, a committee of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District agreed to collaborate with the Nebraska Land Trust to establish an easement program for the land, including that which surrounds Schramm Park State Recreation Area.

The NRD would give the Trust \$5,000 to begin the organizational work. The full NRD board will vote on the measure Thursday but is expected to approve it.

Easements, which are increasingly popular tools for

conserving high value lands, pay a property owner for forfeiting development rights.

The bluffs, oak-hickory woods, tall grass prairie remnants and excellent bird habitat make the area ideal for protection, said Dave Sands of the Land Trust.

Sands said he plans to apply to the Nebraska Environmental Trust for the money to purchase the easements.

Virginia Miller told the board that her family has owned land in the area since 1855.

It is her hope, she said, that visitors will continue to be able to walk along the bluffs and watch the sun setting over the valley.

"This will be totally destroyed and not be able to be saved if development moves forward," she told the board.

Another landowner, Connie Anderson, said after the meeting that she hopes easements entice developers to incorporate more conservation in their proposals.

Florence group tries again for visitor center study

8-9-06

By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A local nonprofit group is making a second attempt at convincing the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District to help assess the feasibility of building a visitor center in far north Omaha.

So far, the Florence Futures Development Group is having some luck.

On Tuesday, a committee of the Papio-Missouri NRD board voted to recommend giving the group \$25,000 to study the proposed center.

Thursday, the full board will vote on the proposal. In April, a similar proposal failed when the NRD board deadlocked.

The study would cost about \$110,000, and most of the money would come from private individuals and businesses.

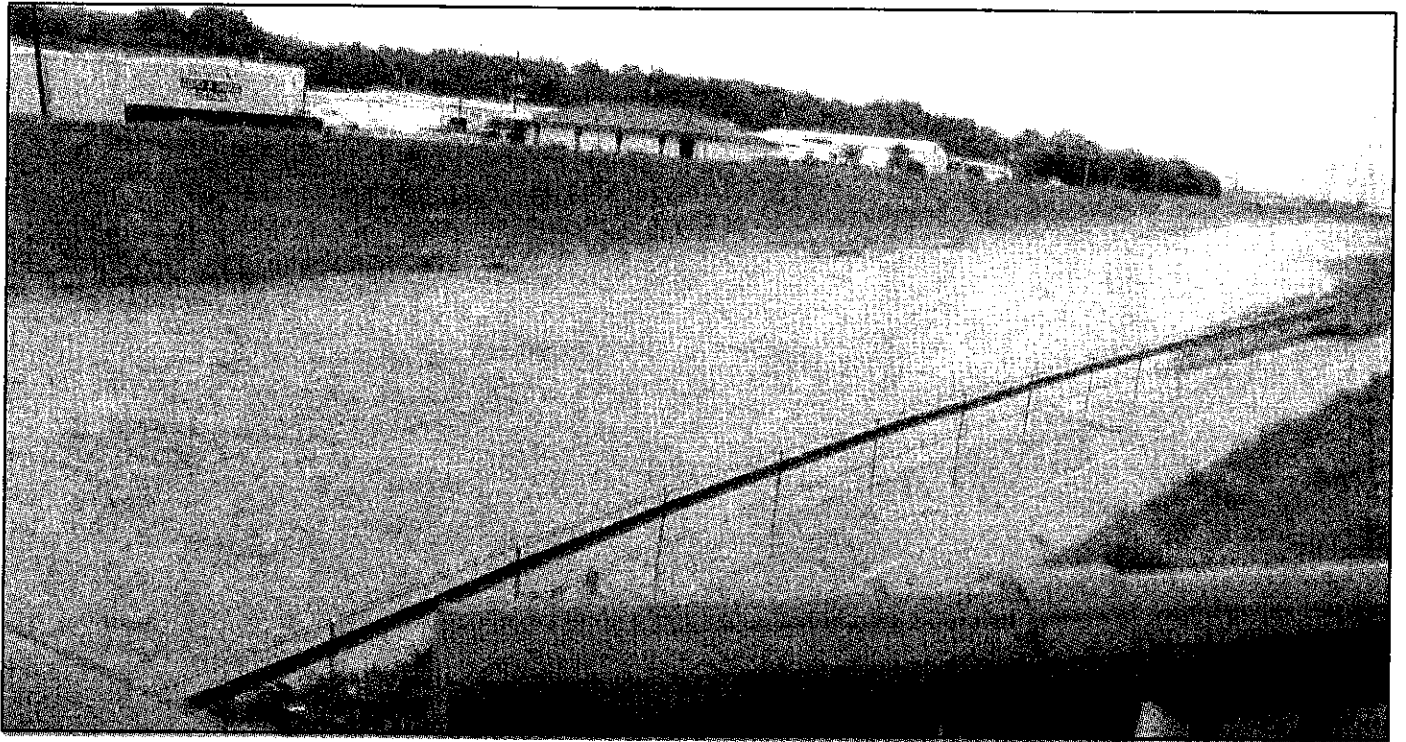
To make the project more appealing to the NRD, planners have added a trail head at the visitor center and specified that the center would emphasize NRD projects.

The center would be built at Interstate 680 and 30th Street.

Making a pitch to the NRD Tuesday was State Sen. Lowen Kruse of Omaha and Florence booster Linda Meigs.

"I've become a real convert," Kruse said.

The center would direct visitors to sites in Florence, other parts of Nebraska and Iowa.



MITCH BEAUMONT / PAPILLION TIMES

High water mark

West

8-10-06

The **Big** Papio Creek in downtown Papillion was higher than normal Tuesday morning after a line of strong thunderstorms rumbled through the area Monday night.

County should not join Papio Partnership

To the editor,

If you, the editor, would go to meetings you would know that you are absolutely wrong with your conclusions (Aug. 4 *Enterprise*). A vote to go along with the partnership is a vote for all the dams. Douglas County hasn't joined yet, and that tells me something.

This was all set up to help developers that are causing all the run-off, pollution, and flooding. Why should everyone have to pay for their mistakes.

Also in joining this part-

nership it is a vote for bonding authority for the NRD and, believe me, they do not need anymore TAXPAYER money to spend. It would be an open checkbook for them. So, Mr. Barber, I think you should get your stories straight before leading people in the wrong direction.

Wayne and Shelia Dreessen
Kennard

Editor's note – Douglas County is a member of the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership.

Joining partnership is dam endorsement

8-11-06 *Enterprise*

To the editor,

In response to the Friday, August 4, *Enterprise* editorial:

You stated that "the perception seems to persist that joining the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership is some kind of an endorsement of the dam proposals. It is not." We believe that it is, without a doubt.

Joining the partnership will not give Washington County any more "say" in the decisions to be made. Rather, being a member will ultimately give approval to the decisions made by the partnership, even if Washington County votes against the proposal.

Why is the NRD asking Washington County to join this partnership? Does the NRD need Washington County on board to go forward with the watershed plans? What are the plans? For the last 30-plus years the only plan has been the large dams. Have you seen any

alternative plans put forth?

What are the "valuable services that could benefit the county" that you stated the watershed partnership would provide?

What does our NRD representative have to say about this? Dick Conneally, who represents Washington County, along with Burt, Dakota, and Thurston counties, has made no attempt to communicate with the people he represents. Do we have any representation?

We thank the Washington County Board of Supervisors for standing firm on their decision against joining the partnership. The supervisors are researching the issue to make sure they have the information necessary to make their decisions. Perhaps *The Enterprise* could search for additional facts to answer some of the questions raised.

Bob and Amy Harper
Kennard

NRD sets aside money for dams

8-12-86

By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The ambitious dam-building initiative that the Papio NRD wants to undertake has yet to get the green light, but the district already is setting aside money.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District has approved a budget that allocates \$4 million for dams that have yet to be approved and another \$50,000 to lobby the Legislature for permission to incur long-term debt so more dams can be built.

The district's management wants to build about 30 dams in the Omaha metro area at a cost of about \$400 million.

The board has yet to approve the effort, but this week it unanimously approved an annual budget with an extensive component for dam-building.

Opponents of the dams tried in vain to have some of the items pulled from the budget.

"Isn't it more prudent to wait until these sites are approved?" Douglas County resident Shawn Melotz asked the board.

Marlin Petermann, acting NRD general manager, responded that the dams are "a relevant anticipated expenditure."

Melotz also quizzed Petermann about details of some of the dams.

Who are the developers? she asked. And have property owners been notified that their land may be taken?

Petermann declined to name the developers and said there were no immediate plans to notify property owners.

The budget includes \$4.1 million for consultants and land acquisition for proposed dam sites at 168th Street and Bennington Road; 144th Street and Bennington Road; 168th and Fort Streets; 126th Street and Cornhusker Road; High-

way 6/31 and West Center Road.

The Legislature has previously shelved the district's request for authority to issue general obligation bonds. The district hopes it will have better luck in the coming session, now that several local governments have endorsed the concept as part of a storm-water runoff plan.

Melotz asked to have the lobbying money removed, pointing out that bonding authority sets taxpayers up for a potentially significant increase in debt and taxes.

Board members offered no direct response to the questions from the dam opponents and approved the budget without comment.

After the meeting, board member John Schwoppe said the board was simply being prudent by setting aside money in case it decides to build the dams.

Tekamah eligible for fed \$

plan adopted 8-16-06

Nobody's hoping for a repeat of the 1999 flood that damaged several homes and caused half a million dollars in damage in Tekamah. Government can't control the weather. Thanks to action last week, however, the city is better positioned to reduce the amount of damage, should a natural disaster strike.

During its brief Aug. 8 meeting, Tekamah City Council passed a resolution adopting an all-hazards mitigation plan. The document was prepared by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources for the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District.

A federal law passed in 2000 requires local governments, as a condition of receiving federal disaster mitigation funds, have a mitigation plan in place. Additionally, the plan fulfills the requirements of another federal law, the National Flood Insurance Reform Act of 1994. With this act, Congress authorized the establishment of a federal grant program to provide financial assistance to states and communities for flood mitigation planning and activities. Only projects for mitigation activities specified in an approved Flood Mitigation Plan are eligible for project grants. These activities include elevation, acquisition, and relocation of flood-prone insurable structures.

The plan covers every city and county in the NRD's area. Sections are dedicated specifically to individual communities. Communities accepting the plan are required to review it every five years.

Tekamah's two main goals, as chosen through a series of public meetings, are to reduce or prevent future damage from natural disasters and to increase public safety.

(Continued on Page 5)

Plan makes city eligible

(Continued from Page 1)

The top priority was to maintain good standing with the National Flood Insurance Program. The recently updated flood plain map will be rolled into a new Burt County map which is scheduled to become effective in 2010.

The last seven years also has seen the city take steps to increase channel capacity in Tekamah Creek and reduce erosion along its banks.

The document also addresses tree management. Falling limbs are a main source of damage to power lines during ice storms or high winds. Recent action has identified and removed more than a half dozen of the most unsafe trees in the city.

In other business Aug. 8, the council:

—Accepted the annual report of the Burt County Museum.

The document shows the museum had 2,414 visitors from 32 states, Ukraine Republic and Costa Rica last year. The facility added 1,144 artifacts, raising the

count to 14,476. It also added 80 photographs, increasing its catalog of photos, copies and prints to 3,597.

Volunteers logged 5,535 hours at the museum last year.

—Gave local approval for expansion of The Edge's liquor license. The restaurant's owner, Jo Uhing, said she plans to add a "sidewalk cafe"-type area on the south and east sides of her building. In order to serve alcohol in the added area, her liquor license needed to be amended to cover the additional square footage. The request also must be approved by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.

—Gave local approval to a request for a one-day liquor license for Brad and Tammie Ferris. The license would cover the auditorium during their daughter's wedding reception.

The application now must be approved by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission.

NRD board infuriating

I recently have been attending the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District's monthly board meetings. I'm shocked by the board's consistent abuse of authority, irresponsible spending practices and rudeness when members' tactics are questioned by the voting public.

Even more shocking is how what really goes on never comes to light. So much for a watchdog press. Even Nebraska's attorney general let the board off the hook when it violated state law on July 13 and cast secret ballots for a replacement board member.

At the Aug. 10 meeting, when the board's legal counsel was asked a question, he refused to respond into the microphone despite a citizen's complaint that the counsel couldn't be heard by those attending. This counsel has done this at other meetings, too. My guess is that he didn't want to be recorded.

W-J 8-20-06

I don't enjoy attending these board meetings. But I feel I must if only to put pressure on yet another governmental agency run amok. I urge others to attend and see for themselves.

Ardith Williams, Omaha

Hold them accountable

You know what scares me even more than terrorist threats in our skies? Our eroding democratic process. Just go to a monthly Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District board meeting and watch how elected officials thumb their noses at constituents.

I attended the Aug. 10 meeting in which the board approved a \$37.3 million operating budget for 2007, a 20 percent increase over 2006. Close to half of the budget (44 percent) is paid out of our property taxes.

Despite citizen input pointing to specific wasteful expenditures, including \$8.3 million for controversial dam projects not yet approved and \$200,000 for trails leading to the proposed Omaha pedestrian bridge, the board voted "yes" unanimously.

That same night, over citizen protest, Omaha City Councilman Jim Suttle convinced the board to donate \$25,000 toward a Florence economic development and visitor center study. The board even agreed to help some residential homeowners pave a perfectly good stretch of gravel road leading to the Chalco Hills State Recreation Area. Both expenditures fall outside the district's responsibility.

More people should attend meetings like this and demand accountability by our elected officials.

Linda Ryan, Omaha

Bicyclists support pedestrian bridge

8-21-06

By JENNIFER GREFF

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Thousands of bicyclists flocked to downtown Omaha Sunday morning for the 16th annual Corporate Cycling Challenge.

This year, the event was part of a fundraising effort for a pedestrian bridge that will connect Council Bluffs and Omaha. Construction is scheduled to begin this fall for the \$22 million project.

For riding enthusiasts, the new bridge means more than 150 miles of bike trails will be connected by the bridge over the Missouri River.

"Build that bridge, and I'll be there," said cyclist Sandy Taylor after the ride.

Some bikers touted the bridge as the safest way to cross the river on a bicycle. Currently, there are few safe options. Others are looking forward to the beauty it will bring to the metro area.

There were concerns, however.

"As a biker, I love it. As a taxpayer, I'm not loving it," said Ralston resident Chris Ortman. "I'm torn."

Critics argue that the bridge is unnecessary and is an example of federal pork-barrel funding.

In 2000, then-Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska won \$19 million in federal funding for the project to highlight Omaha's back-to-the-river effort. The states of Iowa and Nebraska, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and private philanthropies are also contributing.

After Sunday's ride, a representative from Back to the River Inc. received a check for \$25,000, to be spent on lighting and enhancements for the bridge. The money was collected from corporate challenge entry fees.

"I don't know where they were keeping their checkbooks," Pete Castellano joked, looking around at the spandex-suited riders. Castellano is a director for the nonprofit Back to the River, according to its Web site.

More than 2,500 riders participated in the event, setting a new attendance record, he said. Riders chose between three bike routes of varying lengths: 10 miles, 26 miles and 42 miles.

Afterward, riders congregated near the entrance of Heartland of America Park, where they were treated to water and sports drinks, grilled hot dogs and hamburgers, and complimentary massages.

+

Council funds bridge monitoring

■ Frank Brown's reversal enables the city to hire watchdogs for construction of the pedestrian span across the Missouri River.

By C. DAVID KOTOK
8-23-06

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

One week made the difference and helped pave the way for experts to monitor construction of a \$22 million pedestrian bridge across the Missouri River.

Without comment or debate, the Omaha City Council gave

4-3 approval Tuesday to an \$874,000 contract to monitor construction of the span that will link Omaha and Council Bluffs.

The council had twice rejected spending any city funds for the construction monitor.

No Omaha or Bluffs city tax dollars will be used to pay for construction of the pedestrian

bridge, which has drawn criticism from some who view it as an example of unnecessary federal pork barrel spending.

The council's latest vote was not on whether to build the bridge. The only question was whether to hire firms to inspect the bridge design, check critical elements of construction, and monitor the construction schedule and spending.

Councilman Frank Brown provided the swing vote. A week ago, he was the fourth vote to reject the contract. On Tuesday, Brown joined Dan Welch, Garry Gernandt and

Page 8

The City Council votes to divert \$200,000 from Florence to projects on 24th Street.

Jim Suttle in approving the request from Mayor Mike Fahey.

Brown's reversal was not unexpected. He had said he wanted one more week to think over a proposed compromise that included a pledge by Council Bluffs to come up with \$350,000 in private money to cover a share of the construction monitor contract.

Omaha will pay its share from a riverfront improvement bond fund.

The final hurdle before construction of the bridge can begin is obtaining environmental permits from various federal and state agencies.

"We feel pretty good about getting our permits," City Parks Director Steve Scarpello said. "Our goal is to begin construction this fall."

The firms involved in the design and construction of the bridge can now come together to set the construction schedule, Scarpello said.

Water task force hears cost to boost Platte flows

By DAVID HENDEE
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

KEARNEY, Neb. — Nebraska might need to spend \$57 million to \$250 million by about 2020 to find ways to stop groundwater irrigation from harming Platte River flows that are critical to four rare wildlife species, the State Water Policy Task Force learned Wednesday.

The more likely top price tag is \$95 million, said Jim Cook of the Nebraska Natural Resources Department. He provided the latest financial assessment to the task force.

The figures reflect the cost of reducing the use of irrigation water near the Platte and North Platte Rivers in Nebraska and bringing demand into line with supply. The goal could be achieved, for example, by regulation or by paying farmers to reduce or quit irrigation.

Cook's figures differ from the \$45.5 million to \$168.1 million estimated by a University of Nebraska-Lincoln agricultural economist.

Cook said he and Ray Supalla, the UNL economist, used fundamentally the same information to compute their estimates.

Supalla's study, however, estimated what the costs would be if irrigation along the Platte

Public meetings on Platte flows

Three public meetings are scheduled on the plan to improve Platte River flows for habitat in central Nebraska:

Sept. 6: 1 p.m., Gering Civic Center, 1050 M St., Gering

Sept. 22: 1 p.m., Fonner Park 4-H Building Cafe, 700 E. Stolley Park Road, Grand Island

Oct. 10: 1 p.m., Embassy Suites, 1040 P St., Lincoln

needed to be reduced by 75,000 acre-feet. Cook, by contrast, had access to a nearly complete study on the number of acres of irrigated cropland added by Nebraska farmers since 1997.

Preliminary results of the multiyear study indicate that farmers added about 450,000 acres of irrigated cropland in a swath of the Platte watershed upstream of Columbus to the Wyoming border. The region includes some of the Republican River basin.

The year 1997 is when Nebraska pledged to Colorado, Wyoming and the U.S. Interior Department that it would offset the adverse impact of new groundwater pumping on criti-

cal Platte flows for the threatened species.

The estimates by Cook and Supalla reflect the cost of rolling back the impact of Nebraska's groundwater pumping to 1997 levels.

Also Wednesday, Supalla presented a slightly revised version of his original draft.

Cook and Supalla cautioned that their estimates vary widely because they depend on such factors as how much irrigators are paid for their water rights and how quickly and extensively the state addresses the problem.

Nebraska's participation in the habitat program requires the governor's signature. Gov. Dave Heineman said he plans to make a decision after hearing a recommendation from an advisory panel this fall.

Cook said \$10 million to \$15 million of his overall calculation represents Nebraska's estimated cost of mitigating post-1997 irrigation growth along the Platte for the habitat program. The remaining money would go toward balancing supply and demand under the wide-ranging state water law passed in 2005.

If Heineman signs the habitat agreement, the Legislature will be asked to pay to implement the program, Cook said.

'County represented in Papio Creek plans'

By Kevin Propst, trustee
Village of Washington

It is with great curiosity that I inquire about recent articles and opinions in your publication regarding the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District and the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership. Perhaps if the authors had done proper research on the issues before writing pieces or offering an editorial, they would have been more careful about using terms that are simply incorrect.

On July 7, 2006 your paper issued a statement saying the NRD budget included \$500,000 for the preliminary design of 1 and 3C. If I'm not mistaken, that was directly off the P-MRNRD website. Many of us from Washington and Douglas County questioned the NRD that "design" was misleading to the public and should be reworded. The NRD corrected the terminology to preliminary study of 1 and 3C.

Laurie Zook, John Engle of HDR and Paul Woodward of the P-MRNRD were contacted about the article and were to have requested a correction or clarification. Jim Brazda of *The Enterprise* responded that any future reference would include the new wording. Where is your responsibility to the public in following through? Some in the area still believe the money is for the design of the dams and not the study

of flood control.

The August 4, 2006 editorial entitled "County should join Papio partnership" lacked research and was a deceiving piece of journalism. Although editorials are "opinion based," facts should back the writer.

This editorial stated that "The perception seems to persist that joining the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership is some kind of endorsement of the dam proposals. It is not." However, the author failed to mention that by joining, the county would be binding itself to the partnership policies, even if Washington County did not approve the partnership policies.

This means that even if our representative votes no on a proposal and it passes, the county is still bound by the agreement. No legal recourse.

This may not seem like an endorsement, but does leave Washington County with few, or no options if we were to join. By not joining the partnership it provides Washington County with the freedom to review all options and make an intelligent, fact-based decision. It leaves all legal and political options open.

As far as the assertion that we are not "being part of the discussion about future flood control in the watershed and in our county," had this person done their homework

they would have understood that many of us in the county ARE at the table through other means. Many of us spend hours upon hours of our time attending the Papio Watershed Partnership, P-MRNRD sub-committee and board meetings, and other flood control based meetings. Most importantly there are eleven people representing the people of Washington County at the Papillion Creek Reservoirs 1 and 3C Steering Committee meetings.

Unfortunately, we do have a lack of representation by our (like it or not) he WAS elected official on the P-MRNRD board, Dick Connealy. He is supposed to be our voice in the upper watershed, but you have to attend the meetings for that voice to be heard. If I'm not mistaken, he has the worst attendance record of any current board member. If he is not able to fulfill his obligation, perhaps he should explain his absenteeism. But that is yet another topic open for debate.

In another point-the August 4 editorial stated that "The watershed partnership also provides other valuable services that could benefit the county." What valuable services? Are they the only entity that can provide these "services"? Would it be worth the \$15,000 price tag to the taxpayers of this county? Perhaps, the editor should

read the Partnership Agreement and Policies.

One thing that all taxpayers must understand is that the Papio Creek Watershed Partnership is pursuing general obligation bonding power through the Legislature. I'm sure that these funds would be used for the Washington County dams. Who would have oversight of the executive board of the PCWP and the issuing of the bonds? NO ONE! It would be an open checkbook and the taxpayers would be the ones having to deposit money in this bottomless pit.

I would also like to clarify the letter to the editor written by Wayne and Shelia Dreesen which stated "Douglas County hasn't joined yet, and that tells me something." In the editor's note it was corrected that Douglas County is a member of the PCWP, but I believe what the Dreesens were referring to was the fact that Douglas County has not yet voted to accept the PCWP policies.

I feel that had the editor or one of the reporters been a little more knowledgeable about the Douglas County Board and the PCWP, they would have made a more appropriate editor's note.

Just a suggestion, but maybe one of your reporters could contact Mary Ann Borgeson, Mike Boyle or Clare Duda to find out why the PCWP policy issue was tabled. It would be an inter-

esting story and would be useful information to the taxpayers and subscribers of your paper.

I was happy to see Jim Brazda at the August 10 P-MRNRD meeting at which the 2007 budget was approved. I thought that maybe this publication would actually try to do the right thing and start attending meetings, getting the facts straight and above all asking tough questions of the P-MRNRD. My hope was that an article on the fiscal irresponsibility of our NRD would appear in *The Enterprise*, but much to my chagrin a word has yet to be printed.

There have been five Papillion Creek Reservoirs 1 & 3C Steering Committee Meetings held at the Blair City Hall Council Chamber since February of this year. I don't believe that any of your reporters have ever bothered to attend. These meetings are held right in your own backyard, yet you choose to ignore them? If you need meeting dates and times you can log on to www.papioreservoirstand3c.org for that information.

Mr. Rhoades, I would challenge you and your reporter to responsible journalism by attending meetings, getting the facts and above all give fair and equal representation. Your readers deserve and desire true journalistic integrity.