



NPNRD Reminders...

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 9 – Columbus Day, office closed
- Oct. 11 – Western Region Land Judging
- Oct. 12 – Board Meeting, 7 p.m., NPNRD Conference Room
- Oct. 29 – Daylight Savings Ends
- Nov. 7 – Election Day
- Nov. 9 – Board Meeting, 7 p.m. NPNRD Conference Room
- Nov. 16 – NPNRD Open House
- Nov. 28 – Stakeholders Meeting, TBA
- Dec. 6 – No Till Conference, Gering
- Dec. 7 – No Till Conference, Sidney
- Dec. 14 – Board Meeting, 7 p.m. NPNRD Conference Room

Board elections in 2006

The North Platte NRD board is served by nine directors, elected every four years to represent their interests of property owners and irrigators in their respective sub-districts. They are Ted Cannon, Scottsbluff; Gary Darnall, Harrisburg; Dave Deines, Gering; Jerry Dillman, Mitchell; George Hall, Bridgeport; Pete Lapasotes Jr., Bridgeport; Myron Lembke, Bridgeport; John Maser, Minatare; and Arden Wohlers, Scottsbluff.

This year five seats are up for re-election. The candidates in the November General Election will include: Sub-district 1- Gerald Dillman (I) and Burdette Kister; Sub-district 2 - Ted Cannon (I) and David Ostdiek; Sub-district 3 - Gary Darnall (I) and Leo Hoehn; Sub-district 4 - Myron Lembke (I) and Jim Hass; At Large - Pete Lapasotes Jr. (I).

No till conference coming

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in cooperation with the North Platte and South Platte NRDs and the University of Nebraska Extension, is planning a No-Till Conference on Dec. 6 and 7 in Gering and Sidney. This will be a great opportunity for producers to learn more about no-till practices, the costs involved benefits and challenges. The conferences will include guest speakers including researchers from the University of Nebraska, University of Wyoming, NRCS, soils lab and a producers' panel. Lunch, booths and door prizes will also be included. More details will be available as December approaches.

North Platte NRD has moved

The North Platte NRD office has relocated to 100547 Airport Road, Scottsbluff near the airport. Our new phone number is (308) 632-2749 and mailing address is P.O. Box 280, Scottsbluff, NE 69363-0280.

In January 2006 the NPNRD board of directors submit-

ted a sealed bid for the property to the City of Scottsbluff in the amount of \$277,500. The property included 3.63 acres and a 24,000 square foot building. The NPNRD staff worked with architect Rex Petersen to design additional

See *Relocated*, page 2



Before...February 2006 the NRD purchased the facilities formerly known as the CBIT Center near the airport from the City of Scottsbluff through a sealed bid of \$277,500.



After...Remodeling started May 15 and completed Aug. 21. The new facility includes district offices, fleet and tree storage, education center and meeting/conference rooms.

Certification of GW to begin soon

The North Platte NRD staff is making preparations to begin certifying ground water uses on October 12. On that date, the newly adopted rules and regulations for the Certification of Ground Water Uses in the NPNRD will take effect.

A public hearing was held August 31, 2006 on the proposed certification rules. According to NPNRD General Manager Ron Cacek, certification of ground water uses is required to satisfy the Integrated Management Planning process outlined by Nebraska's 2004 water law LB962 for the entire fully-appropriated area. Most of the state's natural resources districts located within fully-appropriated areas now require certification as part of their ground water management plans.

Certification of ground water, which is the verification of wells currently in use, will allow the NRD to know more accurately how much ground water is being used within the district. Certification will include irrigation, public water supplies, industrial and other uses including golf courses and ground water sources for recreation areas. Domestic and range livestock wells are exempt from certification. The Certification rules and regulations will cover all areas of the district excluding the Pumpkin Creek Basin, which has its own set of rules and regulations for ground water use.

Certification forms can be filled out at the NPNRD office, 100547 Airport Road, Scottsbluff. Appointments are required and can be made by calling (308) 632-2749. NPNRD staff will also be scheduling dates to be in the Harrisburg, Bridgeport and Oshkosh NRCS offices to help complete the certification forms.

Information that will be needed to complete the

See *Certification*, page 4

NPNRD opens talks with CNPPID

On Sept. 1, NPNRD Water Resources sub-committee members Gary Darnall, Dave Deines, Jerry Dillman and Myron Lembke met with directors of the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) at Lake McConaughy to directly discuss concerns of water equity and shortages caused by the drought.

The group addressed the proposal put forth by CNPPID in January which calls for approximately 50-percent reduction in stream flow depletions during water

See *NPNRD Talks*, page 2

Bruning Provides \$69K for Environmental Ed to Nebraska's NRDs

LINCOLN—Attorney General Jon Bruning presented \$69,000 for environmental education efforts to the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts at their annual conference in Kearney Sept. 25. The money was made available through the Attorney General's Environmental Court Ordered Settlement Fund. The fund is comprised of voluntary payments collected in court-approved settle-

"The NRDs are a main provider of environmental education in the state, particularly in our schools,"

Attorney General Jon Bruning

ments from entities that have violated state and federal environmental regulations.

Bruning said, "The NRDs are a main provider of environmental education in the state, particularly in our schools." Bruning said "Helping prevent environmental problems in the future and investing in the health and well-being of our children is an ideal way to use these funds."

Ted Hughes, President of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, said, "Attorney General Bruning's support of environmental education will help the NRDs educate Nebraskans about the importance of protecting our natural resources."

The NRDs currently provide numerous environmental education programs, including educator workshops, the Leopold Education Project, Project Wild, Natural Resources Educator of the Year and many other environmental education programs.

NPNRD talks: Shares ideas with CNPPID

Continued from page 1

shortened years from irrigators in western Nebraska. The irrigation district contended in their proposal that the shortages in Lake McConaughy were due in part by unregulated well. CNPPID directors explained their reasoning behind their proposal's emphasis on upstream ground water users and pointed to what they considered issues of equity. CNPPID irrigators have had restricted deliveries the past three years and voted in Sept. board meeting to set 2007 deliveries at 6.7 inches/acre.

"We want to work together to prolong the use of water for everyone in the basin," said CNPPID director Scott Olson of Minden. "But to do that we need equal regulations to protect the resource."

North Platte NRD also presented an outline of efforts that the district and its ground water users have made since the onset of the drought there in 2000. Those efforts include moratoriums on well drilling, ground water allocations in the Pumpkin Creek Basin sub-area of the district, and irrigated acre retirement. The board has approved new rules for the certification of ground water uses which will go into effect Oct. 12, 2006 and the NPNRD staff is now in the process of drawing up rules for the transfer of ground water.



Since 1972 the North Platte NRD has provided over 4 million conservation trees to western Nebraska landowners. Resources Specialist Roy Lyles, above, has played a major role in that effort by beginning from the ground up, teaching school students the importance of tree planting. Again this year Lyles, along with Resources Technician Craig Uhrig and Information/Education Coordinator Kay Grote, presented tree education programs at the annual Branch Out event hosted by ESU#13. Lyles has been with the NRD for 20 years.

Office relocated

Continued from page 1

design additional offices and an interior tree cooler. Remodeling began in May 2006 with Rusch Construction, Inc. as general contractor. The remodeling project was completed within 90 days and the staff made the move on August 21-22 from their former location on Rundell Road in Gering. That property was sold to Triplephl, Inc. the end of August.

After investing approximately \$200,000 for remodeling, the former warehouse and classroom building is now a functional, attractive, and more centrally located for the District's offices. The shop area is large enough to house the District's fleet of vehicles, conservation equipment, and new walk-in tree cooler. The large conference room and a smaller meeting/education room will better accommodate the public and district events.

The staff and board of directors are extremely pleased with the completed project, which would have cost an approximate \$1.3 million to build from the ground up. They commend all the contractors, sub-contractors and their employees for the exceptional work. The public is invited to stop in and visit the new office. An open house is scheduled for November 16.

NPNRD opts for three-cent levy raise

During the annual Budget and Final Tax Request hearings held Sept. 14, the NRD board voted unanimously to increase the district's total levy by three cents to .078297 for Fiscal Year 2007. NPNRD General Manager Ron Cacek explained that due to special provisions made by the state legislature in LB1226, the state's natural resources districts have only one year to increase their tax levies by three cents. The additional revenue must be used for costs associated with programs and conservation practices needed to comply with the state's new water law, LB962.

Districts statewide that are required to return

their ground water use to 1997 levels, such as those in the overappropriated Platte River Basin, are beginning to incur additional expenses as they implement programs including irrigated acre retirement, special Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) incentives, invasive species removal and other efforts. Through the LB1226 provision, such districts are allowed to raise their levies an additional three cents in 2007, two cents in 2008 and 2009.

In August the NRD's budget subcommittee conducted a line-item review of the district's proposed FY-07 budget. After adjustments, the group made a recommenda-

tion to include \$800,000 for the additional taxing levy allowed by LB1226. The district's total 2006-2007 property tax request is \$2,136,713.30. Last year's levy was .054684. The three-cents represent a 41 percent increase. The district's maximum allowed levy is 8.5 cents per \$100 valuation.

The additional revenue will be used specifically for more irrigated acre retirement programs throughout the district and studies and incentives needed to comply with LB962 and the pending Platte River Recovery Implementation Program.

Such programs that the district has already committed to include a study with the U.S. Geological Survey of the district's canals to determine leakage rates and locations and a feasibility study with Natural Resources Conservation Service for using existing dams in the district to augment flows into the North Platte River. Such studies may result in intentional recharge projects which would help maintain western Nebraska ground water aquifers and improve the base flows of the North Platte River.

What will the revenue be used for?

The additional revenue must be used specifically for programs, studies and incentive programs to help the district get ground water use down to 1997 levels. The North Platte NRD has designated the following areas of concentration for the additional \$800,000 revenue:

-- **Canal Leakage Study** conducted in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey. \$200,000. This study will be conducted on five major canals within the 27 irrigation district in the North Platte River valley upstream of Lewellen. This study will assist in developing intentional recharge projects which would help maintain western Nebraska ground water aquifers and improve the base flows of the North Platte River.

-- **Retirement of Irrigated Acres** in Pumpkin Creek Basin and potentially other areas of the district. \$187,500. Last year approximately 2,500 acres of irrigated acres were taken out of production in the Pumpkin Creek Basin and converted to dryland crops, wildlife habitat or range. Additional money will be used to continue the program.

-- **Feasibility Study** in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for using

existing dams to augment flows to the North Platte River. \$100,000. Work in this area could potentially provide information and supporting data for stimulating additional flow for downstream water users.

-- **Studies and incentives** to meet obligations under LB962. \$125,000. Efforts will continue to develop programs for the removal of water-costing invasive species along the North Platte River and its tributaries within the district.

All the above efforts could minimize the need for additional regulatory controls on district irrigators.

All of the above efforts will potentially protect the district, its ground water users and constituents from costly litigation from downstream water users.

The North Platte NRD has opened dialog and is currently working with Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) to develop a water-sharing and drought management plan. Many of the above mentioned programs will dovetail into these efforts. A good-faith effort by the North Platte NRD and its constituents will go a long way in smoothing relations with central and eastern Nebraska water users, both agriculture and municipal/industrial.

PRRIP Update

The third and final opinion gathering meeting on the Platte River Recovery Implementation Plan will be held Oct. 10 at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln. Testimony gathered at the first two meetings in Gering and Grand Island indicated that there is a division among the state. Gov. Dave Heineman said he will issue his final decision sometime between the Oct. 17 meeting of his advisory committee and the Nov. 7 general election.

The NPNRD, along with other western Nebraska interests, have supported the signing of the plan. Despite its high price tag, the plan would provide definite perimeters for the use of the Platte River for irrigation and the endangered species. Without a program, projects with federal ties may be subject to individual compliance reviews by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Heineman said that's of great concern to Panhandle residents because surface water irrigators there get their water from federal Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs in Wyoming. They believe Endangered Species Act compliance without a program will be very difficult and very costly, he said.

Jim Cook, legal counsel with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, said Sept. 25 at the NARD convention in Kearney that one estimate of economic effects for the Panhandle is \$364 million in 13 years.

Some natural resources districts, however, view the plan as a major threat to ground water users. Central Platte NRD of Grand Island voted unanimously at their September board meeting to strongly oppose the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, recommending that a cost/benefit analysis be completed before signing an agreement.

See PRRIP, page 4

Resources

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Tree Orders Starting

It's time to start thinking about your 2007 Conservation Tree planting plans. Fall is a great time to visualize a new shelter belt or filling in an existing tree row. Fall foliage makes us think about the benefits of trees, whether breaking cooler winds or providing colorful beauty and increasing value to our property.

Orders are now being taken and "tree guys" Roy Lyles and Craig Uhrig are available to visit about your shelter belt measurements and requirements. They can help you design a tree plot to meet your needs and advise you about the best soil and terrain types to plant trees.

New nursery varieties are also available this year. Remember, cost share is available for planting conservation trees, so start early for a productive and well-planned spring planting season. Call 632-2749 to get started.



Nebraska's NRDS
making the Good Life
better since 1972

NARD Annual Conference

Leaders seek water shortage strategies

As the drought continues, so do ideas for making every drop of water count. During an address to the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts held Sept. 25-26 in Kearney, acting DNR director Ann Bleed said all water users and decision makers need to get into the habit of planning for long term drought.

Bleed explained a recent meeting she had with researchers at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) indicate stronger evidence of rising temperatures and lower precipitation. She said NOAA predicted between 2010 and 2015 temperatures will rise on average five to ten degrees and precipitation will decrease between 15 and 30 percent with more of the precipitation coming in the form of rain rather than snow. That could mean bad news for our snowmelt levels at the heads of major river basins. Stream flows are predicted to show a 17 percent decrease between the years 2010 and 2039. "Let's hope they're wrong," Bleed said of the predictions. "But we shouldn't take the chance."

Bleed said managers and directors of the state's 23 NRDS are now in the position to make some lead decisions concerning the state's water picture. She said due to statewide surface water regulations, the DNR is done issuing surface water rights, leaving individual NRDS to decide when and how much of the state's remaining water resources should be used. Bleed said NRD leaders will be ones who will make Nebraska's major water decisions in the 21st century. Bleed said the DNR is very anxious to work with the NRD boards to find answers to a sustainable water future.

Locally, efforts continue with the NPNRD board and its stakeholders group. On Sept. 1 members of the NPNRD board and staff met with representatives of Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) of Holdrege to discuss possibilities of jointly developing equitable water use and drought management plans. Related talks are planned to continue. Rules for the Certification of Ground Water Uses in the district were approved Sept. 14 and will go into effect Oct. 12, 2006. New rules are also being developed for the transfer of ground water within the district.

During the Stakeholders meeting held Sept. 28 in Scottsbluff, local surface and ground water users, municipal and industry interests discussed the possibility of using allocations to help better manage all ground water uses within the district. The NPNRD will be working jointly with the South Platte NRD and the University of Nebraska studying the recharge relationships and rates of canals within the district for the purpose of developing intentional recharge projects. Work continues on the removal of invasive species along major waterways to save ground water use. The NPNRD board is also considering the use of flow meters to help better quantify ground water uses.



Former NPNRD board Chairman Jim Olson of Oshkosh, right, received the 2006 Director of the Year award, presented by Ted Hughes. Olson served the NPNRD for 20 years and led conservation efforts on Pumpkin Creek. Below, Ray Boice and Lois Herbel accept the award for OWH Master Conservationist Youth-Group for the Schoolyard Habitat at Cedar Canyon School.



The NPNRD was well represented at the 2006 NARD Conference with three State award winners.

At left are the 2006 Omaha World-Herald Master Conservationist Production Agriculture winners in Dist. A, the Laux Family of Bridgeport, represented by Bill and Kirk Laux (center). Presenting the award are representatives from the Omaha World-Herald and Ted Hughes, NARD board president. The Laux family was honored for their efforts in no-till cropping practices, and soil and water conservation efforts on their farming operation in Morrill County. They were nominated by Dr. Gary Hergert.

Certification: Rules effective Oct. 12

Continued from page 1

certification process will include aerial photographs or maps of irrigated tracts of land, registration numbers of wells historically used to irrigate each tract, sources of irrigation water other than groundwater, USDA-FSA records and FSA Form 578 for Program Year 2004 and/or county assessor records.

The schedule for completion of certification is Jan. 1, 2007 for all of Garden and Sioux Counties; May 1, 2007

for all of Morrill and Banner Counties; and Jan. 1, 2008 for all of Scotts Bluff Counties. Producers are welcome to complete their certification at any time prior to these deadlines.

The complete text of rules for Certification of Ground Water Uses is posted on the district's website, www.npnrd.org or can be viewed at the district office. For more information, please call or stop by.

PRRIP update: Continued from page 3

On Sept. 28 the Secretary of the Interior signed off on the PRRIP, approving Interior's participation in the \$300 million, basin-wide plan.

Representatives from the Interior call the recovery program "an outstanding collaborative effort among interest groups to cooperatively address the needs of endangered

species and ensure that current uses of basin water can continue."

Western Nebraska water users have wished the Endangered Species Act would "go away," but consider the PRRIP a viable alternative to trying to fight the endangered species issue on their own.