



LOWER PLATTE NORTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT

Dedicated to the conservation, preservation and wise use of our natural resources.

Program Highlights

1998



Lake Project Makes Progress in 1998

The century may be winding down, but a long-discussed lake project near Wahoo is starting to build up steam.

Lake Wanahoo, named after an area dance park from several decades ago, is a proposed 637-surface-acre

reservoir one mile north of Wahoo. The project, to be built in conjunction with the Highway 77 bypass around Wahoo, will provide flood control and public recreation.

In April 1998, after five years of studies and discussion, the Lower Platte North NRD, the city of Wahoo, and Saunders County formally agreed to pursue Lake Wanahoo. With this firm commitment from each of the partners, the project began making rapid progress.

In September, the NRD declared *cont. on page 2*

Ordnance Plant Cleanup Continues

In 1998, a groundwater cleanup operation that could take a century or more got underway at the former Nebraska Ordnance Plant near Mead.

Two wells came on line in October, pumping contaminated water to an on-site treatment plant. Twelve more wells are planned, so the spread of contaminants can be contained while the cleanup proceeds. Current estimates have the cleanup operation taking anywhere from 90 to 120 years.

At present, treated water from the groundwater cleanup is being discharged to Clear Creek. However, the NRD is investigating the possibility of using this water for a rural water system in Saunders County.

The ordnance plant was used to build bombs during World War II and the Korean Conflict, and later as an Atlas missile site. Over time, the soil and water under the site became contaminated with explosives and degreasers.

The area was eventually declared a Superfund site, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began working

on a cleanup plan. The soil cleanup was completed in late 1997. More than 17,000 tons of soil were burned in an incinerator built at the site.



End of the Line

Workers begin disassembling one of the "load line" buildings at the former Nebraska Ordnance Plant near Mead. The buildings housed assembly lines where bombs were filled during World War II and the Korean Conflict.

IN BRIEF

Elkhorn River IPA

The Elkhorn River Breakout IPA, a project to halt erosion damage from the river southeast of Fremont, was completed in spring 1998. The project was a joint effort of the Lower Platte North and Papio-Missouri River NRDs, the state and federal Emergency Management Agencies, and area landowners.

Free Trees to Schools

More than 1,800 trees were given to area schools by the Lower Platte North NRD for Arbor Day 1998. Students were encouraged to plant the trees at home or in other locations where trees were damaged by the October 1997 snowstorm.

Sensation-al Spring

Nearly 300 elementary students attended the 6th annual Spring Conservation Sensation at Czechland Lake on May 6. Students spent the day doing hands-on activities involving water, wildlife, forestry, and other natural resources topics.

Tornado Damage Cleanup

In June 1998, a tornado in Platte County deposited a significant amount of debris in Loeske and Shell Creeks, creating a flood hazard. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, the NRD and the county cooperated on a \$150,000+ project to clear the creeks.

Cost-share for Conservation

Cost-share programs offered by the Lower Platte North NRD helped build three dams, 126,433 linear feet of terraces, 56,618 linear feet of tile outlets, and 21,855 linear feet of basins and diversions in 1998.

Anchors Aweigh

Construction began on a Platte River boat ramp in Fremont's Hormel Park in winter 1998. The ramp will provide free public access to the river and should be open in summer 1999.



Piers Dynamited Out of Platte River to Prevent Ice Jams

Removing ice hazards from the Platte River turned out to be a real bang for the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Eighteen concrete railroad piers, each 12 feet high and 35 feet long, were dynamited out of the river north of Cedar Bluffs in December 1998 and January 1999.

In all, nearly two tons of explosives were used.

In the spring, debris and ice often piled up on the piers, causing flooding in the Cedar Lakes Housing and Cabin Area. With the main channels of the river clear, flood problems should be diminished, said Bob Heimann, NRD Operations and Maintenance Manager.

Wanahoo cont. from page 1

the project site a "Flood Control Improvement Corridor." The designation allows the NRD to negotiate with landowners in the project area before any new building permits are issued. This gives the district the opportunity to discourage changes in land use, to prevent artificial inflation of land prices before the project is built. The city and county also approved changes in their zoning to complement the flood control corridor.

The partners also worked throughout 1998 to secure funding for the estimated \$11.7 million project. Each partner agreed to provide \$750,000, with the potential of going up to \$1 million each. The Nebraska Department of Roads pledged an additional \$2.4 million.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is studying the project and could contribute up to 65 percent of the cost. Additional funds are being sought from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, and the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

Near the end of 1998, a full-time coordinator was hired for the project. Mike Murren of Colon will work on funding, land rights acquisition, and other issues related to Lake Wanahoo.

In 1999, the partners will finalize funding and the lake design. Land rights acquisition should get underway in mid-summer. If all goes as scheduled, construction will begin on the lake in 2001, as the Highway 77 bypass is completed.

Skull Creek Site #55 on Track for Year 2000

Skull Creek Site #55, a proposed flood control project near Bruno, came several steps closer to becoming a reality in 1998.

To receive matching funds for the project from the state, the NRD was required to have 75% land treatment above the dam site. Throughout the year, the district worked with landowners and Butler County to achieve that goal.

Terraces, grassed waterways, tree plantings, and a small road dam were installed, among other measures. As the year came to a close, the NRD reached the 75% mark.

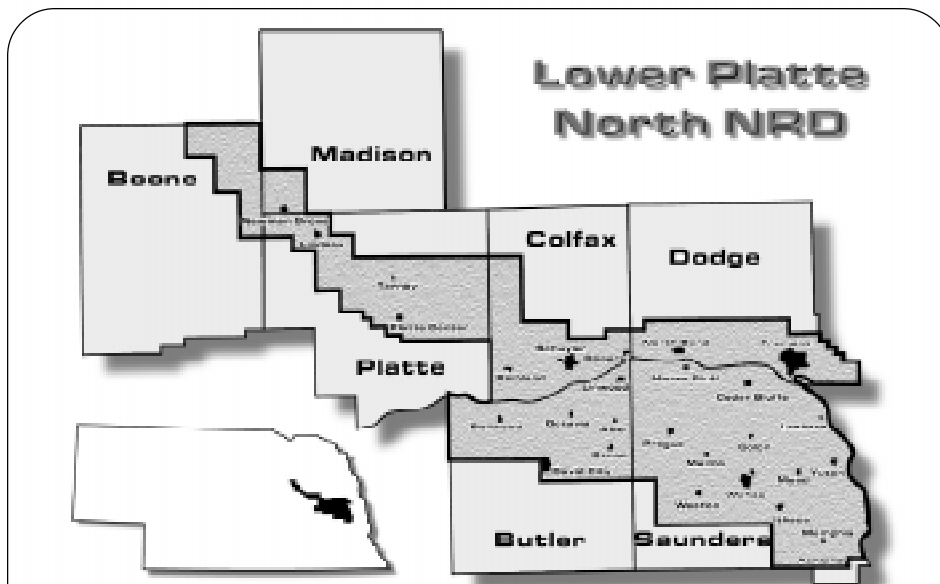
Now, with the land treatment measures in place, the district stands a good chance of receiving state funding for the project in the spring,

said Tom Mountford, NRD assistant manager.

If state funds are allocated as expected, the district hopes to begin land rights negotiations in late spring or early summer. If all goes as planned, construction should begin in the year 2000.

"The opportunity to build this multipurpose dam is thanks to the strong support of area landowners," Mountford said. "Without their conservation efforts, this project wouldn't be possible."

In addition to flood control, Site #55 will provide public recreation, including fishing and primitive camping. A steering committee made up of local residents will help guide recreation development at the site.



The Lower Platte North Natural Resources District, based in Wahoo, covers parts of seven counties in eastcentral Nebraska. The Lower Platte North is one of 23 NRDs in Nebraska. NRDs are charged with developing and protecting the state's natural resources, in partnership with landowners and other government agencies.

The district is financed by a property

tax levy that is limited by law to 4.5 cents per \$100 of valuation. Typically, the NRD uses between 1.5 and 2 percent of local property tax dollars. Other funding comes from state and federal grants.

The district is governed by 19 locally-elected directors from nine subdistricts. See box at right for a list of staff and directors at the LPNDRD.

the ANNUAL REPORT

is distributed once a year in newspapers in the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District. The report was written and designed by Troy Thompson, Information & Education Specialist.

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Keith Lallman	1
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Steven E. Grueber	3
Ted Bailey	3
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Clinton Johannes	5
Annette Mastry	6
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Donald Kavan	8
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LeRoy Nelson	9
Ervin Bull	9
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Bob Heimann	O&M Manager
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Scott Nelson	Water Resources Specialist
Shaula Ross	Water Resources Specialist
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Susie Leu	Butler County
Carol Prokesh	Saunders County
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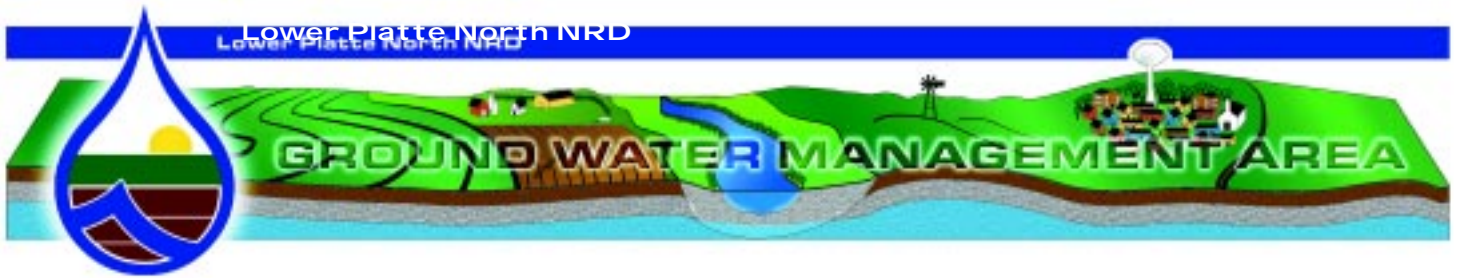
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Producers, NRD Work for Water Quality

There was no sophomore slump for the Lower Platte North NRD's Ground Water Management Area (GWMA).

Throughout 1998, the second year of the GWMA, hundreds of producers took advantage of the NRD's cost-share opportunities, nitrogen management training, and other programs designed to protect water quality.

In March, 639 producers attended nitrogen management certification training at various sites throughout the district. Producers are required to attend the training once every four years under the GWMA rules and regulations.

Four hundred and fifty producers also requested free nitrate sampling kits in 1998. One hundred and seventy-two kits had been returned for analysis by December.

Fertilizer calibration meters and

anhydrous distribution manifolds were popular items as well. The NRD provided \$31,900 in cost-share for 29 meters and \$4,650 for 16 manifolds.

Cost-share funds totaling \$10,832 also helped cap 37 wells thanks to the district's Abandoned Well Program.

Several producers took advantage of the district's Ultrasonic Flow Meter Program. For a fee, producers can request a flow meter check to see how much water their irrigation system is using.

In all, it was a successful year for the Ground Water Management Area.

"We feel the producers in our district are committed to protecting our ground water, and hundreds of them proved it this year," said Larry Angle, NRD Water Resources Manager.



Go With the Flow

An ultrasonic flow meter test is a quick and easy way for producers to check the efficiency of their irrigation systems.

WATER BRIEFS

Chemigation Permits

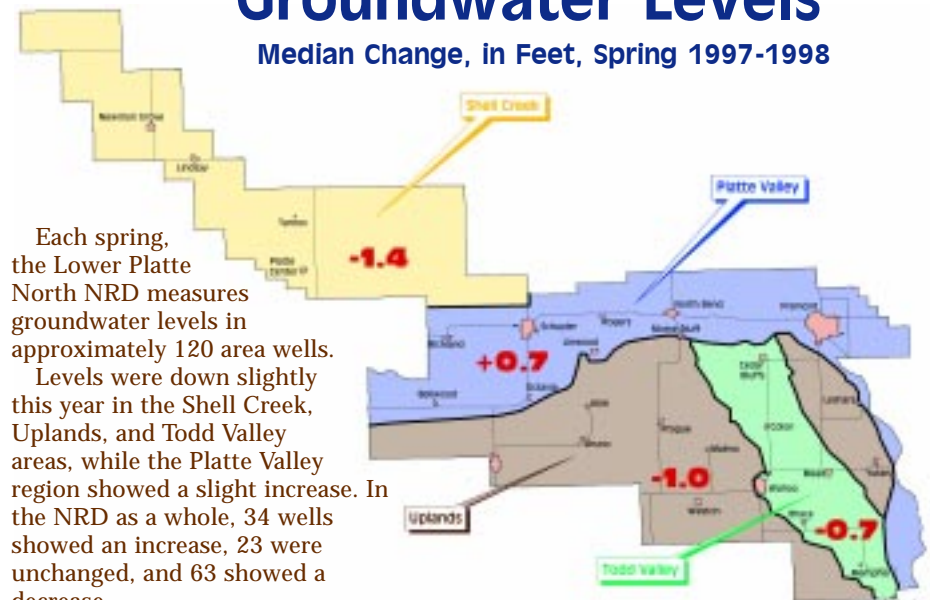
In 1998, there were 277 active chemigation permits in the Lower Platte North NRD. Of these, 28 were new permits. Renewal forms for 1999 will be mailed in April; the deadline to renew permits is June 1.

Sample Kits Available

Water samples are required every 4 years from owners of irrigation, industrial and municipal wells. Free sample kits are available by contacting the NRD at (402) 443-4675, or by mailing a postage-paid request card, available at Extension, NRCS, and FSA offices, and at most area coops and fertilizer dealers.

Groundwater Levels

Median Change, in Feet, Spring 1997-1998



Each spring, the Lower Platte North NRD measures groundwater levels in approximately 120 area wells.

Levels were down slightly this year in the Shell Creek, Uplands, and Todd Valley areas, while the Platte Valley region showed a slight increase. In the NRD as a whole, 34 wells showed an increase, 23 were unchanged, and 63 showed a decrease.