



Wanahoo Site Declared "Flood Control Corridor"

Designation Will Help Preserve Lake Site

The Lake Wanahoo project cleared another hurdle recently, when the project site was declared a "Flood Control Improvement Corridor."

The Lower Platte North NRD Board of Directors voted to approve the corridor designation at their regular monthly meeting on Sept. 14. The Improvement Corridor will cover about 2½ square miles of the Sand Creek flood plain directly north of Wahoo, in sections 15, 22 and 27.

Creation of the Improvement Corridor was prompted by recent applications to the city for zoning changes in the Lake Wanahoo area. With the corridor in place, the NRD can discourage construction activities and help preserve the lake site.

"The corridor allows us to negotiate with landowners before any new building permits are issued," NRD

Manager John Miyoshi explained. "We'd like the land use in the corridor to stay the same as it is now, so that prices aren't overinflated when we start negotiating for land rights."

Flood Control Improvement Corridors were authorized under a 1994 law, but this is the first time an NRD has used that authority. The law gives the NRD a 60-day response period when landowners in the corridor seek a building permit from the county or city.

If the NRD finds the building project won't impinge on the lake site, the permit will be granted. If there are concerns about the project, the permit can be held for up to six months while the district negotiates with the landowner.

The outcome of the negotiation

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Director Don Gaeth, 1923-1998

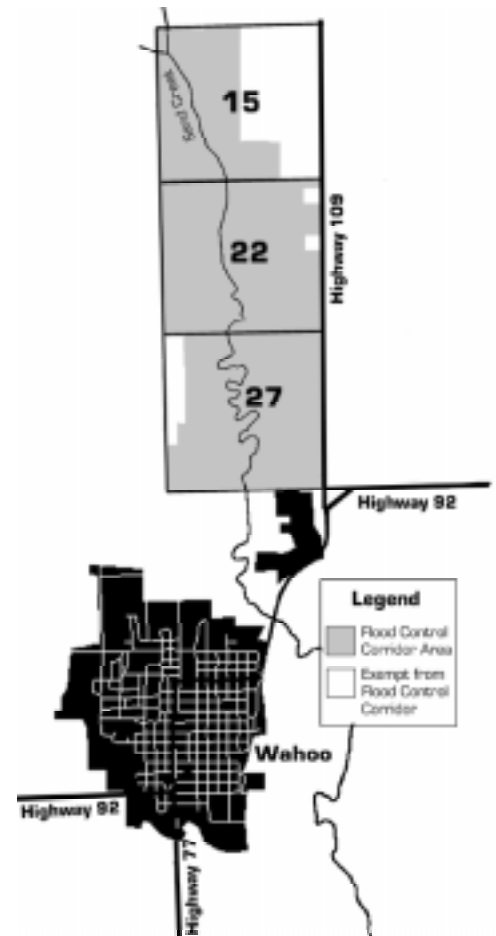
Longtime Lower Platte North NRD Director Don Gaeth, age 75, passed away on August 13, 1998.

Gaeth, who farmed near Schuyler for many years, demonstrated a lifelong commitment to conservation. He helped form the NRD board in 1972, after serving for a number of years on the Loeske Creek Watershed Board. He was a founding member of the NRD's Projects Committee and played an integral role in flood



control efforts across the district. Upon his retirement in April 1998, he was honored as the district's first Director Emeritus.

The staff and directors of the Lower Platte North NRD would like to express their gratitude for Gaeth's long service and extend their condolences to his family and friends.



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IN BRIEF

Platte River Boat Ramp Approved

The Lower Platte North NRD has received permission from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to proceed with the Platte River boat ramp project at Fremont's Hormel Park. The free public access ramp will be built over the winter and spring and should be open for use in summer 1999.

Elkhorn River Breakout IPA Dedicated

The Lower Platte North NRD sponsored a dedication ceremony for the Elkhorn River Breakout Improvement Project Area on June 29. Attending were landowners and representatives from the sponsoring agencies. Over the summer, the project was tested by several storms and proved effective at preventing further erosion damage from the Elkhorn River southeast of Fremont.

Wanahoo cont.

could take several forms. For instance, the permit could be voluntarily withdrawn or altered to address the NRD's concerns, an easement could be granted, or the district could purchase the land.

Approximately 20 people attended a public hearing on the Improvement Corridor before the Sept. 14 board meeting. There were a number of questions about the corridor designation and what it meant, but no strong objections were voiced.

With the Improvement Corridor in place, the NRD will now focus on finalizing funding sources and completing the final design for Lake Wanahoo. Land rights negotiations should begin in 1999. Construction of the lake is tentatively scheduled for 2001.

Landowners Updated on Skull Creek Site #55

Skull Creek Site #55, a proposed dam project near Bruno, is making steady progress toward a year 2000 construction date.

That was the message to landowners at a public meeting in Bruno on August 21. Approximately 25 people attended to hear an update from Lower Platte North NRD representatives Tom Mountford and Kathy Vasa.

Site #55, the linchpin of the NRD's Skull Creek Watershed Project, is located one mile north of Bruno. The site is intended for a 37-surface-acre reservoir providing flood control and outdoor recreation.

The NRD is close to meeting a critical funding requirement for the project, said Vasa, Special Projects Coordinator. The Nebraska Resources Development Fund will pick up three-quarters of the \$659,924 project cost -- if the land above the site has at least 75 percent land treatment (terraces or other conservation measures).

"We're at about 68% right now, and with the contracts we have signed, we should easily reach the 75% mark by the end of the year, assuming the weather cooperates," Vasa said.

Engineering and final design of the project also should be completed by the end of the year, said Mountford, NRD Assistant Manager.

Throughout 1999, the district will focus on obtaining the necessary land rights, Mountford said.

"We hope to have all of the land rights in place by the end of 1999, so we can shoot for construction in the year 2000," he said.

Over the next few months, the NRD will be assembling a steering committee of local residents to help guide recreation development and other aspects of the Site #55 project. Skull Creek area residents who are interested in serving on the committee are encouraged to contact the NRD at (402) 443-4675 or toll-free 1-888-764-0543.

NRD Budget Set at \$2.8 Million

The Lower Platte North NRD's budget for fiscal year 1999 will be \$2,839,333.

Property taxes will account for \$1.1 million, or about 40 percent, of the total budget. The rest of the \$1.7 million will come from state and federal grants and other outside sources.

This year's budget reflects a \$715,000 increase (approximately 25 percent) over fiscal year 1998. However, the property tax levy will actually drop to 4.14 cents per one hundred dollars of valuation, compared to 1998's 4.22 cents. The lower levy was made possible by an average increase in property valuations of

more than nine percent, and an increased level of funding from outside sources.

The majority of the budget increase is due to two large projects that are nearing their final stages: Skull Creek Site #55 and Lake Wanahoo.

What Is the Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE?

The Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance is a coalition of state and local agencies concerned with the future of the Platte River, particularly the stretch from Columbus to Plattsmouth. The Lower Platte North NRD was one of the charter members of the Alliance in 1996, along with seven other agencies.

The intent of the Alliance is to support locally-led efforts to protect the river, and to bring together all of the stakeholders in the Corridor to help plan the river's future.

Fore!

Corridor Alliance Sponsors Golf Open, Airboat Tour

It was a busy summer for the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance. The group sponsored a golf tournament and an airboat tour to raise awareness of the Alliance and foster communication between members and the public.

Nearly 120 people golfed in the "Water Quality Invitational" at Quarry Oaks Golf Course near Mahoney State Park on July 30.

"We had a really broad mix of people," said Diana Allen, Alliance Coordinator. "About 60 percent of them were from the private arena, and the rest were from government agencies, so we felt like we had a good split."

The invitational was partially subsidized by engineering and business firms, which helped keep entry fees down, Allen noted.

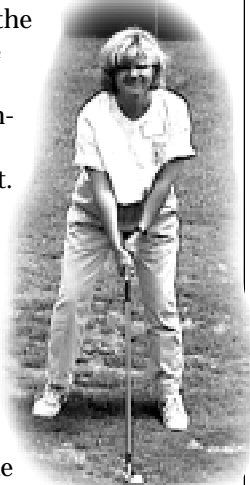
The airboat tour was held for local elected officials on August 14.

The tour started in

Columbus, near the confluence of the Loup and Platte rivers, and continued down the Platte to Fremont.

At stops along the tour, the 30+ officials heard presentations on flood-plain management, wildlife habitat and recreation, private wells and septic systems. Near the town of Cedar Bluffs, the group saw a bank stabilization and jetty project in "Gaughen's Bottom," and a series of bridge piers scheduled for demolition.

The tour was partially funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

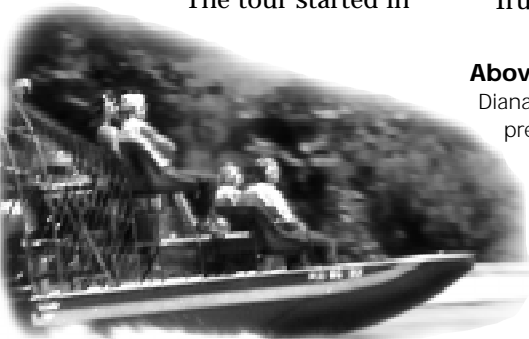


Above:

Diana Allen, Coordinator of the LPRCA, prepares to tee off at the "Water Quality Invitational" at Quarry Oaks.

Left:

Local elected officials enjoy an airboat tour of the Lower Platte River.



THE VIADUCT

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NRD Cost-share Funds Available for Fertilizer Meters, Manifold Systems

To encourage efficient and responsible fertilizer application, the Lower Platte North NRD has cost-share funds available for purchasing fertilizer calibration meters and anhydrous distribution manifold systems.

The cost-share rate for calibration meters is 50 percent of the actual cost, up to a maximum of \$1,100. The funds are limited to one meter per owner/operator. For distribution manifolds, the cost-share rate is 50 percent of actual cost, up to a maximum of \$300.

The deadline for applying for cost-share on these items for the next fiscal year is January 20, 1999.

Cost-share is also available for manure testing and manure management software. The district will pay \$25 per manure test for up to three tests per year. For the software, the district will pay \$10 of the \$15 cost.

For more information or to request an application form, contact the NRD at (402) 443-4675 (local) or 1-888-764-0543 (toll-free).

450+ Nitrate Kits Requested in 1998

Nitrate sampling kits have proved to be a popular item in the Lower Platte North NRD for the second year in a row.

More than 450 kits have been mailed out since the beginning of 1998, said Scott Nelson, NRD Water Resources Specialist. Of those, more than 150 of have already been returned and tested.

The district provides the kits free to owners of irriga-

tion, municipal, and industrial wells. Nitrate tests are required from those wells once every four years in the NRD's Ground Water Management Area.

The district still has kits available. To request one, contact the NRD at (402) 443-4675 (local) or 1-888-764-0543. Postage-paid request cards are also available from county extension, NRCS, and FSA offices, and at most area coops and fertilizer dealers.

WATER BRIEFS

No Fertilizer Applications Before Nov. 1

A reminder to operators with row crops in non-sandy soils: application of commercial nitrogen fertilizer is prohibited until after Nov. 1 in the Lower Platte North NRD's Ground Water Management Area.

Generally, soil temperatures are below 50 degrees by Nov. 1. The low temperature keeps the fertilizer inactive and prevents nitrate from leaching into groundwater over the winter, said Frank Albrecht, the NRD's Lead Water Resources Specialist.

For row crops in sandy soils, commercial fertilizer application is prohibited for the entire fall and winter. Commercial fertilizer can be applied to sandy soils after March 1.