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# VIADUCT

LOWER PLATTE NORTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

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

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## Honoring the Past



As construction gets underway, the Skull Creek Site #55 project has a new name.

Site #55, a 37-surface-acre reservoir now under construction near Bruno, will officially be known as "Homestead Lake - Bruno, Nebraska." The name was chosen by the Lower Platte North NRD Board of Directors from 50 entries in a "Name the Lake" contest.

The winning entry came from Jim and Jean Polivka of Bruno, who owned 40 acres that were purchased for the project. The land was homesteaded in the 1800s and had been in the Polivka family ever since. The original idea for the lake name came from Jean.

"The Polivkas have been great to work with on this project, and our Board liked Jean's idea for the lake name because it gave a sense of the

*con't on pg. 2*

### Clearing the Way

A construction crew begins clearing the site for Homestead Lake - Bruno, Nebraska. The dam is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

**HOMESTEAD**  
**LAKE**   
Bruno, Nebraska

## Wildlife habitat program revamped

# From WHIP to WILD

WHIP has gone WILD.

In other words, the Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program is being reinvented for the new millennium. WHIP and several other habitat programs are being replaced by a new program, "WILD Nebraska."

WILD Nebraska, like its predecessors, will offer landowners cost-share payments for setting aside land for wildlife habitat. However, there are some important differences in the new program, especially in cost-share rates.

In WHIP, payment rates were fixed at a set price per acre statewide.

WILD will offer variable payment rates based on average county rental rates, which should translate to greatly increased per-acre payments.

WILD will also offer more flexibility in payment schedules; cooperators may receive a lump-sum payment at the beginning of their 10-year contract, or annual payments for the first five years. Under WHIP, the only payment option was annual payments each year of the contract.

Many familiar habitat practices have carried over to WILD, including shelterbelts, native shrub plantings, irrigation tailwater recovery, and others. Like WHIP, WILD Nebraska is a cooperative effort between the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and individual NRDs.

The Lower Platte North NRD is participating in the new program, and is accepting new WILD Nebraska signups now. (Existing WHIP contracts will remain unchanged for the duration of their contract period.) For more information or to receive a signup form, contact Bob Heimann at (402) 443-4675.



*cont'd from pg. 1*

history of the area," said Tom Mountford, NRD Assistant Manager. "That land had been in the same family for more than a century, but they were willing to sell it to us because they knew the lake was needed to control flooding in the area. We're glad we can honor that sacrifice."

For submitting the winning entry, Jean received a \$100 savings bond. Homestead Lake was chosen from five top entries recommended by the NRD's Operations and Education Committee. Rounding out the top 5 were (in alphabetical order):

- Moravian Lake (submitted by Tyler Baumert of North Bend);
- Prairie View Lake (submitted by Cale Went of Platte Center);
- Trail Wind Lake (submitted by Tanner Jazwick of Platte Center);
- Tumble Water Lake (submitted by BT

Schefersman of Fremont).

The NRD Board chose Kobus Earth Moving of David City as the contractor for the project. Kobus submitted the low bid of \$288,280 to construct the lake. Work began on the project in early August and is expected to be completed before the end of the year. The lake will be developed for fishing and other public recreation in 2001.

The total cost for the project, including studies, design and engineering, land rights, and construction, is approximately \$660,000. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources is providing \$494,943 from the Nebraska Resources Development Fund for the project. The remaining 25 percent of the funding (\$164,981) will come from the Lower Platte North NRD. In addition, the Nebraska Environmental Trust provided grants totaling \$220,000 for land treatment work above the structure site.

# NRD Office Expansion Complete

Work is complete on an expansion project at the Lower Platte North NRD's office in Wahoo.

A 2,000-square-foot addition was added to the north side of the district headquarters at 511 Commercial Park Road, providing badly-needed office space for the district's employees. Prior to the expansion, office space was so tight that several employees were sharing space in the board room.

The addition has provided space for nine new cubicles, one new walled office, a new conference room, a new copy room, and two handicapped-accessible restrooms. A 1,000-square-foot basement was added under the west half of the addition to provide storage space, and a new concrete parking area was added on the north side of the building.

The addition was designed by JEO Incorporated and constructed by Gifford Realty of Fremont at a cost of \$292,000.

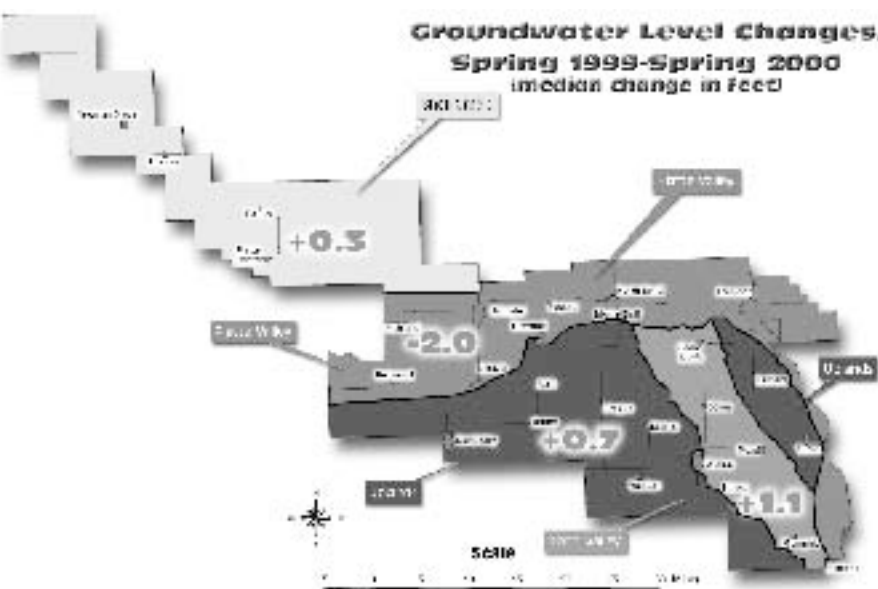


**Top:** NRD office expansion during construction, February 2000.



**Bottom:** Expansion completed, August 2000.

## Groundwater Levels Increase in 3 Out of 4 Aquifer Regions



Groundwater levels rose in three out of the four aquifer regions in the Lower Platte North NRD from spring 1999 to spring 2000, according to measurements from the district's monitoring well network.

Overall, 51 wells showed increases, 18 wells showed no change (+ or - 0.3 feet) and 56 wells showed a decrease (36 of those wells were in the Platte Valley, which experienced a median change of -2.0 feet).

The district measures groundwater levels twice a year (once in the spring and once in the fall). Generally, spring readings are thought to give a more accurate picture of overall groundwater levels, because they aren't influenced by crop irrigation.

For the 1999-2000 comparison, readings were taken from 125 wells in the NRD's monitoring network. The wells, owned by private co-operators, are distributed throughout the district's four major aquifer regions: Shell Creek, Platte Valley, Uplands, and Todd Valley.

# NRD Welcomes New Staff Members

The Lower Platte North NRD is pleased to welcome two new staff members to its ranks: Eric Gottschalk (Special Projects Coordinator) and McKenzie Barry (Wellhead Protection Coordinator).

Eric, a native of Wahoo, graduated from Bellevue University with a degree in Business Management. Eric and his wife Susan run an athletic apparel business, Gottschalk Athletic, in Wahoo. The Gottschalks have a daughter, Anna.

Eric's duties at the NRD include running the district's land treatment and cost-share programs and coordinating special projects such as Homestead Lake - Bruno, Nebraska (see cover).

McKenzie, who lives near Agnew with her husband Chuck, is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in Environmental Science. McKenzie has extensive experience in environmental education and a background in agriculture.

McKenzie's duties at the NRD involve working with area communities to help safeguard their water through the Wellhead Protection Program (see page 5).

Eric and McKenzie can be reached at the NRD at (402) 443-4675, or via e-mail:

[egottsch@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us](mailto:egottsch@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us)

[mbarry@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us](mailto:mbarry@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us)



**Eric Gottschalk**  
Special Programs  
Coordinator



**McKenzie Barry**  
Wellhead Protection  
Coordinator

## Free NRD Recreation Map Available



Looking for places to hike, hunt, fish, or just enjoy a picnic? A free brochure featuring all of the NRD recreation areas in Nebraska is available from the Lower Platte North NRD.

The oversize color brochure features maps and photos of the recreation areas, along with directions to each area and detailed lists of the facilities.

To request a brochure, contact the Lower Platte North NRD, 443-4675.

## IN BRIEF

### **AmeriCorps Volunteer Assists With Wellhead Protection Program**

Lisa Bratt, an environmental technician in the AmeriCorps program, is working with the Lower Platte North NRD on its Wellhead Protection Program. AmeriCorps provides college students with an hourly wage and tuition reimbursement in exchange for community service. Lisa, a UNL student, will be working at the NRD through December.

### **Water Sampling Underway**

Crews from the NRD are taking water samples in the Platte Valley throughout summer 2000. Approximately 100 samples will be collected and analyzed for nitrate content. Random samples will also be analyzed for pesticides.

### **Lake Wanahoo Waiting for Approval**

The Lake Wanahoo project, a 637-surface-acre reservoir to be constructed one mile north of Wahoo, is almost ready to move into its final phase for a planned 2002 construction date. Currently, the NRD and its partners are awaiting passage of the 2000 Water Resources Development Act, which contains funding for the project (among many others). WRDA has been held up in Congress due to a disagreement over labor requirements in the bill, but final approval is hoped for before the end of the year.

### **New Look for the Viaduct**

Subscribers may have noticed a new look for the Viaduct this issue. To go along with the new design, we've expanded to six pages to bring you more information about our projects and programs. Feedback is welcomed at (402) 443-4675, or e-mail:

[tthompsn@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us](mailto:tthompsn@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us)



## NRD Launches Wellhead Protection Program

# It's *Your* Water . . . Keep It Well!

Communities in the Lower Platte North NRD are learning how to keep their water “well,” thanks to a new program.

The Wellhead Protection Program (WHP) is a voluntary program that helps communities take a proactive approach to protecting their drinking water. The program emphasizes community involvement and leadership throughout the process.

The first step in the program is to delineate a Wellhead Protection Area around a community’s “capture zone” -- the area of land that supplies water to public wells. The capture zone is identified and mapped by a computer program, taking into account well pumping history, geologic logs from the wells, local hydrogeology of the area, direction of groundwater flow, etc. The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and the Nebraska Rural Water Association generate these maps.

Once the Wellhead Protection Area has been identified, a “Contaminant Source Inventory” is conducted. The inventory helps identify possible sources of contamination that could threaten public wells. The inventory is conducted by NRD staff in cooperation with local officials. FFA students or other local residents also may help conduct the inventory.

When the inventory is completed, the community can decide how it wants to manage any contaminant sources that were found. Possible courses of action could include ordinances, zoning, education, and/



or agreements with the county or NRD.

The program can also assist communities in developing emergency contingency plans for unexpected water shortages and in planning for new wells to accommodate future growth.

Fremont, Abie and Schuyler are the first three communities in the Lower Platte North NRD to participate in the Wellhead Protection Program. Contaminant Source Inventories have been completed for all three communities. Next, the communities will decide what action to take based on the results of the CSIs.

The Wellhead Protection Program is coordinated by McKenzie Barry, working for the NRD under a 3-year grant provided by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. Also assisting with the program is Lisa Bratt, an environmental technician sponsored by the Americorps Community Environmental Partnerships Program. For more information about Wellhead Protection, contact McKenzie or Lisa at 443-4675.





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Larry Angle .....	Water Resources Manager
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Dan Becker .....	Water Resources Specialist
Lisa Bratt .....	Americorps Volunteer
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To receive **The Viaduct**, contact:

Lower Platte North NRD  
 511 Commercial Park Road  
 P. O. Box 126  
 Wahoo, Nebraska 68066-0126  
 Phone: 402-443-4675  
 Toll-free 1-888-764-0543  
 Fax: 402-443-5339  
 E-mail: [lpnnrd@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us](mailto:lpnnrd@linux3.nrc.state.ne.us)  
 Web Site: [www.lpnnrd.org](http://www.lpnnrd.org)

# NRD Sets \$3.5 Million Budget

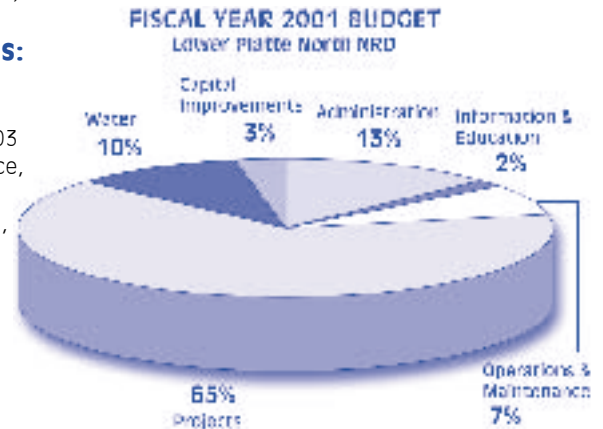
The Lower Platte North NRD's operating budget for fiscal year 2001 has been set at \$3,472,965.

The district's property tax requirement is estimated at 4.217 cents per \$100 of valuation, up slightly from 4.14 cents in fiscal year 2000.

Overall, the district will account for approximately 1.8 percent of all local property taxes. The owner of a \$75,000 house would pay approximately \$31 in taxes to the district for fiscal year 2001, which runs from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001.

**Major Budget Areas:**

- Projects, \$2,241,603
- Administration, \$447,228
- Water Programs, \$358,903
- Operations & Maintenance, \$253,816
- Information & Education, \$61,925



**LOWER PLATTE NORTH  
 NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT**

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