



Czechland Project Gets Green Light

Nebraska Environmental Trust, Department of Environmental Quality OK Grant Funds

An innovative project to protect water quality at Czechland Lake will become a reality soon, thanks to state and federal grants.

The Czechland Lake Wetland Development Project has received the go-ahead for funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality/EPA Region 7. The Trust and the NRD will provide 40 percent of the

funding, or \$44,400 each, for the \$222,000 project. DEQ/EPA will provide the remaining \$133,200.

The project will use a new approach for keeping sediment and chemicals out of the popular NRD-owned lake near Prague, said Bob Heimann, NRD Operations and Maintenance Manager.

In Phase I of the project, a silt dam will be built just upstream of the lake inlet on Cottonwood Creek. The small dam will keep water from entering the lake long enough for sediment to settle out. Such dams are a common practice for many newer flood control structures, but they



tend to silt in quickly, and costly dredging is periodically required to keep them functional. Phase II of the Czechland Project should help avoid that problem, said Heimann.

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Land Rights Negotiations to Start Soon for Wanahoo



Land rights negotiations for the Lake Wanahoo project north of Wahoo will begin in October.

Land appraisals for the project were completed in July and announced at a public hearing on August 23. The 1,657 acres of land needed for the project were appraised at a total cost of \$3.939 million. Earlier estimates pegged

the cost of acquiring land at around \$4 million, so the appraisals came in very close to what was expected.

To allow landowners time to review their appraisals, a 45-day waiting period went into effect immediately after the public hearing. During this period,

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IN BRIEF

New GIS Specialist Joins NRD

Cameron Conrad has been hired as the Lower Platte North NRD's new GIS Specialist. Cam replaces Shane Buscher, who accepted a job with a private firm in Omaha earlier this summer.

Cam, a native of Keota, Iowa, graduated from the University of Iowa in May 1999. His degree is in Geography, with specialties in GIS, Environmental Geography, and International Development.

While attending school, Cam worked for the Iowa State Geological Survey in the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Cam now lives in Lincoln.



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landowners can contact someone from the Wanahoo partnership if they have questions, but no one from the partnership is allowed to initiate contact. The partnership is made up of the NRD, the city of Wahoo, and Saunders County.

Land rights negotiations will begin after the waiting period expires on October 8, and are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

By February 2000, a draft feasibility report from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will be ready to present to Congress. If funding is allocated for the project, construction of the dam is scheduled to begin in 2002, with the final sediment control structures, wetlands, and recreational facilities in place by 2003. The Highway 77 bypass across the top of the dam is scheduled to be paved in 2004.

Skull Creek Site #55 Receives State Funds

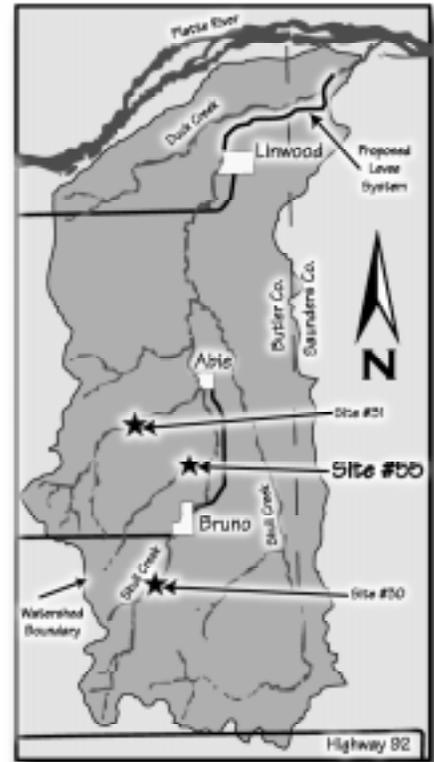
State funds have been formally allocated for Skull Creek Site #55, a multipurpose dam project north of Bruno.

The project will receive \$181,488 from the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission for fiscal year 2000. The funds will be used to pay for an already-completed feasibility study, complete the final design and engineering of the dam and recreation facilities, and purchase land rights.

The Natural Resources Commission earlier approved the Skull Creek project for a total of \$494,943 in state funds. However, this is the first time money has been formally allocated for the project. The remainder of the funds should be allocated in fiscal year 2001.

Land right appraisals for the project should be completed later this fall. The NRD hopes to have land purchases finalized by the

beginning of 2000. If negotiations are completed on schedule, the dam will be constructed in summer 2000.



Czechland Project cont'd from page 1

In Phase II, a hydrosuction dredge line will be installed to divert sediment around the lake. A pump will suck up the sediment collected by the silt dam, send it through buried pipe running along the edge of the lake, then release the sediment back into the creek. The system should increase the lifespan of both Czechland Lake and the silt dam, Heimann said. The amount of chemicals entering the lake also should be reduced, because pesticides and other chemicals

are often attached to sediment particles.

Once the first two phases are complete, the NRD will attempt to secure further grant funding for development of a wetland at the lake. During heavy flows, water will flow over the silt dam into the wetland, which will filter sediment and chemicals out of the water before it returns to the lake. A rock dam also is planned between the wetland and the lake to provide further protection during heavy flows.

\$7.07 Million Budget Set for NRD's Fiscal Year 2000

The Lower Platte North NRD's budget for fiscal year 2000 will be \$7.07 million.

The budget is substantially larger than in past years because the district is gearing up to purchase land rights for Lake Wanahoo, a proposed 637-surface-acre lake near Wahoo. However, the increase will be offset by state and federal funding for the Wanahoo project. Minus the Lake Wanahoo expenses, the district's budget for fiscal year 2000 is \$2.4 million, compared to \$2.8 million in fiscal year 1999.

The district's property tax requirement will increase slightly, from \$1,151,871 in fiscal year 1999 to \$1,267,789 in fiscal year 2000. However, because of higher valuations, the district's property

tax levy will not change from the 1999 figure of 4.14 cents per \$100 of valuation. The remainder of the budget will come from state and federal funds and other outside sources.

There are seven major program areas in the budget, including:

- ◆ Water Programs, \$294,000
- ◆ Operations and Maintenance, \$323,000
- ◆ Land Treatment, \$454,000
- ◆ Information and Education, \$56,000
- ◆ Projects \$901,000
- ◆ Lake Wanahoo, \$4,600,000
- ◆ Administration, \$439,000

Overall, the NRD will take in approximately 1.8 percent of local property tax revenues in fiscal year 2000. The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30.

VIADUCT

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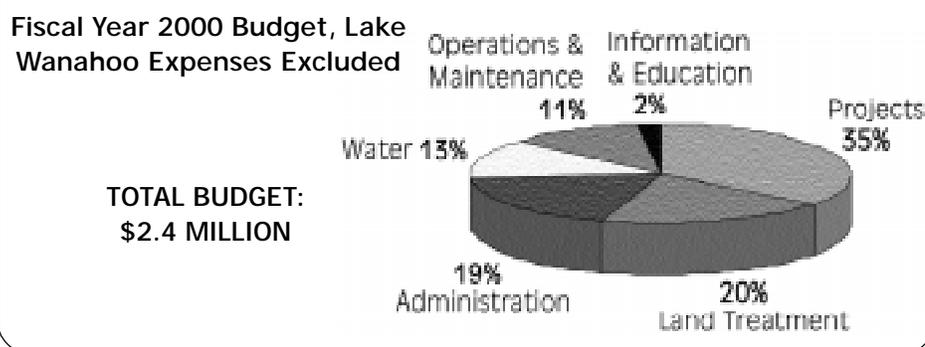
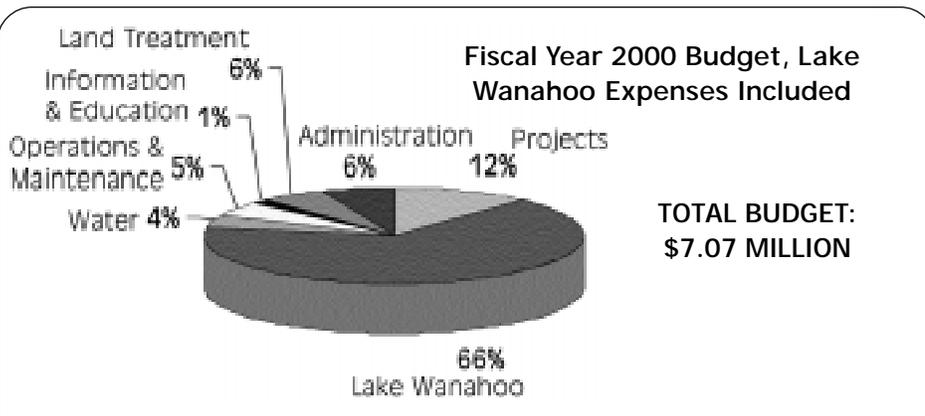
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Temporary Compromise Reached on MUD Well Field in Saunders County

A temporary cease-fire has been declared in the battle over Omaha Metropolitan Utility District wells in Saunders County.

The NRD, Saunders County and MUD reached an agreement at the NRD's July Board of Directors meeting. Under the terms of the agreement, MUD will refrain from using any wells in the Saunders County portion of their West Platte Well Field until the Nebraska Department of Water Resources can rule on a series of complaints filed by the county.

The complaints allege various violations of state law relating to the permitting and registration of the MUD wells.

The controversial well field south of Yutan is planned to

eventually include 26 wells in Saunders County and 21 wells in Douglas County, serving customers in the Omaha metro area and outlying regions. No wells have started operation yet. However, area residents are concerned that when the wells become operational, they could lower groundwater levels in the Wann Basin, the primary source of drinking water for the area. Many farmers in the area also rely on the Basin for irrigation and subirrigation.

The Department of Water Resources is expected to reach a decision on the Saunders County complaints before the end of the year. Depending on the Department's decisions, the NRD could choose to take separate action on the complaints.

WATER BRIEFS

Groundwater Samples Taken in Todd, Platte Valleys

A total of 142 water samples were taken in the Todd and Platte valleys during summer 1999, with 85 additional samples scheduled. The samples will be analyzed for nitrate content. Approximately 20 percent of the samples will also be analyzed for pesticides, and an additional 20 percent will be tested for nitrogen isotopes, which can help determine if nitrate contamination is from fertilizer or organic sources. The sampling results are expected later this fall.

Meter, Manifold Cost-share Programs to End in 2000

Producers interested in the NRD's cost-share programs on fertilizer calibration meters and anhydrous distribution manifolds should contact the NRD soon. Because the Legislature declined to reauthorize the fertilizer tax, these programs will no longer be funded by the end of 2000. The deadline to apply is January 20, 2000. Contact the NRD at 443-4675 now for more information.