

Lower Loup Natural Resources District

IN THE LOUP

A Public Hearing on Proposed Changes to the LLNRD's Groundwater Management Rules and Regulations will be held June 25th

The hearing will be held at the Valley County Ag Complex, East Highway 11, in Ord, at 4 p.m.

- Proposed rules changes would allow development of up to 2,500 groundwater irrigated acres
- Proposed rules would create a sign-up period and ranking system for applications
- Processes for certifying and transferring irrigated acres would be modified under proposed changes
- Anyone wishing to offer testimony on the proposed rule changes may appear at the public hearing or submit testimony in writing.
- Written testimony must be received by 5 p.m. on June 24th at the Lower Loup NRD, 2620 Airport Drive, Box 210, Ord, NE 68862
- See current and proposed rules at www.llnrd.org

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Public Hearing On New Irrigation Is June 25th

A public hearing on changes to the Lower Loup Natural Resources District Groundwater Rules and Regulations that could allow new groundwater irrigation development will be held Thursday, June 25th at 4 p.m. at the Valley County Ag Complex in Ord.

The NRD Board of Directors will consider the changes that would allow for the development of 2,500 acres of new groundwater irrigation annually for the next four years. The Nebraska Legislature made such irrigation development possible when it passed LB483 in its 2009 session.

NRD Manager Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos said the proposed rule changes would create a sign-up period that would run from September 1-20 this year and the next three years. He said the changes would also create a ranking system to determine which applications would be granted. The system would look at factors like stream depletion factors, groundwater and surface water status, irrigation concentration and soil classification among others.

Assistant Manager Russ Callan said that the proposed rules would modify the NRD's certi-

fication of irrigated acres process, requiring land to be irrigated two out of ten years prior to January 1, 2008. He said proof of irrigation would be the landowner's responsibility.

Callan said another proposed change would affect transfers of irrigated land within the NRD. He said land would have to be certified as irrigated and approvals would be based on stream depletion factors and no transfer could result in new stream depletions. Transfers would not be allowed into areas where the NRD believes there are potential water management problems.

Fully Appropriated Designation Reversed

In April, the Director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Brian Dunnigan, issued a final determination that the lower Platte River Basin, including its Loup and Elkhorn River tributaries, was not fully appropriated.

In a press release, Dunnigan said "After evaluating all of the testimony and information provided through the hearing process, including the discovery of an erroneous method used to develop the groundwater model simulations for the preliminary determination, the lower Platte

River Basin is not fully appropriated at this time. This final decision is, as the law requires, based upon the best scientific data, information and methodologies available."

In December of 2008, DNR reached a preliminary determination that the basin was fully appropriated, meaning that the maximum level of sustainable development of both surface water and groundwater had been reached.

When the preliminary determination was made, nine natural

resources districts, including the Lower Loup NRD, formed a coalition to review the legal and regulatory, technical and legislative issues raised. Information from that review was then presented at a public hearing on the basin status in Fremont.

Lower Loup NRD General Manager Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos said, "The decision of Director Dunnigan to rescind the preliminary determination was the correct one, showing that the system does work when the correct information is known."

New Director & Employees Join LLNRD Team



Kim Walden of Columbus now represents the Lower Loup NRD's Subdistrict 9, which covers the central third of the city of Columbus.

Nebraska's NRDs...

Protecting Lives

Protecting Property

Protecting The Future



Dr. John Ortmann is the new Prescribed Burn Coordinator in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

As the responsibilities and challenges facing natural resources management grow, a new Director and four new employees have become part of the Lower Loup NRD team.

Kim Walden of Columbus has been appointed by the NRD Board to fill a vacancy in the NRD's Subdistrict 9, which covers the central third of the city of Columbus. Walden said that he had a strong interest in the environment and believed that the local control offered through NRDs was a good way to maintain and improve natural resources.

Walden is the Corporate Security Manager for Nebraska Public Power District in Columbus. He was also an officer in the U.S. Navy and Navy Reserves. He and his wife, Susan, have three children.

Dr. John Ortmann has been named the Prescribed Burn Coordinator in the NRD. He works with landowners and area organizations to plan and implement prescribed burns across the District. He was hired through an NRCS grant program that provides 80 percent of the position's funding.

Ortmann was formerly the Nature Conservancy's Director of Science and Stewardship for the western half of Nebraska and a range extension specialist for Colorado State University.

Tylr Naprstek is the new NRD Water Modeling Coordinator. He will coordinate the NRD's work on the Elkhorn-Loup Modeling project, to further the NRD's knowledge and understanding of the groundwater and surface



water in the basin. He will assist NRD management and the Board of Directors in establishing policies and procedures for the transfer of irrigated acres in the NRD and gather data to apply to the models.

Naprstek previously served as the Water Resources Manager for the Upper Elkhorn NRD in O'Neill. He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Brian Kolar has been hired as the NRD's Water Programs Specialist. Kolar coordinates LLNRD water programs and data gathering projects. His duties include GIS data collection and processing, soil and water sampling and water analysis. He also does static water level measurement and chemigation inspections.



Kolar is a graduate of Ord High School and Southeast Community College in Milford. His family includes his wife, Marie, and a son, Gage.

Kyle Charron has been hired as the NRD/NRCS Technician in Broken Bow. His duties include soil and water sampling, planting conservation trees, installing drip irrigation, flow checking wells,



and conducting chemigation inspections as well as assisting NRCS staff.

Charron is a 2009 graduate of Chadron State College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a minor in water resources. He is a native of the Central City area and grew up on the family farm in Merrick County.

A Message From The Manager

Welcome to another edition of *In the Loup*. It's nice putting out a newsletter that's full of good information! We have some important stuff for you to digest: a public hearing on June 25th considering new rules and regulations, a new Director representing constituents in Columbus, and four new staff members helping to get work done for conservation, as well as other important news. Please take the time to read it all...and thank you for doing so.

As I mentioned, in our cover story "**Fully Appropriated Designation Reversed**", the foresight of the Governor's Water Policy Task Force and provisions passed under LB-962 allowed the determination process to work. A forward look at water use through the utilization of a water model convinced DNR that the lower Platte River Basin was to a point of being fully appropriated.

After further collaboration,

review, and correction of a formula used to predict future water use, it was found the basin was not as close to the status of fully appropriated as predicted and the order was reversed. It was unfortunate that the time and expense was incurred, but it proved the best science was the ultimate decision maker and not pressures from outside sources. Although the ELM model appeared to be the culprit and took a lot of the blame for the designation being made, it was really the ELM model that should be credited for the correct decision being made at the end.

The ELM model is a man-made tool that takes in data and provides a prediction in return. I pretend to be a "techie" when it comes to computers, but the work and expertise in creating, calibrating, and using a computer model goes way over my head. What I have found is that throughout the process of building a model, readjust-

ments must be made and it is a continuous process of updating and making corrections in how the model performs to get the best answers to our questions.

I want to thank everyone involved with coming to the right conclusion on the basin designation, including the US Geological Survey for working with DNR and our consultants to provide and evaluate loads of data. Thanks to DNR for working with USGS and our consultants in locating the problem and correcting their decision based on the science. Finally, thanks to the NRDs who followed through with the intent of LB-962 and partnered together to independently review the criteria and information used to confirm that the data was correct, used properly, and assured that the best science available was considered in making the decision on future water management within the basin.



Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos is the General Manager of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

*Visit the Lower Loup
NRD web site at
www.llnrd.org*

Enjoy Family Fun At Davis Creek Rec Area

The Davis Creek Recreation Area, five and one-half miles south of North Loup, used to be one of central Nebraska's best kept secrets. That's no longer the case as more boaters and campers discover it every year.

The Lower Loup NRD manages the recreation area which includes a picnic area with shelter and water, a 25-pad RV camping area, a boat

dock and two single-lane boat ramps. There is also a fishing pier designed to meet the needs of those confined to wheelchairs or who have other mobility issues.

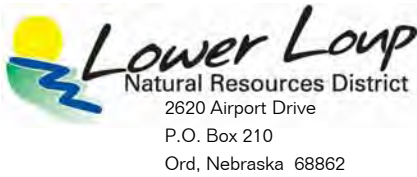
Davis Creek Reservoir provides irrigation water to about 20,000 acres of farmland served by the Fullerton Canal below the dam. At its peak, the reservoir has a pool of 1,140 acres, but lake levels

vary due to irrigation water use.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission manages the fish in the lake, which offers wipers, crappie, largemouth bass, walleye and white bass. The dam and reservoir are owned by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and are operated by the Twin Loups Irrigation District.



The Lower Loup Natural Resources District operates the Davis Creek Recreation Area. The area is located south of North Loup near the Valley-Greeley County line.



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***IN THE LOUP** is a publication of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District. It is published quarterly by the LLNRD and is distributed to the residents of the 16 counties that make up the District. Questions regarding information in this newsletter can be directed to the NRD using the contact information at left. **IN THE LOUP** is edited by Larry Schultz, NRD Information/Education Coordinator.*

Ord Team Wins Nebraska Envirothon, Heads To National Contest

A team of Ord High School students finished first in the State Envirothon and will represent Nebraska at the national contest, August 2-8, 2009 in Asheville, North Carolina.

The Canon Envirothon is a national program for 9th through 12th grade students who compete in a wide array of subjects relating to natural resources and the environment. Nebraska's state contest was held May 2nd at Ponca State Park and featured 12 teams from across the state.

At the state contest, five-member teams compete in seven areas of natural resources competition: soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, range, policy and a current environmental issue. The Ord team is the first from a school in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District to advance to the national contest.



State Envirothon Champs from Ord High School: Back row (l to r) Chuck Butterfield, Chadron State College; Kris Hornickel; Jim Johnson, Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD); Jed Wagner, NARD; and Patrick Cowsert, NRCS. Front row: Mitch Bredthauer, Ord Asst. Ag Instructor; Aaron Kokes; Samantha Krikac; Amanda Duvall; and Debra Wray.