

IN THE LOUP

South Loup River Basin Project Moves Forward

Officials with the Lower Loup Natural Resources District and area residents continue work on a plan that would manage both water quality and quantity issues in the South Loup River Basin.

LLNRD Water Modeling Coordinator Tylr Naprstek said that water quality issues include high levels of E. coli bacteria, high nitrate levels, nutrients and sedimentation problems. He said that the quantity problems involve

lower levels of both surface water and groundwater.

Stakeholders in the basin have met twice to discuss the water issues. At the most recent meeting in Arnold, the group looked at data from hydrographs on the South Loup River, which gave a historical perspective on the flows in the basin.

Results from a public survey of residents and landowners in the basin showed the current land

treatments being employed and their success rates and looked at potential best management practices that could be implemented in the future to reduce the water quality and quantity concerns.

The South Loup River Basin Project is a cooperative effort of the Lower Loup, Central Platte, Twin Platte and Upper Loup NRDs, as well as the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

Work Begins on Pibel Rec Area Renovation

Construction has begun on the renovation of the Pibel Lake Recreation Area in southeast Wheeler County. Frahm Construction of North Loup was awarded the project bid.

Lower Loup NRD Water Modeling Coordinator Tylr Naprstek said the lake has been drawn down 4.5 feet to allow the upper marshy area to drain. This site will be worked on first, and following construction of the sedimentation basin, will refill utilizing precipitation.

LLNRD staff continue to monitor critical water quality factors

including temperature and dissolved oxygen throughout the lake on a weekly basis. So far, Naprstek said, levels have remained stable enough to support life and the falling temperatures should assist with maintaining sufficient oxygen levels to prevent a fish kill.



Pibel Lake renovation is underway.

LLNRD crews have completed the picnic shelter structure and picnic tables will soon be added.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Kozeal Award	2
Range & Land Judging	2
Columbus Area Water Study	2
Message From The Manager	3
Integrated Management Plan	3
Conservation Tree Sales	4

Mike Kozeal Wins NARD Educator Award

Sargent High School Ag Teacher and FFA Advisor Mike Kozeal has been named the recipient of the Natural Resources Educator of the Year Award for 2015. The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) presents the award annually to recognize outstanding natural resources education efforts in Nebraska.

Kozeal has been the agriculture education instructor at Sargent for 22 years. His students have a history

of success in natural resources competitions, including range judging and land judging, with several state champions. A highpoint in his personal range judging career came at the 2015 Area IV



Mike Kozeal, 2015 Natural Resources Educator of the Year

contest in Garfield County, when he missed a perfect score in the professional division by a single point.

Kozeal has also taught natural resources to students in several other schools through distance learning.

The Lower Loup NRD nominated Kozeal for the award. Kozeal received the honor at a luncheon during the NARD's Annual Conference in Kearney September 28th.

Range & Land Judging Tests High Schoolers

The Lower Loup NRD, NRCS and UNL Extension hosted the 2015 Area IV Range Contest near Burwell and the North Central Land Judging Contest near Loup City.

Ty Chaffin of Burwell and Neleigh Gehl of Wheeler Central finished

first individually in the senior and junior divisions while teams from Loup County (Senior) and Sargent (Junior) were first in the team contests.

In North Central Land Judging, Alexis Herbeck of Verdigre finished as the

top individual and her Verdigre team was first.

There were 347 competitors from 18 schools in the range contest and the land contest saw 207 contestants from 11 schools compete for the top spot.

Columbus Study to Provide Aquifer Details

Columbus, located on the lower end of the Loup River system at its confluence with the Platte River, has multiple demands placed upon its water resources. The Lower Loup NRD is partnering with the City of Columbus and has contracted with engineering firm HDR to develop an overall assessment that will determine how water availability can be sustained with increasing usage from the community.

Besides its municipal customer base of 22,533 people, which is up 7.4%

from 2000 according to 2013 city data, the community has a college, three golf courses, several man-made impoundments, hydroelectric facilities and large commercial and industrial uses.

In order to understand the various water management decisions, HDR is developing an assessment of water availability. A highly detailed numerical model is being formulated by HDR, with current and historical data inputs that will examine the availability of both

surface and groundwater, as well as take into account all existing uses.

Once completed, the more focused evaluation will provide an understanding of how current and future actions, as well as growth within the Columbus community, would impact the water resource. Additionally, HDR is identifying potential management and development projects that could augment existing water levels or provide recharge and storage to offset the impacts during high use times.

A Message From The Manager

Hello, and welcome to another edition of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District's quarterly newsletter, "In The Loup." Thank you for taking a moment to look it over.

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District Board of Directors approved the Fiscal Year 2016 Budget of \$10,616,354 at their meeting in August.

The new budget numbers include funding for a variety of flood control projects, groundwater recharge projects, and other projects. The District's financial participation in the Columbus levee project and

land acquisition at the Pibel Lake Recreation Area are also included in the numbers.

The funds in the new budget are not all from property tax asking. A sizeable portion of the budget comes from federal, state and grant sources.

The NRD's property tax asking will be \$4,974,011.33, resulting in a levy of \$0.033193 per \$100 of property tax valuation. The levy is well below the \$0.05 levy allowed to Natural Resources Districts under Nebraska law.



*LLNRD General Manager
Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos*

As an example, with the new levy, the tax assessment on a home valued at \$100,000 would be just over \$33.

Work Proceeds on Integrated Management

Work on an integrated management plan (IMP) for the Lower Loup Natural Resources District is moving ahead. The IMP will address water sustainability, funding opportunities, integrated management of groundwater and surface water resources and other issues.

A group of individuals representing various water users in the NRD has taken part in three stakeholders meetings and outlined priorities for inclusion in the plan. Here are the priorities outlined by the stakeholders group:

1. Develop and maintain a water supply and use inventory based on the best available data and analysis.
2. Implement a water management plan that maintains

a balance between current and future water supplies and demands.

3. Develop and implement water use policies and practices that contribute to the protection of existing surface and groundwater uses while allowing for future water development.
4. Expand public education programs that encourage water conservation measures.

The stakeholders have also identified a number of strategies that could be utilized to implement each of the stated goals. Following a meeting in July, each stakeholder indicated which of the strategies they liked, were neutral to, or disliked.

That data was then compiled by the plan's facilitator, Olsson Associates,

and presented to the stakeholders at a meeting in October. That meeting also included a presentation on the state's process of determining a fully-appropriated river basin from Jesse Bradley of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

A fully-appropriated basin is one where the maximum level of sustainable development for both groundwater and surface water has been reached. That status has not been reached in the Lower Loup Basin.

General Manager Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos said a public hearing on the LLNRD's IMP was tentatively planned for February, 2016.



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Nebraska's NRDs . . .
Protecting Lives, Protecting
Property, Protecting the Future.

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POSTAL PATRON

Order Conservation Tree Seedlings Today

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District is now accepting orders for conservation tree and shrub seedlings. These trees are sold to implement windbreaks, wildlife habitat, buffer strips, and a variety of other purposes. Each tree or shrub is a two-year-old bare root seedling and measures between 10 to 18 inches tall.

All 2016 conservation trees and shrubs will cost the same as they were in 2015, 85 cents per seedling plus sales tax. Each species must be ordered in lots of 25.

Property owners can hand plant

the trees and shrubs or request the NRD machine plant them. The Lower Loup's machine planting charge is \$65 per one hundred trees. The minimum charge is \$150 plus sales tax. The District also provides a spraying service. The charge is \$35 plus \$2 per hundred feet of row.

Cost-share may also be available when NRD crews plant your trees for special purposes. Application for cost-share should be made at your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), or the Lower Loup Natural Resources District office. Planning assistance is also available from the

NRCS or your LLNRD technician. Trees may also be ordered on the LLNRD web site at www.llnrd.org - just click on "Buy Trees" on the right side of the main page.



Lower Loup NRD conservation tree seedlings are \$0.85 per seedling.