

IN THE LOUP

Board Approves New Irrigated Acres for 2019

Applications for a total of 2,623 new irrigated acres in the North Loup River, Middle Loup and Beaver Creek Sub-Basins have been approved by the Lower Loup Natural Resources District Board of Directors.

LLNRD General Manager Russell Callan said that there were 67 applications for new irrigation: 23 in the North Loup River Basin, 19 in the Middle Loup River Basin and 25 in the Beaver Creek Basin. He said that the total irrigated acres requested in the combined basins was 4,099.09 acres. Callan said the average application for the new irrigation development requested 61.67 acres and the

average application ranking was 272.42 points.

At their meeting October 25th, the Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors unanimously approved a recommendation from the NRD Water Resources Committee to approve applications for new irrigated acres, up to and including the last application that meets or exceeds the limit initially approved for that basin.

Therefore, an additional 123.32 new irrigated acres over the initial 2,500 were approved by the Board across the three basins. Letters of approval or denial have been mailed out to all applicants.

NRD Assistant General Manager Tylr Naprstek said applications for new irrigation were ranked using criteria approved by the Board when irrigated acres had been previously granted. He said the criteria included the stream depletion factors, the status of groundwater and surface water, and soil classification.

County	Acres
Greeley	511.79
Howard	381.84
Boone	365.26
Platte	307.54
Sherman	249.94
Valley	225.53
Custer	203.58
Nance	190.72
Garfield	107.36
Loup	88.60

Election: Eleven Re-elected, One New Director

In the Tuesday, November 6th, General Election, 11 LLNRD Directors were re-elected and 1 new member was elected.

The eleven members re-elected to the LLNRD Board ran unopposed. They are Tim Bartak of Merna, Henry Thoene of Burwell, Rollie "Skip" Amsberry of Mason City, Rick Vlach of Scotia, Dean Thede of St. Paul, and Jim Eschliman of Ericson.

Also re-elected were Gary Kruse,

Larry Mohrman, Joe Citta, and Beth Boesch all of Columbus, and the Director At-Large Dick Hadenfeldt of Dannebrog.

In the only contested race, challenger John Coffey of Columbus defeated incumbent Virgil Gellermann in Subdistrict 10, which covers a portion of Columbus and Platte County.

The new and re-elected directors will all serve four-year terms. Larry Mohrman will serve a two-year

term in Subdistrict 7 following appointment to the Board. Each director represents one of the ten subdistricts in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

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Study Finds Limited Benefit to Lake Project

The Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors has voted to end a project at Ravenna Lake that had, as one of its goals, groundwater recharge.

The Board action followed a recommendation from the NRD's Water Resources Committee. At the committee meeting, Rick Wilson of JEO told committee members that a full field investigation of the lake had been completed, covering a 20-square-mile area.

Wilson said that the investigation showed that the lake is in direct

contact with the groundwater. He said due to that factor, there is little space for additional groundwater storage.

Lower Loup NRD General Manager Russ Callan said that NRD staff would continue to take water quality measurements through 2019.

A number of contaminants will be measured in the water, including nitrates, E. coli, and others. Lower Loup NRD staff will visit the lake to take water samples.



Projects Technician Brian Kolar takes samples at Ravenna Lake.

NRD To Investigate Wheeler County Nitrates

The Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors will consider changes to its Water Quality Areas to address apparent issues in Wheeler County.

LLNRD staff has found several areas in the county which show high levels of nitrate contamination. Nitrate levels in some wells have tested as high as 44.2 parts per million (ppm), well above the 10 ppm federal

standard.

In order to investigate the concerns more closely, staff has recommended utilizing township boundaries rather than larger, multi-county water quality area boundaries. The smaller areas will allow for better groundwater management regulation and solutions.

The change from water quality areas to township boundaries will require changes to the District's Groundwater Management rules and regulations. Those changes will require a public hearing, expected in early 2019. Portions of Wheeler County could be moved into higher phases of groundwater management under the proposed rules.

Conservation Tree Sales Are Underway

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District is now accepting orders for conservation tree and shrub seedlings for planting in Spring, 2019.

The trees are sold across the District to landowners seeking to implement windbreaks, wildlife habitat, buffer strips, or other conservation

practices. Each tree or shrub is a two-year-old bare root seedling and approximately 12 to 18 inches tall.

The price on all trees and shrubs is now one dollar 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 75 cents per tree and the minimum charge is \$200.

Landowners should contact the NRCS to get the planning process underway. Species can also be ordered on-line at www.llnrd.org or call the LLNRD at (308) 728-3221.

A Message From The Manager

This season's abundant rainfall has been a welcome change. It's also brought up many questions, like "Is the NRD going to release additional irrigated acres?" While the NRD Board agreed to allow 2,500 new irrigated acres for 2019, it wasn't based on rain.

There are many factors that affect the District's decision to release new irrigated acres. The possibility of the Lower Loup NRD releasing additional irrigated acres is not based on a single year's abundance or lack of rainfall.

Those factors do center around the quantity of water available for development. The District relies on streamflow trends and rainfall patterns over long periods of time.

The Lower Loup NRD has developed a computer model, the Elkhorn-Loup Groundwater Model (ELM), to provide specific data which allows the Board of Directors to make an educated decision on how much water is currently consumed and what may be available for future consumption.

The LLNRD Board of Directors is dedicated to a proactive approach in groundwater management. Like you manage your household budget, the 21 members of the NRD Board will continue to evaluate the District's groundwater budget and work to keep a balance between available water and the needs of agriculture and our communities for economic development.



*LLNRD General Manager
Russell Callan*

An educated approach to groundwater management... it's part of the reason Natural Resources Districts across the state proudly proclaim that they are "Protecting Lives, Protecting Property, and Protecting the Future."

Project to Recharge Columbus Groundwater

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District, the City of Columbus, Platte County, Archer Daniels Midland, and the Christopher's Cove Homeowners Association are partnering on a proposed groundwater recharge project southeast of Columbus.

The recharge project would help offset groundwater declines in an area southeast of Columbus. It would also restore the hydrology of Lost Creek Channel. An informational open house for the recharge project was held October 10th at the ADM Training Center in Columbus.

Around 25 members of the public, as well as representatives from the NRD, city, county, and local industry were in attendance. Pat Engelbert of HDR Engineering in Omaha laid out details of the project for the audience.

Engelbert said the proposed recharge project would require the acquisition of several easements. The project is currently in the data collection and preliminary design phase. He said details of proposed construction would be released in the next stage of the project.

LLNRD General Manager Russ Callan said the partnership of community,

county, NRD, and private citizens was a vital component in the success of the project.



LLNRD General Manager Russ Callan (right) answers Columbus Recharge Project questions.



2620 Airport Drive
Ord, Nebraska 68862

Phone: 308-728-3221
Fax: 308-728-5669
E-mail: larrys@llnrd.org
www.llnrd.org

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

Flowmeter Maintenance-Important & Required

Checking flowmeters on wells before, during and after the irrigation season will ensure that equipment is in optimal shape. Knowing that flowmeters are working benefits the landowner, the operator, and the irrigation specialist when work on either the pivot or the well pump is done.

Currently, the Lower Loup NRD requires flowmeters in the Area 28 Water Quality Area, a Phase III Area south of the Loup River between Palmer and Columbus, where high nitrate levels in groundwater continue to be a problem. If cost-share through a conservation program was used in the purchase, the agency that provided the funding will likely have a maintenance requirement.

It is the responsibility of each producer to keep flowmeters functioning properly throughout the irrigation season.



Flowmeters need regular maintenance.

Producers who have a Senninger brand flowmeter may want to make sure the batteries are the correct size. These meters take a lithium 3.6 volt battery instead of the standard 1.5 volt AA battery.

Battery replacement is a must every 4-5 years to keep from losing the pumping data.

McCrometer or other brand propeller meters need to have the bearings and gaskets checked every 3-5 years. If any noise is emitted from the meter, if there are noticeable leaks, or if any fogging is visible in the lens, then the meter is in need of immediate repair or replacement.

Maintenance of propeller meters includes greasing the bearings, ensuring the propeller is undamaged, inspecting the drive cable and register canopy. Maintenance should be conducted by a licensed dealer. By ensuring a flowmeter is operational, an irrigator can have an accurate reading that benefits both the crop yield and well operation for years to come.

