

# IN THE LOUP

## LLNRD Board Levies Penalty On Landowner

Four years without irrigation is the penalty levied against Nance County landowner Robert Prokop for violations of the Lower Loup NRD’s Groundwater Management rules.

At its June meeting, the LLNRD Board of Directors approved a penalty that means no irrigation on Prokop’s land from 2018 through 2021. This is the second time a penalty has been levied against Prokop

for failure to file required reports with the District.

Prokop’s land is the NRD’s Phase III Groundwater Management Area that stretches from near south of Palmer to just south of Columbus along the Loup River. Landowners there are required to report on water use, fertilizer application and other factors as the Lower Loup NRD continues to combat high nitrate levels in the groundwater.

The penalty issued to Prokop will allow the Wilber resident to continue to irrigate in 2017, but that practice will cease at the end of the current season and will not be re-instated until the 2022 irrigation season.

Prokop challenged the LLNRD’s first action against him in District Court. The court found in favor of the NRD in that action.

## Average Groundwater Levels Rebound Slightly

Average springtime groundwater measurements across the Lower Loup NRD show a slight increase in 2017. The district-wide average was an increase of ? foot (? inches).

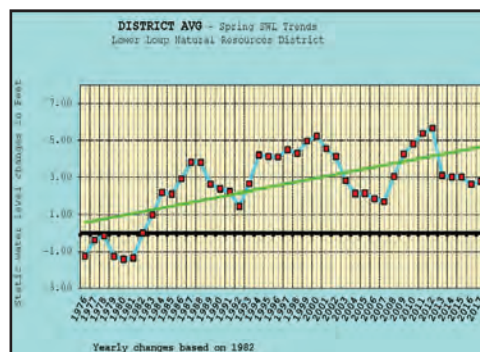
LLNRD General Manager Leon “Butch” Koehlmoos said groundwater monitoring began in 1976 and has been done annually in each of the following four decades.

The NRD’s Assistant General Manager, Russell Callan, said that over the 41 years, groundwater levels continue to show an upward trend. The Lower Loup NRD numbers show the largest average

increase in groundwater levels in Valley County, 0.57 foot and the largest average decline in Howard County, 0.54 feet.

The trend line for the District average can be found below. The complete report can be found

at [www.llnrd.org](http://www.llnrd.org). Click on the “Resources” tab, then “Downloads,” and the link is near the bottom of the page.



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# LLNRD Seeks To Fill Two Board Vacancies

The Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors has begun the process of filling two vacant seats. Those vacancies were created by the death of Clifford Loseke, who represented Subdistrict 7; and by the resignation of Dean Rasmussen, who has moved out of the District.

Loseke and Rasmussen were both re-elected to their seats in 2016, and new Board appointees will serve until 2018, when state law requires that both seats again go before voters.

A map of each subdistrict can be found on the Lower Loup NRD web site, [www.llnrd.org](http://www.llnrd.org). Go to the "About" tab, then move down to "Board of Directors." Click on the subdistrict name to bring up a map of that area.

Those seeking appointment to the vacant seats must be a resident of the subdistrict. The applicant should submit a letter of interest to the Lower Loup NRD Board, and indicate their natural resources

background, their reasons for requesting appointment, and general background information.

Those letters should be sent to:  
Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos  
General Manager  
Lower Loup NRD  
2620 Airport Drive  
Ord, Nebraska 68862-1002  
Letters must be received by July 21st.

# New Erosion/Sediment Control Rules Okayed

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District held a public hearing at the district headquarters, 2620 Airport Drive in Ord, on March 30, 2017, to consider approval of rules and regulations to implement the Erosion and Sediment Control Act.

The rules, which were approved by a unanimous vote, are meant to reduce damage from wind erosion, reduce storm water runoff and flooding danger, reduce sediment damage, reduce non-point pollution from sedimentation, preserve land values and productivity, and safe-

guard the citizens of the NRD.

The new rules can be found on-line at the Lower Loup NRD web site, [www.llnrd.org](http://www.llnrd.org). Click on the "Resources" tab, then drop down to "Downloads," and the rules will be found near the bottom of the page.

# New Camp Services Available at Davis Creek

Davis Creek Recreation Area, south of North Loup, now offers a new campground with services and a daily fee.

About half the spots at each campground are not reservable, available only on a first-come, first served basis.

The campground, on the north side of the rec area, provides both electrical and water hook-ups. The daily fee for the camp sites is \$19. Visitors can reserve a spot on-line at [ReserveAmerica.com](http://ReserveAmerica.com). There is still no-service camping available at the rec area's west loop. The daily fee for no-service sites is \$6. Those spots can also be reserved on-line.

Other new additions at the site are a coin operated shower house that includes flush toilets, two new picnic shelters, and a camper dump station. Work later this summer will add a second boat ramp, a fish cleaning station, and a new parking area.



A camper dump station is a new addition at Davis Creek Rec Area.

# A Message From The Manager

Welcome to another edition of "In the Loup." As always, we are happy to share information on the work of the LLNRD. Thank you for joining us.

Today, my topic is 'abandoned wells.' These are wells no longer being used for their intended purpose and usually in such a state of disrepair that they represent 'illegal wells' by our definition. These wells' beneficial use has been accomplished or permanently discontinued and/or does not meet current well construction standards, presenting a threat to the groundwater supply.

Groundwater is normally provided some degree of protection by a natural filter of soil over the top. When this soil barrier is penetrated with a well and the well has deteriorated to a point that contamination can pass through, it becomes a direct conduit to our valuable ground water drinking supply. The Lower Loup has considered old wells as our greatest threat to our groundwater drinking supply. What constitutes an illegal water well?

- As mentioned, it is a well in such a condition that it cannot be placed in active or inactive status.
- Any necessary operating equipment has been removed and the well has not been placed inactive.
- The water well poses a health or safety hazard.
- The well is considered illegal in accordance with Nebraska statutes.
- The well was constructed after 10/1/86 and not constructed by a licensed water well contractor for by the landowner himself for farming, ranching, agricultural purposes, or at their place of abode and is not in compliance with the Water Well Standards and Contractors Licensing Act.

What can you do? Be alert to old wells that haven't been properly abandoned. If you have an old windmill that is falling apart, there is probably an old well and pump-jack under it. Old pipes sticking out of the ground could be an old well casing that may need attention. A concrete pad on the edge of an



LLNRD General Manager  
Leon "Butch" Koehlmoos

irrigated field may be an old irrigation well that is no longer being used and it might have nothing more than some tin or boards covering up a well casing that poses a severe threat to health and safety.

Cost-share assistance is available to anyone that has an old well needing properly abandoned. Contact our office if you have any questions or want additional information on abandonment of an illegal well.

# NRD Hazard Mitigation Plan Under Review

The Lower Loup NRD's update of its regional hazard mitigation plan (HMP) is currently under state and federal review. The plan, which covers multiple entities, such as communities, schools, fire and police departments, hospitals and special districts, is expected to be approved by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) before the end of the year.

HMPs are community-guided documents that identify vulnerabilities to natural or man-made hazards. The plans identify projects to reduce or eliminate these vulnerabilities. Among the natural disasters covered by an HMP are

tornadoes, flooding, drought, hail, and severe winter storms. HMP participants can apply for grant funds to help mitigate potential disasters and emergencies.

The draft version of the HMP can be found on the Lower Loup NRD web site, [www.llnrd.org](http://www.llnrd.org).



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**Protecting Lives, Protecting**  
**Property, Protecting the Future.**

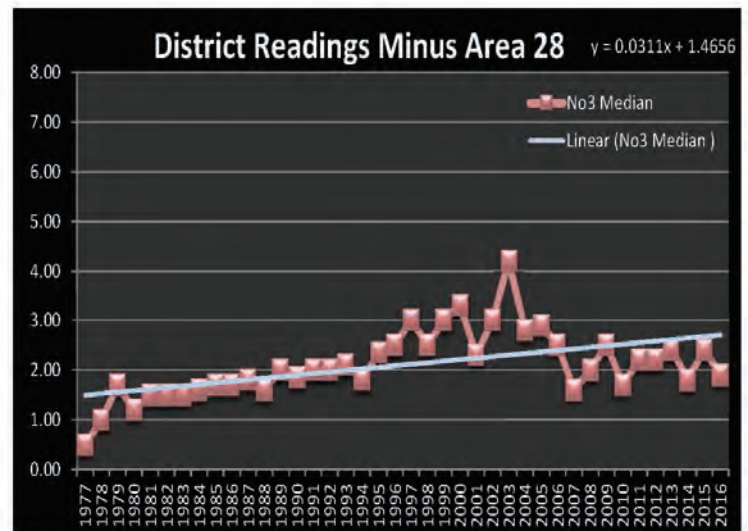
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POSTAL PATRON

# Report Shows Improvement In Water Quality

Average groundwater nitrate (NO3) levels across the Lower Loup Natural Resources District declined slightly in 2016. When water samples from 993 locations in the district were averaged, the groundwater nitrate level declined from 5.1 parts per million (ppm) in 2015 to 4.4 ppm in 2016.

Those figures do not include the NRD's lone Groundwater Quality Management Area, Area 28, which is located south of the Loup River from southeast of Palmer to south of Columbus. High nitrate readings there bring the numbers to an average of 10.6 ppm in 201, compared to 11 ppm in 2015.

The Lower Loup NRD has initiated several regulations to control high nitrates in Area 28, including a requirement to utilize groundwater flowmeters. The requirement means that the high nitrate levels in the water can be used to reduce fertilizer application.



*The 2016 Lower Loup NRD average for groundwater nitrate, not including Area 28, still trends upward.*