



NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES DISTRICTS

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March 24, 2005

TO: NARD Board, NRD Managers and Conservation Partners
FROM: Dean E. Edson, NARD Executive Director
RE: March 24 NARD UPDATE

Revenue Committee Indefinitely Postpones Conservation Tax Credits – The Legislatures Revenue Committee indefinitely postponed LB 472, a bill which would have created fees on wells to fund conservation easement tax credits. The proposal would have created a transferable income tax credit up to 50% of the land value placed in the easement. The easements would be targeted toward three areas as follows: 1) Areas of water shortages, 2) Along the Niobrara Scenic River, and 3) Areas identified by the Nebraska Game and Parks as habitat for endangered species. The well fees would have been a minimum of \$10 and a maximum of \$40, to be set by the Department of Natural Resources, to collect at least \$1 million annually.

CSP Informational Meetings – The University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service are sponsoring a series of 10 public meetings March 21 through April 6 for farmers who might be interested in the Conservation Security Program to be offered through the NRCS. The meetings will focus on stewardship practices and record-keeping requirements needed to qualify for enrollment. Land in all or parts of the following counties are eligible: Polk, Butler, Hall, Hamilton, York, Seward, Adams, Clay, Fillmore, Saline, Lancaster, Jefferson, Gage, Pawnee, Dundy, and Kimball. For more information, visit www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov

Meeting dates are:

- March 21, Wilber, NE, 7 PM, Sokol Hall located on Main Street;
- March 24, York, NE, 7 PM, 4-H Building, York County Fairgrounds, 2400 Nebraska Ave.;
- March 28, Aurora, NE, 9 AM, Ag Building, Hamilton County Fairgrounds;
- March 29, Beatrice, NE, 7 PM, 4-H Building, Gage County Fairgrounds;
- March 30, Geneva, NE, 7 PM, Ag Hall, Fillmore County Fairgrounds;
- March 31, Seward, NE, 7 PM, Ag Pavilion, Seward County Fairgrounds, North 14th Street;
- April 4, Clay Center, NE, 7 PM, 4-H Building, Clay County Fairgrounds, W. Johnson Street;
- April 5, Beatrice, NE, 7 PM, 4-H Building, Gage County Fairgrounds;
- April 6, Osceola, NE, 1 PM, Exhibit Building, Polk County Fairgrounds;
- April 6, York, NE, 7 PM, 4-H Building, York County Fairgrounds, 2400 Nebraska Avenue.

NARD Officers – Dave Nelson, Tri-Basin NRD, was re-elected President of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts by the members of the board. Ted Hughes, Upper Elkhorn NRD, was re-elected as Vice-President. Dave and Ted will be allowed to serve another 1 year term in their current positions. Dan Steinkruger, Lower Platte South NRD, was elected as Secretary/Treasurer. Dan will be eligible for re-election for another one-year term.

On a related note, Butch Koehlmoos, Manager of the Lower Loup NRD, was elected to serve as Chairman of the Managers Committee for one year. Lyndon Vogt, Manager of the Upper Niobrara White NRD, was elected Vice-Chairman. Both were elected by the managers and will serve a one-year term.

Lower Platte South NRD Temporary Move – Beginning April 1, 2005, the Lower Platte South NRD will be temporarily re-locating its office due to building renovation and addition. The temporary office will be located at 285 South 68th Street Place, Suite 2. The office phone number and mailing address will remain the same, (402) 476-2729, P.O. Box 83581, Lincoln, NE 68501-3581. The relocation is expected to last nine months.

April 7-8 Water Law Conference – The Second Annual Water Law, Policy and Science Conference at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be held on April 7-8 at the City Campus Union in Lincoln. The conference theme this year is “Water Management and Policy in the Great Plains: Implications of Drought and Climate Change.”

Conference sessions focus on panel presentations and discussion of climate change and drought; drought history and predictability; climate change in a fragile ecosystem: water in the Great Plains; decision making under uncertainty: water management and policy instruments to mitigate drought and climate change; and a panel discussion translating science into policy. The conference is co-sponsored by UNL’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, School of Natural Resources, Department of Geosciences, College of Law, Water Center, Water Resources Research Initiative, and School of Journalism Public Policy Center.

For more information about the conference, contact Steve Ress at sress1@unl.edu , phone at 402-472-9549 or go to the following website:

<http://snr.unl.edu/waterconference/Conference2005/2005Conference.asp>

USDA Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program Signed – Last Saturday, the USDA and State of Nebraska formally signed the \$158 million voluntary Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat in southern and western Nebraska. Congressman Tom Osborne was instrumental in the development and finalization of the new program.

This CREP agreement will target water conservation for an approximate 2-mile stretch on either side of the Republican and Platte Rivers (from Central Nebraska west) and cover 100,000 cropland acres. The program will help protect lakes and water sources through the establishment of native grass plantings, permanent wildlife habitat covers, filter strips, riparian buffers and the restoration of wetlands. On the average, landowners could receive \$125/acre for 10-15 years.

The goals of the new CREP include: 1) Reducing the use of cropland irrigation by 125,000 acre-feet annually from current irrigated usage levels; 2) Increasing surface and ground water retention by 85,000 acre-feet of water annually within priority area reservoirs, groundwater tables and streams; and 3) Providing up to 85,000 additional acres of native grassland habitat for wildlife in the priority area, and increasing the populations of pheasants and other ground nesting birds by 25 percent in the area.

The State of Nebraska will be required to provide some cash to the program in addition to in-kind services. The match requirement is essentially \$1 for every \$30 in federal funds. The Legislature’s Appropriations Committee is currently reviewing the funding proposed in Governor Heineman’s proposed budget.

Sign-up for the program is scheduled to begin April 4, 2005 at local USDA-FSA Offices and will continue until enrollment goals are met, or through Dec. 31, 2007, when CREP enrollment authority ends, whichever comes first. Additional information is also available online at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/dafp/cepd/crep.htm>