



NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES DISTRICTS

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TO: NARD Board, NRD Managers and Conservation Partners
FROM: Dean E. Edson, NARD Executive Director
RE: January 27 NARD UPDATE

Congressman Osborne Meets with Kansas Officials – Congressman Tom Osborne and Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning organized a meeting with their counterparts in Kansas, Congressman and Jerry Moran, R-Kan., and Kansas Attorney General Phill Kline, to discuss Republican River Compact issues and compliance. After the meeting, Kline reported he was impressed with Nebraska's initiatives to reduce water uses, noting the efforts of the NRDs and the irrigators in the basin using an average of 30 percent less water than their allocations allowed. "There is a strong effort by the producers (to comply) with the agreement, and I believe Nebraska is making a good-faith effort in compliance," said Attorney General Phill Kline

Congressmen Osborne and Moran also plan to jointly seek an estimated \$8 million to \$10 million to spray noxious plants in the riverbed. The plants consume huge amounts of water that otherwise would flow in the river.

NARD Annual Legislative Conference – The NARD Legislative Conference at the Embassy Suites in Lincoln continues to grow with 264 registered attendees and over 330 at the Tuesday evening reception. The commitment to attend shows the dedication of those involved in local natural resource protection and enhancement.

Delegates discussed 46 legislative proposals dealing with natural resources issues on Tuesday. These issues included LB 933 – Changes to the water management activities and providing assurances for domestic water supplies; LB 1225 – Provides scientific basis for determining fully appropriated areas; LB 1226 – Changes to the water management programs and activities; LB 975 – Livestock Waste Management; LB 971- Increases NRD levies for Water Management Programs; LB 1060 – Funding for Natural Resource programs LB 1147—Eliminate the qualifications for the director of the Department of Natural Resources; LB 1097-- Storm Water Management; and LB 997—Provide for conservation easements. All of these bills were supported by the delegates.

Hearings Summary this Week – The following testified for NARD on bills this week:

Dan Smith, Middle Republican NRD Manager, and Jasper Fanning, Upper Republican NRD testified in support of LB 971 on behalf of NARD. The bill would allow NRDs in fully and over-appropriated areas to levy an additional 3 cents levy for water management programs. Nebraska Farm Bureau, the League of Municipalities and Tom Schwartz, a farmer from Bertrand, also testified in support of the Water Policy Task Force recommendation. The Nebraska Cattlemen testified in opposition. The Revenue Committee has not taken action on the bill.

Bob Hilske, Nemaha NRD Manager, and Steve Oltmans, Papio-Missouri River NRD Manager, testified in the Judiciary Committee on behalf of NARD in opposition to LB 784. This bill requires Natural Resources Districts and Cities and villages to ensure that public access for recreational use is available to the public for each of their projects. Access for recreational use must meet or exceed the access available to an adjacent landowner to the project. Under this interpretation, small private flood control structures, livestock dams, etc., would have to provide public access. The committee has not taken action on the bill.

Glenn Johnson, Lower Platte South NRD Manager, presented testimony in support of LB 997 before the Revenue Committee this week. The bill, sponsored by Senator Chris Beutler, would authorize income tax credits for donations of perpetual conservation easements. The tax credit would be a maximum of 50% of the land value placed in the easement. The easements would have to be donated in order to be eligible for the credit. The easements would be targeted toward the areas as follows: 1) Areas of water shortages, 2) Along the Niobrara Scenic River, 3) Areas identified by the Nebraska Game and Parks as habitat for endangered species, 4) Areas identified by the Game and Parks Commission as native prairie or with other ecological significance.

Water Fees -- Senator Beutler filed a motion to place LB 930 on General File notwithstanding the action of the committee. The bill implements water fees on irrigators and municipal uses to fund water programs. The Natural Resources Committee indefinitely postponed the bill last week. Under the rules of the Legislature, it will require 3/5th vote (30 votes) to bring the bill to the floor.

Hearings Next Week

Wednesday, February 1, 2006

Appropriations, Committee Room 1003, 1:30 p.m.

LB 1077 Appropriate funds to the Department of Natural Resources

LB 1060 – Deficit Appropriations Bill -- Department of Natural Resources Funding.

Government, Military and Veterans Affairs, Committee Room 1507, 1:30 p.m.

LB 981 Modify public records statutes to include geographical information systems data

Natural Resources, Committee Room 1525, 1:30 p.m.

LB 1109 – Changes provisions of the Livestock Waste Management Act

LB 1214 -- Change Livestock Waste Management Act provisions relating to cold water Class A streams

LB 1098 – Require Chemigation Permits – NARD Bill

Thursday, February 2, 2006

Natural Resources Committee, Room 1525, 1:30 p.m.

LB 1164 – Allow replacement wells to be used as monitoring wells. – NARD Bill

LB 1099 -- Clarify ground water reuse pits are not subject to surface water permits – NARD Bill

LB 1156 -- Require irrigated school lands in the Republican and Platte Basins to be converted to dryland when the leases expire.

LB 1147 -- Eliminate the qualifications of the Director of Natural Resources