If the NARD Risk Pool Board would have selected an insurance rate to recover all the losses and make sure that the program would add to reserves on FY 2012-13, the rates would have had to increase over 30%. However, the board chose to rely on reserves that had built up over the good years to cover some of the losses. Thus, the rates increased above the national average for the first time in 5 years at 15%. On a positive note, there were no increases in dental insurance for the next fiscal year. NRD employee's involvement in wellness activities and programs reduces health care cost to local NRDS and taxpayers.

As we move forward, the challenges we face this year, the record drought in 2012? The NARD staff is excited to meet the challenges undoubted will change and be different. For example, who would have predicted that we would record floods in 2011 and a record drought in 2012? The NARD staff is excited to assist the local NRDS in their efforts to continue to protect lives, protect property and protect the future!
The NARD assisted eight NRDs in theing their district’s tree programs. This is just one of many ways the NARD helps foster awareness and appreciation of natural re- sources conservation among our state’s young people. The Upper Niobrara-White NRD (UNWRD) and NARD hosted the NRDForestry Workshop in June at Chadron State College. Topics and activities included tree and shrub seedling inventory management, a tour of UNWRD facilities, and equipment, planting and fabric mulch laying demonstrations, and a robust roundtable discussion. This workshop will be hosted once again in June 2013 by the Lower Elkhorn NRD.

The NARD helped plan, coordinate and host the U.S. Forest Service Client’s Day and Forestry Conference in October held at Bessey Nursery and the State 4H Camp near Halsey, NE. Presenters from Kansas and South Dakota shared their expertise in the areas of drought tolerant plant species and tree pests and diseases. NRD representatives shared components of market-based approaches for their district’s tree programs.

The NARD assisted eight NRDs in distributing over 19,000 tree seedlings to elementary school children across Nebraska. This is just one of many ways the NARD helps foster awareness and appreciation of natural resources conservation among our state’s young people.

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts’ Foundation was established as a way to support students with a desire to enter the field of natural resources. In 2012 over $12,500 dollars were raised for the NARD Foundation to support youth education and programs where young people can learn more about natural resources. Funds were raised through a variety of activities including a live and silent auction at the Annual Conference. The NARD Foundation supports the following programs:

- The Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute is a weeklong conference held each July where juniors and seniors in high school gather to learn more about agriculture and natural resources in Nebraska.
- Sponsored three Nebraska college students for Ag Day on the Hill. The Nebraska representatives spent National Ag Day in Washington D.C. learning about agriculture and natural resource issues.
- Sponsored three annual Agriculture Issues Academy at the 84th Annual State FFA Convention held in Lincoln in early April. The three award areas were Outdoor Recreation Proficiency, Natural Resources Chapter Award, and the Environmental and Natural Resources Management Career Development Event (CDE).
- The Nebraska Evironment, an agriculture, wildlife and science competition for grades 9-12. This year’s winning team, West Holt High School, represented Nebraska at the Canon Environowment, which includes students from across the United States and Canada.
- The Nebraska Foundation for Agricultural Awareness to promote Nebraska NRDs. NARD has assisted NRDs in promoting their tree programs, providing the flexibility for the employee to determine the amount of risk and potential rate of return they feel most comfortable with.

For the fourth consecutive year the NARD gathered from NRDs information about their tree programs for the purpose of sharing with each other services offered and charges for each service. Each year different sets of supplemental information are requested to help gauge the management programs around the state.

NRDs and NRCs- NRDs’ goals and service boundaries are aligned across the state with NRCS, a division of the United States Department of Agriculture. In some cases NRDs have included NRCS in NRD offices. Since 2004, the NARD has maintained contribution funding agreements with the NRCS. Using federal funds, these agreements allow NRDs to fulfill a number of conservation planning, construction, maintenance and management requests. In 2012, Nebraska NRCS compensated participat- ing NRDs approximately $100,000 for work accomplished.

- Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) in 2012 drew 30 campers from across the state, and many of the campers received scholarships from their local NRD. The camp is open to sixth through eighth grade students and focuses on natural resources.

These programs are a great opportunity to recognize Nebraska’s youth for their interest and hard work in helping to protect our natural resources.

The NRD NDEQ Liaison position was created to assist in matters dealing with NDEQ and other state and federal agencies such as the United States Parks Commission, Department of Natural Resources and the Environmental Protection Agency. One of the roles is to ensure consistency among the NRDs and assist with regulatory compliance matters. Regulation review and updates are periodically undertaken by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. Since the NRDs are known entities, the NRD programs are impacted it is necessary that all the NRDs are provided the information to determine the extent of the impact. This was the case in 2012 when a proposal to regulate regional haze by EPA created potential challenges in water use and pollution control.

The NRDs and NDEQ met with representative of EPA Region 7 to provide information on water management and the impacts the rule may have on the NRD programs. The rule will not be implemented in the near future however it is necessary for the NRDs/NARD to continue to remain attentive for cross goal impacts.

For the ninth consecutive year the NARD Tree Program assists NRDs in distributing over 19,000 tree seedlings to elementary school children across Nebraska. This is just one of many ways the NARD helps foster awareness and appreciation of natural resources conservation among our state’s young people.

NRD Retirement Program

The voluntary NARD 457 program also grew 11.6% over the past year to $1,824,917 as of June 30, 2012. Six NRD employees are participating in the NARD 457 plan. Plan Members enjoy a tour during the annual Washington DC Conference.
Notes from Joe Anderjaska, NARD Board President

In celebrating this 40th anniversary of Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts, it is important to remember the success of the past, learn from our mistakes and look forward to the challenges of the future. In 1972, progressive thinking state leaders combined 154 special purpose groups into the NRDs using the state’s major river basins as boundaries.

In 40 years, NRDs have constructed and maintain over 700 flood control structures that offer many additional benefits such as water quality improvement, recreation and groundwater recharge. Nebraska is fortunate to have an abundant supply of groundwater. In 1972 there were 2,400 registered irrigation wells in Nebraska, today we have 124,000. This rapid growth created challenges that required difficult decisions to be made, legislation pursued, and rules and regulations established. While actions may not have always been popular, the goal of a sustainable water supply for future generations has been, and will continue to be the NRDs driving force. As water management moves forward, NRDs must continue to work together, learn from the past and strive to look forward to the future with new ideas, technology and tools.

Historically, Nebraska was known as the “Great American Desert” due in part to the lack of trees. Since 1972, over 60 million trees have been planted throughout the state with the NRDs tree programs. The trees have provided beneficial windbreaks for livestock, reduced wind erosion, stabilized soil and increased wildlife habitat. In a state known for Arbor Day, the NRDs have been the leaders in getting trees into the ground. Flood control, groundwater and trees only represent a portion of the 12 main charges for the NRDs. Even though the NRDs remain independent, local entities with locally elected directors, some accomplishments are only achieved when a unified approach is undertaken. As an association we are able to influence policy, advance legislation, offer health care insurance, retirement programs and educate the general public. NARD board members have collectively worked to meet the needs of the districts and will continue to do so in the future.

I want to personally thank and acknowledge the handful of great people that have helped lead our organization through these first 40 years. New faces continue to appear and will help pursue our commitment to protecting lives, protecting property and protecting the future.

40 Years of Service!

Congratulations to the natural resources districts board members and staff on 40 years of service! Your hard work and dedication is appreciated!

Central Platte NRD – Board Member: Dick Mercer, Staff – Ron Bishop, Dianne Miller, Milt Moravek
Lower Loup NRD – Board Members: Dean Rasmussen, James Nelson, Staff – Rita Goldfish, Ona Poland
Lower Platte North NRD – Board Member: Don Kavan
Lower Platte South NRD – Staff: Glenn Johnson
Upper Elkhorn NRD – Staff: Joy Knopp
Upper Niobrara White NRD – Board Member: James (Jim) Erwin

VRN RD board members with 35-39 years of service: Bill Meyer, LENRD, Darwin Anderson, LLNRD; Ron Sabatka, LPNRRD; Jim Moore, LRNRD; Larry Moore, LBBNRRD. NRD board members with 30-34 years of service: Mark Fehringer, CPNRRD; Joe Hergott, LBRRD; Ken Regier and Merlin Volkmter, UBBNRRD.

NRD staff with 33-39 years of service: Tom Moser, LCNRRD; Mike Omnen, LBNRRD; Ken Berney, LENRRD; Daniel Ray and Beverley Smedra, LLRRD; Vivian Frasch, LNNRRD; Ron Cacek, NPNRRD; Emmett Egr, Dick Sklenar and Marlin Pettermann, PNRNRRD; Kent Miller, TPNRRD; Rod DeBuhr, John Turnbull and Ken Feather, UBBNRRD; Glenda Cushing, UNWNRD. NRD staff members with 30-34 years of service: Sandy Noecker, CPNRRD; Marilyn Schumacher, LCNRRD; Dave Clabaugh, LBBNRRD; Vickie DeJong, Phyllis Knobbe and Stan Stabb, LENRRD; Cheryl Hornickel, Leon (Butch) Koehlmos and Robert Mohler, LLNRD; Paul Zillig, Kathy Spence and Dan Schulz, LPSNRRD; Dan Smith and Betty Fritsch, MRNRRD; Vernon (Junior) Speers, Mark McDonald and Jane Kuhl, Nemaha NRD; Martin Cleveland, Bill Warren and Darlene Hensley, PMNRRD; Jay Bitner, Jeff Ball and Nancy Brisk, UBBNRRD; Wilma Zimbleman and Mike Nesbitt, URRNRD.

The year 2012 marks 40 years of protecting lives, property and the future of natural resources for Nebraska’s 23 Natural Resources Districts (NRDs). Throughout 2012, the NRDs have been celebrating the success of projects and programs that help protect Nebraska’s natural resources. NRDs are unique to Nebraska because they are governed by locally elected boards and Nebraska is the only state in the union to have this system. A handful of board members, managers and staff have been a part of the system since the NRD creation in 1972.

Senator Maurice Kremer introduced and the Nebraska Legislature enacted Legislative Bill (LB) 1357 in 1969 to combine Nebraska’s 154 special purpose entities into 24 Natural Resources Districts by July, 1972. The original 24 NRDs’ boundaries were organized based on Nebraska’s major river basins which allows for better management practices to be applied to similar topography. In 1989, the Middle Missouri River NRD and the Papio NRD were merged into one, becoming the Papio-Missouri River NRD which resulted in the current NRD system.

“For the last 40 years, the 23 NRDs across the state have been addressing natural resources issues and concerns with local solutions,” said Ron Bishop, who has been the manager at Central Platte NRD since 1972.

Natural Resources Districts were created to solve flood control, soil erosion, irrigation run-off, and groundwater quantity and quality issues. Nebraska’s NRDs are involved in a wide variety of projects and programs to conserve and protect the state’s natural resources. NRDs are charged under state law with 12 areas of responsibility including flood control, soil erosion, groundwater management and many others.
The Upper Niobrara White NRD is divided into six ground water management area sub-areas with 1,853 irrigation flow meters. A four year allocation of 54 acre-feet of ground water is in place through 2014 for the areas where ground water decline is a concern.

The Middle Niobrara NRD is the early stages of developing the Long Pine Creek Watershed Plan, located primarily north of Ainsworth, NE. The Plan is to help address the creek’s impairments to the water quality and erosion of land.

The North Platte NRD constructed the Gering Valley Flood Control project to protect lives and property from flood waters by slowing the rain water going down from the surrounding bluffs. The early work was done on the project by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the final two pieces was completed in a joint effort between the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the North Platte NRD.

In 2010 the Upper Loup NRD started a District wide recycling program. Recycling was a need that had not been met previously in the District. It has been very successful since its implementation and continues to expand.

Combining management options through its Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations and Integrated Management Planning, the South Platte NRD strives to protect current and future ground water use through allocations, retirement of irrigated acres and recharge projects.

The Upper Republican NRD has retired 3,260 irrigated acres and pipe water that otherwise would have been consumed by crops to increase Republic River stream flows. The acreage retirement/stream flow enhancement project is designed to help keep the state in compliance with the Republican River Compact and is being funded by a local tax in the URNAKD.

When the Middle Republican NRD was first established they took the lead on construction of several flood control structures within the District. These structures continue to be maintained and inspected by the Middle Republican NRD. The effectiveness of these structures was demonstrated during recent heavy spring rains.

The Twin Platte NRD has partnered with Pheasants Forever on the Crooked Run Wetland program since 1997. During that time, over 100 pivot corner projects have been enrolled in this program. This program has also stabilized highly erodible land, improving air and water quality in the District for future generations.

The Lower Loup NRD’s tree planting program is one of the largest in the state and covers the entire District. The NRD is made up of all or parts of 16 Nebraska counties. Landowners and NRD crews could choose from more than 40 species of trees and shrubs in 2012. There were 72,260 conservation trees planted along the LLNRD this year.

The Lower NRD began construction in 1984 on the West Knowl Rural Water System which began operation in January 1, 1985 with two communities. The system continues to grow with the development of a new well field and the addition of 3 communities.

The Lower Elkhorn NRD has cooperated with the University of Nebraska Research Center out of Concord to demonstrate the importance of irrigation and nutrient management on local landowner field plots. Tours were held for the general public to ask questions and become better informed on these issues.

The Lower Elkhorn NRD has constructed the Cedar-Knox Rural Water Project in 1981. The project uses surface water from Lewis and Clark Lake as a source of drinking water for over 800 rural homes and 4 communities.

The Upper Elkhorn NRD has cooperated with the University of Nebraska Research Center out of Concord to demonstrate the importance of irrigation and nutrient management on local landowner field plots. Tours were held for the general public to ask questions and become better informed on these issues.

The Papio Missouri River NRD has sponsored and cost shared effective flood control efforts throughout the most flood prone areas of their district. To protect lives and property NRDs have constructed or maintain more than 700 flood control structures across Nebraska. The NRDs design and build dams and levees, to protect lives and property from flood waters.

The Lower Platte South NRD, partnering with the City of Lincoln and the University of Nebraska, completed the Antelope Valley Project in 2012. Besides creating a beautiful open waterway through the heart of Lincoln, the project removed several hundred acres and 800 homes and businesses from the floodplain. The project also

The Lower Platte South NRD, partnering with the City of Lincoln and the University of Nebraska, completed the Antelope Valley Project in 2012. Besides creating a beautiful open waterway through the heart of Lincoln, the project removed several hundred acres and 800 homes and businesses from the floodplain. The project also

The Lower Big Blue NRD operates and maintains seven recreation areas that are open to the public. These areas offer many recreation opportunities along with other benefits including flood control and water quality protection. The newest of these is Lone Star Recreation Area near Oshkosh, NE.

NRDs create groundwater management plans to protect the quantity and quality of Nebraska’s groundwater.

Water, and effective policies to manage and protect it, is a major focus for NRDs.

Land agents use rich stores of groundwater beneath Nebraska as a selling point to attract homesteaders.


In 1870, Nebraska’s first holiday was devoted to natural resources conservation.

In 1935 the U.S. Soil Conservation Service is established to assist farmers and help foster a new conservation ethic across the United States.

Devastating floods during the 1950’s cause massive property damage and spur major flood control projects across Nebraska.

In 1972, Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts form and begin taking action to address a wide variety of natural resources challenges.

Because it’s value to farmers and urban centers, groundwater is commonly recognized as the state’s most precious natural resources.

NRDs continue to play a leading role in addressing local natural resources concerns.