

IN THE LOUP

Flood Control Funding Approved for Sargent

After years of flooding throughout the community, the City of Sargent can now pursue options to remedy those problems. The Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors has approved funding up to \$250,000 to assist with the local costs for the project.

After examining various alternatives to solve the flooding issues in town, consultants from Olsson recommended construction of a diversion channel to divert excess water flows around town to the Middle Loup River. Replacement of

storm drains and culverts was also recommended.

The consultant said that the estimated cost for the project, including engineering, design, and permitting would total a little over \$5 million. The City of Sargent will apply for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant that would help finance the project.

Olsson also recommended the town seek a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to cover most of the funds needed.

NRD General Manager Russell Callan stated that, so far, the NRD had contributed roughly \$77,000 for the study and that Olsson's recommendations would help resolve ongoing flooding issues. Callan stated that, under the NRD's Project Participation Policy, the project fit under the Flood Control, Drainage, and Public Safety tabs as well as others.

The \$5 million price tag for the project only includes work in the Sargent city limits and any work done outside of the city would be additional.

South Loup Water Quality Program Underway

The Lower Loup NRD (LLNRD) is implementing a new water quality program to improve water quality in the high priority areas of the South Loup River Watershed.

Pollutant loads in the watershed will be reduced through best management practices. They include buffer strips, prescribed grazing management (including riparian fencing and alternative water sources), and irrigation water management (including soil moisture sensors and variable rate

irrigation).

LLNRD Rangeland Management Specialist Dan Ruterbories said that cost-share will be available for the planting of buffer strips. Rental rates will follow Nebraska Buffer Strip Program guidelines.

Riparian fencing for sections of the South Loup River or its tributaries will help limit livestock access to the river. Irrigation water management cost-share will assist with implementing soil moisture sensors and variable rate irrigation.

Soil moisture sensors cost-share will be limited to two per field and a one-time payment. Variable rate irrigation cost-share is a flat rate of \$1.37 per linear foot. For more information on the cost-share, contact Ruterbories at (308) 728-3221.

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Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Underway

The Lower Loup NRD's Hazard Mitigation Plan update got underway with a virtual kickoff meeting March 9th. Hazard mitigation planning reduces loss of life and property by minimizing the impact of disasters.

The Lower Loup NRD-sponsored plan, developed in 2017, will expire in 2022, so work has kicked off on an update.

The eligible participants include counties, cities, villages, school districts, fire districts, tribes, etc. The project is funded by a FEMA planning grant. The cost is shared 75% through federal funding and 25% through a local match. For this

plan update, the Lower Loup NRD is providing the 25% local match.

The project timeline has the next round of meetings set for June.

Those meetings may be face to face or virtual, depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic. The potential hazards in the

Lower Loup NRD can include dam failures, drought, flooding, severe thunderstorms, terrorism, severe winter storms and tornadoes.

Approximately 56 entities, counties, cities, irrigation districts, health departments, and others took part in the 2017 plan.



Hazard mitigation reduces the impacts of natural disasters like flooding.

Access Incentives Improve Rec Opportunities

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District (LLNRD) has renewed its Access Incentives Program, which improves recreation opportunities and provides additional funding towards the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The program offers cost-share funding to assist landowners interested in enrolling property, now in CRP, into the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's (NGPC) Open Fields and Waters (OFW) program.

The OFW program contributes to the opening of rangeland, pastureland, and wetlands to public access for hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Landowner payments are based on

the location, enrollment type, and habitat quality.

Enrollment contracts can be written for 1 to 5 years. The NGPC will determine the habitat quality and payments will be made based on that determination. The rates for enrolling CRP acres range from \$4 to \$8 an acre, depending on the evaluation.

Landowners receive 50% of the incentive payment the month following signing the agreement and the remaining 50% of the payment the following May.



Access incentives offer hunting opportunities.

For more information about the District's Access Incentives Program, contact the Lower Loup NRD at (308) 728-3221.

A Message From The Manager

Welcome to the latest edition of “In The Loup.” We are glad you have opted to learn more about the work of the NRD in this publication.

I am pleased to share with you a cooperative effort to monitor, maintain, and recharge groundwater in an area southeast of Columbus in Platte County. The project has been in the works for over a year.

The Lower Loup NRD has been monitoring a groundwater decline in that area for some time. The NRD began an investigation in to the groundwater status of the area to determine what might be happening.

We discovered that high groundwater usage in the area was

affecting the aquifer and the nearby lake at Christopher’s Cove.

Numerous options to remedy the situation were considered. One of the options settled upon was rerouting water from the Loup Power Canal.

The partners in the \$2.6 million project are the LLNRD, the City of Columbus, Platte County, the Christopher’s Cove Homeowners Association, and Archer-Daniels Midland. The project funding has come from several sources, including a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart grant and a grant from the Nebraska Water Sustainability Fund.

Final details on the project are



*LLNRD General Manager
Russell Callan*

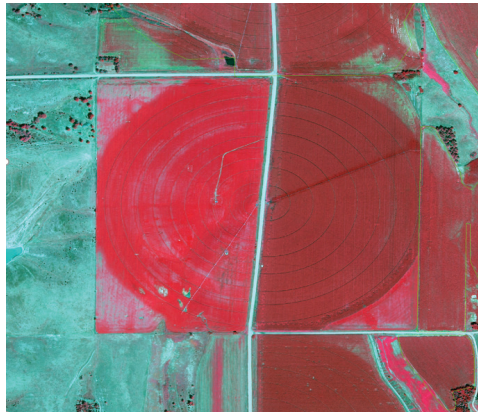
being wrapped up and work on the project will begin later this year. The LLNRD is proud to be part of this cooperative effort to tackle this urban/rural groundwater issue in Platte County.

System Changes Can Cause Illegal Irrigation

The Lower Loup NRD reminds irrigators in the District that any changes to an irrigation system can result in an expansion of irrigated acres and can result in a cease and desist letter.

The equipment changes that should be considered include new pivot systems or replacement pivots, new endguns or booster pumps, and new corner or swing arm systems. Conversion from gravity to pivot irrigation can also change the number of irrigated acres.

LLNRD Assistant General Manager Tylr Naprstek said that changes to the irrigation systems of grass or alfalfa should be considered, not just



The LLNRD uses infrared photography to monitor irrigation.

field crops like corn and soybeans.

Naprstek said a field boundary revision or change of ownership will require recertification through the NRD and potentially the

county assessor. He said that these modifications involve not just groundwater irrigation, but surface water too.

The entire NRD is flown annually and infrared photography is taken. That photography indicates which fields are irrigated and which are non-irrigated. Failure to take irrigation modifications into account could constitute a violation of District rules and regulations and require offset of future irrigation.

For more information, contact the Lower Loup NRD at (308) 728-3221.



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IN THE LOUP is a publication of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District. It is published quarterly by the **LLNRD** and is distributed to the residents of the 16 counties that make up the District. **IN THE LOUP** is edited by Larry Schultz, NRD Information/Education Coordinator.

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

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POSTAL PATRON

Ord, St. Paul, and Burwell Qualify for State

Teams from Ord, Burwell and St. Paul have qualified to compete in the state Envirothon. Between Feb. 3-5, Nebraska high school students around the state took part in a virtual regional Envirothon competition, demonstrating natural resources knowledge by identifying trees, labeling fish anatomy and determining soil structure.

Ord and Burwell, as winning teams from the central and northeast regions, and St. Paul as one of eight wild cards, qualified for state based on their competition scores. The Burwell team includes Hayes Jensen, Devin Konicek, Cooper Phillipps, Ethan Joy, Dillon Simpson and advisor Phillip Simpson. Dave Ference and Johnny Ference are advisors for the Ord team, which

includes Tye Bruha, Alex Flessner, Brodie Darnell, Treaven Scheideler, Vickie Ference and alternate Abby Jacobs. Boyd Bowder, St. Paul advisor, and his team including Sam Thede, Nick Busse, Ben Feeken, Truman Beck and Kaleb Baker, qualified as wild cards.

Traditionally, Nebraska's six regional Envirothon competitions are hosted in conjunction with district agriculture education contests. Due to the pandemic, the contest went virtual with teams taking online, timed tests. High school students compete on five-member teams in seven environmental areas including: soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, range, policy and a current environmental issue.

Qualifying teams will compete at the Nebraska Envirothon, which is currently scheduled for Lake Wanahoo near Wahoo, April 28th. During the state contest, teams compete in hands-on environmental testing stations as well as prepare and deliver an oral problem-solving presentation focusing on "Water Resources Management: Local Control, Local Solutions."

The Nebraska Envirothon Steering Committee recognizes the extenuating circumstances due to COVID-19, and will follow guidance from federal, state and local officials regarding the virus and whether a virtual alternative of the State Envirothon will be necessary.