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Watershed
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the VIADUCT

Lower Platte North Natural Resources District
Winter 2020-2021

Tree Planting Programs Available Through LPNNRD

Trees are an important investment for both rural and urban settings. They provide protection for property, livestock and crops; create wildlife habitats; and add beauty to landscape. The Lower Platte North NRD offers multiple options for adding trees throughout the district.

Dozens of hand-plant tree and shrub species are available for \$1 each. These trees and shrubs must be purchased in bundles of 25. For large tree plantings or windbreaks, the LPNNRD offers a two-man tree planter available to rent.

Cost-Share Assistance with NRCS

Landowners can also work with the LPNNRD and county Natural

Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices to help develop a tree planting plan free of charge. This includes determining how many trees and shrubs you will need, the best location for your planting and the species that fit your specific needs. Cost-share assistance is available for this program.

Community Forestry Program

LPNNRD's Community Forestry program is available for communities wanting to plant trees and shrubs on public land within the district. Any village, town or city with an eligible project can apply for cost-share funds through the program.



To view a full list of tree and shrub species available and cost-share program requirements, please visit lpnnrd.org/projects-and-programs/forestry/ or call Bob Heimann at 402-443-4675.

Priority Watershed Continues To See Improvements

The Shell Creek Watershed which covers portions of Boone, Madison, Platte and Colfax counties in the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD) continues to be a top priority for improvements. Local conservation efforts from the Shell Creek Watershed Improvement Group and landowners, along with assistance from partners LPNNRD,

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Colfax County, continue to help with the increase in improved water quality and enhanced stream flow for Shell Creek.

Multiple improvements continued throughout the summer including the channel improvement and bank stabilization project East of Schuyler, septic system

cost-share assistance programs for landowners, and a grad stabilization and wetland project with landowner, Tom Sprunk.

Summer's warm and dry weather provided the ability for Pruss Excavating to work on the North Channel of Shell Creek for the channel improvement and bank stabilization project. Colfax

Continued on page 3

Lower Platte North NRD Board & Staff

Board Member.....	Subdistrict
Lon Olson, Fremont	1
Kelly Thompson, Fremont	1
Frank Pollard, Fremont (Vice-Chairperson).....	2
Bill Saeger, Fremont.....	2
Dave Saalfeld, North Bend.....	3
Larry Feala, North Bend (Secretary)	3
Chris Yosten, Schuyler.....	4
Matt Bailey, Schuyler	4
Mark Seier, Newman Grove	5
John Hannah, Columbus	5
Joe Birkel, David City	6
Robert Hilger, David City (Treasurer).....	6
Nancy Meyer, Cedar Bluffs.....	7
Ryan Sabatka, Weston	7
Jerry Johnson, Wahoo	8
Alex Kavan, Wahoo.....	8
Don Veskerna, Ashland.....	9
Robert Meduna, Wahoo	9
Gene Ruzicka, North Bend (Chairperson)....	at large

Staff Member.....	Position
Sydney Abbott.....	Education Coordinator
Daryl Andersen.....	Water Resources Manager
Tyler Benal	Water Resources Specialist
Jill Breunig	Bookkeeping Dept. Head/ Admin. Assistant
Will Brueggemann	Water Resources Specialist
Duke Dokulil	O & M Technician
Sean Elliott	Projects/Rural Water Manager
Eric Gottschalk.....	General Manager
Bob Heimann	O & M Manager
Tom Mountford	Assistant Manager
Dave Moore	O & M Technician
Russell Oaklund	Lead Water Resources Specialist
Dave Odvody	Recreation Facilitator
Chris Poole	Grants/GIS Dept. Head
Karen Rezac.....	Dept./Admin Assistant
Lacey Sabatka	Information Coordinator
Bret Schomer	Wanahoo Recreation Supervisor/ Water Resources Specialist

NRD/NRCS Field Office Assistant.....	County
Kimberly Piitz	Butler County
Kristin Miller	Colfax County
Luz Schafersman	Dodge County
Marla Milliken.....	Saunders County

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 twitter.com/lpnrd

From the Desk of the General Manager



Eric Gottschalk

"Dark Day, Brighter Tomorrow."

I have never and will never be ashamed of being an American, as should no one...Yesterday, January 6th, 2021, I was ashamed however, by the actions of a relatively small number of Americans and the decisions they made. As I sat watching video clips of the mobs and rioters disrespecting, disregarding, and degrading the laws and public property of our great nation, I could not help thinking of my uncle Glenn Gommels, a tail-gunner in a B24 "Liberator" who bravely served and ultimately gave his life in the skies of WWII Belgium. I thought of Glenn and the thousands of other brave men and women who have risked the same on behalf of our country. These Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines put their lives on the line to uphold the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and all additional amendments...Our First Amendment, by the way, allows all citizens the right of peaceful assembly, not the right to propagate violence and destruction.

Ronald Reagan once stated; "Peace is not the absences of conflict; peace is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

The Lower Platte North NRD is an excellent example of a local democracy in action. Our 19-member board represents a local political subdivision of the people, voted on by the people and created for the people. Our board members do not always agree, nor do they always disagree, they often have conflicting ideas on how or what should be done. What they do consistently, is keep open, respectful communication on all issues. All 19 members understand their work here is much more than just them...What is most important is the responsibility which has been bestowed upon them and the goals we, as a district, have set forth. All conflicts are communicated, debated, and voted on. Once the vote is taken, the board collectively moves forward to the next order of business.

A wise man once said; "Success is not final, failure is not fatal, the courage to continue is what counts."

I have confidence our Republic will recover from yesterday's failures of a few, just as our Natural Resources Districts and other governing bodies of Nebraska recover from past failures...Not because our democracy is flawless, but because I see, in our directors and staff, the courage needed to continue our important work on behalf of the American public.

Eric Gottschalk,
General Manager
Lower Platte North NRD

Shell Creek Watershed continued from Page 1

County provided landowner easements, project engineering and construction oversight for both the North Channel and South Channel of Shell Creek for this project.

By fall, LPNNRD Director, Matt Bailey, updated the board members that construction work had officially been completed on Shell Creek's North Channel. Colfax County was also in the process of final designs for the South Channel. Construction continued through November along Shell Creek, moving towards the South side of the U.P. Railroad bridge.

"While the Lower Platte North NRD is not directly involved with the replacement of the Union Pacific (U.P.) Railroad bridge, we continue to stay in contact with the U.P. Railroad on their progress," stated Tom Mountford, LPNNRD Assistant Manager. The construction of a much larger bridge across Shell Creek will not only help the railroad but has the ability to enhance the water flow and reduce flood damages near the railroad tracks.

The U.P. Railroad was scheduled to start construction this summer but due to the coronavirus and budget



County Road 14 bridge over Shell Creek

cuts, the construction was delayed. The U.P. was made aware that the LPNNRD channel improvement and bank stabilization project was moving forward and would bring water at an increased velocity to the bridge that could cause problems if an extreme weather event occurred.

By November, the U.P. Railroad was able to start construction on the bridge. The U.P. Railroad informed LPNNRD they hope to have the bridge completed by Spring of 2021.

The LPNNRD began offering a voluntary program this year to landowners within the Shell Creek Watershed for cost-share assistance to upgrade septic systems with open discharge. Multiple landowners have applied for the program that is funded by the Shell Creek NDEE Water

Quality Phase 2 Grant. Bill Bos, NRCS/NRD Shell Creek Project Coordinator, has been working with landowners to sign up for the program.

Shell Creek Watershed landowner, Tom Sprunk, has been working with Bill Bos & NRCS Project Engineer, Jim Reedy, on a wetlands enhancement and bank stabilization project on his property. The project site is located on a tributary that drains directly into Shell Creek. The project will stabilize gully erosion that will protect and enhance a wetland area that has been on the Sprunk property for many years. The Lower Platte North NRD and Shell Creek Watershed Improvement Group continue to work with landowners to establishing best management practices. This effort resulted in the Shell Creek becoming the first watershed in the nation to be delisted for Atrazine contamination in 2018. Over the past 20 years, the Shell Creek Watershed has benefited with over \$2 million in EPA Section 319 funds combined with approximately \$4 million in partnering federal and local funds for landowner projects.

Wahoo Creek Watershed Flood Reduction Efforts

The Wahoo Creek Watershed project continues advancing forward this year. Although flood damage reduction is the main goal of this project, the Lower Platte North NRD plans to see added benefits of improved water quality, sediment reduction, erosion control and improved wildlife habitats throughout the watershed.

The NRD has been working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to complete the watershed plan on 11 structures. Most recently, with the help of FYRA Engineering, the plan was submitted

to the NRCS in Little Rock, Arkansas for final review, with hopes of approval by Spring of 2021.

Once the plan is approved, the funding for the Wahoo Creek Watershed project is available to start construction on sites 26a, 26b and 27-located West of Malmo. Federal funding has been provided by the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and State funding available from the Water Sustainability Fund. Olsson is hired to provide designs, permits & construction services on these three dam sites, with the projected

completion date of December 2022.

Of the remaining sites, one has been under review this year for further investigations of cultural resource and archaeological findings. Due to the pandemic and other scheduling issues, the NRD, along with NRCS, Native American Tribal Representatives, and the State Historical Society have not been able to properly inspect the site.

The project remains on track for final completion of all 11 structures to be completed by 2030.



GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT

Special Options for Producers Needing Nitrogen and Water Management Certification

Producers across the District have different options for Nitrogen and Water Management Certification for 2021. Due to the pandemic and continued changes in local directed health measures, the Lower Platte North NRD will not be offering classes like ones previously, but are offering new ways to learn about recent updates for Nitrogen and Water Management.

Producers who need to renew their certification are highly encouraged to request a test online at www.lpnrd.org. Study materials for the test can be viewed and downloaded on the website.

If you do not have access to the online test, in-person testing is being offered for producers at one of the sites below. Please be aware there is not a class at these locations, only testing. Producers can call 402-443-4675 to reserve a spot at these testing sites and have study materials mailed. Registration

is not required but those who register can begin taking their test first.

- Was held Tuesday, January 12, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Butler County Events Center in David City.
- Tuesday, February 9, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Oak Ballroom in Schuyler
- Wednesday, March 10, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Lake Wanahoo Education Building (east side of Lake Wanahoo) near Wahoo. Presentations to follow at 1:00 p.m.

Special Events

On Thursday, January 28, 2021, the Lower Platte North NRD and Aaron Nygren, UNL-Colfax County Extension Educator will be offering an online presentation via Zoom for producers. Starting at 6:30 p.m., LPNDRD staff, UNL staff



and guest speakers will discuss Nitrogen Applications, Manure Management and Applications and Cover Crops. Registration is required. Please call 402-443-4675 or email dandersen@lpnrd.org.

On Wednesday, March 10, at the Lake Wanahoo Education Building (east side of Lake Wanahoo) there will be in-person testing available from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Special presentations begin at 1:00 p.m. with topics to be determined at a later date.

For more information and any questions, please contact the Water Department at 402-443-4675.

New Technology For Monitoring Water Levels

One of the major responsibilities of the Lower Platte North NRD is to conserve and protect our ground water and surface water. Monitoring water levels throughout the year across the district is vital to water management. Equipment with the ability to monitor these changing water levels will in turn help irrigation producers across the district.

Earlier this year, the Lower Platte North NRD

was awarded with a WaterSMART (Sustain and Manage America's Resources for Tomorrow) Grant from the Bureau of Reclamation.

With the help of this grant, the NRD purchased and installed equipment from Metos USA that included 77 remote data loggers and 6 weather stations.

Efficiency is invaluable information as the NRD moves forward with online

reporting and newer technology for monitoring ground water and surface water levels. The evapotranspiration information provided by the equipment will allow staff to see changes in the soil throughout the crop's growing season. Instant remote access and weather stations will give the district access to see accurate rainfall, wind speeds and soil temperature. NRD staff continues to work with Metos USA to finish this project and bring information from the equipment to area producers in the future.





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New Faces Join LPNNRD

Staff

The Lower Platte North NRD welcomed **Sydney Abbott** in December 2020. Sydney graduated from Wahoo High School in 2012 and went on to earn her degree from the University of South Dakota, where she also played softball for 4 years. After graduating, she pursued a Graduate certificate in Floriculture from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and is currently finishing up a Master's Degree in Natural Resources from UNL.



Sydney Abbott

doing any outdoor activity—usually with a camera in her hand.

The Dodge County NRCS Field Office and Lower Platte North NRD welcomes back **Luz Schafersman** as the NRD/NRCS Field Office Assistant. She is excited to assist farmers and landowners in the Dodge County area, where she and her family reside.



Luz Schafersman

Nebraska Air boat Association, Mike is also a member of the Chamber of Commerce in North Bend and on the Board at the North Bend Golf Course.



Mike McGinn

David Lawrence of Columbus also joined the LPNNRD Board of Directors in January. He will serve as representative for Subdistrict 5.

David has been employed with ADM Corn Processing since August of 1999, and is currently a Field Technician in the Environmental Department. He is looking forward to bringing his industrial background to the Lower Platte North NRD.



David Lawrence

Sydney married her high school sweetheart, Jon, in October of 2018 and welcomed their first child, Kennedy, in March of 2020. Sydney loves to spend time with her family

Directors

Mike McGinn of North Bend joined the LPNNRD Board of Directors in January 2021. He will serve as a representative for Subdistrict 3. Mike lives in North Bend where he farms and leases cabin lots along the Platte River. A lifetime member of

Thank You Directors!

The Lower Platte North NRD would like to recognize two directors who will end their service to the LPNNRD Board in 2020.

John Hannah has served on the LPNNRD board from 2003-2020. He was involved in many things including the LPNNRD Projects Committee and the Nebraska Land Trust Representative.



John Hannah

John has been a strong supporter of all NRD projects, but as a member of the Shell Creek Watershed Improvement Group for over

20 years, he has been especially supportive of the Shell Creek Projects which have included the Kramer Shell Creek Bank Stabilization Projects, the Shell Creek Channel Improvement/Benching Project, and also the Tom Sprunk Shell Creek Bank Stabilization/Wetlands Project. John has personally visited and contacted numerous landowners in the Shell Creek Watershed promoting conservation practices.

As former LPNNRD Chairman, John was a strong advocate for LPNNRD taking over the operation and maintenance of Lake Wanhoo Park and Property that has been a great success.

Larry Feala joined the LPNNRD board for Subdistrict 3 in 2015. He has been an active member on LPNNRD's Water Committee since



Larry Feala

joining the Board. Prior to that, Larry was an active volunteer on LPNNRD's Groundwater Advisory Group for several years. Larry has also participated with many water related committees to establish the Voluntary Integrated Management Plan, the Lower Platte River Basin Coalition and the Lower Platte Drought Plan.

Annual Report

2020

FY2020 – IN BRIEF

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

In partnership with the Nebraska Natural Resources Conservation Service, the NRD's Soil & Water Conservation Program provided cost-share funds to landowners to construct terraces, waterways, and a variety of other conservation measures.

WATER QUALITY & QUANTITY

The NRD continued its efforts to safeguard vital groundwater resources through quality and quantity monitoring programs, irrigated acre certification, nitrogen certification and water management classes, abandoned well plugging, chemigation system inspections, and more. In the last two years, the district has done extensive soil and water sampling to help in the management of contaminants in the groundwater. Evaluation of these results will be available in 2021. Real-time monitoring equipment from weather stations, water level data loggers and soil moisture sensors has been installed district-wide with plans on implementing public viewing in 2021. Both of these projects received grant funding from the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Bureau of Reclamation.

RURAL WATER SYSTEMS

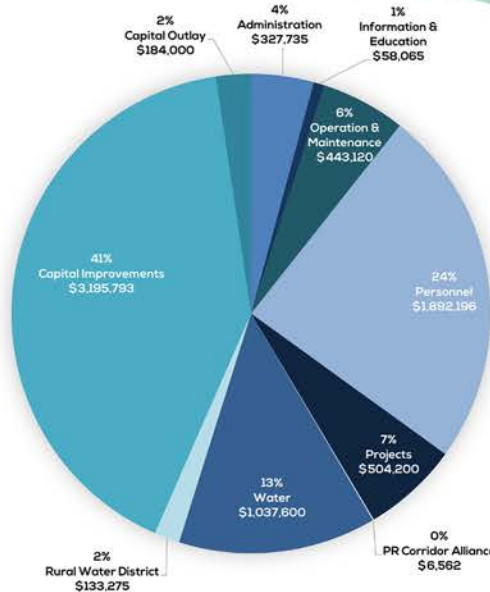
The NRD's rural water systems – one connecting Bruno and David City and the other connecting Colon and Wahoo – finished their fifteenth year of operation in FY2020, providing Bruno and Colon residents with safe, clean drinking water.

TREE PLANTING

The NRD ordered 6,375 trees this year, with 4,700 of those planted by the district. Almost 575 tree seedlings were donated to Arbor Day programs, and school programs. Since 1972, more than 896,000 trees have been planted through this program.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Over 1,654 youth, from preschool to college level age have participated in NRD educational activities and programs during FY2020—including classroom presentations, outdoor activities and internships.

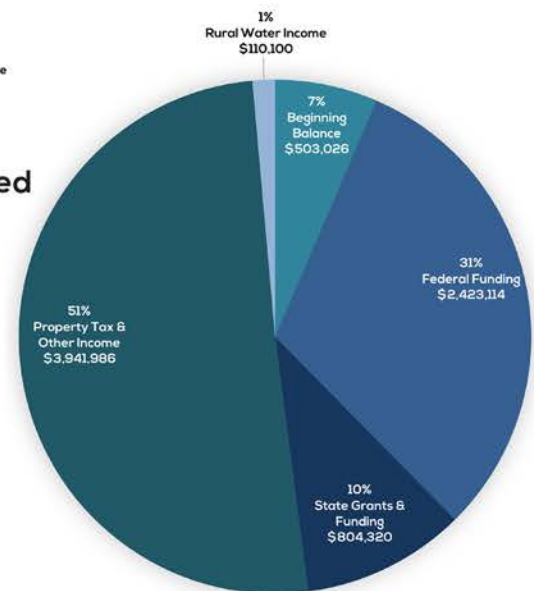


Lower Platte North NRD Projected Expenses for Fiscal Year 2021: \$7,782,546

The Lower Platte North NRD is funded by a combination of property taxes and grants from local, State and Federal sources. For fiscal year 2021 (July 1, 2020–June 30, 2021), the district's projected budget is \$7,782,546.

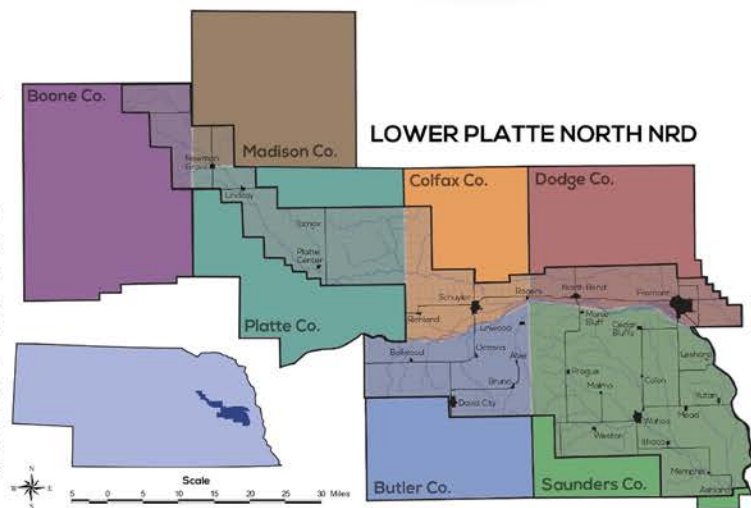
Lower Platte North NRD Projected Income for Fiscal Year 2021: \$7,782,546

State statute allows NRDs a maximum property tax rate of 5.5 cents per \$100 of valuation. The Lower Platte North tax levy is 3.5511 cents for FY20, which equates to approximately \$53 in property tax for a \$150,000 home or farm, or \$2.84/acre for farm land valued at \$8,000/acre.



ABOUT THE LOWER PLATTE NORTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

The Lower Platte North Natural Resources District, based in Wahoo, covers parts of seven counties in east-central Nebraska. There are 23 NRDs in Nebraska, charged with developing and protecting the state's natural resources.



In pursuing this mission, the districts often partner with landowners and other government agencies, such as the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Lower Platte North NRD is governed by 19 locally-elected directors from nine subdistricts, and employs 15 full-time staff members (see current NRD directors and staff on page 2). The district is funded by a combination of property taxes and grants from local, State and Federal sources.

Get more info on the NRD and our projects and programs at www.lpnrd.org.