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the VIADUCT

Lower Platte North Natural Resources District
Winter 2021-2022

Progress Advancing with NRD Priority Watersheds

Shell Creek Watershed

The Shell Creek Watershed covers portions of Boone, Madison, Platte and Colfax counties in the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District. 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 the Shell Creek.

The Shell Creek South Branch channel improvement/benching work will continue in December of 2021 with possible completion by next spring, depending on the weather the next few months. Early this fall, the NRD received notice that the Union Pacific Railroad bridge was officially complete East of Schuyler. This bridge along with the newly constructed county road bridge will help to enhance the flow of the Shell Creek and reduce flood

damages. Federal and State cost-share assistance helped the Lower Platte North NRD to complete some of these projects.

Students at the Schuyler High School used the county road bridge this summer to conduct water sampling. With the help of these students, the Lower Platte North NRD and Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) use the data to study the levels of bacteria, atrazine, and other findings.

The LPNNRD continues to offer a voluntary program to landowners within the Shell Creek Watershed for cost-share assistance to upgrade septic systems with open discharge. Multiple landowners have applied for the voluntary 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.

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New Technology to Help Ice Jam and Flood Monitoring

The threats of ice jams and flooding during the changing seasons prompted Dodge County officials to find additional ways to monitor these issues along the Platte River. The Lower Platte North NRD has partnered



Icy conditions along the Platte River

and established an Inter-local Agreement with Dodge County, Papio-Missouri River NRD and the City of Fremont to establish ice/flood monitoring equipment along the Platte River. On behalf of the partners, the Lower Platte North NRD has approved a three-year joint funding agreement with

USGS (United State Geological Survey Agency). Both of these agreements extend to September 30, 2024.

The goal of the group is to establish cameras and water level monitoring equipment on the Lower Platte River for ice and flood observation. Dodge County Emergency Management is attempting to secure funding through FEMA to assist with the project.

Cameras will be established on Highway bridges 64, 77, 79 and 15, and water level monitors will be on Highway bridges 77 and 15. A fifth camera will be located on land near the confluence of the Loup River into the Platte. The cameras will be focused on an upstream view. The Lower Platte North NRD has established mounting brackets on Highway bridges 64, 77 and 79 for USGS to utilize and had two more fabricated.

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Lower Platte North NRD Board & Staff

Board Member.....Subdistrict

Lon Olson, Fremont	1
Kelly Thompson, Fremont (Vice-Chairperson).....	1
Frank Pollard, Fremont (Chairperson)	2
Bill Saeger, Fremont.....	2
Dave Saalfeld, North Bend.....	3
Mike McGinn, North Bend	3
Chris Yosten, Schuyler.....	4
Matt Bailey, Schuyler.....	4
Mark Seier, Newman Grove	5
David Lawrence, 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 (Secretary)	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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LOWER PLATTE NORTH NRD

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From the Desk of the General Manager

Role Models



Eric Gottschalk

We've all had, and continue to have, amazing role models. These individuals make a unique impact and give us a positive example on how we should live our lives. I am lucky, my life has been blessed with multiple role models in all aspects of my life:

- My wife Susie is the ultimate example of what a loving parent and spouse should be. Her patience and unending dedication to our family is inspiration to all that know her.
- My parents' work ethic and faith were qualities I witnessed daily as a child and into my adulthood. My memories of them and their examples will last a lifetime.
- Our daughter Anna's determination, quest for perfection and sense of humor are second to none.
- My coaches over the years: Coaches Eddie, Tingelhoff, Anderson, Wilson, Shada and countless others...passed on their dedication towards fundamentals and attention to detail while developing the "person" as well as the athlete. Their example continues to help direct my life.

In my professional life, no person has proven to be a larger and more impactful role model than Lower Platte North NRD's Assistant Manager Tom Mountford. Tom's ability to lead by example, remain strong during adversity and stay humble and remain approachable to all, are just a few of his unique skills. Tom is honest, truthful and over the years he has guided, supervised, and consulted me while always displaying how a professional conducts themselves daily. They say true character is revealed not in the moments when all are watching but rather what someone does when no one is watching...Tom Mountford's character is exactly that. Tom's ability to influence others is proven by the fact everyone in our office is convinced the middle-aged woman he knocked cold pursuing his black belt in Tae Kwan Do, actually had it coming to her!



Tom and Eric while attending a conference in Washington D.C.

Tom plans to retire in July of 2022. While I am so very happy for him as he approaches his much-deserved retirement, I am saddened by the thought of not having him right next door to bounce ideas, request input, test out a dumb joke or simply sit down, over a cup of coffee, and discuss the nuances of Gunsmoke and Andy Griffith reruns.

I would suggest anyone reading this who knows Tom or would like to know him, stop by our office and visit when you get a chance. I am confident you will enjoy your time and will definitely benefit from a few minutes with this amazing man. The Lower Platte North NRD is the organization it is today, in large part, because of Tom Mountford.

Over the years Tom and I have shared our successes, our struggles and some deep personal loss but what I will remember most are the countless times we laughed...and talked...and then laughed some more... What more can you ask of a role model and a true friend?

Eric Gottschalk,
General Manager, Lower Platte North NRD

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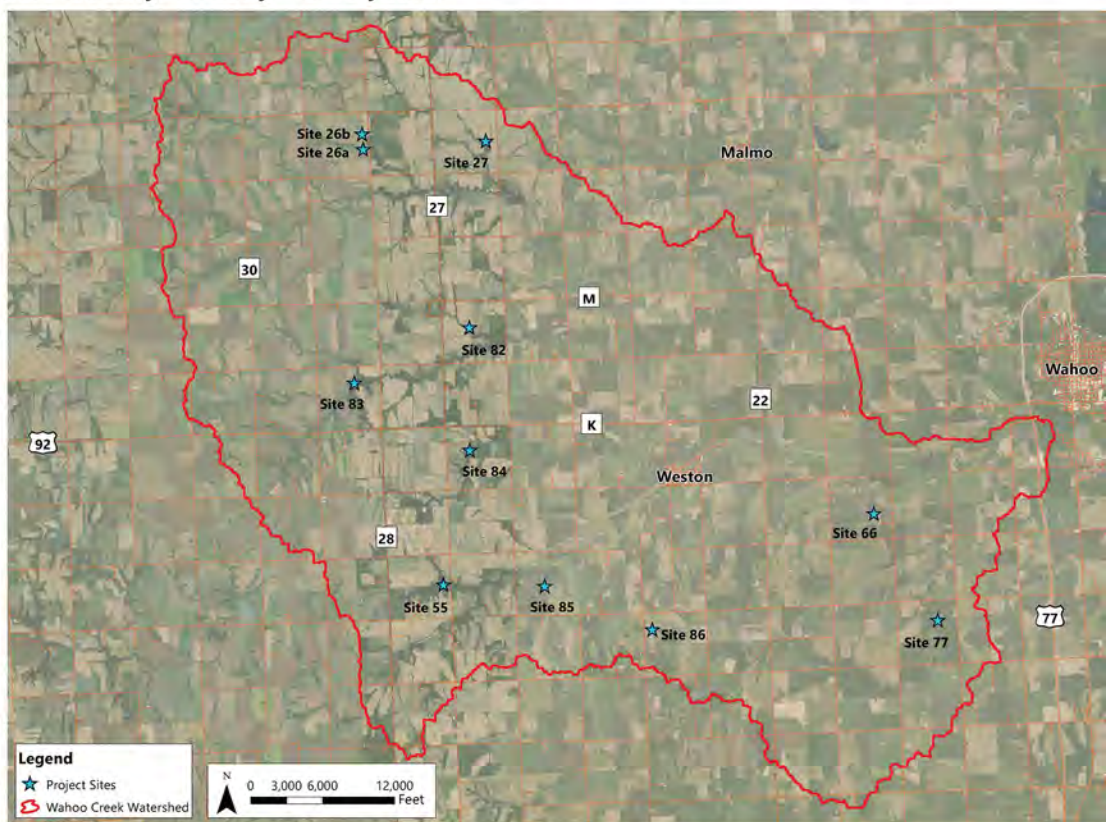
Wahoo Creek Watershed

The Wahoo Creek Watershed project (pictured at right) was created to address the environmental impacts of flooding in areas of Saunders County. In early December, the Draft Upper Wahoo Creek Watershed Plan was posted for public and agency review. The NRD was granted permission from Olsson to move forward with conducting geo-technical analysis and other engineering design activities at seven of the ten proposed dam sites. Soil borings are required to understand the soil properties within the dam and permanent pool footprints, which are needed to determine how the structures will be designed. Soil boring on three of the sites (26a, 26b, and 27) were completed in 2019.

The Wahoo Creek Watershed plan has the potential to reduce flooding damages to agricultural and urban land, improve water quality, and improve wildlife and aquatic habitats.

Three of the ten proposed dam sites could possibly begin construction as early as 2023. Funding for these three dams has already been secured.

The NRD is working with the NRCS and the State of Nebraska for funding with the remaining sites. The design for the remaining sites will potentially be completed in 2022 or 2023, with all of the dams potentially completed in the next 8-10 years.



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USGS plans to have the first camera on Highway 64 up and running in early December and will work their way up river with the remaining four. The camera images and water level information will be established on

a USGS website for the public to utilize. Once it is available, a link to this information from the cameras will be on our website at www.lpnrd.org.

2022 Lake Wanahoo Park Permits Available for Purchase

The 2022 Lake Wanahoo Park Permits are here! A permit is required for all vehicles that enter the Lake Wanahoo NRD Recreation area. If you live in or own land in the Lower Platte North NRD boundaries, you can purchase a resident annual permit for \$15. Residence outside of the district boundaries will need to purchase a non-resident annual permit for \$25. A second permit can be purchased a half price of the first permit. Permits can be purchased at the LPNNRD office,

online at www.lpnrd.org, at the kiosks at Lake Wanahoo entrance, or at Corner Market in Wahoo.

Rediscover the outdoors at Lake Wanahoo! Enjoy camping, fishing, no-wake boating, disc golf, bird watching, hiking and biking trails and more! For more information about the park and the numerous amenities, please visit www.lpnrd.org

Order Trees and Shrubs for Spring Delivery



Trees and shrubs provide numerous benefits to people, animals and the environment – improved air quality, livestock and crop protection, reduced heating and cooling costs, and essential habitats for wildlife are just a few. The Lower Platte North NRD has over three dozen different species

of bare root trees and shrubs available to choose from!

Handplant trees and shrubs are \$1.00 per tree or shrub, and must be purchased in multiples of 25 per species. There is also a wildlife package and small acreage package available for \$60 that include 10 species of 5 different trees or shrubs. For a complete list of species available, please visit the LPNNRD website at www.lpnrd.org/projects-and-programs/forestry or call the NRD at 402-443-4675. Orders can be placed online, by mail, or at the NRD office in Wahoo.



Groundwater Management

Nitrogen and Water Management Workshop Offered

Do you live in the country? How often do you have your well water tested? Have you ever had your well water tested? The United States Environmental Protection Agency set the legal limit for nitrate levels in drinking water at 10 parts per million. Anything above 10 parts per million can cause serious health problems.

On Tuesday, February 1, 2022, the Lower Platte North NRD will be hosting a Nitrate Workshop at the Oak Ballroom in Schuyler. Producers and others are encouraged to attend to learn more about the Nitrate issues concerning Nebraska. Rural residents can bring in a sample of their domestic well water to be tested during the event!

Jesse Bell, Director and Professor at the Claire M. Hubbard Water, Health and Climate Program, will discuss health effects linked to environmental issues such as elevated Nitrate levels and drought conditions. Dr. Dan Snow from the Nebraska Water Center will discuss the vadose zone sampling results. The vadose zone is the area below the land surface and above the groundwater table. The main purpose of this study in the LPNNRD area is to evaluate the amount of Nitrate that is in the vadose zone. This information can help determine the type of best management practices and the locations.

Students from the Shell Creek Watershed testing group will present their results and data from their recent water testing. With the recent addition of Columbus Lakeview students conducting the water testing, along with Newman

Grove students and Schuyler students, there is now water being sampled and tested from the headwaters of Shell Creek near Newman Grove and downstream just before it reaches the Platte River near Schuyler.

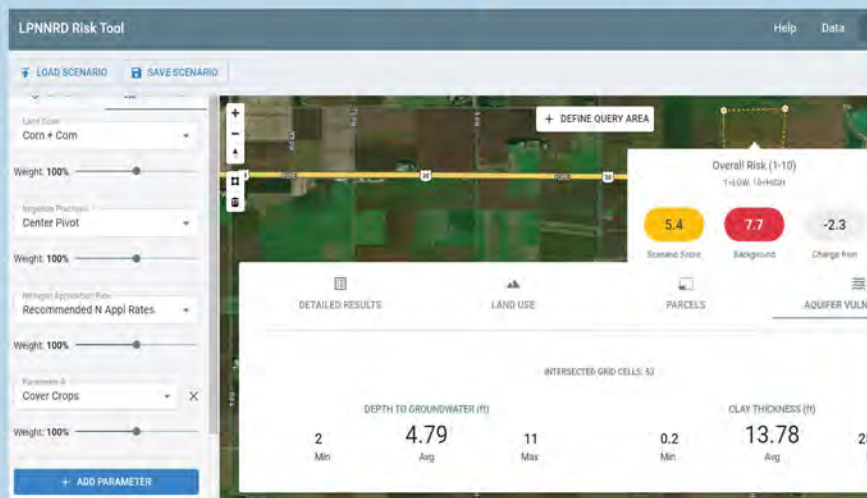
A soil health and cover crop discussion will also transpire at the event, led by Joe Luck, Associate Director from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center. Luck will show some innovative practices on applying cover crops and nitrogen fertilizer. Staff from the Lower Platte NRD's Water Resources Department and UNL-Extension will also be available during the discussions. Lunch will be provided to attendees. Producers will receive credit for Nitrogen Certification during the event. If you have any questions about the event, please contact Daryl Andersen, LPNNRD Water Resources Manager at dandersen@lpnnrd.org or call the NRD office at 402-443-4675.

2022 Nitrogen Certification & Water Management Classes

Friday, January 7 in David City
Wednesday, January 12 in Fremont
Tuesday, February 1 in Schuyler
Wednesday, February 2 in David City
Thursday, February 3 in Wahoo
Monday, February 7 in Lindsey
Tuesday, February 15 in David City
Thursday, February 24 in Columbus
Monday, March 7 in Wahoo
Tuesday, March 15 in Columbus

Nitrate Risk Tool Created for Phase Management Areas

The Lower Platte North NRD released the new nitrate risk tool created for the Phase Management Areas of Schuyler/Richland and Bellwood this fall. NRD staff had multiple meetings with producers in the phase areas recently to discuss the nitrate issues and encourage best management practices. With the help of this new technology, users can select an area of their land and see what best management practice can be incorporated to improve the soil conditions and curb nitrate leaching. The practices have been proven effective from research projects conducted throughout the Midwest. At this time, the technology is only available to the phase management areas, but the availability to all producers in the district is still progressing.





LOWER PLATTE NORTH NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

Annual Report

2021

Employee Years of Service Recognition

Three employees of the Lower Platte North NRD were recognized this year for their years of service.

Russell Oaklund, Lead Water Resources Specialist, has been with the Lower Platte North NRD for 20 years. Russell has orchestrated



Russell Oaklund

countless Nitrogen Certification Classes, conducted dozens of irrigation and creek samplings, and many other aspects of the

Water Resources Department over the years.

Karen Rezac, Department/Administrative Assistant for the Lower Platte North NRD, has also been with the District for 20 years. Karen assists with the Rural Water department, Lake Wanahoo permit



Karen Rezac

Manager, **Tom Mountford**, has worked in the NRD system for a combined total of 35 years. Tom started his NRD career working



Tom Mountford

at the Little Blue NRD in Davenport as the Information and Programs Coordinator. After working at the Little Blue NRD for 2 ½ years, Tom moved on to the Nemaha NRD in

sales, multiple activities within the Water Department and a multitude of daily office activities.

The Lower Platte North NRD's Assistant

Manager, **Tom Mountford**, has worked in the NRD system for a combined total of 35 years. Tom started his NRD career working at the Little Blue NRD in Davenport as the Information and Programs Coordinator. After working at the Little Blue NRD for 2 ½ years, Tom

moved on to the Nemaha NRD in

Tecumseh, working as the Assistant Manager for 5 years. After leaving the Nemaha NRD, Tom was hired as the Assistant Manager at the Lower Platte North NRD, which he currently holds for the last 27 ½ years.

"The Lower Platte North NRD is the productive, focused, and positive organization it is today because of our dedicated, long-time staff members like Tom, Karen and Russell," said Eric Gottschalk, LPNNRD General Manager. He continued, "their commitment to our district's goals and objectives is a testament to their professionalism, amazing abilities, and positive attitudes."

The NRD is pleased to recognize these three employees for their time, dedication and commitment towards the District's mission of conservation, preservation and wise use of our natural resources.

Successful Year at Lake Wanahoo Amid Challenges



The Lake Wanahoo Recreation Area received an astonishing increase in attendance during the Fiscal Year 2021. Camping revenue and permit sales continued to increase while outdoor enthusiasts looked for ways to get outside amid the ongoing pandemic.

The camping experience at Lake Wanahoo expanded with the completion of six primitive cabins. The 10-foot by 12-foot cabins offer a lake-front view, heating and air

conditioning, drop-down bunks and a sleeping loft. All six cabins were often booked throughout the summer weekends.

Outdoor enthusiasts looking for a unique experience ventured to Pork Chop Island throughout Fiscal Year 2021. Campers can rent one spot or the whole island, located

North of the Breakwater Trail. The island is pack-in and pack-out and only accessible by boat, kayak, or canoe.

Another addition to the recreation area was the addition of 4.5 miles of hiking and biking trails through natural prairie grass along the North portion of the lake.

The Clint Johannes Education Building on the East side of Lake Wanahoo stayed busy throughout Fiscal Year 2021, even with some capacity restrictions due to recommended health measures during the pandemic. Although dozens of rentals were canceled or postponed, there were nearly 150 events.



Inside the Clint Johannes Education Building

FY2021 – IN BRIEF

SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION

In partnership with the Nebraska Natural Resources Conservation Service, the NRD's Soil & Water Conservation Program continued to provide 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 are available and will be discussed at the winter NRD programs. Real-time monitoring equipment from weather stations, water level data loggers and soil moisture sensors have been installed district-wide with public viewing available online. 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 sixteenth year of operation in FY2021, providing Bruno and Colon residents with safe, clean drinking water.

TREE PLANTING

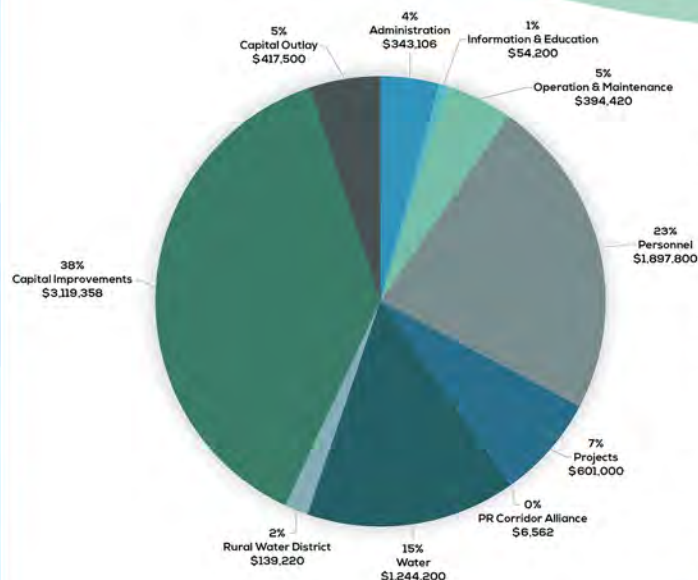
The NRD ordered 11,775 trees this year, with 5,245 of those planted by the district. The NRD also donated 900 trees for educational events throughout the district. Since 1972, more than 905,000 trees have been planted through this program.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Over 1,100 youth, from preschool to college-level age and almost 45 adults have participated in NRD educational activities and programs during FY2021—including classroom presentations, outdoor activities, field days, special presentations and more.

Lower Platte North Natural Resources District

Annual Report 2021

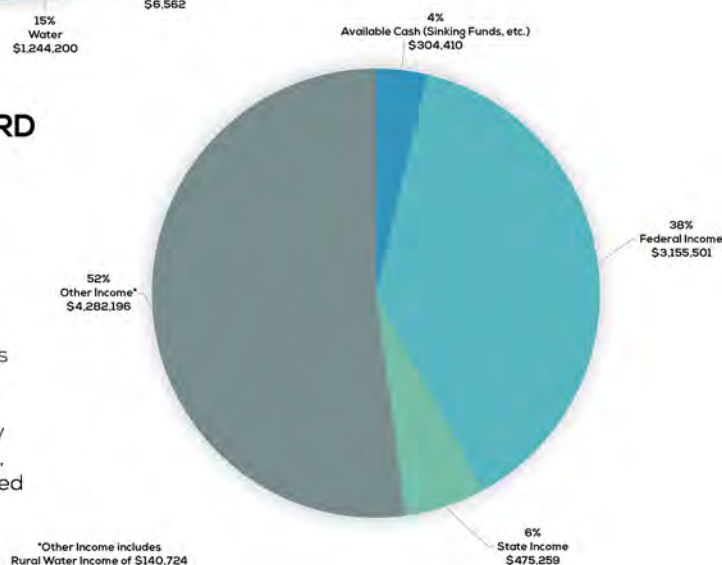


Lower Platte North NRD Projected Expenses for Fiscal Year 2022: \$8,217,366

The Lower Platte North NRD is funded by a combination of property taxes and grants from local, State and Federal sources. For fiscal year 2022 (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022), the district's projected budget is \$8,217,366.

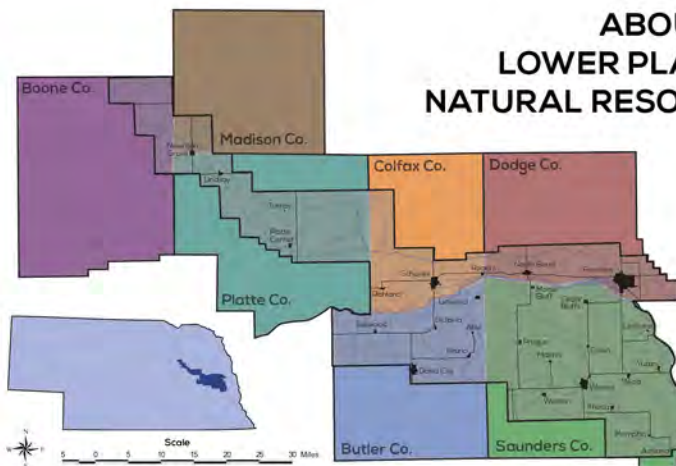
Lower Platte North NRD Projected Income for Fiscal Year 2022: \$8,217,366

State statute allows NRDs a maximum property tax rate of 5.5 cents per \$100 of valuation. The Lower Platte North tax levy is .03345 cents per \$100 valuation for FY22, which equates to approximately \$50.18 in property tax for a \$150,000 home or farm, or \$2.68/acre for farm land valued at \$8,000/acre.



*Other Income includes Rural Water Income of \$140,724

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.