

IN THE LOUP

New Irrigation Available For Three River Basins

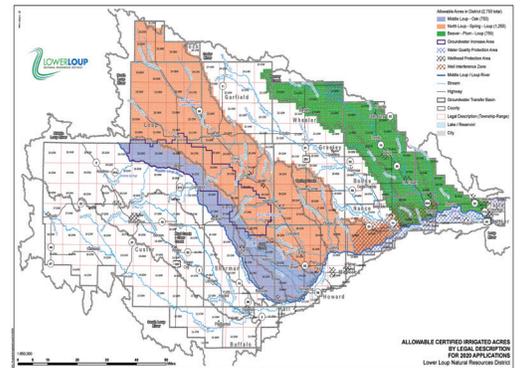
New groundwater irrigated acres will be available for three river basins in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District in 2021. The Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors approved the new irrigation at its meeting May 28th. There will be 750 irrigated acres granted in the Middle Loup Basin, 1,250 acres in the North Loup, and 750 acres will be available in the Beaver Creek/Plum Creek/Loup River Basin.

NRD General Manager Russell Callan said that the new irrigation development was approved after a review of studies that showed a “surplus” in the water budget

created for the approved sub-basins of the Loup River Basin. Water quality was also a consideration.

Applications for new irrigation will be accepted Sept. 1-20, 2020 only. A non-refundable fee of \$500 will be required with each application and only one application will be allowed per field. Due to restrictions in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those with interest in applying or seeking answers to questions are urged to telephone the District Headquarters office at (308) 728-3221.

LLNRD Assistant Manager Tylr Naprstek said that application forms



New Irrigated Acres in 2021 allowed in the highlighted three basins

for new irrigated acres are available at www.llnrd.org as well as at NRCS offices in the District, and at the NRD Headquarters office in Ord.

LLNRD FY2021 Budget Drops 18 Percent

The Lower Loup NRD Board has approved a budget for FY2021 that requires an 18% decrease in property tax funding.

Lower Loup NRD General Manager Russell Callan said that funding of \$4,736,484.19 is needed for this fiscal year. That compares to last year, when the budget required \$5,853,609.54.

He said that the FY2021 tax rate will be 0.029264 per \$100 of property tax valuation. The FY2020 tax rate

was 0.035736 per \$100 of valuation.

The property valuation in the District was \$16,185,327,865 in 2020 while in 2019, it was \$16,380,300,696.

Callan said its important to remember that not every dollar budgeted comes from property taxes. He said that the NRD is required to budget for every dollar it spends. The General Manager said that includes all funding made available through grants and other non-tax sources.

The LLNRD Board of Directors voted to adopt the new budget at its monthly meeting on August 27th. The vote was 18 in favor, 1 opposed.

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Sargent Flooding Issues To Be Addressed

A potential interlocal agreement between the City of Sargent and the Lower Loup NRD would move the project forward to address the flooding issues in the community.

The agreement would divide the cost of a consultant to seek grants for the project at 75% LLNRD and 25% City. Flooding is an on-going problem in the community.

The NRD hired Olsson as project consultant.

Several options were developed as potential solutions and input on those solutions was received from the public.

Among those options was transitioning some surface water irrigated fields to groundwater. Since groundwater levels in the Sargent area are high, using groundwater to irrigate will draw those levels down. Surface water irrigation could add to the levels.

Other options include a potential diversion channel around the city and drainage improvements in the city limits.

A number of funding opportunities will be investigated for the project, according to LLNRD General Manager Russell Callan. He said



Proposed options for Sargent

that the cooperative effort between the community and the NRD will provide for strong applications. He said that every potential funding source for the flooding project will be investigated.

Cover Crop Water Use Is Focus Of Study

The impact of cover crops on soil moisture and recharge is the subject of a study being undertaken by the Lower Loup Natural Resources District and the Central Platte Natural Resources District. The NRDs entered into a partnership with EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc (EA) after receiving a Water Sustainability Grant from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to conduct the three-year study.

Producers were selected with corn/soybean rotations as well as cover crops in southern Buffalo County, an area that has shown historical declines in the water table. Cover crops have been used for improving

soil health and reducing erosion, but there is limited information available that quantifies the impact of cover crops on groundwater recharge. This was the finding of an in-depth



Cover crop water usage is examined

Literacy Review conducted by EA in 2017.

To look further into the impacts of cover crops, three fields with traditional row crops were selected. After fall harvest, half the pivot will be planted to a cover crop such as cereal rye, while the other will be left unplanted. Soil samples were collected and analyzed for nitrate, texture, and soil moisture content.

Field monitoring equipment was installed in the Fall, 2019, and will stay in the field for the three-year study. Moisture sensors at 18, 72, and 84 inches deep will record data continuously and be delivered and stored remotely to a website.

A Message From The Manager

Thanks for reading our latest edition of “In The Loup.” This publication allows us to share the work of the Lower Loup NRD.

2020 has been a challenging year in nearly every aspect of American life. That’s true for this natural resources district, too.

The LLNRD Directors and staff have worked hard to establish our two recreation areas as among the best in the state. That’s why it was difficult to pare back on the services we provided when COVID-19 struck Nebraska.

Initially, the NRD closed Davis Creek and Pibel Lake Recreation Areas to overnight camping, but allowed day use of each area. The restroom facilities and playground equipment were locked down.

As we moved into summer, the LLNRD reopened the two rec areas to overnight camping and all restroom and other facilities were returned to use.

The demand for use of the two facilities has never been higher. Camping spots are reserved well in advance and day use continues at record paces.

We are pleased that the public has recognized the work of the LLNRD to make both recreation areas the best they can be. One new area that has proved quite successful is the tent camping area at Davis Creek. Tent campers have recognized the attractive location near the lake shore.

The LLNRD’s commitment to outdoor recreation has proved



*LLNRD General Manager
Russell Callan*

a great success thanks to our partnership with the public. Your willingness to follow the rules and regulations and your effort to help maintain the amenities in place have made a great difference.

Consultant Hiring Moves IPA Plan Forward

A consultant has been selected to undertake the design of the Sargent East Improvement Project Area (IPA) east and south of Sargent. JEO of Lincoln was selected from the two bidders for the project.

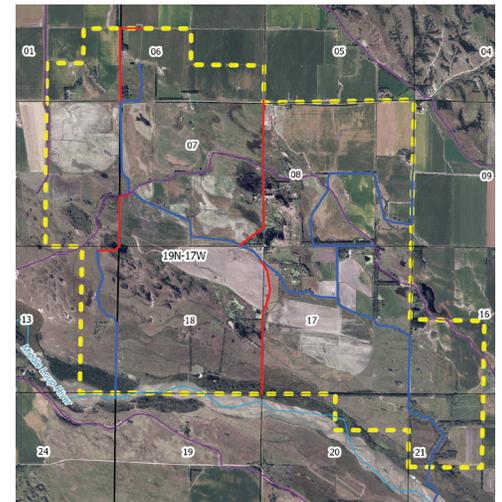
An IPA is set up to provide drainage and flood control benefits for landowners in a specific area. NRDs can create an IPA, at the request of affected landowners, for projects that create a private benefit.

NRD Projects Technician Brian Kolar said the consultant would do design work and feasibility studies. JEO

will also be tasked with determining what portion of the project’s benefits will be billed to each landowner.

The Sargent East IPA got its start when a petition with 19 signatures of the 20 potential participants in the project was turned into the NRD. Numerous areas east of Sargent are flooded and there is no natural drainage.

The final decision on whether the IPA moves forward will be determined by a vote of the landowners affected.



*Proposed boundaries of the
Sargent East IPA*



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

*****ECRWSSSEDDM*****
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Mud Creek Project Will Protect Watershed

The Lower Loup NRD and the NRCS are working with residents, local communities, and other agencies to develop a Mud Creek Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Plan (WFPO).

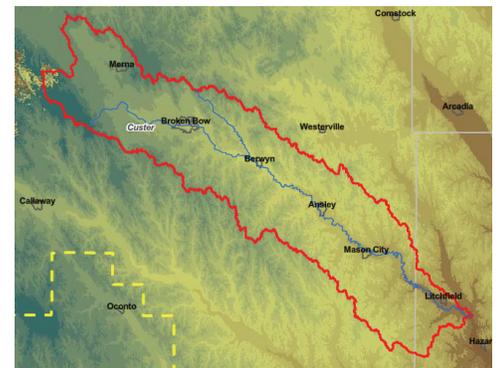
The WFPO plan is focused on a portion of the Mud Creek Watershed, beginning northwest of Merna and extending to Clear Creek southeast of Litchfield. The planning area covers approximately 50% of the watershed's total 474,080 acres, including the communities of Merna, Broken Bow, Berwyn, Ansley, Mason City and Litchfield.

The plan goal is to increase flood prevention and provide watershed protection, as well as improvements to water quality, erosion control, and

enhanced groundwater recharge. Potential projects will provide a wide range of benefits to local residents, farmers, ranchers, and community infrastructure. Ultimately, watershed projects and conservation practices identified in the WFPO plan will be eligible for future funding and cost share programs.

The focus area is based on community requests to the LLNRD and the need for improvements throughout the Mud Creek Watershed. The plan will be guided by input from local stakeholders, public agencies, landowners, the community, and other interested parties. Successful development and implementation of a plan will depend on the involvement of community members.

Representatives and stakeholders will be invited to offer their opinions, ensuring that local issues and considerations are utilized in plan development. The plan development will follow steps using NRCS national guidelines. The WFPO plan is a two- year project scheduled to be complete, Spring, 2022.



Mud Creek Project Area