

Insight

Nemaha Natural Resources District

Obermeyer Honored as Soil Conservationist of the Year



Pictured Left to Right: NARD Director Judy Ridenour, Orval Gigstad, Daryl Obermeyer, Dan Hodges, Jackie Obermeyer, Duane Sugden, & Kyle Hauschild

(NARD) Soil Conservationist of the Year Award. The award recognizes producers that manage soils in proper accordance with the capabilities and economics of the land. Daryl was honored at the NARD Annual Conference in September.

Daryl and his wife Jackie have operated a cow/calf Simmental herd and rotational cropping system that includes cover crops for several decades. Daryl is a devout no-tiller. He utilizes conservation practices such as farming and spraying on the contour, planting field borders and filter strips, soil testing, and managing nutrient application timing and rates all to promote soil health. He participates in on-farm research and hosts field days in partnership with University of Nebraska Extension. On his pasture he implements rotational grazing to promote forage health and also to benefit wildlife.

Daryl is actively involved in his community and is an outstanding advocate for sharing information with others in the agricultural community.

Please help us to congratulate Daryl on this achievement. For the full article on Daryl's award please visit our website:

www.nemahanrd.org/about/news

The Nemaha Natural Resources District and its Board of Directors would like to congratulate Daryl Obermeyer of Nemaha County for receiving the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts

2023 Land Judging

The Southeast Area Land Judging competition was hosted in Gage County on October 4th. 317 students and 13 adults from 14 different schools participated in the event.

During the competition students visit four different soil formations on an agricultural field. They are challenged to interpret physical soil properties such as depth, texture, permeability, slope, thickness, and susceptibility to erosion. Students are also asked to determine a soil's land capability class that indicates land use limitations and to make land treatment recommendations. All four of the 2023 state qualifying teams from the Southeast Area Land Judging competition are from the Nemaha NRD! Team results from the area contest are as follows; First Place: Johnson-Brock, Second Place: Falls City, Third Place: Pawnee City, and Fourth Place: Syracuse. For a complete listing of teams and indi-

viduals from each school, please visit www.nrdnet.org/nebraska-land-judging-soil-evaluation. It is of note that three students from Lewiston competed as adults this year. Students that previously participated in the National Land Judging competition are required to compete as adults in subsequent years.

State Land Judging was held October 25th near Broken Bow. Falls City's team of Ethan Morris, Brock Niedfeldt, Kemper Foster, & Lathan Richey (pictured left to right) finished 1st place and will be heading to the National competition in El Reno, Oklahoma in spring of 2024. Brock Niedfeldt from Falls City's team also placed 3rd overall individually at the State competition. Congratulations Tigers and good luck at Nationals!



Participants at the land judging site. Photo courtesy of Lower Big Blue NRD

Fall 2023

FY23 Annual Report (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)

Programs

Conservation Assistance

The NNRD's Soil and Water Conservation Program works with NRCS offices to provide technical assistance, design, and layout of structural conservation practices that reduce erosion and facilitate better grazing management systems. In FY23 the NNRD along with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture provided cost share assistance to landowners. The following conservation practices were installed throughout the district

- 12.2 miles of terraces
- 3.8 miles of underground outlets (tile)
- 4.9 acres of grassed waterways
- 341 windbreak trees/shrubs
- 4,713 cubic yard of diversions

Trees

10,350 trees and shrubs were sold through the conservation tree program. Of those trees and shrubs 3,820 were machine planted by the NNRD at 14 different locations. The remaining were picked up at the NNRD office.

The NNRD held a tree workshop in February of 2023 with the Nebraska Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Pheasants Forever. The workshop provided expert presentations on pests, diseases, windbreak renovation, proper planting and care techniques, considerations for wildlife, and programs available to landowners.

Executive Travel continued their partnership with Nebraska's Natural Resource Districts working toward their goal to plant a million trees to promote its sustainability program. This year \$1,153 was awarded to reimburse 3 lucky landowners for trees and shrubs they had machine planted by the NNRD.

Nebraska Buffer Strip Program

Over 775 acres in the NNRD were enrolled in the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program aimed at reducing cropland pollutants entering surface waters. The program provides annual payments for grass filter strips or riparian forest buffers along vulnerable surface water resources. Those acres earned a combined \$107,500 in annual payments in FY23.

Grass Drilling Program

The NNRD no-till drilled 10.8 acres of seed for 4 landowners through the district's grass drilling program. FY23 will be the final year of the grass drilling program. If you are seeking a contractor to do some seeding for you, local NRCS offices should maintain contractor lists with local providers.

Urban Special Projects

There were no Urban Special Projects completed in FY23. Communities seeking to develop/improve natural resources related recreation, education, or interpretation should visit www.nemahanrd.org/programs/cost-share to learn more.

Education & Outreach

Plant-A-Tree

Third Grade Plant-A-Tree delivered 768 trees/shrubs to 15 area schools in the spring of 2023. Presentations on how to plant and care for trees accompanied the tree deliveries.

Envirothon

Three teams from District schools participated in the 2023 regional Envirothon competition. Norris went to the State competition as a wild-card.

Land Judging

Pawnee County hosted the Southeast Area Land Judging competition in October of 2022. 239 kids from area schools participated. Lewiston finished 5th at the State competition.

Coffee With The NRD

In FY23 the NNRD piloted two "Coffee with the NRD" listening sessions. Staff and directors from the NNRD visited Firth and Nebraska City to share what the NRDs do and answer any questions from constituents. Turnout for the events was minimal.

5K Depot Dash

The NNRD and Nebraska Association of Resources Districts hosted a 5K run to benefit the NARD Foundation in April. Proceeds from the event will be used to support Nebraska youth with the desire to pursue a natural resource related field.

Weekly Radio Spot

In addition to usual advertising the NNRD added a short weekly live radio call in. Wednesday mornings at 8:15am you can catch the NNRD's General Manager, Kyle Hauschild, live on B103 discussing the current events at the NNRD.

Staff Years of Service

Chuck Wingert, Water Resources Manager, 25 Years of Service
Steve Bartels, Field Representative, 30 Years of Service

Director Years of Service:

Orval Gigstad, Subdistrict 3 Director, 30 Years of Service

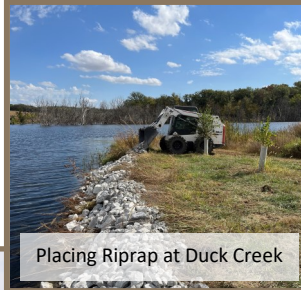
Board Vacancies

The NRD Board of Directors seeks to fill vacancies in subdistricts 4 and 9. Interested persons must be registered voters who meet all eligibility requirements for holding an elected office and reside within the boundaries of the vacant subdistrict. Subdistrict 4 is in the eastern Otoe County/eastern Nebraska City vicinity and includes Talmage, Otoe, Lorton, Wyoming, & Paul. Subdistrict 9 is located in southeastern Richardson County and includes Falls City, Rulo, and Preston. If you are interested in more information please visit www.nemahanrd.org or call the office at 402-335-3325

FY23 Annual Report: Recreation Update

Field Staff Make Improvements at Duck Creek & Iron Horse Trail Lake

Field Staff have been busy all summer making improvements at Iron Horse Trail Lake and Duck Creek Recreation Area. Fishing jetties at both parks were lined with new riprap. Fishing bump outs in the day use area at Iron Horse Trail Lake also received new riprap.

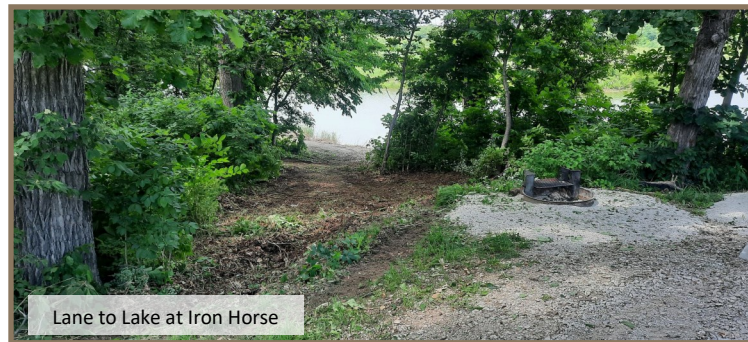


Placing Riprap at Duck Creek

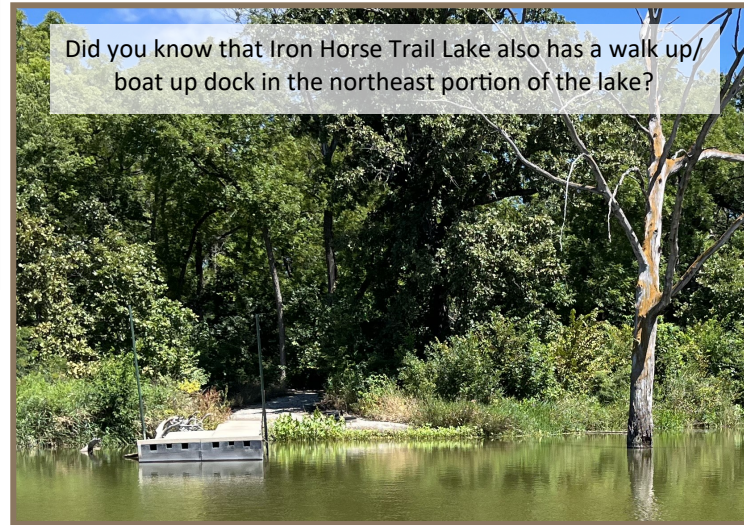


Riprap Along Jetty at Duck Creek

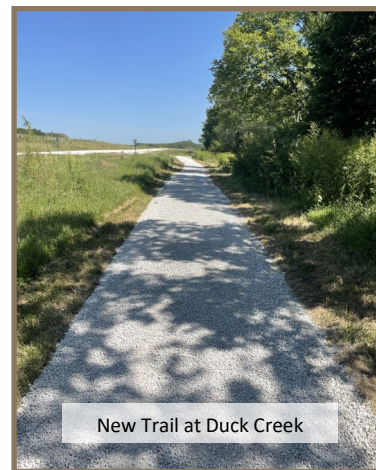
Iron Horse Trail Lake is the first public recreation area opened by the NNRD in 1985. It has been a favorite spot among fishermen and campers alike. This spring and summer the tent camping area was spruced up. New walking lanes were developed from the tent camping area to the lakeside trail. They provide lake access and a great view!



Lane to Lake at Iron Horse



Did you know that Iron Horse Trail Lake also has a walk up/boat up dock in the northeast portion of the lake?



New Trail at Duck Creek

Duck Creek Recreation Area is the NNRD's newest public recreation area. Opening in 2018, Duck Creek has quickly become a favorite spot for many campers. This spring a new, more user friendly, water hydrant system was installed at the park. The existing system was prone to freezing pipes when temperatures dropped in the fall.

The trail system at Duck Creek Recreation Area was expanded this summer. The new trail provides a connection between the

primitive/tent camping area on the west side of the park and the existing walking trail down to the beach.

If you haven't had a chance to visit one of the NNRD's recreation areas fall is the perfect time to change that! Daily park permits are \$5 and available at the park entrance. Annual permits are \$15 each and available at the park entrance, online, or at the office in Tecumseh.

Annual Conference Recap

The 2023 Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Annual Conference was held the last week of September in Kearney, Nebraska. Each year staff, directors, agency partners, and consulting firms from across the state gather together to gain knowledge about topics that fall under the umbrella of Natural Resources Districts' responsibilities. The annual conference provides an opportunity for the NRDs to network and become more educated on current/foreseeable resource concerns and to troubleshoot ways to tackle them. The local perspective brought to the table is one of the NRD system's greatest strengths. From producer panels to training in improving communication, the conference covers it all and leaves attendees with a revitalized sense of purpose. January will provide a

similar networking and educational experience for NRD staff and Directors as they attend the 2024 Legislative Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Giving Back

This year the NARD Foundation raised \$27,650 that will go toward supporting natural resource based educational programs. The money raised provides scholarships, internships, and support for high school students to continue their education in natural resources.



FY23 Watershed Updates and FY24 Watershed Plans

Maintaining over 400 watershed structures, 5 recreation areas, and a trail keeps Nemaha NRD field staff busy throughout the year. Projects, such as prescribed burns or brush/vegetation management are often times an all hands on deck task. Throughout the growing season crews are busy cutting trees and spraying for undesirable vegetation. Late fall through early spring, when conditions are favorable, crews do some tree removal, burn brush piles, and conduct prescribed burns.



Ken Hatten spraying



Steve Bartels & Tomas Chalé Akè on a controlled burn



Slip Liner

Going forward in FY24 the Nemaha NRD has prioritized structures to receive riprap, be slip lined, or have other repairs done. \$587,000 has been budgeted for watershed repairs. This year, a few slip lining projects have been planned in the Spring Creek and Brownell watersheds. After piloting 5 slip lining projects in the NNRD during FY23, slip lining has proven to be a cost and time effective way to maintain the integrity of outlet risers and pipes on aging structures. Upper Big Nemaha 7-A, near Adams, will

have some repair work done following the development of an engineering design in FY24. The structure has been drained since spring of 2023 to allow engineers to assess the dam. South Fork 14-4, in Richardson County, will have major repairs completed involving the recovery and re-use of two outlet sections and measures to restore the structure. The outlet sections of the pipe have fallen off and there is a 20 foot drop off into the plunge pool. These repairs will also prevent similar issues from occurring again. Dam repair including shaping and placement of riprap are scheduled on four watershed structures in FY24. Riprap is used on the face of dams to prevent wave action from causing erosion issues.



South Fork 14-4, Scheduled for Fy24 Repairs

Aging structures continue to be a challenge in the Nemaha NRD, taking a considerable amount of both time and financial resources. In addition to the money budgeted for watershed repairs, \$100,000 has been set aside for a watershed development/maintenance sinking fund to prepare for Watershed and Flood Protection Operations (WFPO) in Brownell, Wilson, & Ziegler Creek Watersheds in partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). An additional \$30,000 has been set aside for WFPO work in the Kirkman's Creek Watershed. The Nemaha NRD submitted requests for planning assistance through the NRCS in January of 2022 for Brownell, Wilson, & Ziegler Creek Watersheds and in September of 2022 for Kirkman's Creek Watershed. Staffing shortages at the NRCS have delayed the anticipated planning time.

District 6 Range Judging



239 area youth came together from 13 area schools in southeast Nebraska to participate in the 2023 Area 6 range judging competition on October 20th. Range judging teaches students how to better understand rangeland

ecosystems in order to make proper management decisions.

Native rangeland covers approximately 46%, or 23 million acres of Nebraska. Combined with seeded pasture, 50% of the State of Nebraska is occupied with grasslands according to UNL's Range Judging Handbook. As one of Nebraska's most important resources, grasslands support the livestock industry by providing forage for animals. Additionally, they provide habitat for wildlife, protect soils from erosion, filter rainfall runoff before it enters streams, and recharge groundwater aquifers. The goal of range judging is for stu-

dents to better understand rangeland systems allowing them to make good management decisions. Students learn about plant species, soils, and livestock and how they impact each other. The contest has participants identify 24 plant species and report on their life span, origin, season of growth, forage value, and growth form. They additionally evaluate three different range sites, determine range quality of a ranch to make necessary recommendations for improvement, and answer general range and grassland questions. For contest results please visit the news section of our website!



FY24 Budget & Priorities

Fiscal Year (FY) 2024’s budget was approved at the September 14 board meeting. The NNRD’s levy increased from 0.029532 to 0.029996, a total increase of 0.000464 per \$100 in property valuation. Aging structures and increased cost to do business are among the greatest challenges the NNRD faces. With over 400 watershed structures in its jurisdiction the NNRD is unique compared to other NRDs. To prepare for future, more major, watershed rehabilitation efforts, \$130,000 of the watershed and flood control project budget will be placed into a sinking fund for future watershed rehabilitation projects in the Brownell, Wilson, Ziegler, and Kirkman’s Creek Watersheds. The remainder of the watershed and flood control projects budget will go toward maintenance and necessary major repairs.

| FY24 Budget Expense Category | Budgeted Amount | % of Budget |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Watershed & Flood Control Projects | \$757,475 | 19% |
| Recreation | \$212,300 | 5% |
| Personnel & Director Expenses | \$1,718,254 | 43% |
| General Operation & Administration | \$237,247 | 6% |
| Conservation Assistance | \$256,734 | 6% |
| Water Quality/Quantity | \$156,340 | 4% |
| Capital Expenditures | \$102,455 | 3% |
| Cash Reserve | \$500,000 | 13% |
| Information & Education | \$20,840 | 1% |
| Total FY24 Budget | \$3,961,645 | |

Water quality and quantity has been a recurring topic this past year and will continue to be well into the future. As municipalities expand and the demand for water increases, it is essential that NRDs have the best available tools and information to help make management decisions regarding water resources. Airborne Electromagnetic (AEM) Flights were finalized within the last priority portion of the NNRD during FY23. These flights produce a series of virtual bore holes along the flight path that provide a hydrogeological cross section from the ground down to bedrock. This valuable information shows the extent and characteristics of the paleovalley aquifer system that is unique to southeast Nebraska. A comprehensive report including all prior flight data is in the production process this fall and will be delivered to the NNRD this winter. These flights have revolutionized the information available to the NNRD water resource specialists and will hopefully be used to create a groundwater model for the area in the future. FY24 marks the start of another Hazard Mitigation Grant Cycle. The NNRD has applied for a grant through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to prepare a multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). This involves collaboration among the 5 southeastern most counties in Nebraska (Otoe, Nemaha, Johnson, Pawnee & Richardson) and the businesses, agencies, and people that are within that them. Hazard Mitigation Planning is essential to be eligible for federal funding should a national disaster be declared in our area. Every 5 years the plan must be updated to include the most recent and vital information. Keep an eye on our website for information on how you can get involved to make sure the NNRD is prepared for disastrous emergencies that might take place.

Conservation Trees for Sale!

| Deciduous | Shrubs | Conifers |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Black Cherry | American Hazelnut | Black Hills Spruce |
| Black Oak | American Plum | Colorado Blue Spruce |
| Black Walnut | Black Chokeberry | Eastern Red Cedar |
| Bur Oak | Chokecherry | Eastern White Pine |
| Northern Pecan | Elderberry | Norway Spruce |
| Northern Red Oak | Lilac | Ponderosa Pine |
| Shagbark Hickory | Redosier Dogwood | |
| Swamp White Oak | Serviceberry | |



It is that time of year again! The Nemaha NRD will start selling conservation trees and shrubs in November for spring 2024 pickup. Trees/shrubs will cost \$1.35 each (subject to change) and must be ordered in lots of 25. Order early to ensure species availability! You must use a NRD order form to place your order.

A machine planting service is available for orders over 200. The cost is \$1.50 per tree and cost share is available through the district’s Soil and Water Conservation Program. Please keep in mind that ground must be prepared in the fall if it is currently in sod. The deadline to order trees/shrubs for machine planting is January 31, 2024. If you would like assistance designing your windbreak, give the office a call at (402) 335-3325 and ask for Mark McDonald.

Insight is a publication of the Nemaha NRD. Requests to be placed upon the Insight mailing list and/or comments regarding information in this publication should be directed to Ashley Rippe at 62161 Hwy 136 Tecumseh, NE 68450 or at arippe@nemahanrd.org. For more information on the Nemaha Natural Resources District please visit our website www.nemahanrd.org



Nemaha NRD
62161 Hwy 136
Tecumseh, NE 68450



Upcoming Events

- November 9: Nemaha NRD Board of Directors Meeting
- November 10: Veterans Day Holiday, Observed—NNRD Office Closed
- November 11-19: Steamboat Trace Closed to ALL Users during fire arm deer season
- November 23: Thanksgiving Holiday—NNRD Office Closed
- December 14: Nemaha NRD Board of Directors Meeting
- December 25: Christmas Holiday—NRD Office Closed
- January 1: New Year Holiday—NRD Office Closed

Do You Have High Nitrates in Your Domestic Well?

Reverse Osmosis Rebate Program Application
<https://go.unl.edu/roapplication>

Order state lab kit
<https://go.unl.edu/ordertestkit>

Check if your well is registered
<https://go.unl.edu/checkwell>

How to register your well
<https://go.unl.edu/registerwell>

More program details
<https://go.unl.edu/programdetails>

Get up to \$4,000 reimbursed!