

# FALL NEWSLETTER 2022



## TWIN PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

PROTECTING PROPERTY, PROTECTING LIVES, PROTECTING THE FUTURE

### EVENTS

#### BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are on the second Thursday of every month, located on the second floor of First Interstate Bank

November 10 @ 3:00 PM CT  
December 8 @ 4:30 PM MT\*  
January 12 @ 3:00 PM CT  
\*Meeting held in Ogallala

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## PROPOSED PERKINS COUNTY CANAL

Nebraska and Colorado signed the South Platte River Compact in 1923, to settle a case brought by Nebraska's Western Irrigation District, which provides for an equitable distribution of the waters of the South Platte River between Nebraska and Colorado.

The compact was approved by the Legislatures in Colorado and Nebraska and was approved by the United States Congress.

The waters of the stream under the compact may be utilized to their highest benefit by the States of Colorado and Nebraska, through which it flows, without the possibility of vexatious litigation between the States with respect to the waters of the South Platte River.

There are two key provisions of the Compact.

- **FIRST** - Article IV limits irrigation season uses in Colorado to benefit the Western Irrigation District near Brule, NE. Under this provision, Colorado is required to limit its users when a flow of less than 120 cubic feet per second (cfs) is available at Julesburg.
- **SECOND** - **Article VI authorizes Nebraska to build a Perkins County Canal to divert 500 cfs during the non-irrigation season.** However, since the Perkins County project remains unfinished, Nebraska cannot divert the 500 cfs unless the canal is built. Colorado continues to ramp up its own diversions and related water uses during the non-irrigation season which will result in a dry South Platte River in Nebraska if the canal is not built.

In pursuing its Article VI rights, Nebraska may acquire land and divert the water in Colorado for subsequent uses in Nebraska. Specific lands and routes are not specified in the Compact and will be determined based on a variety of factors that will be evaluated through a design process approved and funded by the Nebraska Legislature in 2022.

*Portions of previous canal construction efforts, which began in 1891, remain visible along Interstate I-76 near Julesburg*



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# PROPOSED PERKINS COUNTY CANAL (continued)

## Why a Compact

- Water rights are administered within a state
- In the early 1900s, Western Irrigation District was not able to divert their Nebraska water right because of diversions in Colorado
- A lawsuit was initiated against Riverside Irrigation District in Colorado
- Delph Carpenter, an attorney in Colorado, initiated the idea and discussions for river compacts
- The South Platte River Compact was the first started in the United States

In the 1890s there was a severe drought occurring. Farmers from Perkins County began digging a canal in Colorado from the South Platte River that was never completed. During the development of the South Platte River Compact, the Keith County Community Club proposed the Perkins County Canal be allowed in the South Platte River Compact.



*Nebraska Senators Touring the Perkins County Canal Project Area and Other Water Facilities on September 29, 2022*

## Impacts to Nebraska if the Canal is Not Built

- A dry South Platte River in Nebraska October 15 to April 1
- Decreased agricultural water supplies
- Jeopardize municipal water supplies for Lincoln, Omaha, and other Platte River communities
- Threaten the cooling water supplies for the NPPD Gerald Gentlemen Station, Nebraska's largest electric generation facility
- Decreased flow would undercut the capacity to generate hydroelectric power in Nebraska

## FACTS

- The water from the canal will be used in the Platte River Basin in Nebraska
- Nebraska needs to protect the water Nebraska has been receiving
- The canal will benefit the TPNRD and the Platte River Basin throughout Nebraska
- The canal will benefit the TPNRD required Integrated Management Plan
- There will be no new irrigated acres in the TPNRD
- Project construction could take a decade

A canal and associated storage facilities, as approved by Legislative Bill 1015 in 2022, will be known as the Perkins County Canal Project, and will be developed, constructed, managed, and operated by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

This is the right time and Nebraska cannot wait any longer. It is essential to the economic prosperity, health, and welfare of the people of the State of Nebraska, and to the environmental health of the entire Platte River Basin across Nebraska to protect Nebraska's full entitlement to the flows of the South Platte River as provided for in the South Platte River Compact.

## What is Next

- The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources engages stakeholders and completes the design
- The Nebraska Legislature must approve funding for land purchases and construction

**Irrigation Season (Apr. 1 to Oct 15)**

120 cfs minimum flow

Currently in effect

**Non-Irrigation Season (Oct. 15 to Apr. 1)**

500 cfs minimum flow

Colorado not yet enforcing without completion of Perkins County Canal

# ARTHUR TEACHER IS THE NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF RESOURCES DISTRICTS PRIMARY EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Laura Cooney, an elementary Teacher at Arthur County Public Schools, was recognized as the Primary Educator of the Year during the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Annual Conference on September 27, 2022 in Kearney, Nebraska.

Cooney has been teaching elementary school in Arthur County for over 30 years. During that time, she has consistently been finding ways to inspire her students. Her teaching has given her students a deeper appreciation of the Nebraska Sandhills grasslands. This challenges entire families to learn more about these grasslands.

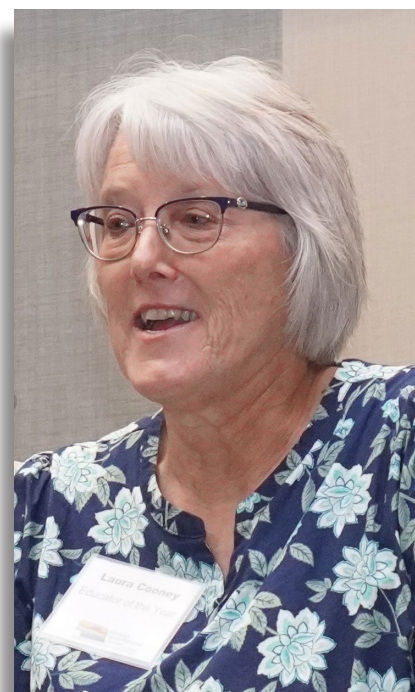
Arthur County Schools has hosted several grassland management workshops and tours over the years.

Cooney is herself the product of youth education that allowed her to attend Range Camp in her teens. In 2016, she wanted to learn even more to share with her students. The TPNRD provided her a scholarship to attend the Range Short Course, held at Chadron State College.

Cooney has organized field days at the school where conservation professionals provide all the elementary students presentations at rotating stations on topics such as entomology, livestock, and wildlife, in addition to information about the grassland resources so important to the area.

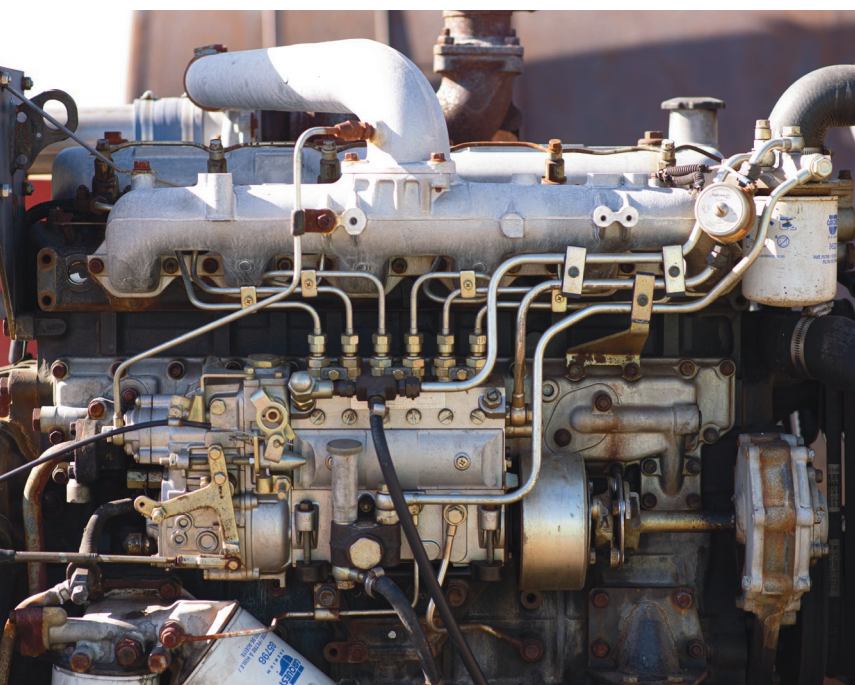
Cooney invited TPNRD staff to assist with planting and labeling a native plot of grasses and forbs near the elementary school entrance.

Cooney has been a strong promoter of youth camps for the students at Arthur County Schools. Her involvement with all Arthur County students has helped create very competitive teams in Range Judging and Envirothon competitions.



*Laura Cooney receiving the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Primary Educator of the Year Award on September 27, 2022*

## IRRIGATION PUMP DIESEL ENGINE REBATE PROGRAM



The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy's (NDEE) 2022 Clean Diesel Rebate Program is now accepting applications for agricultural irrigation pump diesel engine replacements. Applications must be submitted to NDEE by Dec. 15, 2022, to be considered.

Funding will assist farmers with the replacement of irrigation pump diesel engines with all-electric equipment. Eligible engines must have been owned by the applicant for at least two years, must be in operating condition, and must have operated at least 250 hours in each of the last two years.

NDEE will reimburse 60% of the cost of the electrical equipment, installation, and required electric line extension up to a maximum rebate of \$20,000.

More information, including rebate applications, can be found at NDEE's Clean Diesel Program webpage: <http://deq.ne.gov/publica.nsf/pages/17-016>.



# SPOTLIGHT



Myles Mendell is the new Resources Programs Coordinator for the TPNRD. Myles started working for the District in early August, and has hit the ground running. He is the new face of the chemigation program, and will be out in the field next spring/summer with chemigation inspections. He has several other responsibilities, including the buffer strip program, cedar tree control, erosion and sediment control, and the wildlife habitat programs, which includes working with Pheasants Forever on Corners for Wildlife. Myles will also assist other staff members on the many water programs that are so important within the TPNRD. If you have questions about any of these programs, please call or stop in and meet Myles!

Don't forget to log into the Water Data Program (WDP) and update your crops and tillage practices for 2022 before the end of December. Feel free to call Jenny or Ann if you forgot your password, or see anything that doesn't look right!

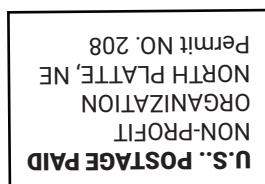
## TPNRD STAFF

Kent O. Miller, P.E..... General Manager  
Glen Bowers ..... Water Programs Field Coordinator  
Ann Dimmitt ..... Integrated Management Plan Manager  
Phil Heimann .. Geographic Information Systems Manager  
Myles Mendell .....Resources Programs Coordinator  
Amy Oberst.....Office & Financial Coordinator  
Dave Slattery ..... Conservation Programs Coordinator  
Jenny Turner.....Water Data Program Coordinator  
Jan Brestel..... Field Office Secretary, North Platte NRCS  
Open..... Range Technician, North Platte NRCS  
Eryn Rapp..... District Secretary, Ogallala NRCS

This newsletter is an official publication of the Twin Platte Natural Resources District. Please call the TPNRD office if you would like email updates, or if you have any questions.

Twin Platte Natural Resources District  
First Interstate Bank Center  
PO Box 1347  
111 South Dewey Street, 2nd Floor  
North Platte NE 69103

Postal Customer



PO Box 1347  
111 South Dewey Street, 2nd Floor  
North Platte, NE 69103-1347

