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# the VIADUCT

Lower Platte North Natural Resources District  
Summer 2025

## Investing in Clean Water: Incentives for Operators in the Wahoo Creek Watershed

The Lower Platte North NRD has partnered with the NRCS to promote best management practices for both row crop and livestock operations within the Wahoo Creek Watershed. Producers within the watershed may be eligible for financial assistance through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), or National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). NRCS administers the EQIP program and has allocated money exclusively to the Wahoo Creek Watershed.

The main goal of the NWQI plan is to reduce the amount of both atrazine and *E. coli* within the watershed. There are currently 10 water bodies within the Wahoo Creek Watershed that are impaired from either of these two contaminants. Applicants can work with NRCS to develop and implement a plan that can help reduce the amount of *E. coli* and atrazine entering our waterways.

The practices in the NWQI plan range from high to

low priority in the effectiveness of reducing these two contaminants. Practices that are deemed low priority must be bundled with a high priority practice to be eligible to apply. Some examples of high priority practices are cover crops, integrated pest management, and waste storage facilities. If a producer were looking to implement a practice that is low priority, like a grassed waterway, they would have to pair that with an integrated pest management practice to become eligible. This example creates an overall highly effective practice for the reduction of atrazine or *E. coli* from entering the watershed while also treating the producer's resource concern.

Anyone interested in applying should contact the Saunders County NRCS office to begin the application process. If you have more questions about the program, please call Jake Maslonka at the LPNNRD. You can also visit [lpnnrd.org](http://lpnnrd.org) for a list of practices and more information.

## Final Bend of Shell Creek Benching Project Completed

The Shell Creek Watershed Improvement Group (SCWIG) continues to invest in conservation practices throughout the watershed. SCWIG is a locally led group of dedicated individuals created over 25 years ago who lead grassroots initiatives to improve water quality in Shell Creek. Their mission aligns seamlessly with the LPNNRD to collaborate with and open doors for project funding.

The partnership has yielded extensive results over the past decade; utilizing grants through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Nebraska Department of Environment and



*The "final bend" benching project looking south from the new county road bridge after recent heavy rains that historically would've caused localized flooding but were contained within the Shell Creek banks.*

Energy, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Colfax County, and local NRD funds, SCWIG has provided:

- Over \$120,000 to upgrade septic systems to EPA certified levels
- Built three streambank stabilization structures to provide protection to county road bridge infrastructure
- Assisted livestock producers to install solar wells, tanks, and fencing to provide fresh water and keep cattle out of the creek.
- This summer, along with Colfax

County and Union Pacific Railroad, completed the final phase of a wetland benching project

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Shell Creek, continued from page 1 along the final three miles of Shell Creek as it meets the Platte River. This project included building a "benched wetland" within the banks of Shell creek, a larger UPRR bridge and county road bridge, to allow for flood flows to stay within the

- banks of the creek and reach the river.
- Future plans include: additional streambank/grade stabilization structures, continued septic system upgrades, and educational outreach opportunities.

## Lower Platte North NRD Relocates to a New Office Space

The Lower Platte North Natural Resources District (LPNNRD) is pleased to announce the relocation of its main office located at: 1616 County Road 17, Wahoo, NE 68066.

This move marks a significant milestone for the LPNNRD, following extensive discussions and planning by staff and the 19-member Board of Directors since preliminary preparations began in 2022. The decision to relocate was first discussed by the LPNNRD board in 2011 and driven by the limitations of the previous office at 511 Commercial Park Road in Wahoo, which was landlocked and offered no room for necessary expansion. On May 9, 2025, the former building was sold at a public auction and will now go back onto the property tax roles.



Lower Platte North NRD's new office located on the southwest side of Lake Wanhoo near Wahoo.

The new office is located on the southwest corner of the Lake Wanhoo NRD Recreation Area, on land already owned by the LPNNRD. The new site offers unlimited expandability, addressing the previous challenge of being landlocked.

While our address is changing, the LPNNRD's unwavering commitment to protecting Nebraska's natural resources for future generations remains the same. We look forward

to continuing our crucial work in local conservation, water quality and quantity management, forestry, and environmental education.

Our phone number, (402) 443-4675, website, [www.lpnnrd.org](http://www.lpnnrd.org), and office hours—Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM—remain the same.

## Wahoo Creek Watershed Dams Construction Underway

The Lower Platte North NRD broke ground on the Wahoo Creek Watershed flood reduction project last fall.



The riser inlet under construction at site 27.

The watershed plan calls for the construction of nine earthen embankments to reduce the flood damages within the watershed by nearly a third.

The first three structures are scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2026. The NRD is currently acquiring the remaining land rights on the final sites and finalizing design. Olsson was contracted by the NRD for engineering and land right acquisition services. Additionally, Thompson

Construction Inc., of Fremont, is the general contractor for the first three sites currently under construction.

The Wahoo Creek Watershed is part of the Natural Resources Conservation Service's (NRCS) Watershed Flood Protection and Operations (WFPO) program and is being funded through the State of Nebraska's Jobs and Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) fund.



The plunge pool spillway outlet for site 27.



Workers grouting the 24" concrete pipe spillway.

## Local 4-H and FFA Projects Receive Assistance from LPNNRD

Three local high school students were recently awarded funding to assist with their natural resources projects. The mission at the LPNNRD is the conservation, preservation, and wise use of our natural resources. The newly established Natural Resources Grant was created after multiple requests to assist high school students with grant monies that will aid them in completing a project

within their community that aligns with the mission of the NRD. The types of projects available for funding are FFA Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE), seminar class projects, 4-H projects, and community engagement activities.

Funding recently awarded to students will assist with the following projects:



- **Becca Podolak, member of Always Busy Clovers 4-H club** is working with staff from the Butler County Hospital and Butler County Extension office to expand the community garden housed behind a nursing home in David City. The funding will give the nursing home residents a beautiful garden to visit, and help grow additional produce for hospital patients and

low-income families within Butler County.

- **William Podolak, member of Aquinas FFA Chapter** in David City will use funding for a grow tower and supplies to be used with their plant science class. This will provide learning opportunities for water efficiency, food to be used during school lunches, and allow students to use it for various SAE Projects.

- **Bishop Neumann FFA Chapter** in Wahoo plans to expand their currently successful vegetable growing efforts to provide additional vegetables at the school's salad bar and within the community such as the local food pantry, senior center, and others in need.

LPNNRD looks forward to the successful future of these projects and their efforts to help their communities!

## Internships Provide College Students with Natural Resources Experience

Each summer, LPNNRD offers college students who are pursuing careers in natural resources, water resources, environmental science, agriculture or a related major, an opportunity to learn more about Nebraska's NRDs. The interns work with the Operations and Maintenance Department to assist in tree planting, dam site maintenance, site inspections, property and vehicle maintenance, and other operational duties. The interns also work with the Water Resources Department to verify flow meters, perform variance and well permit checks, complete chemigation

inspections, sample wells for water quality and quantity, and other various water related activities.

These internships offer a strong foundation for students pursuing careers in natural resources, environmental science, and agriculture. The diverse work experience gained is beneficial for their intended career path but also for building crucial personal and professional skills. One such invaluable skill is adaptability.

Working in natural resources means constantly responding to dynamic conditions. The weather, for instance, can be highly unpredictable

during the summer months. Interns quickly learn to navigate these fluctuations, and transition to alternative tasks, demonstrating problem-solving skills. Additionally, the hands-on exposure and practical skills like data collection and equipment operation makes this internship an essential stepping stone for future career paths.

If you or someone you know is interested in a future internship at LPNNRD, contact us at 402-443-4675 or visit our website at [lpnnrd.org/](http://lpnnrd.org/) downloads, then employment opportunities to learn more.

## Weather Station Monitoring Available Across the District

Area residents can now access LPNNRD's METOS weather station network. This service provides valuable local weather data collected from various stations strategically placed across the district.

**Q&A with Jacob Stover, Water Resources Specialist coordinating the weather stations.**

**Where are the weather stations placed?**

The overall goal is to have a weather station every 5 or so miles apart. This distance gets shrunk and stretched in different parts of the district due to suitable placements and the willingness of landowners.

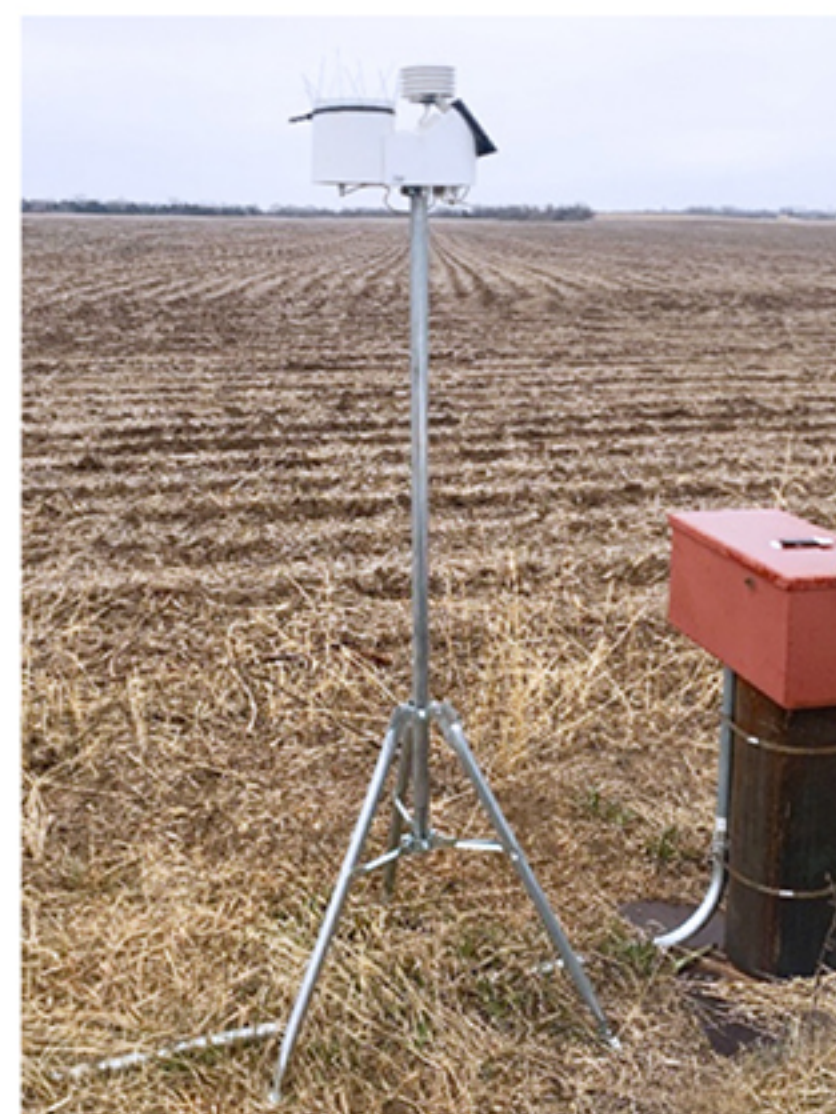
**What needs to be considered when placing a weather station?**

The weather station is solar powered and takes rain readings as well. The stations must be placed a good distance away from trees or buildings

that are taller and could keep rain from entering the rain bucket with different wind directions. The station also needs to be level due to the digital rain gauge using a tipping bucket for calculating rainfall.

**What is the data used for?**

All the data that is being collected is for the public's use as well as the use of the NRD. On the public side, this data could be useful for tracking rainfall for farming, gardening, and lawn care. It also tracks DeltaT, which is a pesticide effectiveness parameter. On the NRD's side, the data is useful for tracking rainfall to compare groundwater recharge and groundwater levels. It can also be used for monitoring rainfall that contributes to varying stream and river levels and



Weather station positioned alongside a monitoring well.

if conditions could lead to flooding. We also use it to know how much it rained and where to decide if it's a good idea to do field work around the district. We never want to tear up anybody's fields or contribute to compaction.

**What can I monitor?**

The parameters that are measured are: temperature, dew point, vapor pressure deficit (VPD), relative

humidity, precipitation, and DeltaT (commonly used as indicator for suitable spraying conditions for pest management).

**How do I access the data?**

Visit [www.lpnnrd.org](http://www.lpnnrd.org). Hover over the 'Projects and Programs' tab, then 'Water Management' tab, then 'Monitoring Programs' *continued on page 6*



# Outdoor Adventures For All Ages

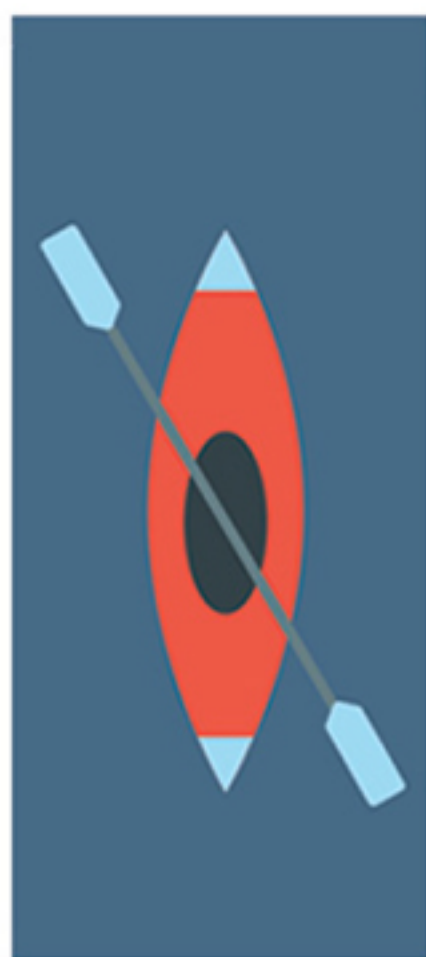
Are you ready to explore hidden gems in Nebraska? Go camping, view wildlife, test your luck at fishing, take nature walks, explore bike trails and more! The NRD Recreation Exploration challenges you to visit as many Natural Resources District recreation areas as you can between March 1, and September 19, 2025. It's simple: visit an NRD recreation area, snap a photo, and submit it online at <https://www.nrdnet.org/nrd-recreation-exploration-entry-form> for a chance to win great prizes!

This is the perfect opportunity to discover a new favorite spots right here in Nebraska. The Lower Platte North NRD offers three locations for

outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy fishing, no-wake boating, hiking, camping, and more at Czechland Lake near Prague, Homestead Lake near Bruno, and Lake Wanahoo near Wahoo.

And while you're out and about, Lake Wanahoo NRD Recreation Area has a fantastic lineup of summer events designed to get everyone outside and exploring:

- **Wildflowers and Wine (August 4):** Enjoy the beauty of native wildflowers paired with a relaxing evening of wine tasting.
- **Coffee, Lakeside (August 7):** Start



your morning with fresh coffee and donuts plus a great chat and view.

- **Nocturnal Night (August 7):** Discover the creepy crawly creatures in the night as Lake Wanahoo comes alive after dark.

- **Starry Night (September 22):** Stargaze with telescopes, explore the StoryWalk, and learn how plants and animals interact with the moon and stars.
- More details about these events are available at [lpnnrd.org](http://lpnnrd.org), [facebook.com/lpnnrd](https://facebook.com/lpnnrd), and [x.com/LPNNRD](https://x.com/LPNNRD).

## Join Us in Welcoming New Staff at LPNNRD

**Jake Maslonka** joined the LPNNRD at the beginning of 2025 as the Water Quality Program Coordinator. Jake developed his natural resources experience as an intern for the LPNNRD in 2016, the Upper Big Blue NRD from 2020-2022, followed by the City of Lincoln as an arborist. Jake and his fiancé will get married in August; they currently reside in Lincoln with their dog, Gus.



Jake Maslonka

**Jake Pittman** joined in March as a Water Resources Technician. Later this year, he will transition to a Water

Resources Specialist, with a dedicated focus on water quality initiatives. Jake brings experience in environmental science, having graduated from UNL in December 2024, and a two-year Environmental Management internship with Union Pacific Railroad.



Jake Pittman

**Sean O'Brien** joined LPNNRD in April of 2025. He was born in Lincoln and moved to Chadron in 2013 before settling most recently in Valley. As the eldest of three siblings, his background includes familiar ties to natural resources management with his dad currently managing the Upper

Niobrara White NRD. Sean brings hands-on experience from working on a ranch near Chadron and valuable mechanical skills from Honda, Yamaha, and Stihl dealership shops. Furthermore, he has been a dedicated volunteer firefighter since 2022. Sean is an avid outdoorsman who enjoys hunting, fishing, and water sports, and is a proud Nebraska fan through and through.

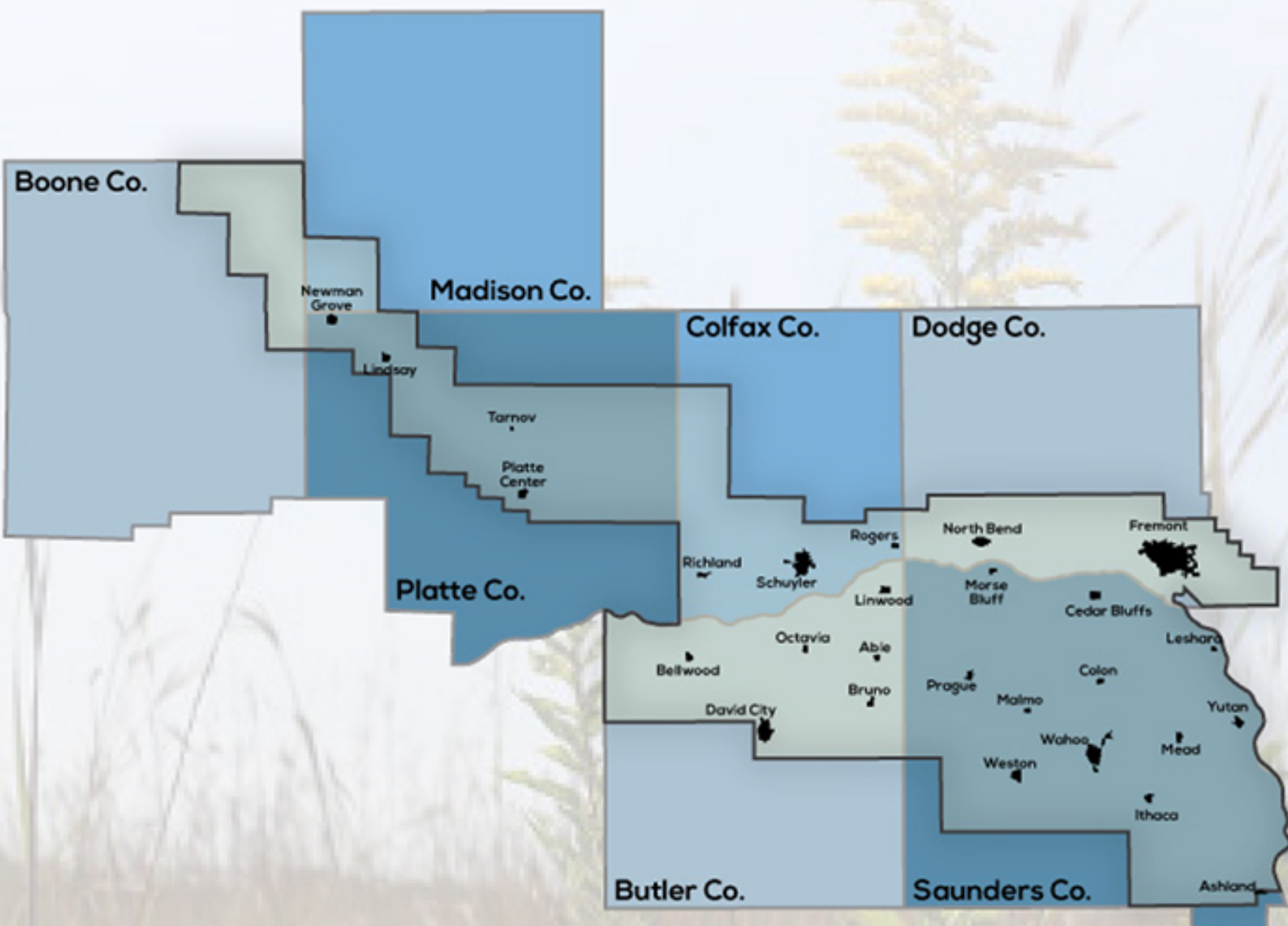


Sean O'Brien

We're delighted to have these three join the staff at the Lower Platte North NRD and invite you to stop by and introduce yourself to them!

## WE ARE THE LOWER PLATTE NORTH NRD

### 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 18 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.





# Groundwater Management

## Beneath Our Feet: the Future of Groundwater

How does the Lower Platte North NRD ensure sustainable groundwater for generations to come? The answer lies in a carefully crafted document called the Groundwater Management Plan. The first plan was developed in 1987 with the most recent update completed in 1995. Over the last 30 years, the NRD has completed additional studies, research projects and updated maps on water quality and water quantity.

Over the last year, the NRD has been updating the Groundwater Management Plan. This plan will serve as a guideline for how the district will manage groundwater for future generations. The plan includes but is not limited to new aquifer sub-area maps, updated geological information and revised goals and objectives that are

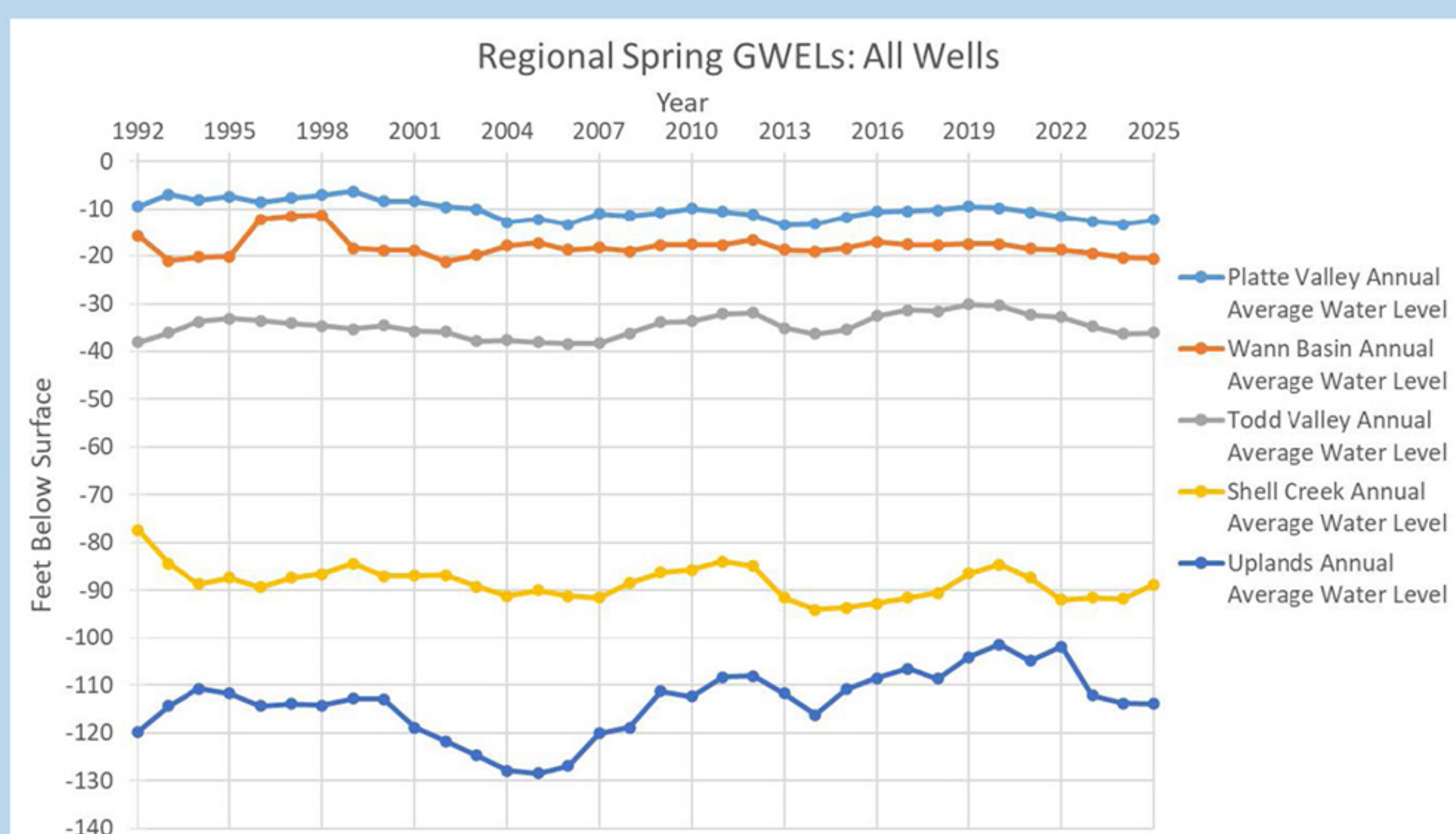
vital to water quality and quantity. The NRD utilized data from Airborne Electromagnetic Survey (AEM), hydrogeological assessments, groundwater levels and water sampling results to update the plan.

Over the course of reviewing and updating the plan, the NRD has held stakeholder and public meetings, as well as frequent meetings with the NRD Water Committee board members to finalize the plan. A final public hearing will be held after all comments are addressed. The public can review the plan by contacting the NRD office for a draft copy. After the plan is finalized, the Groundwater Rules and Regulations can be reviewed and updated if deemed necessary.

## Spring Groundwater Levels by Region

One of the responsibilities of the LPNNRD is conducting water level measurements of groundwater. These levels are invaluable to monitoring so that groundwater remains available for future generations. Groundwater is used by 85% of the Nebraskans for human and livestock consumption, irrigation and industrial use.

LPNNRD has completed its 2025 spring water level measurements and analyzed the data. Four aquifer areas exist within the NRD boundaries: Uplands, Platte Valley, Todd Valley and Shell Creek. The water level analysis looks at these areas separately for a better representation of that area. The chart was made by taking the average distance to water from the ground surface for each year in each region of the district. The plot does fall short, however, in that the number of wells that were tested has increased



each year to get more accurate data. Earlier data was made with less data points within each region, making the earlier data less reliable compared to recent data. Visit [lpnnrd.org](http://lpnnrd.org) for more detailed information on region locations.

*Weather Stations continued from page 5* tab. Scroll down on this page to the titled section 'FieldClimate Weather Station Network'. The PDF will walk you through how to access the data and view it. If you are having trouble with this or have additional questions, please feel free to email Jacob at [jstover@lpnnrd.org](mailto:jstover@lpnnrd.org).

**Disclaimer:** The LPNNRD makes no guarantee regarding the accuracy of this data and takes no responsibility for any consequences that may arise from its application. LPNNRD advised that none of the data collected from this network is reviewed or verified by professional meteorologists or agrometeorologists.