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Recovery begins with Damage Assessment

Lincoln (NE) January 22, 2018 – The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (NRD) Board of Directors was briefed Wednesday on bomb cyclone flooding across the district that includes most of Lancaster and Cass counties and smaller parts of Butler, Saunders, Otoe and Seward counties. An assessment of damage to levees, streams, lakes, trails, wetlands and other properties has begun, but General Manager Paul Zillig told the board a complete assessment cannot be made until water levels recede. Zillig outlined for the board what is known, so far, about flood damage, pointing out there is damage district-wide, but the heaviest damage in the district is along the Platte and Missouri rivers. He said the City of Plattsmouth and the Lincoln wellfield at Ashland have sustained some of the heaviest known damage.

Zillig showed stream gage information to the NRD Board indicating some of the district's lakes, streams and rivers were at record or near-record levels during last week's flooding:

- Branched Oak Lake reached its highest recorded level ever (4.5 feet above the normal conservation pool)
- Pawnee Lake, 2nd highest recorded level (+4.4 ft. above flood stage)
- Twin Lakes, 4th highest recorded level (+4.3 ft.)
- Missouri River at Plattsmouth (+14.6 ft.)
- Platte River at Ashland (+2 ft.), Louisville (+4 ft.)
- Salt Creek at 27th Street, Lincoln (+1 ft.) (6th highest since the Salt Creek Levees were built in the 1960s)
- Salt Creek at Roca (+1 ft.), Greenwood (+5 ft.), Ashland (+2 ft.)
- Weeping Water Creek at Union (+2 ft.)
- Rock Creek at Ceresco (flood stage)
- North Oak Creek at Valparaiso (+2 ft.)

Zillig said, while rainfall totals in the district were not as high as in similar historic flood events, he said, "The presence of several inches of snow throughout the district and ice up to 20 inches thick in

waterways contributed significantly to flooding and damage.” Zillig added that without the district’s flood control dams, damage would have been much worse. Ten Corps of Engineers dams along Salt Creek, according to Zillig, held back a total of 18,000 acre-feet of runoff, or about 6 billion gallons. In addition, NRD-operated Salt Creek dams held back an additional 10,000 acre-feet of runoff.

The NRD Board acted on these agenda items Wednesday:

- Approved 12 requests from landowners for cost-sharing to install water quality improvement practices under the NRD’s Summer Conservation Program (\$150,000)
- Denied a request from John Rallis to purchase credits from the NRD’s Blue Herron Wetland Bank as mitigation for a residential development near 94th and “A” streets
- Approved two agreements with USGS for the operation of four stream gages on the Platte River, Elkhorn River and Salt Creek. The agreements are for three years. The stream gages can not only record water levels, but also information about water quality.
- Approved a joint funding agreement with Lower Platte North NRD, Lincoln Water System and Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha for the operation of a stream gage at Leshara
- Denied a proposed amendment to the Lincoln Federal Bank Conservation Easement at the Wilderness Creek/Wilderness Hills development, southwest of 40th Street and Yankee Hill Road
- Approved professional services to design erosion control measures along Salt Creek, upstream from the Van Dorn Street Bridge (\$20,000)
- Approved cost-sharing under the NRD’s Community Assistance Program for a dam rehabilitation project by the Hamann Meadows Townhomes Association (\$12,000)
- Approved an interlocal agreement for replacing the 14th Street Bridge over Little Salt Creek and constructing a stream grade control structure. Lancaster County will replace the bridge. The estimated \$130,500 cost of the stream grade control structure will be split evenly between the City of Lincoln and the NRD.
- Approved professional services for repairs along the NRD’s Homestead and MoPac East Trails
- Approved a saline wetland partnership agreement with the City of Lincoln and the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission on saline wetland acquisitions, restorations, management, operation and maintenance
- Approved replacement of the Whitehead Saline Wetland observation deck, near Whitehead Drive and North 28th Street, which was struck by a vehicle (\$15,000)