

Sand & Soapweed



Middle Niobrara NRD

Protecting Lives

Protecting Property

Protecting the Future

Temporary Stay

The final year to sign up for new irrigated acres under LB483 was 2014. At the June 8, 2015 Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District Board of Director's Meeting, the Board approved a 6-month Temporary Stay on the addition of new groundwater irrigated acres, in compliance with Neb. Rev. Stat. 46-707(2). The Board also requested that the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) implement a similar 6-month Stay on new surface water irrigated acres. These temporary Stays went into effect on June 29, 2015. A joint public hearing was held to take comments on future use of ground and surface water within the MNNRD in November. At the December 14, 2015 board meeting, the MNNRD voted to extend the stay on the addition of new groundwater irrigated acres until the MNNRD and the NDNR have completed their Voluntary Integrated Management Plan. The District will still allow the transfer of irrigated acres. If you have questions about the Stays please contact the MNNRD office at (402)-376-3241.

Voluntary Integrated Management Plan

During this time, the Board of Directors has initiated a voluntary district-wide Integrated Management Plan (IMP) process with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) to protect the economy and water uses in the basin. The district has also joined the four other NRDs in the Niobrara Basin to proactively develop a basin-wide plan to protect the economy and water uses in the entire Niobrara River basin. There has been a public meeting for review and comment in Johnstown, NE. If you have any questions please contact the MNNRD office at (402)-376-3241.

Special Points of Interest

Temporary Stay/IMP	1
Utilizing Cedar Waste	2
Range Judging	2
Chemigation.....	3
2015 Fall Conference	3
Spring/Fall Water Levels	3
Spencer Dam.....	4
Long Pine Creek Watershed	4
Marty Graff 25 years.....	5
Tree Season 2015	5
Water Quality Cost-Share	5
Contact Us	6
Important Dates	6

Utilizing Eastern Red Cedar Waste

To help with the cedar reduction effort, chipping operations in the local area have continued. We have been taking cedar trees and turning them into the renewable resource of wood chips. To date, 1,100 tons of wood chips have been produced for different projects that the MNNRD is working on.



The recreational trail project applies these wood chips to trails to help stabilize the soil and to prevent additional erosion due to off-road vehicles. So far it has been a success—1.5 miles of trails were covered with wood chips.

These are holding the soil and have also allowed grass to begin re-establishing on these trails.



The other major project that the MNNRD undertook was an application of wood chips to agricultural fields. This project is with the University of Nebraska studying different rates of wood chips, cattle manure, and hog manure applied on small field plots. They are looking to see if integrating the wood chips will increase the amounts of Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium available to the plants and soil. Additionally, UNL will see if the wood chips add biomass to the sandy soils and increase water retention. A couple landowners have taken the initiative to try half-field sites where they will have either wood chips and cattle manure or wood chips and swine manure/compost mixed and applied to the field. Grants from the NDEQ and NFS have helped to fund these projects. We appreciate the support from these entities and the local landowners to help create local uses for the cedar trees.



Welcome Anna!

Anna Johnson started this June, as a Natural Resource Technician Intern. This summer she has helped with nitrate sampling and chemigation inspections. She grew up on the farm outside of Creighton, Nebraska, and has always wanted a job working with water. Consequently, she attended UNL for a degree in agricultural engineering with an emphasis on soil and water. Anna moved up to Valentine after graduating, and is looking forward to working with the people and natural resources in this area.

REGIONAL RANGE JUDGING

Range Judging was held near Ainsworth on September 15, 2015. Students examined a site south of town to identify properties of plants such as name, life span, season of growth and livestock forage value. They then suggested ways to improve the plot for livestock and wildlife use. Examples of improvements identified could be build a dugout, reseed rangeland, crossfence pasture, or change mineral locations. There were 238 students from surrounding schools who participated. The main goal of range judging is to teach students to appreciate and effectively manage rangeland.

Water News

The MNNRD received 517 total chemigation permits, with 252 systems inspected this summer. Chemigation systems are inspected to make sure all of the necessary safety equipment is present and working to prevent mixing of chemicals and the groundwater source. Landowner cooperation is very much appreciated!

Chemigation Fees 2016: Renewal \$50, New \$75 and Emergency \$300.

Over 300 nitrate samples were taken throughout the district. County averages (ppm) are as follows: Brown 5.84, Rock 6.04, Keya Paha 6.84 and Cherry 3.00. The district average is 4.7. State standard is 10 ppm or less for safe drinking water.

2015 Fall Conference

The 2015 Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Fall Conference was held in Kearney in September. Directors Dean Jochem, Marty Graff, Cherryl Lovejoy, Leonard Danielski, and Justin Hammond along with General Manager Mike Murphy, Tim Storm, Travis Connot, Cortney Werner, Zac Peterson, and Anna Johnson attended the conference. This conference allows for collaboration between NRD's, partners, and guests in order to learn new information about protecting our Natural Resources.

Resolutions Passed: 2015-1: Nebraska Public Meeting Act 2015-2: Conversion of an Appropriation to Manufacture Hydropower

Prior to the conference, we had the opportunity to tour the facilities of Kingsley Dam at Lake McConaughy. The dam stands 162 ft tall, and spans 3.1 miles. The project was completed in 1941, and then in 1984 the hydroplant facility was constructed. There is a single 51.9 MW turbine, which the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District uses to generate around 322 GWh (322 million kWh) annually.

FALL WATER LEVELS

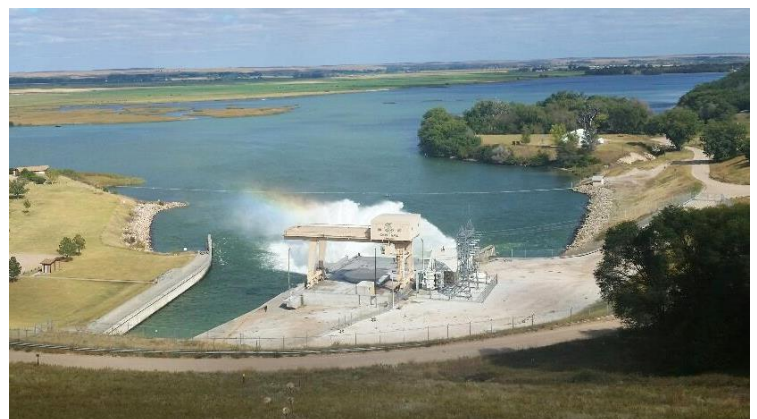
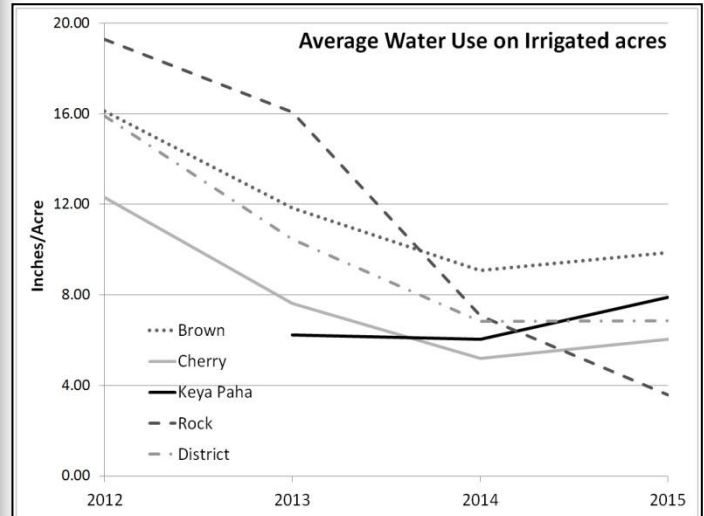
Comparison of Fall 2014 to Fall 2015

Overall the District is down 0.4 ft ↓

County Averages: Brown: down 0.1 ft ↓

Cherry: no change ↔ Rock: down 0.7 ft ↓

Keya Paha: down 0.7 ft ↓



Pictured above is the site of the underground turbine. The spray is from the aerator, which releases excess water and also helps improve the dissolved oxygen content of the sulfurous water from the reservoir's bottom.

Spencer Hydro Dam MOU

The Niobrara River Basin Alliance (NRBA) includes five NRDs—the Upper Niobrara White, Middle Niobrara, Lower Niobrara, Upper Elkhorn, and the Upper Loup. Together with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and NPPD, NRBA has signed a historic agreement to preserve the future of the Niobrara River. This memorandum of understanding (MOU) is about the Spencer Hydro facility, located south of Spencer, NE.

The Niobrara River is a “functioning system,” meaning there is a sufficient supply water for all current uses. The end goal of the agreement is to protect the river’s existing uses: agriculture, domestic, fish, wildlife, and recreation. All current subordination agreements on the river would be honored.

This facility holds a large non-consumptive water right. Currently, those water rights control the majority of the Niobrara upstream flows. The NRDs would leave the water right as non-consumptive, switching it to “instream basin management” instead of “hydropower” non-consumptive. The future operation of the dam and gates would be evaluated to determine what should and should not be done.

Public informational meetings were held in Atkinson and Ainsworth, NE on December 2. Future expansion of water use would be addressed separately in the Niobrara Basin Integrated Management Plan and the

NRD’s individual integrated management plans (IMP). These plans are currently being drafted and reviewed and include public input, review, and comments. Please feel free to call your local NRD with any questions.



Pictured above is Director Marty Graff signing the Memorandum of Understanding at Husker Harvest Days 2015

Long Pine Creek Watershed

The Middle Niobrara NRD and JEO Consulting Group are in the works of a project addressing threats to water quality and infrastructure within the Long Pine Creek Watershed. The Watershed, located primarily in Brown County, encompasses approximately 328,000 acres, most of which is irrigated farming and rangeland, and also the communities of Ainsworth and Long Pine. Major tributaries include Sand Draw Creek, Bone Creek, Willow Creek, Spring Branch Creek, and Short Pine Creek. MNNRD is seeking funding from NDEQ, the EPA, and NET in order to provide cost-shares for landowners to improve stream conditions on their land through Best Management Practices (BMPs). This, over time, will help reduce the problems occurring in this watershed.

Some problems occurring in this area include major head cutting of the streams, impaired culverts, and high levels of E. coli in some streams. Currently, the plan is awaiting approval from the EPA. Hopefully projects in high-priority areas will be starting up next year. When the plan is approved, there will be BMP cost-shares available through the NRD and the NRCS.



Tree Season 2015

The 2015 tree season was a very successful season overall. The MNNRD sold over 63,000 trees to our constituents. Out of that amount the MNNRD tree crew machine planted over 16,900 of the total trees for 36 landowners, and laid over 25 miles of weed barrier fabric. Financial assistance was available through various cost-share programs to assist in planting and replanting efforts for landowners. Please place your tree orders for this year as soon as possible. The nurseries will sell out of certain species as the season goes along.

Total Trees sold from 1979- present: 2,440,748 trees

Total Fabric sold from 1979- present: 3,156,000 feet

**PLACE YOUR TREE
ORDERS TODAY FOR
THE SPRING 2016
PLANTING SEASON!**



Congratulations!

Director Marty Graff was recognized for **25 years** of serving on the MNNRD Board. Thank you for your dedication to the area, and your continued interest in taking care of our natural resources.

Thanks to Jenny Suhr and Laurie Delimont for their years of working with us! You will be missed. Good luck in your future endeavors!

WATER QUALITY COST-SHARE

The MNNRD is accepting applications for its Water Quality Cost-Share Program. Items available for cost-share include soil moisture sensors, surge valves, low pressure nozzles, and converting siphon tubes to gated pipes. Cost-share is limited to 50% up to \$2,500 per application or \$1000 for soil moisture sensors.

Contact Us

EMPLOYEES

General Manager

Mike Murphy

Water Programs Coordinator

Tim Storm

Administrative Assistant

Cortney Werner

Lead Natural Resources Technician

Travis Connot

Natural Resources Coordinator

Zac Peterson

Natural Resources Technician

Shawn Conner

Natural Resources Intern

Anna Johnson

Wood Chipper

Clayton Waugh

Wood Chipper

James Miller

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**Catch your
NRD Moment
with Travis on
KVSH 940
for all the latest
MNNRD updates!**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Justin Hammond

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Sub District # 3

Leonard Danielski

Sub District # 4

Cherryl Lovejoy

Secretary/Treasurer

Sub District # 5

Greg Wilke

Sub District # 6

Marty Graff

At Large

Dean Jochem

Important Dates in 2016

- January 26-27: NARD Legislative Conference, Embassy Suites, Lincoln
- March 12-16: NARD Annual Washington D. C. Meeting
- April 15: MNNRD Fertilizer Report Due
- May 1- May 31: NSWCP Applications accepted
- May 31: Chemigation Applications Due
- Nov-Dec: Water Quality Cost Share Applications Accepted

Look for us at local county fairs, Husker Harvest Days, and the Bassett Ranch Expo!