

NEWS RELEASE

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ANTELOPE CREEK REMOVED FROM IMPAIRED WATERS LIST

Partnerships and projects decrease E.coli levels

City, State and federal officials today announced that Antelope Creek, which runs for 11 miles through Lincoln, has been removed from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Impaired Waters list. Only 90 creeks in the nation have been removed from the list in the last 15 years, and only 14 of those are in urban areas.

Antelope Creek was first added to the Clean Water Act List of Impaired Waters by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) in 2004. At that time, levels of E.coli bacteria were more than 25 times the water quality standard. A creek, stream, river, pond or lake can be removed from the Impaired Waters list only if they meet water quality standards set by the NDEQ and approved by the EPA.

Improving Antelope Creek and the surrounding area has been a collaborative project for more than 20 years involving the City, Lower Platte South Natural Resources District (LPSNRD), University of Nebraska, NDEQ, Nebraska Environmental Trust and other partners and local businesses. The Antelope Valley Project, which reduced flooding, improved traffic flow and spurred revitalization in the core of the City, also exposed the creek water to more sunlight, which helped break down the E.coli bacteria.

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“The Antelope Creek project symbolizes the kind of can-do spirit that energizes Nebraskans to work together to solve tough problems and be good stewards of our natural resources,” said **Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts**. “Because of this project, homes and businesses are protected from floods, traffic flows more smoothly, new projects are flourishing along the stream corridor, and new venues for recreation were created. Thank you to the numerous partners who helped make today a reality.”

E.coli, which can be found in any body of water, is a species of bacteria specific to fecal material from people and warm-blooded animals and can occur naturally. Since the mid-2000s, Antelope Creek has benefitted from about 15 stormwater quality improvement projects and two major flood control projects with funding from local, state and federal sources. Residents and businesses along and near Antelope Creek have installed sustainable landscaping projects, including the installation of 119 residential rain gardens. Permeable pavers and rain gardens have been installed in key locations throughout the creek area. Other projects have included Assurity Life Insurance Company’s green roof and the Lincoln Children’s Zoo’s installation of rain gardens and special storm drain inlets designed to filter animal waste and sediment.

“Improving and preserving our environmental resources for future generations is difficult, but it is essential,” said **Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler**. “Every single one of us must commit to changing our routines. And if you’ve ever wondered if your small actions on a daily basis make a difference, remember Antelope Creek. Consistent effort by many parties has made a huge difference. As a result, residents who come in contact with Antelope Creek won’t have to worry as much about E. coli infections. Pets are safer if they accidentally drink from the stream. And one more waterway that feeds our recreational water system just got cleaner.”

“The removal and de-listing of Antelope Creek for E.coli contamination is a tribute to the vision, courage and tenacity of the many local, state and federal partners who coordinated efforts to create a safe, healthy and vital resource for the City of Lincoln,” said **NDEQ Director Jim Macy**. “This is a historic accomplishment for Nebraska and among only a handful of similar successes in the Nation.”

“The removal of Antelope Creek from the U.S. EPA Impaired Waters list is a result of strong commitment to the environment by many agencies and groups and the Lower Platte South NRD is proud to be involved in keeping Lincoln a safe and healthy place to live,” said **LPSNRD Board Chair Ray Stevens**.

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“Success stories like this don’t happen without partnership,” **said EPA Region 7 Administrator Jim Gulliford.** “Local solutions and partnership can lead to big changes in water quality. The City of Lincoln, the Lower Platte Natural Resources District, NDEQ, and the University of Nebraska - the whole team should be proud of what they’ve accomplished in Antelope Creek.”

Antelope Creek runs from 84th and Highway 2 north to 14th Street and Cornhusker Highway. The City has about 11 miles of bike paths along the creek that connect to more than 131 miles of trails in Lincoln. The Creek is a major feature of Union Plaza, a linear park east of downtown.

Nebraska’s water quality standards describe the desired condition of a body of water. Water bodies are assigned beneficial uses such as recreation, aquatic life and water supply. Antelope Creek has a recreation water quality standard which is used to protect human health, aquatic life and all beneficial uses of the creek.

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