



Sand & Soapweed

Newsletter of the **Middle Niobrara
Natural Resources District**

Winter 2013

Results of Fall Static Water Levels



Travis Connot and Stephanie Butler use team work to take the static water level at an irrigation well in Cherry County

Static water levels were measured at 130 sites this fall during the second and third weeks of October. The table below shows a summary of the results. The comparison is from the Fall of 2012 to the Fall of 2013. Overall the district was down an average of -0.08 feet from last year. District wide, the greatest increase was 4.33 feet and the greatest decrease was -5.07 feet.

	Average	High	Low	Number of wells sampled
Brown	-0.42 ft.	2.5 ft.	-2.83 ft.	39
Cherry	0.37 ft.	4.33 ft.	-5.07 ft.	60
Keya Paha	0.06 ft.	4.11 ft.	-2.39 ft.	24
Rock	-1.83 ft.	0.0 ft.	-2.66 ft.	7
District	-0.08 ft.	4.33 ft.	-5.07 ft.	130

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Website Updated



The MNNRD website can be found at www.mnnrd.org

The MNNRD website has been updated and is awaiting your visit! Additions have been made to the “Forms” page, now almost any form you may need can be printed off at your convenience and mailed to the office. New pages are being added to keep you informed on the latest in tree and water resource information. We also have a new page devoted to the Long Pine Creek Watershed Project, where you can find information regarding the grant, the project, be alerted of upcoming meetings and track our progress. Furthermore, the latest edition of *Sand and Soapweed* can be downloaded as well. So

the next time you are surfing the web, click on our website – www.mnnrd.org. Of course, there is nothing like a good old fashioned phone call or visit, so feel free to call or stop in the office with any questions you may have. We’re always glad you did!

Tree Site Preparation

Preparation for the 2014 tree season is underway! Staff have been busy meeting with landowners to assist with tree planning and flagging sites. Shawn has been busy doing site preparation in locations that need mowed and/or tilled. The MNNRD offers mowing and tilling services to landowners for \$50/hour or landowners can mow/till their tree planting site themselves. The MNNRD recommends landowners mow/till their sites this fall for spring planting. Mowing/tilling the sites makes it easier for our tree planter and fabric machine to glide through the soil while reducing the amount of weeds present to reduce competition for the young tree seedlings.



Shawn Conner loads equipment for tree planting site preparation

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2014 MNNRD Scholarship Available!

The Middle Niobrara NRD is offering a \$500 scholarship to any graduating high school senior, students currently attending college or vocational school or a non-traditional student. Applicants must live within the MNNRD district, plan to attend an accredited university or technical school and have plans to major in natural resources, wildlife management, horticulture, range management, earth sciences, forestry, soil and water conservation, geology, agriculture or any other related field. Interested applicants should come by or contact the MNNRD office at (402) 376-3241 to pick up an application. Applications can also be picked up from your local high school guidance counselor. Deadline for completed applications is April 1st, 2014.

Election Time



Four of the seven director seats will be up for election in 2014. Seats in subdistricts 2, 4, 6 and the at-large position are up for election this coming year. Incumbents have until February 15th to file, while non-incumbent candidates have until March 1st to file with the Secretary of State to run in the upcoming election.

Primary elections will only be held for a subdistrict if more than two candidates file, with two of those candidates moving onto the ballot for the November General Election. Candidates must be a registered voter residing in the subdistrict they file to represent. Natural Resources District directors serve four-year terms. The MNNRD Board meets monthly and each Board member also serves on two or more subcommittees of the Board. Subdistrict maps and more information is available to the MNNRD office.

Water Quality Cost-Share

Funds are available for water quality cost-share for the coming year. Cost-share covers 50% up to \$2,500 for items such as surge valves, drip nozzles and sprinklers, and converting siphon tubes to gated pipes. Applications will be accepted November 1st – December 31st, 2013 and can be picked up at the MNNRD office or the NRCS offices in Ainsworth and Valentine. Please contact Tim Storm at the MNNRD office for more information (402) 376-3241.

Pretty Faces at the MNNRD



Cortney Werner (left) and Julie Battershaw (right) keep the MNNRD up and running

Cortney Werner, a St. Edward native, is the newest team member at the MNNRD! Cortney will be filling the administrative assistant position. Cortney graduated from Chadron State College in May 2013 with a degree in Rangeland and Livestock Management with a minor in Agriculture Business. Her ranching/agriculture background will make her a welcome addition to our staff. In her free time Cortney likes to hunt, fish and spend time on her families' ranch in Long Pine and is currently residing in Valentine. We are so glad to have Cortney with us!

The MNNRD Staff would also like to extend a great deal of thanks to Julie Battershaw from Danielski Harvesting and Farming. We appreciate her willingness to take on extra responsibilities and help keep our office running during our absence of an administrative assistant. We would also like to thank Danielski Harvesting and Farming for allowing one of their top-notch employees to spend some work days at the MNNRD office!

Wood Chipper from the National Park Service

The National Park Service has loaned the MNNRD a small wood chipper to be used in Firewise © projects across the district. The chipper is ideal for use around homes where small branches and brush needs to be chipped. If you have a project that would make your home more Firewise © and would like to rent the wood chipper, please contact the MNNRD office for more information and rates. For more information on Firewise © communities visit www.firewise.org or contact forester Sandy Benson at (402) 684-2290 or e-mail Sandy at sbenon2@unl.edu.



Wood chipper from the National Park Service

Wood chips can be used for garden and landscaping mulch or as animal bedding

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Brewer Bridge River Access Repair

Repair work was done recently to the water access area near the Brewer Bridge. Geo webbing had been installed along the river bank to stabilize the bank and provide an access area to the river for recreationists. However, over time, the river has exposed the geo webbing, creating potential erosion and public safety issues. Preliminary repair work was conducted this fall to help curb the problem. Bags of cement were placed along the edge of the geo webbing and plans are made to complete this project in the spring.



Exposed geo webbing along the Niobrara River



Preliminary repair conducted by the MNNRD

Long Pine Creek Watershed Update

The Long Pine Creek Watershed (LPCW) project is coming along as scheduled. Middle Niobrara NRD staff along with JEO Consulting, INC, Brown County commissioners and the Ainsworth Irrigation District have been laying groundwork to meet the erosion and pollutant needs of the project. The next stakeholder's meeting will be held January 15th, 2014 at 7:00 PM at the Ainsworth Conference Center. A letter will be sent to stakeholders with an update on work that has been completed. Public updates will be made periodically throughout the year. This project is funded through grants from the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

*Up-to-date information regarding the LPCW project can be found online at
<http://www.mnnrd.org/longpinecreekwatershed.html>*

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Master Conservationist Award Nominations

Master Conservationist nominations are being accepted now through March 1st, 2014. The goal of the Master Conservationist program is to recognize those who have excelled in soil and water conservation and protection. The program also recognizes outstanding youth who have implemented water conservation methods or created new ways to improve the environment. Current awards focus on recognition of excellence in water management and conservation. Production Agriculture awards are also presented to farming and ranching operations who have shown new and innovative or traditional methods to conserve water. Anyone can submit nominations, including self-nominations. Nominations can be submitted online by visiting <http://nrdnet.org/conservation-awards.php>. Winners are featured in the Omaha World Herald and are presented an award at the annual fall NARD conference. If you would like to nominate someone and would like assistance, please contact the MNNRD office.

Winter Safety Tips

With winter weather upon us, it is important to use caution when traveling or removing snow. Here are a few tips to follow to ensure a safe winter:

- Make an emergency kit for your vehicle – find kit ideas online
- When shoveling snow, lift with your legs, not your back
- Allow extra time to make your destination
- Do not use cruise control on a slippery surface
- Check weather conditions before heading out
- Keep your hands out of your pockets while walking on snow or ice



Travis Connot clears the MNNRD parking lot

*“Buckle up for safety!” –
Sheriff Roscoe P. Coltrane*

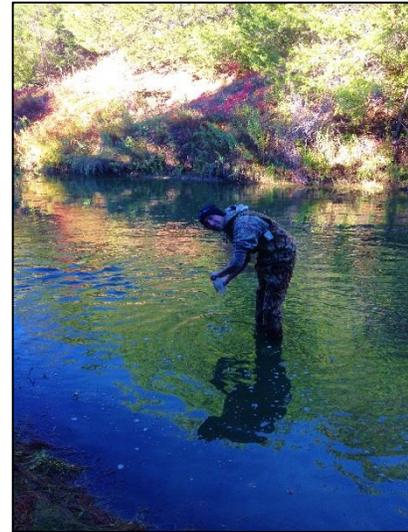


Water Saving Tip - Select the proper pan size for cooking. Large pans may require more cooking water than necessary

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Water Sampling

Water samples are collected from Snake Creek, the Niobrara River, Long Pine Creek and Plum Creek once a month by MNNRD Staff. These water samples are sent to Health and Human Services in Lincoln and are monitored for concentrations of bacteria and metals. Samples from these four locations are collected year round with additional samples from Merritt Reservoir and the Mill Pond collected during the summer months to monitor for *E. coli* and algae content. Every five years, the Middle Niobrara completes a basin rotation where samples will be collected from more sites and monitored for bacteria and metals. The next basin rotation will begin in the Spring of 2014.



Travis Connot collects a water sample from Snake Creek

Fertilizer Reports

Now that harvest time is over and the crop producers are looking to next year, it is time to start thinking about fertilizer reports. Fertilizer reports are filled out for each crop field, even if no fertilizer has been applied. The amount of nitrogen, potassium, phosphorus, sulfur and any other added nutrients are reported along with the amount of irrigation water applied and any implemented best management practices. This information allows MNNRD staff to better serve the crop producers in our district through increased knowledge in fertilizer application and best management practice use. Travis will send out fertilizer report forms in the Spring, but the forms can also be found on the forms page on our website at www.mnnrd.org. Report forms are due in mid-April, but will be accepted before the deadline.

Calendar of Events

December 25 th	Christmas observed, office closed
December 31 st	Water quality cost-share deadline
January 1 st	New Year's Day observed, office closed
January 13 th	MNNRD Board of directors' meeting
January 15 th	Long Pine Creek Watershed meeting
January 28-29 th	NARD Legislative Conference
February.....	Farm and Ranch Seminar TBA
February 10 th	MNNRD Board of directors' meeting
March.....	Trees begin to arrive
March 10 th	MNNRD Board of directors' meeting

Mark
Your
Calendar



Merry Christmas
and Happy New
Year from
MNNRD Staff

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