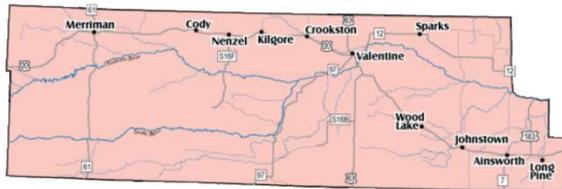


MIDDLE NIOBRARA NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

2013 YEAR IN REVIEW

The Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District

The Natural Resources District (NRD) system is unique to the State of Nebraska. In 1972, NRDs were developed according to watershed basins, instead of by political boundaries. This system provided a more efficient management strategy, solving the issues of overlapping authorities and lack of funds. Each District is governed by a locally elected



The Middle Niobrara NRD

Board of Directors, which ensures that local issues and concerns are addressed. The Middle Niobrara NRD (MNNRD) is one of three NRDs responsible for protecting the groundwater in the Niobrara River basin. One of the largest NRD's in the state, the MNNRD has an area of 2.9 million acres which includes the northern two thirds of Cherry, western Keya Paha, northern Brown and a small parcel of western Rock Counties. The MNNRD has certified 108,208.2 groundwater, 36,425.1 surface water, and 13,074.4 combination

surface/ground water irrigated acres. The purpose of this mailing is to report on the activities and projects currently conducted by the MNNRD and to inform our constituents of available services.

Chemigation Inspections

MNNRD employees were busy this summer with chemigation inspections. A total of 520 permits were received with 261 being inspected this year. Chemigation inspections are to ensure that all safety equipment needed for applying chemicals through center pivot irrigation systems is working properly. A total of 43,868 acres were treated with chemigation in the district in 2012 with 2.7 million pounds of nitrogen and 0.2 million pounds of sulfur applied. The following fungicides and insecticides were also reported as being applied during the 2012 season: Brigade 2EC = 7462 lbs., Kts 0-0-25-17 = 50,000 lbs., Pivot Mix = 13,490 gal. and Headline = 145.7 gallon.

Static Water Level Measurements

Static water level measurements were taken in the Spring and Fall at our monitoring and irrigation well sites. The measurements are compared to the measurements taken at the same locations from the previous year. This year marked the completion of

permanent water level recorders being inserted in the remaining monitoring wells giving the district a total of 52 dedicated sites.

District wide, the water level was down an average of -1.70 ft. in the Spring and an average of -0.08 ft. in the Fall from the previous year.



Stephanie Butler and Travis Connot use teamwork to take a static water measurement at an irrigation well

Groundwater Quality Monitoring

Nitrate samples were collected at irrigation, monitoring and domestic wells at 273 locations. Samples were tested at the MNNRD office and sent to Ward Labs in Kearney. Results from these tests are used to create maps to aid with groundwater management zoning. The MNNRD can test your domestic well at the office during regular business hours.

Water Quality Cost Share

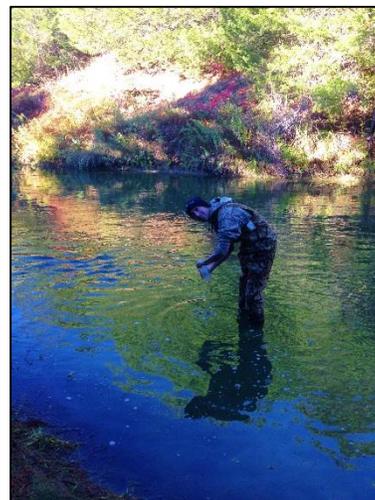
Funds are available for water quality cost-share for the coming year. Cost-share covers 50% up to \$2,500 for items such as surge valves, drip nozzles and sprinklers, and converting siphon tubes to gated pipes. Applications will be accepted November 1st – December

31st, 2014 and can be picked up at the MNNRD office or the NRCS offices in Ainsworth and Valentine.

Ambient Water Sample Collection

Water samples are collected from Snake River, 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 at Snake River

LB 483 New Irrigated Acres

2013 marked the 3rd of four years allowing up to 2,500/year of new irrigated acres within the District. Utilizing some left over acres from last year, the MNNRD Board of Directors were able to approve 2,684 acres. The last year to sign-up for new irrigated acres will be in 2014, starting July 7th and ending August 15th.

Nitrogen Management Certification

MNNRD Programs Coordinator Tim Storm offers nitrogen management certification classes in Ainsworth and Valentine each Spring (see locations/dates on last page). This class must be attended by everyone applying fertilizers to more than five acres of land. The certification is valid for four years. Fertilizer reports are due to the MNNRD office by April 15th, 2014 to report all fertilizers used on fields during the 2013 season. The forms will be mailed out in early Spring or can be downloaded from our website.

2013 Tree Season

Tree season 2013 was a very successful season even though sales were down from the previous year. The MNNRD sold over 49,000 trees to our constituents. The MNNRD tree crew machine planted over 18,000 of those trees for 45 landowners and laid over 21 miles of weed barrier fabric. Financial assistance was obtained through various grants to assist replanting efforts for

landowners affected by the 2012 wildfires. To date, over 45,000 trees have been ordered for 2014.

If you have any plastic lined dog or cat food bags you would like to donate for 2014 tree packing, please bring them by the office. Thanks!!

Long Pine Creek Watershed Project

The Middle Niobrara NRD received \$300,000 in grant funds from the Nebraska Environmental Trust



The MNNRD and JEO Consulting, LLC hosted a kick-off meeting for the Long Pine Creek Watershed Project

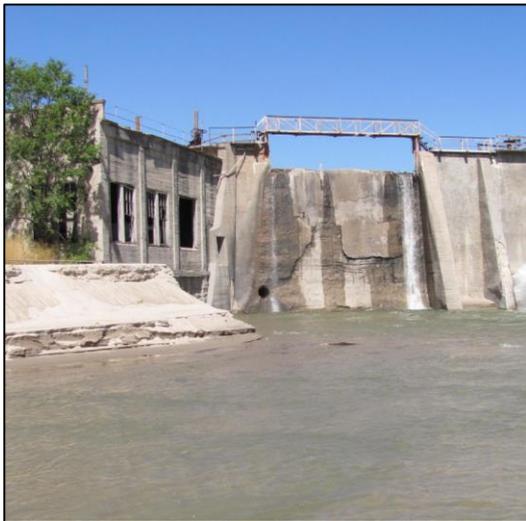
and the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to address threats to water quality and infrastructure within the Long Pine Creek Watershed. The Watershed, located primarily in Brown County, encompasses approximately 328,000 acres – most of which is irrigated farming and rangeland –and the community of Ainsworth and Long Pine. Major tributaries include Sand Draw Creek, Bone Creek, Willow Creek, Spring Branch Creek, and Short Pine Creek. The MNNRD has hired JEO Consulting

Group to assist with this project. A public kick-off meeting was held on May 21, 2013, with approximately 40 people in attendance representing project stakeholders such as landowners, NGPC, USFWS, MNNRD, Sandhills Task Force, Brown County, Ainsworth Irrigation District, NRCS, NDEQ, and DNR. The project planning phase is expected to be completed in Fall 2014.



The MNNRD and the EPA

The MNNRD and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have partnered together to address sedimentation issues surrounding the McGowen Dam.



The McGowen Dam located in Brown County

Sedimentation released by the owner from the dam have allowed build up in over 7 miles of stream and has negatively affected critical habitat, four downstream landowners and the NGPC Bobcat Wildlife Management Area. Currently, the EPA is working with the dam's owner and those affected to resolve this issue.

The MNNRD goes to Washington, D.C.



Directors Dean Jochem and Cherryl Lovejoy with Manager Mike Murphy in Washington, D.C.

Directors Dean Jochem and Cherryl Lovejoy along with Manager Mike Murphy made a trip to Washington, D.C. during the Spring of 2013. There they met with Senator Deb Fischer and Congressman Adrian Smith to discuss local water issues including the McGowen Dam, Long Pine Creek Watershed erosion and bacteria issues, new irrigated acres and the 2006 and 2012 wildfires.

Sign-up for our quarterly newsletter and find applications and forms at mnnrd.org or call 402.376.3241

Dam Inspections and Recreational Area Upkeep

MNNRD staff conduct inspections every Spring on Fishberry Canyon, Government Canyon, Johnson-Snyder, Appleman, Valentine NW # 2 and Cub Creek dams. Trees and brush that could compromise the structure of the dams are removed. Trees and grass are also managed at Cub Creek, the Mill Pond in Valentine and at the Brewer Bridge Access area during the summer.



Travis Connot and Shawn Conner cutting trees at Cub Creek (Stephanie was stacking the brush!)

New Building and Equipment

The MNNRD purchased the building currently occupied by Morris Equipment on highway 20 in Valentine. A lease agreement was included as part of the purchase with a maximum length of three years. We are looking forward to moving to a new location that will better serve our district!

The MNNRD was able to purchase some new equipment in 2013. A new Case



Travis Connot uses our new tractor to clear the parking lot tractor was purchased for use during tree season along with a 2013 Dodge 3500 to pull the tractor and trailer from site to site. A new tree planter was purchased through funds received from the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Public Outreach

Updates about the MNNRD can be heard on Travis' monthly radio show on KVSH – so tune in for your NRD Moment! Our website is a useful resource for MNNRD information. Here you can download forms, find information on tree and water resources, download the latest edition of our newsletter and keep up to date on special programs like the Long Pine Creek Watershed project.

Also on our website is the application for the MNNRD scholarship. Each year a \$500 scholarship is offered to any graduating senior or continuing college student who resides in our district and is majoring in a natural resource or related degree. Applications are due March 30th, 2014.

The MNNRD maintains involvement in the community through projects such as the Big Rock Fire re-planting. This

Spring will mark the 8th year of replanting trees in the burned area north of Valentine. The MNNRD partners with teachers and students from Valentine Community Schools to accomplish this task every year and to date, over 18,000 trees have been planted.



Valentine FFA students plant trees in the Big Rock fire area

The MNNRD staff was also involved in Nature Fest, an event hosted by the Niobrara Valley Outdoor Education Partnership. Around 100 school children from a four county area participated at Nature Fest this year.



Travis Connot and Shawn Conner at the Cherry County fair

The MNNRD had a booth at the Brown, Cherry and Keya Paha County fairs as well as the Farm and Ranch Expo in Basset. Staff were on hand to answer any questions, pass out informational material and test water samples for nitrate levels.

2013 Basin Tour



Over 60 people from across the state attended the Niobrara River Basin Tour

Each year a water basin tour is hosted by the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts and in 2013 the Niobrara River Basin was chosen. The MNNRD hosted the tour and made stops at select bridges and dams across the district to showcase our district and issues/projects the MNNRD is currently dealing with. Stops were also made at Snake River Falls, McKelvie National Forest, select sites from the 2012 wildfires and the George Paul Vineyard and Vinegery in Cody, NE. The tour allows NRD directors and employees from across the state to share ideas and see first-hand issues that their counterpart NRDs are facing. Over 60 people from across the state attended the tour, including Senator Al Davis.

Board of Directors

The MNNRD Board is composed of seven Directors from the six districts within the MNNRD and one at-large Director. Each Director serves on at least two of the following committees: executive, land and resources, information and education, operations and water programs. The monthly Board of Director's meetings are held the second Monday of each month at 3:00 PM (CST) unless otherwise advertised.

Meet our Board of Directors:

Wade Andrews – Subdistrict #1
Justin Hammond – Subdistrict #2
Leonard Danielski – Subdistrict #3
Cherryl Lovejoy – Subdistrict #4
Greg Wilke – Subdistrict #5
Marty Graff – Subdistrict #6
Dean Jochem – At-large

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. Subdistrict maps and more information is available at the MNNRD office.

New Staff and Open Positions

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 she likes to hunt, fish and spend time on her families' ranch in Long Pine. Cortney is currently residing in Valentine.

Filling our internship position for 2014 is Debbie Hafer. Debbie is a Kilgore native and graduated from Chadron State College in December 2013 with a degree in Range Management. Debby will be helping with tree planting, water quality programs and data management. We are so glad to have Cortney and Debby with us!



The MNNRD currently has some open positions for Spring resource technicians. These positions are temporary, lasting through the tree planting season of March-June. Applicants must have a valid driver's license and be able to pass a drug test. For more information, please contact the MNNRD office.

Looking Ahead to 2014

Chemigation and Nitrogen Certification Training Dates Set

Chemigation and Nitrogen Certification training dates have been set for 2014. Training in Ainsworth will be April 1st at the Lutheran Church at 1:30PM (CST) and April 8th in Valentine at the UNL Extension office located in the Cherry county courthouse at 1:00PM (CST).

Certification is valid for four years and must be obtained by anyone who will be applying fertilizers to over five acres of land. Study manuals may be picked up at your local UNL extension office or found online at

<http://water.unl.edu/web/cropswater/cemigation>

Citizens' Survey Being Conducted about Long Pine Creek Watershed

The Middle Niobrara NRD is gathering information from residents, land owners, producers, and citizens in the Long Pine Creek Watershed area through a short survey. The survey is in association with the Long Pine Creek Watershed Management Plan and addresses issues with stream water quality and stream erosion.

Information gathered from the survey will be used in development of the Plan with a focus on best management practices and water quality projects. Included in the survey are questions about water quality, outdoor recreation, land use, and common management practices. No personal information will be recorded. Responses to the survey need to be completed by February 21st, 2014.

Public input into the planning process is critical to achieve a realistic and workable watershed plan. The web-based survey can be accessed at the following address:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LongPineWatershed>.

If you prefer to fill out a paper copy of the survey, they will be available at the Ainsworth NRCS office (731 E. 4th St.), or you can contact the MNNRD by phone at 402.376.3241. Additional information can also be found on the MNNRD's website at:

<http://www.mnnrd.org>.

NSWCP Cost-Share Sign-Up in May

The sign-up period for the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP) is from May 1st – May 31st, 2014. This program offers cost-share for approved soil and water conservation measures that improve water quality, conserve water and help control erosion and sedimentation. Common conservation practices are windbreaks/tree plantings, planned grazing practices and miscellaneous practices such as grade stabilization structures and stream bank stabilization.

Cost-share rates are as follows:

Windbreaks/tree plantings
50% up to \$4,000.00

Planned grazing
60% up to \$5,000.00

Miscellaneous practices
60% up to \$5,000.00

Please contact the office for more information and to receive an application. Applications turned in during this acceptance period are for 2015 projects. **Applications are due May 31st, 2014 for 2015 conservation practices.**

Meet the Staff

Mike Murphy, General Manager

Tim Storm, Programs Coordinator

Cortney Werner, Administrative Assistant

Travis Connot, Natural Resources Technician

Stephanie Butler, Lead Natural Resources Technician/Grants Coordinator

Shawn Conner, Natural Resources Technician

Debbie Hafer, Natural Resources Intern

Jenny Suhr, Valentine NRCS Clerk

Laurie Delimont, Ainsworth NRCS Clerk

Contact Us:

Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District

526 E. 1st St.

Valentine, NE 69201

402.376.3241

mnnrd@qwestoffice.net

www.mnnrd.org

2014 Important Dates

Board of Director's meetings held the second Monday of every month unless stated otherwise

Long Pine Creek Watershed Stakeholder's meetings TBA

NARD Legislative Conference January 28th - 29th

New Year's Day observed, office closed January 1st

Martin Luther King Jr. Day observed, office closed January 20th

President's Day observed, office closed February 17th

Tree Pick-up days in Ainsworth and Valentine TBA date in April

Ainsworth Chemigation and Nitrogen Certification Training, April 1st

Valentine Chemigation and Nitrogen Certification Training, April 8th

Fertilizer Reports Due April 15th

Big Rock Fire Planting April 25th

NSWCP Applications accepted May 1st-May 31st

Memorial Day observed, office closed May 26th

Chemigation Applications Due May 31st

Ranch Expo in Bassett June 11th -12th

Independence Day observed, office closed July 4th

Cherry County Fair August

Brown County Fair August

Keya Paha County Fair

State Fair August 23rd - September 1st

Labor Day observed, office closed September 1st

Husker Harvest Days September 9th-11th

State Fair August 23rd - September 1st

NARD Fall Conference September 21st - 23rd

Columbus Day observed, office closed October 13th

Veteran's Day observed, office closed November 11th

Thanksgiving observed, office closed November 27th-28th

Water Quality Cost Share begins November 1st - December 31st

Christmas observed, office closed December 25th

Middle Niobrara Natural Resources District
526 E. 1st St.
Valentine, NE 69201

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