

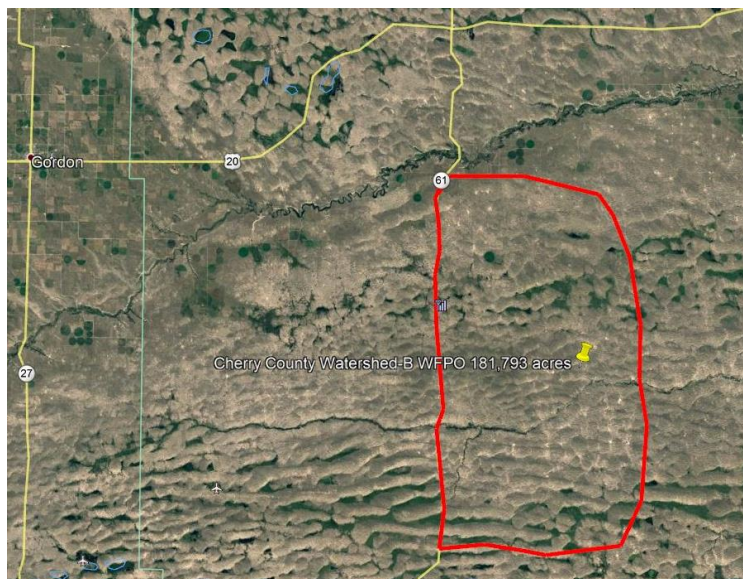


To: Parties interested in Cherry County, NE Watershed B – Environmental Assessment

On behalf of the Middle Niobrara Natural Resource District (MNNRD) and with the support of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), E & A Consulting Group, Inc. (E&A) has been hired to develop a Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment (EA) for Cherry County Watershed B in Cherry County, NE through the USDA-NRCS Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program.

The purpose of this watershed planning effort is to address resource concerns related to watershed protection, water management, water quality management, and public fish/wildlife habitat. The project's goal is to establish a recommended plan through an assessment of alternatives supported by public engagement and sponsor participation that follows the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The project is needed to address stream degradation, bank erosion, inundated hay meadows, calving areas, and infrastructure associated with excessive flows. This effort will result in an approved Watershed Plan-EA to achieve flood prevention, watershed protection, and groundwater recharge goals for the watershed. Projects may include but are not limited to, stream restorations, water management, small or large dams, structures for retiming of flows, watershed Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Cherry County Watershed B covers a total of 181,793 acres. The watershed is located approximately 8 miles south of Merriman, NE on the east side of Highway 61. A map is included below showing the approximate watershed boundaries.



As part of the process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment and for identifying the important issues related to the proposed action, we request

your comments on the above issues and any other issues that you can identify as important. We intend to use your comments to:

- Identify the range of alternatives and impacts and the important issues to be addressed in the Environmental Assessment.
- Identify and eliminate from detailed study the issues which are not important or which have been covered by prior environmental review.
- Identify other environmental review and consultation requirements.

A public scoping meeting will be held at the MNNRD office at 303 E Highway 20 in Valentine NE. The meeting is scheduled for January 19th, 2021 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. If you are uncomfortable attending the meeting in person, you can attend virtually using the information at the end of this letter. The meeting will also be recorded and available at <https://eacg.com/project/cherry-county-watershed-a-b-meeting/> for viewing at a later date.

The scoping meeting provides an opportunity to learn about the proposed Watershed Plan EA, the NEPA process, and to submit verbal comments in addition to, or in lieu of, written comments on issues of environmental concern related to the watershed plan EA. Both written and verbal comments receive equal consideration. E&A and MNNRD representatives will be present before, during, and after the meeting with maps depicting the project area and to answer questions. We request your comments by March 15th, 2020.

Please contact E&A or the MNNRD if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about particular resources or have questions about the project. All public comments we receive will be used to help develop the Environmental Assessment.

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Virtual Meeting via GoToMeeting

Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/557416749>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3311

Access Code: 557-416-749