



Upper Loup Scoop

What do you know about NRD's?

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts were created by the Nebraska Legislature and began serving the people of the state in 1972. The legislature combined 154 special purpose resources management entities, including county soil and water conservation districts, drainage districts and watershed boards into 23 NRDs. These districts are unique to Nebraska. No other state has a system for managing its natural resources identical to our NRDs.

NRDs are local government units with broad responsibilities to protect and enhance our state's natural resources. Major Nebraska river basins form the boundaries enabling the NRDs to respond best to local needs. Elected boards govern districts. Much of the funding for resources management programs and projects come from property taxes collected in the area served by the district.

What do NRDs really do? Under Nebraska state law, NRDs are charged with: erosion prevention and control, prevention of damages from flood water and sediment, flood prevention and control soil conservation, water supply for any beneficial uses, development, management, utilization, and conservation of groundwater and surface water, pollution control, solid waste disposal and drainage, drainage improvement and channel rectification, development and management of fish and wildlife habitat, development and management of recreational and park facilities, forestry and range management.

Quite a list wouldn't you agree!

Specific services offered by

each district vary according to the districts specific needs. The NRD receives NSWCP (Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program) funds which are provided through the DNR (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources). The funding is used to offer cost-share on a variety of conservation practices. The landowner must apply and be approved before the practice can be put in place. Listed below are just a few of the eligible practices the Upper Loup NRD cost-shares on.

- Pasture Planting or Range Seeding
- Critical Area Planting
- Leafy Spurge
- Soil Sampling
- Wind breaks
- Planned Grazing Systems
- Stream Bank Stabilization

Water use not a problem in ULNRD or is it?

The entire state of Nebraska has experienced a severe drought for the past seven years. Drought conditions have caused the decline of water levels at Lake McConaughy and Harlan County reservoirs, as well as low stream flows in the majority of the rivers that pass through Nebraska. This drought is part of the Upper Loup NRD's motivation to review, update and implement groundwater quality and quantity policies and regulations.

The number and capacity of wells and their effect on surface water rights are used to determine when a basin is "fully-appropriated" (at the maximum level of sustainable development)

or "over-appropriated" (water levels in decline due to over-development). The Loup River Basin is not currently fully-appropriated, but that could change in the future. This means that landowners can still drill wells within the NRD district without the need for "offsets" for new water uses or new acres placed under irrigation.

Our NRD office currently measures and tracks the ground water level and feels that by tracking water use as

well we can get a preview of any potential concerns. Producers in our area with irrigation wells were contacted last year asking for assistance on reviewing the amount of water being used for each well for irrigation purposes. We plan to continue these efforts of gaining data this year. Once again we will furnish a post card to irrigators to record needed information on. If you did not receive a card last year and should have, please contact our office. We greatly appreciate your assistance in our efforts.

Upper Loup NRD Staff

Anna Baum	General Manager
Jack Brummet	Resources Technician
Kyle Yrkoski	Resources Technician
Angie Jensen	Administrative Secretary
Cleo Jacobs	Theford Field Office

Upper Loup Board of Directors

- Subdistrict 1 Ginger Fouse & Eric Storer
- Subdistrict 2 Steve Boyer & Judy Ridenour
- Subdistrict 3 Gary Schaeffer & Wayne Eatinger
- Subdistrict 4 Byron Cox & Gordon Simonson
- Subdistrict 5 Louis Jacobson & Travis Hansen
- At Large: Wynn Wiens

Trees, the silent supporters.

Trees are the quiet and unnoticed heroes of the plains, providing important benefits to many. They prevent soil erosion and crop damage due to wind. They shelter people and livestock from summer heat and winter cold. They help to reduce heating and cooling costs to homes and shop buildings. Trees and shrubs can also provide a habitat for many species of wildlife.

Trees are valuable to towns and communities as well. They provide social, communal, environmental and economic advantages.

The Upper Loup Natural Resources District sells trees to property owners across the district. Trees can be purchased as producer hand plants, contract plants or for NRD machine planting. The ULNRD

are now accepting orders for trees and will till approximately March 1st or while tree supplies last. Trees are planted in the spring as soon as conditions are suitable.

The ULNRD or local NRCS are available to work with landowners to determine the type and number of trees and shrubs needed. A technician will make arrangements for the tree order and assist with NRD machine planting service as well as advise you about weed control and care following planting.

To help promote tree planting the NRD has cost share funds available for those practices that meet stated requirements. Trees, shrubs, planting and weed mulch are all eligible for the cost share program. For more information on the conservation

tree program including tree prices, minimum purchases, cost share, or if you need assistance with designing a tree planting project, stop by our office in Thedford or call us at 308-645-2250 or contact your NRCS Office. NOW is the TIME to ORDER TREES!



It is not too early to think about rain—really!



I imagine most people are concerned about snow amounts this time of year not rain but before long spring will be upon us and hopefully the rains as well. (Yes I am the eternal optimist)

The Upper Loup NRD continues to look for volunteers to report rainfall on a daily basis. Some of you may already collect weather information on your own but now you can become part of a network (NeRain) that will affect local, state and even National Weather Service reporting.

The NeRain program is a project that

records and monitors precipitation trends across the state and has been funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Information gained is used for decision making in agriculture, industry, home water use, utility providers, insurance companies, resource managers and educators. Nebraska has continued to battle drought conditions in excess now of seven years and the NeRAIN project is one that helps to expand our knowledge on the impacts that precipitation events have on individual watersheds within Nebraska.

The Upper Loup NRD is providing participants with a high quality precision rain

gauge at no cost. The information collected can be reported to a website, phoned or mailed into our Thedford office. We need volunteers throughout the district which includes all of Grant, Hooker, Thomas, Blaine, and Logan counties and the southern part of Cherry and Brown counties and the east half of McPherson county.

If you or someone you know are interested in becoming a volunteer in the NeRAIN program or would like more information about the project please contact Scott Hajek at 308-645-2250 or visit the [NeRAIN Website](#). Volunteers in southern Brown, Grant and southern Cherry Counties are needed greatly.

ABANDONED WELLS POSE HAZARDS.

In the last 100 years, Nebraskans have dug or drilled thousands of wells for irrigation, livestock and domestic purposes.

Few of these wells were properly abandoned when their usefulness was exhausted. These abandoned wells are direct channels to the groundwater supply as well as physical safety hazard for animals and humans.

Estimates of the number of aban-

doned wells in Nebraska range from 10,000 to 100,000.

Abandoned wells are often located near gardens, fields or sites where harmful contaminated sediment, chemicals or waste can enter the well.

Properly plugging abandoned Wells takes time and money, but cost-share programs may be available from the Upper Loup Natural Resources Districts. Please call with any questions or information.

Lets get Acquainted: We would like to introduce ourselves and share a little bit about our ULNRD family



(L to R) Jack, Anna, Cleo, Angie

Anna Baum, General Manager, her husband Mike, and girls Courtney, Mallory and Brodie, live in Mullen. Anna was raised in Lincoln, and has spent the last 17 years in Curtis, NE. She taught at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture for 12 years, and was the Frontier County Assessor for 5 years. Anna enjoys her family, playing golf, gardening, reading, and spending time with friends.

Angie Jensen, Administrative Assistant, has been with the ULNRD since August, 2004. Angie has two grown children, Tori and Cash. She grew up and graduated from Broken Bow High School. She received a Bachelors Degree in Office Administration from Kearney State. Angie loves anything involving horses and horse events. She enjoys cross stitching and philosophical discussions.

Jack Brummet, Resources Technician, and his wife Deanna, live in Stapleton. Jack has been with the ULNRD for 15 years. Jack and Deanna have a daughter, Heidi, and a son, Jay. Jack served in the National Guard for 7 years. He attended Milford and then worked for the institution the following 7 years. Jack was a self-employed farmer/rancher and worked in the refrigeration / heating business for 20 years. His hobbies are building things in the shop, Christmas lighting displays, and working around the farm.

Cleo Jacobs is the ULNRD Field Office Secretary, and works at the NRCS Field Office in Thedford. She and her husband, Jeff, live in Mullen. Cleo grew up on a farm / ranch in Morrill County. She attended Nebraska Western College and Chadron State College, majoring in Business and Elementary Ed. Cleo has

worked as Field Office Secretary for 35 years. She enjoys reading, needlework, fresh and dried flower arranging, music and gardening.

Kyle Yrokoski is the newest member of the Upper Loup NRD family. Kyle is originally from Clarks, Nebraska. He graduated in December from the University of Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture where he majored in Natural Resources and Agronomy. Kyle comes to us with experience in several NRD activities that he gained while working for the Central Platte NRD. Kyle enjoys hunting, fishing and most outdoor activities.

[Web Site up and running](http://www.upperloupnrd.org)

[Come and check us out at:](http://www.upperloupnrd.org)

www.upperloupnrd.org

Upper Loup NRD now has 2 new satellite office locations. A Resources Technician will be available to answer questions, provide information, provide water testing and various cost-share applications to all residents of the district. On the first Tuesday of each month they will be in Stapleton in the extension office from 9-3 CST and the second Tuesday of each month in Mullen at the extension office from 9-3 MT.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS.....

The Elkhorn-Loup Modeling (ELM) project is starting into its second year. This project is a study of surface water and ground water resources in the Elkhorn River basin upstream of Norfolk, Nebraska and the Loup River basin upstream of Columbus, Nebraska and covers an area approximately 29,300 square miles, and extends from the Niobrara River to the north to the Platte River to the south. The project is a combined effort of eight total NRD's including the Upper Loup NRD.

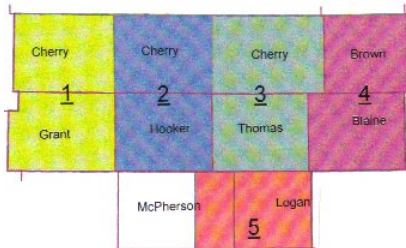
The study will assist Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the

Natural Resources Districts within the study area by characterizing the ground water system and by providing a region ground water flow model that could be used to evaluate surface water / ground water interaction in the study area. The study will also provide data and interpretations that could serve as the basis for future management of the regional water resources.

The ELM Study is a necessity for the NRD's involved in order to make wise decisions on how to manage hydrologically connected surface water and groundwater

for water management planning. The study will provide data on the impact of additional irrigation development, self imposed moratoriums, and other management options. The study will also be used to provide more detailed data for use in Department of Natural Resources annual evaluations of the river basins.

The Upper Loup NRD would like to thank all land owners who have worked with our district as well as with the United States Geological Systems (USGS) in the past. We appreciate and look forward to your cooperation in the future.



UPPER LOUP NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

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Visit us on the web at: www.upperloupnrd.org

Calendar of Events

January

- 1 ULNRD Office Closed—Holiday
- 11 ULNRD Board Meeting, Theftford
- 15 ULNRD Office Closed—Holiday
- 23-24 Legislative Conference, Lincoln

February

- 8 ULNRD Board Meeting, Theftford
- 19 ULNRD Office Closed—Holiday

March

- 6 NRD Water Programs Conference
- 8 ULNRD Board Meeting, Theftford
- 12-15 NARD Washington DC meeting

TO:

ULNRD has an Ultra-Sonic Flow Meter which is a non-invasive (installed outside the pipe wall) method to measure water flow in an irrigation system. This service is provided free to district producers.

Proposed Mullen Dam & Lake Project

Back in November of 2004 discussion with local interested parties about a potential project to create a lake in the Middle Loup River north of Mullen began. The proposed four mile long reservoir would be for recreation, not irrigation and was thought to be a project that would bring economic vitality to the area. Initial possible purposes for the dam and lake included power generation, water storage, trout and or fishing lake, recreation and environmental enhancement.

The ULNRD agreed to be the initial sponsor for the project and to get the ball rolling. There are many steps in a project of this size and the first key step is to accumulate funding. The initial cost estimate for the project without the power generation added was between 16-24 million.

A pre-feasibility study was

performed by the engineering firm HDR and submitted in spring of 2006 to the Nebraska Resources Development Fund (NRDF) in hopes the project would be eligible for partial reimbursement.

In April of 2006 the Natural Resources Commission authorized the ULNRD to proceed with an application and full feasibility report (report alone costing ~ \$ 200,000— \$ 400,000) for the Mullen Dam Project if they desired. However, the NRDF grant would not exceed 50% of the total eligible project costs. This basically meant the district would have to absorb the remaining 50% of the funds locally.

The ULNRD, HDR, and the Department of Natural Resources met in August of 2006 to discuss the project and funding. Due to cost benefit issues, cost to the local community and the growing environmental impacts the pro-

ject as it was initially presented was becoming quite difficult. DNR felt if we considered a different project, perhaps river enhancement rather than the building of a lake and dam that the total project cost would be less and NRDF funding may increase up to 75%.

This new idea was brought back to the initial group of interested parties, affected land owners, as well as several state agencies in October of 2006. None of local individuals that attended the meeting were interested in the new project proposal, they preferred the initial project.

So where does this entire project stand? It is currently in a holding pattern. A few local community representatives' plan to dialogue with the NRDF commission to see if some of the funding requirements can be changed in the future. Modifying the allowable benefits might allow a higher reimbursement rate for the initial project.