

SPRINKLES & SPLASHES

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 2 ::: SPRING 2006

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Middle Republican Natural Resources District

Ungers Awarded for Their Conservation Efforts in 2005

For the past 35 years, the Middle Republican Natural Resources District has honored area farmers and ranchers for their outstanding efforts in natural resources conservation. Over 140 families have been presented with the District's Honor Conservation, the Outstanding Tree Planter, and the Outstanding Grassland Awards. At the Southwest Nebraska Water Conference in March, the district honored the Dave & Kerri Unger Family of Culbertson with the 2005 Honor Conservation Award.

The Ungers have been farming and ranching for over 17 years. They operate 100 head of cattle and over 1,500 acres of dryland farmground. The Ungers have implemented a

number of conservation practices over the years. These include building new terraces and enlarging existing terraces, rotational grazing, and tree planting through the CRP programs. Over the years, they have planted over 500 trees.

The Ungers say that, "the benefits of conservation practices have been especially noticeable in years of drought. Terraces and minimum till help keep moisture in the fields, increasing crop production. Rotational grazing reduces overgrazing and allows rejuvenation of pasture ground. Windbreaks help maintain body condition of cattle throughout the winter."

Dave and Kerri live just northeast



2005 MRNRD HONOR CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS, KERRI & DAVE UNGER WITH THEIR SON RYAN. ALSO PICTURED, KARA GALL, INFORMATION & EDUCATION COORDINATOR FOR THE MRNRD, AND KURT RINGENBURG OF MCCOOK NATIONAL BANK. PHOTO COURTESY OF MCCOOK GAZETTE / CONNIE JO DISCOE

of Culbertson with their three children: Lauren, Katie and Ryan.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service staff in

Red Willow County has been instrumental in assisting the Unger family implement their conservation efforts. Thanks to McCook National Bank in McCook for sponsoring this award.

District Students Earn Trip to Canon Envirothon



Wauneta-Palisade High School students (pictured at left - L to R) advisor Teresa Hayes, Brennan Keiser, Jesse Skelton, Katie Erickson, Stacey Wright, and Luke Wright took top honors at the Nebraska State Envirothon held at Bunker Hill near Hastings on May 6. The students will represent Nebraska at the Canon Envirothon at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada July 23-29, 2006.

The Hayes Center Envirothon Team also competed at the state contest, finishing in 4th place. The Medicine Valley Envirothon Team finished in 8th place. Congratulations to all our district teams!

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From Dan's Desk

IT'S YEAR TWO of our allocations and we look forward to what may happen with a certain amount of angst. Subsoil moisture is low and many producers are using their first irrigation to get the crop up and growing. We can only hope that rainfall will be plentiful and irrigation can be held to a minimum. Compliance issues from last year and what happens this year continue to dominate our thought process. The purchase of surface water supplies will help with compliance concerns but will not ensure that we will achieve compliance.

Other projects are underway and studies are being set up that will help determine what water might be saved with these projects. The impact of riparian growth may be evaluated if federal grant funds are obtained.

Several different local, state and federal agencies are trying to address this problem. Basin transfer of water is still being discussed and the source, timing of delivery and available supply issues are being identified with the hope that all

these issues can be resolved.

The June Board of Directors meeting will be preceded by a hearing for the purpose receiving

"Compliance issues from last year and what happens this year continue to dominate our thought process."

testimony relative to changes in our rules and regulations for the Ground Water Management Area. A full copy of these revisions is available by contacting the NRD

at 367-4281 or by visiting the NRD website at www.mrnrd.org. We consider these revisions as minor in nature and primarily clarifying administrative issues.

They do not change the allocations that are set through the 2007 crop year. Those allocations will be reviewed at a later date and necessary revisions may be made if warranted. We continue

to hope that incentive programs will retire enough acres to minimize any future changes in allocations.

-Dan Smith, General Manager

NRD Partner in Environmental Trust Grants

IRRIGATION POCKET GUIDE

A project sponsored in part by the Middle Republican NRD was found eligible for a grant award of \$35,578 by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

The project, which was submitted by the Nebraska Republican River Management Districts Association (NRRMDA), is for the production of a Republican River Basin Pocket Irrigation Guide. The guide would include best practices for irrigation water usage that irrigators could use in the field. Other sponsors include the Upper Republican NRD, Lower Republican NRD, and Tri-Basin NRD. Both the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and University Cooperative Extension are providing technical assistance. Project sponsors anticipate mailing the guide to all irrigators throughout the Republican Basin by mid-summer.

WATER CONTAMINATION TESTING

The Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department has received a grant to provide testing of domestic water well for coliform, nitrates, arsenic, and uranium.

The NRDs within the health district have agreed to help educate residents in relation to water contamination and what measures are needed to prevent this occurrence. Public meetings will be held the end of June and first part of July in Arapahoe, McCook, Curtis, Grant, Imperial, Benkelman, Trenton and Hayes Center. The public is encouraged to attend these meetings and sign up to have their well water tested free of charge. The Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department will perform the well sampling in July, August and September.

Owners will receive their individual results and any recommendation, if needed, to reduce unsafe

levels above the state's standards. Town hall meetings will be conducted to report overall results of the district testing. The dates and times of the meeting will be posted in the local newspapers and on the MRNRD website at www.mrnrd.org.

If you are interested in having your well tested for free, please plan on attending one of the meetings close to you.

Both of the above projects are funded through a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The Trust is funded by proceeds of the Nebraska Lottery and private donations and has awarded more than \$89 million to conservation projects in Nebraska since 1994. ♦



Water Issues Affecting Other NRDs

Ever wonder how water issues are affecting other NRDs in other watersheds? Here's a rundown:

Following a presentation by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in March 2006, it was the consensus of **both the Upper Elkhorn NRD and Lower Elkhorn NRD** that a stay on new wells and new irrigated acres would not be required at this time.

There is a moratorium on the drilling of new high-capacity (over 50 gallons per minute) wells in the entire **Upper Niobrara White Natural Resources District** (which includes all of Box Butte, Dawes and Sheridan Counties and the upper 2/3 of Sioux County). Additionally, as a result of LB962, the DNR declared areas of the Upper Niobrara White NRD fully appropriated on July 16, 2004. For this portion of the District, the law prohibits the addition of new irrigated acres, new high-capacity ground water wells and new surface water appropriations.

The **Upper Big Blue NRD** is working on a groundwater model for all of the Big Blue Basin including the Little Blue and the Lower Big Blue NRDs in an attempt to save irrigated acres from becoming fully appropriated by the state.

A two-year suspension in the granting of new well permits, a groundwater certification process and the creation of a variance process received unanimous approval from the **Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors** following a public hearing in Ord in February.

The **Central Platte NRD** has begun to certify irrigated acres. In March, the NRD mailed out packets to landowners and operators who live in northern Custer and Frontier counties. The NRD staff were located in the 4-H Building in Lexington and certified 15,000 acres in March. The NRD plans to certify acres in western Dawson County starting the end of May including about 400 landowners. The entire Central Platte NRD, from Gothenburg to Columbus, is in a suspension area and no new irrigated acres are allowed, even if a new well is not drilled.

In the **South Platte NRD (Kimball, Cheyenne, and Deuel Counties)**, a workgroup composed of individuals representing a wide range of interests is developing an Integrated Management Plan in accordance with LB962. Groundwater levels remain a concern due to a dry winter and early spring. ♦

District Headlines

Tree Planting Nears End

District tree planters are winding down their spring work. Weather conditions allowed the crew to finish without too many snags, but without adequate moisture, landowners will need to "baby" their plantings along.

In celebration of Arbor Day, Information & Education coordinator Kara Gall and NRCS Field Office Clerk Kim Smith distributed over 500 tree seedlings to students at schools throughout the district. Through songs, storytelling, and games such as Tree Jeopardy, students from preschool through fifth grade learned about parts of trees, benefits of trees, types of trees, and how we can conserve this renewable resource.

Scholarship Winners Announced

High School graduates Kay Kaczor of Curtis and Matthew Wiest of Moorefield were recent recipients of the Middle Republican NRD Post High School Scholarships.

Kaczor will attend Chadron State College next fall. She will be studying Agribusiness Administration. She is a graduate of Medicine Valley High School.

Wiest, also a graduate of Medicine Valley High School, will attend the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis next fall, studying turf management.

The MRNRD annually offers one \$200 scholarship to two students from the district who will be majoring in natural resources or agricultural topics. Congratulations to Kay and Matt!

Directors File For Seats

The Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors will have six seats up for re-election in 2006. Current directors Don Roberts and Dennis Hoyt did not file for election.

Those filing and their hometowns are:

- Jim Roberts, McCook
- Mike Peters, McCook**
- Kelly Wertz, Trenton**
- Dan Nelson, Moorefield
- Marty Schurr, Maywood
- William Barger, Culbertson
- Duane Dodson, Maywood**
- Kevin Fornoff, Hayes Center**
- Josh Friesen, Wallace
- Benjie Loomis, Maywood
- Brad Randel, Indianola
- Bradford Hock, Culbertson

**Incumbents

CREP

CREP signup continues in the Republican Basin. There may be more acres transferred from the Platte area to the Republican. If you have an interest in the CREP program, please check with your local FSA office.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

May	30	Memorial Day, Office Closed
June	5	Educator Scholarship Applications Due
	13	Public Hearing, Curtis Legion Hall, 7:00 PM; Board of Directors Meeting, Curtis, 8:00 PM
	19-21	NARD Platte Basin Tour
July	4	Independence Day, Office Closed
	11	Board of Directors Meeting, McCook, 8:00 PM
	23-29	Canon Envirothon, Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada
August	8	Board of Directors Meeting, Curtis, 8:00 PM
	17	Summer Water Conference, West Central Research and Extension

There are more activities and events on our online calendar at: <http://www.mrnrd.org/calendar/>

The Middle Republican NRD has scheduled a
PUBLIC HEARING
Tuesday, June 13
7:00 PM
Legion Hall, Curtis

for the purpose of receiving testimony relative to changes in our rules and regulations for the Ground Water Management Area. A full copy of these revisions is available by contacting the NRD at 367-4281 or they are listed on the NRD website at www.mrnrd.org.

CHEMIGATORS!!!

Forms to renew chemigation permits were mailed to permit holders at the beginning of March. If you intend to chemigate this season, you must fill out the form and mail it back to the Middle Republican NRD office in Curtis by June 1, 2006.

Please check the expiration date on your chemigation applicator's license. If it expired January 1, 2006 and you plan to chemigate this year, you must register for a chemigation class this spring.

You can find information regarding training dates and locations by logging on to www.deq.state.ne.us or by contacting the MRNRD office at (800) 873-5613.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joseph Anderjaska	Hayes Center
Duane Dodson	Maywood
Kevin Fornoff	Hayes Center
Gayle Haag	Bartley
Dennis Hoyt	Culbertson
Stanley Moore	Bartley
Jerry Mustion	Culbertson
Michael Peters	McCook
Donald Roberts	McCook
Rick Spencer	Culbertson
Kelly Wertz	Trenton

STAFF

Daniel Smith	General Manager
Kara Gall	Information and Education Coordinator
Tom Hansen	Technician
Richard Karre	Technical Supervisor
Robert Merrigan	Assistant Manager
Christy Peterson	Office Supervisor & Board Secretary
Dennis Peterson	Technician
Mary Tidyman	Secretary/Receptionist

NRCS Field Office Clerks:

Kathy Barger	Hayes County NRCS
Kathy Clark	Lincoln County NRCS
Betty Fritsch	Red Willow County NRCS
Carol Lashley	Hitchcock County NRCS
Kim Smith	Frontier County NRCS

SPRINKLES & SPLASHES is the official publication of the Middle Republican Natural Resources District. It is published quarterly by the MRNRD, 220 Center Av., PO Box 81, Curtis, NE 69025. We can be reached at 800-873-5613, 308-367-4281, Email: office@mrnrd.org or www.mrnrd.org.

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