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Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

Distinguished Service Recognized at NRD Luncheon

(Curtis, NE) – The Middle Republican NRD held their 34th annual Board of Directors Luncheon last Tuesday in Curtis. In attendance were retiring Senator Tom Baker (District 44) and Senators-elect Mark Christensen (District 44) and Tom Hansen (District 42). The senators' remarks targeted the water challenges in their districts. Christensen said that water is the number one issue for the state because of the effect on the economy. He said, "I feel like there are more solutions than what we're looking at, such as moving water around. Cutting irrigation is not the only thing to look at." Hansen commented that he is invested in what happens regarding water in the Republican River Valley, because that will shape what happens in the Platte.

Dean Edson, Executive Director for the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts presented five directors with distinguished service awards.

"We're not here just to say goodbye," Edson began, "we're here to thank five directors of the Middle Republican NRD board. Collectively, they represent 84 years of natural resources conservation experience. It will be difficult to replace their institutional knowledge, skills, production, and practical experience."

Awards were presented to Kelly Wertz, Duane Dodson, Mike Peters, Dennis Hoyt, and Don Roberts. Wertz and Dodson each gave 8 years of service to the Middle Republican NRD Board; Peters, 15; Hoyt, 18, and Roberts, 35.

Wertz resigned from the board to take a position running a restaurant in Great Bend, KS. Before returning home to farm, Kelly was an Irrigation Specialist with University of Nebraska – Lincoln Extension. This became Kelly's key contribution to the board, and he served an important role in

shaping the Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations and Integrated Management Plan.

Duane Dodson's expertise in grassland management provided the insight the Middle Republican NRD needed to make sound decisions in range programs. Duane's expertise was evident in the many awards received by the Dodson Ranch and Farm over the years. In 2001, they received the Nebraska Society for Range Management Rangeman's Award. They also received the Middle Republican NRD's 2000 Outstanding Grassland Award and the Middle Republican NRD's Outstanding Conservation Award in 1972. Duane served on the board's executive committee for two terms as treasurer. He was also involved with hiring committees and served on the local EQIP advisory group.

Mike Peters was elected to the board in 1992. Mike brought to the board his experience in Agri-business, and as a resident of McCook, he contributed much needed input on Urban-oriented issues. He has also been involved with the local operations and personnel committee. The board thanked

Following in the footsteps of his father James, Dennis Hoyt was elected to the board in 1989. Dennis' contribution to the board began originally from a production agriculture standpoint and then later from an Ag-business background. Dennis was also been involved with the local operations and personnel committee.

Retiring this year after 35 years on the board, Don Roberts received the final award. As a member of the Red Willow County Soil and Water Conservation District, Don was appointed to the initial steering committee that organized the Middle Republican Natural Resources District in 1972 and served on the MRNRD Board of Directors ever since. He was a member of the groundwater committee and the special protection area local action committee. He was also involved with the local operations and personnel committee, and served on the local EQIP advisory group. Don's guidance and leadership led the Middle Republican NRD to adopt the first Integrated Management Plan. His involvement with the NRD since its inception meant that staff members and directors continually looked to Don for support and guidance on NRD issues.

Edson concluded the presentation by saying "Thank you all for your years of service and guidance. You will be missed."

Manager Dan Smith presented NRD Employees with Service Recognition Pins, which are earned for every 5 years of service. Receiving a 10-year pin this year was Mary Tidyman. Other employees had previously earned pins but had not yet been presented with them. Earning 5-year pins were Christy

Peterson and Kathy Barger, who have both given seven years of service to the district. Rich Karre, who has been with the district for twelve years, earned his 10-year pin. Bob Merrigan, who has completed sixteen years with the NRD, earned his 15-year pin. Betty Fritsch and Dan Smith earned their 25-year pins. Both are beginning their 28th year of service to the district.

Smith also introduced the five new board members, who were in attendance at the luncheon. Josh Friesen, Dan Nelsen, Benjie Loomis, Brad Randel, and Marty Schurr will take their seats on the board at the January 9 board meeting.

Doug Whisenhunt, NRCS District Conservationist (Curtis), recognized NRCS employees throughout the district and Mary Reece, NRCS District Conservationist (North Platte), recognized Lee Morse's contribution to the NRD. Morse, who was active in implementing conservation measures in the Lincoln county portion of the MRNRD, is retiring this year.

Following the luncheon, participants met for the December board meeting at the NRD Office.

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