This is Nate Jenkins with the Upper Republican Natural Resources District in Imperial, Nebraska, and this is the Natural Resources Report.

The new year marks the 40th Anniversary of Nebraska's unique Natural Resources District system. Historically, Nebraskans have been pretty independent and forward-thinking when it comes to government structures – Nebraska is home to the only one-house unicameral Legislature in the country, for example – and NRDs are part of that proud tradition. From flood control to managing our precious groundwater, the state's 23 NRDs have been protecting lives, property and the future of natural resources with local control that allows decisions to be made by people closest to the issues that require decisions. It's the only system of its kind in the country and, like the state's one-house Legislature, has gained a national reputation for being able to swiftly craft common-sense solutions to issues.

State Senator Maurice Kremer introduced, and the Nebraska Legislature enacted, Legislative Bill (LB) 1357 in 1969 to combine Nebraska's 154 special purpose entities into 24 Natural Resources Districts by July, 1972. The NRDs' boundaries were organized based on Nebraska's major river basins. That allows management practices to be applied to similar topographies, enabling districts to respond best to local conservation and resource management needs. In 1989, the merger of two NRD reduced the number of NRDs in the state to 23.

Natural Resources Districts were created to solve flood control, soil erosion, irrigation run-off, and groundwater quantity and quality issues. Nebraska's NRDs are involved in a wide variety of projects and programs to conserve and protect the state's natural resources. NRDs

are charged under state law with 12 areas of responsibility including flood control, soil erosion, groundwater management and many others.

In our NRD in southwest Nebraska's Perkins, Chase and Dundy Counties, local control has resulted in some of the most progressive groundwater-management rules in the entire country. The Upper Republican NRD may have been the first government agency in the country to regulate irrigation to protect water resources and the long-term viability of the local economy.

Thanks to the foresight of Nebraskans and the Nebraska Legislature, NRDs across the state have been able to take their own steps to address a range of local issues. It's not a stretch to say Nebraska is a better state because of it.

To learn more about Nebraska NRDs visit www.nrdnet.org.

This has been Nate Jenkins with the Upper Republican NRD in Imperial, Nebraska.