

Insight

Nemaha Natural Resources District

Recreation With A Purpose



Flood control structures, traditionally designed for mitigating damages from flooding events, have evolved over the years to support a range of recreational activities. Dams created to mitigate flooding impacts along our streams have become popular sites for boating, swimming, and fishing. The integration of recreational uses into flood control projects maximizes the utility of the structures and helps to foster an appreciation for environmental stewardship among community members. By balancing flood management with recreational uses, the Nemaha NRD is able to enhance the quality of life for residents while maintaining essential safety functions necessary to protect life, property, and the future.

The Nemaha NRD maintains 380 watershed structures throughout southeast Nebraska with a 0.29996% tax levy per \$100 in valuation. While most of the structures are on privately owned land the flood reduction benefits are far reaching. Prior to these watershed projects being implemented across the district it was not uncommon for flooding to destroy homes, devastate crop fields, and sometimes even take lives. The Upper Big Nemaha watershed near Sterling is a prime example. Prior to partnering with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to install flood control throughout the watershed, multiple lives were lost during flood conditions. Frequent flooding occurred that impacted residents of the town and the railroad. Since installation of the 76 structures within the Upper Big Nemaha watershed, flood damages have been nearly eliminated. This is true for watersheds all across southeast Nebraska.

The Nemaha NRD manages five public use recreation areas that provide access to residents. Each of the recreation areas has been integrated into a flood control structure. Public recreation areas provide opportunity to improve well being, community cohesion, environmental stewardship, and educational opportunities. Recre-

ation areas draw tourists in and lead to increased economic activity in surrounding communities.

The following is a brief description of recreation areas managed by the Nemaha NRD. Nemaha NRD park permits are required for all public recreation areas besides Prairie Owl. Permits are available for purchase online, in the Tecumseh office, or at the parks. Visit www.nemahanrd.org to find out more information about public recreation areas near you!

Iron Horse Trail Lake: 80-acre no-wake lake located near DuBois featuring tent and RV camping (11 electrical hookups), fishing, boat ramp/dock, picnic areas with grills, tables, shelters, sand beach, playground, and nature trails.

Kirkman's Cove: 160-acre lake located near Humboldt featuring tent and RV camping (16 electrical hookups), fishing, boat dock/ramp, picnic areas with grills, tables, shelters, sand beach, playground, nature trails, outdoor chapel, and 9-hole public golf course adjacent.

Duck Creek: 60-acre no-wake lake located near Peru featuring tent and RV camping (28 electrical hookups), fishing, boat ramp/dock, picnic areas with grills, tables, shelters, sand beach, playground, and nature trails

Wirth Brothers: 34-acre no-wake lake located near Tecumseh featuring tent camping and one non-electrical RV pad, fishing, boat ramp/dock, picnic area with grills, tables, shelter, sand beach, playground, and nature trails.

Prairie Owl: Day use only, 24-acre no-wake lake near Dunbar.

NRD Staff On The Move

Field staff at the Nemaha NRD are very busy during the summer months! Water staff are out doing chemigation inspections, collecting water quality samples from recreation area beaches, collecting monthly data on lake health, and more. Field staff are busy inspecting and maintaining watershed structures, checking the parks, managing various projects, and inspecting buffer strips. If you see a white vehicle on your property check the side for the NRD logo and please be courteous to our employees!

Parks Mowing Schedule

July 10	Sept. 4
July 24*	Sept. 18*
Aug. 7	Oct. 2
Aug. 21*	

These are tentative dates that can be adjusted based on weather conditions.

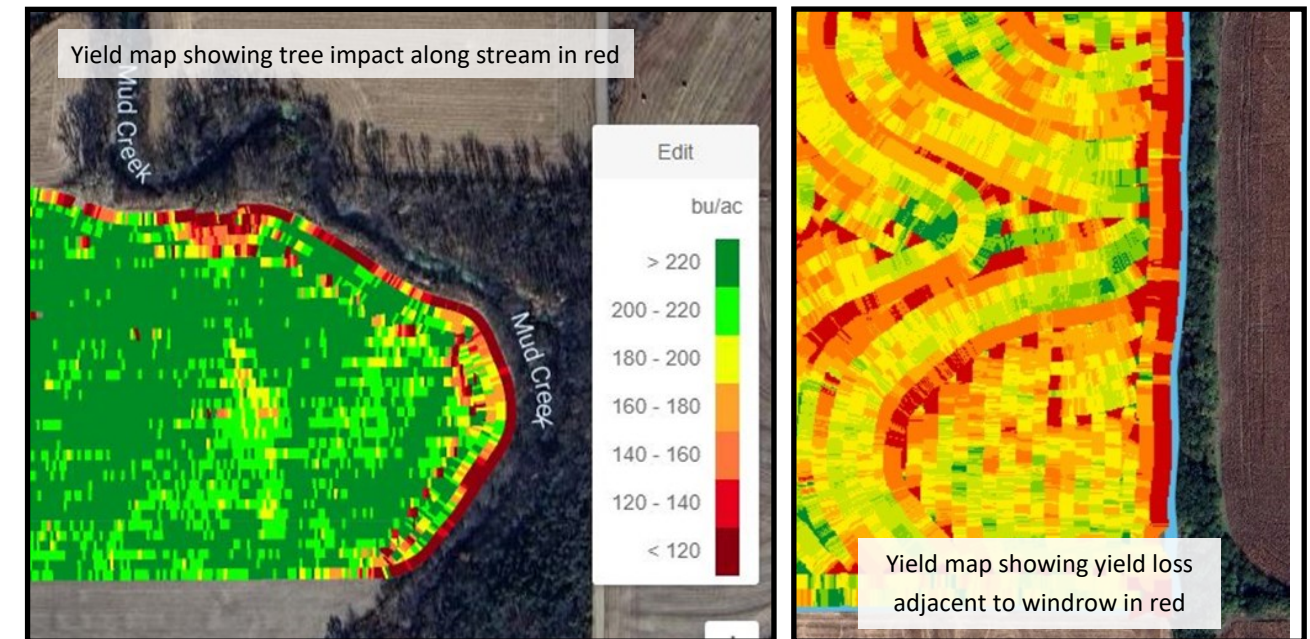
*Trimming

Summer 2024

Economic Considerations for Least Profitable Acres

Advances in agricultural technology have revolutionized the way we can analyze a field's productivity and profitability. Technology allows producers to look at profitability down to individual acres across their entire operation to see what parts of fields are making money, breaking even, or losing money. If you have acres that are consistently not profitable, the Nemaha NRD encourages you to take your yield maps and visit with your USDA service center's Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) about potential options through the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program or Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).

The following yield maps are good illustrations of farms that could benefit from the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program or Continuous CRP. You can easily see the impact trees are having on yield for 30' (arguably 60') because the crops and trees are competing for the same resources. Putting low yielding acres into conservation programs that receive annual payments is a good alternative for landowners that might be considering taking trees out. Additionally, planting perennial vegetation next to riparian trees and/or hedge rows can promote pollinator species and provide habitat and forage for upland game species like turkeys, deer, pheasants, and quail.



Nebraska Buffer Strip Program:

This program is for cropland adjacent to waterbodies (streams, lakes, wetlands) as shown on the left yield map. Buffer strips can be designed to fit equipment and range from 20 feet to 120 feet in width for grass buffers and 55 feet to 180 feet for riparian buffers. The Nebraska Buffer Strip Program is available as a standalone program receiving 120% of the CRP rental rate by soil type, or piggy-backed on top of the Continuous CRP Filter Strip practice to receive a higher payment rate, if eligible. Advantages to Nebraska Buffer Strip Program would be: Annual haying and grazing once established, contract lengths ranging from 5-10 years, and year-round sign up.

Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP):

This program is open to any acres on portions of a field with cropping history. The yield map on the right illustrates a field that would benefit from Continuous CRP practices like field borders or prairie strips (prairie strips can also be implemented in areas of the field with thin and unproductive soils, not necessarily adjacent to trees). Continuous CRP can be designed to fit the widths of your equipment and managed through a variety of beneficial alternatives. The last farm bill focused on making management options more adaptive to meet the needs of the producer, including options for haying and grazing. Continuous CRP offers a 5% higher soil rental rate (90%) than General CRP (85%) and includes bonus incentives for signing up and implementing the practice.

If you are interested in learning more about options to maximize profits, create beneficial ecosystems, and protect water quality on your property, please contact your local USDA service center's Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Check weekly Beach Monitoring results on our website at www.nemahanrd.org using the link in the top right corner

Another Fun Filled Watershed of Wonders

The Nemaha NRD hosted it's Watershed of Wonders day camp at Kirkman's Cove Recreation Area on Tuesday, June 18th. This is the 10th time the NRD has hosted the day camp. We were very fortunate to have an overcast and breezy day, which kept temperatures more comfortable for all the activities. Watershed of Wonders or WoW started off as a way for the NRD to fulfill a grant requirement and morphed into an event that is prioritized and budgeted for every other year.

This year, sixty, 10 to 12 year old children gathered to explore Kirkman's Cove and a variety of activity stations related to natural resources. The day featured:

- The Amazing Water Race which challenges groups of kids to complete four activity stations in the shortest amount of time.
- Water Rockets where kids launch water filled recycled pop bottles into the air.
- Fishing where kids get to see how Game and Parks crews manage fisheries across Nebraska, learn to identify different species of live fish, and then try their luck at catching some fish.



- Archery where kids receive instruction on properly shooting bow and arrow at fun themed targets.
- Boating where kids learn the important water safety devices and rules of watercrafts on the lake, and then get to go on a boat ride.
- Hayrack Tour where kids learn valuable information on what watersheds are and how flood control structures can be multi-purposed and serve as a recreational area!

The Nemaha NRD wants to extend a big thank you to the 48 staff, directors, and volunteers who showed up to make the event possible. We couldn't put the event on without you! We would also like to thank all of our sponsors for helping us put WoW on!

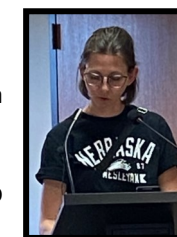
New Faces at the Nemaha NRD & on the Board

The Nemaha NRD has some new faces. As many of you know, our long time secretary, Lisa Bartels, retired in March. We are pleased to welcome Maddie Million to our team at the headquarters in Tecumseh. Maddie began working for us in April and has been a wonderful addition to our team! Maddie is originally from Iowa and now resides in Talmage. Maddie has a bachelors degree in Human Resources and Risk Management.



Producers visiting the NRCS office in the USDA Service Center in Syracuse will have the chance to meet Deb Nelson. Deb started with the Nemaha NRD as the Otoe County Clerk in April. Deb is originally from Iowa and now resides in Dunbar. She previously worked as a retirement home activities director and is eager to learn everything the NRD does.

Tracy Ensor was sworn in to the Nemaha NRD's Board of Directors at the May 2024 meeting. Tracy is a resident of Unadilla and is filling the At-Large position vacated by Jake Armknecht. Tracy works at Nebraska Wesleyan and has a diverse background in conservation, education, and outdoor recreation. She is passionate about connecting people to educational opportunities within their communities and strives to help all Nebraskans appreciate their natural resources.



Upcoming Events

- July 11th: Nemaha NRD Board of Directors Meeting
- August 8th: Nemaha NRD Board of Directors Meeting
- September 2nd: Labor Day Holiday, NNRD office closed
- September 12th: Nemaha NRD Board of Directors Meeting
- September 10th-12th: Visit the NRD Booth at Husker Harvest Days



2024 Youth Poster and Photo Contest

The Nemaha NRD is proud to announce its youth poster contest! Youth in grades K-12 are invited to create original pieces of artwork depicting this year's Stewardship Week theme, "May the Forest Be With You, Always." Students may enter the hand drawn poster contest, digital poster contest, or photo contest. Categories for students requiring additional assistance or a braille contest are available. Contest entry forms should accompany all submissions and can be found on our website along with contest details at : www.nemahanrd.org/programs/education.

Winners of the local contest will be entered into the National Association of Conservation Districts' national competition!

Hand Drawn Poster Contest Rules:

Contest is open to students entering grades K-12. Posters should be drawn on 8.5" X 11" or 11" X 17" paper. Paint, crayon, colored pencil, charcoal, stickers, paper, and other materials may be used. Posters must be created by an individual student and may not be traced from photos or other artists' work. The 2024 theme "MAY THE FOREST BE WITH YOU, ALWAYS" must be included on the front side of each submission.

Digital Poster Contest Rules:

Contest is open to students entering grades 7-12. Posters should be created as 8.5" X 11" or 11" X 17". The 2024 theme "MAY THE FOREST BE WITH YOU, ALWAYS" must be included on the front side of each submission.

Digital posters must be original work and may not include any copyrighted, trademarked, or branded images or phrases besides the poster theme. Posters must be created by individual students.

Photo Contest Rules:

Contest is open to all students entering grades K-12. Original photos will be accepted for the following categories:

- Conservation Practices
- Close-Up Conservation
- Conservation in Action

Agriculture and Conservation Across America. Minor enhancements for cropping, red-eye removal, filters, and corrective functions are permitted. However, if a photo appears to be significantly altered it will be disqualified. No borders, frames, backgrounds, watermarks, dates, signatures, or copyrights are allowed on photos.

Students requiring additional assistance or those interested in submitting a braille poster should contact Ashley Rippe at the Nemaha NRD at 402-335-3325 for more information.

All submissions will be evaluated by the Nemaha NRD Board of Directors at the August 2024 Board Meeting.



Nemaha NRD
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Insight is a publication of the Nemaha NRD. Requests to be placed upon the Insight mailing list and/or comments regarding information in this publication should be directed to Ashley Rippe at 62161 Hwy 136 Tecumseh, NE 68450 or at arippe@nemahanrd.org. For more information on the Nemaha Natural Resources District please visit our website www.nemahanrd.org

Protecting Lives, Protecting Property, Protecting the Future – Since 1972
For a listing of staff and directors please visit our website at www.nemahanrd.org/about