

MASTER PLAN

January 2012

North Platte Natural Resources District
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I. INTRODUCTION

This master plan has been prepared to meet the statutory requirements of Nebraska Revised Statute 2-3276, which states:

“By August 1, 1979, each natural resources district shall prepare and adopt a master plan to include but not be limited to a statement of goals and objectives for each of the purposes stated in section 2-3229. The master plan shall be reviewed and updated as often as deemed necessary by the district, but in no event less often than once each ten years. A copy of the master plan as adopted and all revisions and updates thereto shall be filed with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.”

We have made our best effort to forecast future conditions as they relate to natural resources needs, financial resources available to the District and relevant statutory developments. However, this plan should be considered a statement of goals and a general policy guide, not a binding plan of action. The District's annual budget is a much more detailed plan of the programs and projects the District plans to undertake each year.

II. DESCRIPTION OF DISTRICT

The North Platte Natural Resources District was organized in 1972 along with 22 other Districts to cover the entire land area of the State of Nebraska. The North Platte NRD encompasses the North Platte Valley in the Panhandle of Nebraska. The District includes all of Banner, Garden, Morrill and Scotts Bluff counties, and approximately the southern one-fourth of Sioux County.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the North Platte NRD is composed of nine members elected on a non-partisan ballot at the general election to a four-year term of office. Two Directors each are elected from four sub-districts and one Director is elected at-large. Members of the Board of Directors must be registered voters of the sub-district in which they live.

Budget, valuation and tax levy

The District's fiscal year runs from July 1 until June 30. Revenue for the operating budget comes from local property taxes, state aid to local subdivisions, user fees such as chemigation inspection fees, sales of trees, and miscellaneous sources, such as federal grants. State law limits NRDs' tax levy to 4.0 cents per \$100 of valuation.

Population and land area

The North Platte NRD has a population of 46,171 according to the 2000 census. Nearly half of this population is concentrated in the cities of Scottsbluff and Gering. County-by-county population figures according to the 2010 census:

Banner: 819

Garden: 2,292

Morrill: 5,440

Scotts Bluff: 36,951

Sioux (southern): 669

The populations of the largest cities include Scottsbluff 14,732; Gering 7,751; Mitchell 1,831; Bridgeport 1,594; Bayard 1,247; Oshkosh 887; Morrill 957; and Minatare 810.

The land area of the District is approximately 5,042 square miles or 3,226,880 acres. A county-by-county breakdown of land area in square miles (acres in parentheses):

Banner: 747 (478,080)

Garden: 1,680 (1,075,200)

Morrill: 1,405 (899,200)

Scotts Bluff: 725 (464,000)

Sioux (southern): Approx. 485 (310,400)

The North Platte River is the defining feature of the District. The geographical area of the District includes all of Banner, Garden, Morrill, and Scotts Bluff counties and approximately the southern one-fourth of Sioux County. The six geographic sub-areas within this drainage basin are the North Platte Valley, Pumpkin Creek Valley, Northern Tablelands, Southern Tablelands,

Wildcat Hills, and the Sandhills. Bluffs and escarpments characterize the transition from valleys to the tablelands.

Business and agriculture

The major crops grown in the District are wheat, sugar beets, corn, dry edible beans and alfalfa. Minor crops include potatoes, sunflowers, grass seed, millet, and other grains. The livestock industry includes cow-calf operations in the range areas; cattle feedlots (several with capacities of about 20,000 head); hog operations; and others, such as purebred horse farms and sheep operations. Aquaculture -- the raising of fish for restaurants, grocery stores or catching by fishermen -- has reached the North Platte Valley, with operations in Garden, Morrill and Scotts Bluff counties.

This agricultural base is the largest segment of the economy in the North Platte NRD. Besides the direct production of crops and livestock, other major industries include processing of crops and livestock; agriculture supported industries such as fertilizer and seed dealers; manufacturers; financial industries; retail outlets; and health care, including retirement homes. Scottsbluff and Gering are a major trade and medical center for the entire Panhandle and eastern Wyoming.

Soil resources

Soil types vary widely throughout the District, and often within a small area. Soil surveys have been published by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) for Banner, Scotts Bluff, Morrill, Sioux, and Garden counties. Some information about soils -- the major soil associations and the respective average permeability -- are listed in a general soil map of Nebraska revised by the University of Nebraska Conservation and Survey Division in 1990.

Many of the soil associations in the valleys can be described as sandy and excessively drained. This characteristic, combined with the fact that precipitation is sporadic and often comes in downpours followed by periods of drought, makes the soil susceptible to erosion from wind and water. It also makes the ground water susceptible to contamination, especially where there is irrigated agriculture and the water table is close to the surface. These factors give added importance to the conservation and water quality programs operated by the District.

Water resources

The average annual precipitation ranges from approximately 14 inches in the western part of the District to approximately 17 inches in the eastern part of the District. The average annual precipitation for the entire Panhandle region is 16.61 inches, according to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration statistics from the Nebraska Statistical Handbook. Of that, about half -- 8.51 inches -- falls in three months, May, June and July.

Irrigation water is essential for agriculture in the NRD. Irrigation makes possible the production of corn, sugar beets, dry edible beans and alfalfa in most of the NRD. Dryland crops are grown in the extreme eastern portion of the District and in areas where flood or pivot irrigation is unavailable or impractical, especially outside of the immediate North Platte River Valley.

Both surface water and ground water are used for irrigation in the North Platte Valley. Surface water is diverted from the North Platte River or its tributaries at several diversion dams in Wyoming and Nebraska. The river begins in the mountainous north-central part of Colorado, with much of its flow originating as snow melt. It then flows generally northward to central Wyoming before arcing to a southeasterly direction in the area of Casper. In Nebraska it continues to flow toward the southeast to its confluence with the South Platte River near the city of North Platte.

Water in the river is impounded by a series of on-stream reservoirs in Wyoming, and the stored water is released for irrigation. After it is diverted from the river, the released water is conveyed by canals to crops in Wyoming and Nebraska on both the north and south sides of the river. The river and its tributaries provide irrigation water to more than 300,000 acres of cultivated cropland in the NRD.

Other major surface water resources include Blue Creek, a tributary of the North Platte located in Garden County, which rises in the Sandhills region in the northeast portion of the NRD and has perennial flow maintained by ground water seepage. During the irrigation season, much or all of its flow is diverted into irrigation canals.

Inflow to the North Platte River from Pumpkin Creek, which enters from the south in central Morrill County, is much less now than it was under pre-development conditions. Rights have been granted to divert from the creek into small reservoirs and canals, including rights to pump directly from the creek. In recent years the creek has had little or no flow, especially during drought conditions.

Ground water for irrigation comes from nearly 2,500 irrigation wells within the district. There are estimated to be 1,200 ground water only center pivot systems in operation in the NRD.

The most productive wells for irrigation, industrial, and municipal supply draw water from the sand and gravel beneath the inner valley of the North Platte River or beneath the third terrace north of the river. Many of the wells yield as much as 1,000 gallons per minute.

High-yielding wells have been obtained in the Pumpkin Creek Valley, where the principal source of water comes from water-bearing fractures in the Brule Formation. The area to the south of the Pumpkin Creek Valley is in the Southern Panhandle Tableland Region. Although this area is underlain by a fairly thick sequence of Tertiary formations, zones of saturated permeable rock are thick enough to yield adequate water for irrigation use only in localized areas.

No new irrigation wells are allowed in the Pumpkin Creek Valley or in the over and fully appropriated areas of the North Platte Valley. Both areas are under allocation as to the amount of groundwater that can be used, and Integrated Management Plans have been developed and implemented with the help of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to comply with the provisions of LB 962, the legislation adopted in 2004 to help better manage water resources.

The principal aquifers found in the NRD are Chadron Formation, Brule Formation, Arikaree Group, Ogallala Group, and various alluvia. Further information and a description of each of these aquifers is found in the North Platte NRD Groundwater Management Plan published in 1986 and revised in 1994.

The North Platte River alluvium receives its principal recharge from irrigation, including seepage from irrigation canals, laterals and irrigated fields. Discharge of the ground water occurs by seepage into surface water systems such as streams and man-made drains, and by direct evapotranspiration in high water table areas.

L.K. Wenzel et al. in "Geology and Groundwater Resources of Scotts Bluff County Nebraska" (U.S. Department of Interior with Conservation and Survey Division - University of Nebraska-Lincoln 1946) estimated the water table rose 50 feet or more in parts of the North Platte alluvium in Scotts Bluff County after irrigation was first begun. After the canal irrigation systems were constructed, the ground water system came to a new equilibrium. Monitoring wells typically show a rise in the water table during irrigation season, then lowering during the winter as the ground water drains to the river.

The interaction between the surface water system and the reservoir of available groundwater in the various aquifers has been well documented and is an important phenomena not only to groundwater users in the North Platte Valley but also to those dependent on the stream flow of the North Platte River downstream of the North Platte Natural Resources District. Seepage from the reservoir of ground water thus created has given the North Platte River in Nebraska a fairly constant base flow it formerly did not have.

When the flow of the North Platte River increases, the water surface of the river rises above the water table at its banks. Consequently, water percolates out of the river into the ground (alluvium) until the adjacent ground water table is raised to a level approximately corresponding to the stage of the river. Conversely, when the flow of the river decreases the water surface declines below the ground water table and water flows back into the river until the water table declines to a position corresponding approximately to that stage of the river. Because of this, cities located along the river see some residents with water in their basements during high flows in the river and no water in the basements during low flow periods.

Other natural resources

Many of the areas of the NRD have been recognized as having the potential for wind development, especially along the edge of the Southern Tablelands.

Another development is that of the possibility of uranium mining in the area. Currently, the state's only production uranium mine is an in-situ operation, the Crow Butte Mine near Crawford (outside District boundaries, about 75 miles north of Scottsbluff). However, exploration has taken place throughout the Panhandle and it has been recognized that areas in the North Platte NRD may have the potential for uranium.

Oil well development has been prominent, especially in the western portion of the NRD.

Cultural resources

The North Platte NRD is rich in heritage and historical significance. The Oregon and Mormon Trails and the Pony Express followed the North Platte River through the District. Major landmarks including Scotts Bluff National Monument, Chimney Rock, Courthouse and Jail Rocks and Ash Hollow State Historical Park are attractions for history buffs and tourists. Many early pioneers looked for these landmarks en route to Oregon and California.

Tourism continues to gain prominence with visitor centers located at the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area and Chimney Rock National Historical Site, promotion of the "fossil freeway" and attractions further north such as Agate Fossil Beds National Monument about 40 miles north of Mitchell and Fort Robinson near Crawford.

A four-lane highway runs north-south through Banner, Scotts Bluff, and Kimball counties, linking the area with Interstate 80. This highway has the potential for bringing more

tourists and business into the area. The short term goal is an eventual four-lane corridor connecting Interstates 80 and 90. The long term goal may include developing south to I-70 to connect with US 287 to coastal Texas, and north from Rapid City on I-90 to the Canadian border.

III. STATUTORY PURPOSES AND GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Natural resources districts are local units of government organized under the Nebraska Statutes. NRDs have broad areas of responsibilities assigned to them in Nebraska Revised Statute 2-3229, which states:

"The purposes of the natural resources districts shall be to develop and execute, through the exercise of powers and authorities granted by law, plans, facilities, works, and programs relating to:

1. Erosion prevention and control,
2. Prevention of damages from flood water and sediment,
3. Flood prevention and control,
4. Soil conservation,
5. Water supply for any beneficial uses,
6. Development, management, utilization, and conservation of groundwater and surface water,
7. Pollution control,
8. Solid waste disposal and sanitary drainage,
9. Drainage improvement and channel rectification,
10. Development and management of fish and wildlife habitat,
11. Development and management of recreational and park facilities, and
12. Forestry and range management."

The following is a summary of the District's activities in each area and a list of goals and objectives for each. In some instances, several of the statutory areas of responsibility have been grouped together, because of their similarity.

Erosion prevention and control; soil conservation

The District's goal in this area is to encourage and assist landowners in adopting practices that conserve soil and prevent erosion while maintaining production. To attain this goal, the District establishes the following objectives:

1. Continue the District's cooperation with other agencies involved in conservation of natural resources.
2. By its own efforts and through the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, encourage adequate funding by the State of Nebraska for the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program.

3. Continue to assess the effectiveness of the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program and the District Conservation Program to ensure that the practices funded by the two programs match the natural resources needs in the North Platte NRD.

Current Activities:

1. District and Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Programs: These programs offer cost-share assistance to landowners to put conservation practices on the land, including new and rebuilt terraces, terrace underground outlets, windbreaks, water impoundment dams, grade stabilization structures, diversions, grassed waterways, water and sediment control basins, livestock water dugouts, range seeding or pasture planting, planned grazing systems, critical area planting, irrigation underground pipeline or return pipe, livestock water tanks, irrigation tailwater recovery pits, and irrigation water management. Applications are approved or denied by the board after careful consideration of the proposed projects. The cost-share rates range from 50 percent to 65 percent of average or actual costs, whichever is lower. Applicants are responsible for operation and maintenance. Funds for items covered by the Nebraska program originate with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, which uses a formula to allocate funds to each Natural Resources District. None of that money passes through the NRD's budget.

2. Enforcement of Nebraska Erosion and Sediment Control Act: Natural Resources Districts are responsible, under state law, for investigating complaints of excessive soil erosion and developing plans for compliance.

**Flood prevention and control/
Prevention of damages from floodwater and sediment/
Drainage improvement and channel rectification**

The District's goal in this area is to reduce flooding and flood damage to acceptable levels, and encourage land-use planning that prevents flooding and makes the best use of the floodplain. To attain this goal, the District establishes the following objectives:

1. Investigate existing flooding problems as they arise and assist in finding solutions.
2. Encourage floodplain zoning ordinances and other zoning decisions by municipalities that are intended to prevent flooding or minimize damage.
3. Attempt to make the public aware of potential flooding problems and discourage developments in flood-prone areas.
4. Assume a leadership role in meeting and solving problems through structural measures.

5. Continue to encourage, and when appropriate, assist, landowners to manage lands adjoining streams in such a way as to reduce stream bank erosion.
6. Cooperate with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in their drainage and channel rectification programs.

Current Activities:

3. Gering Valley Flood Control Project: This extensive project south of Gering was begun in the 1960's by the Gering Valley Watershed Conservancy District, one of the predecessors of the North Platte NRD. It includes channel control, a series of dams, concrete and culvert drop structures, field drainage structures, rock sills, rock riprap and earthwork. It was developed to prevent flooding and soil erosion in Gering Valley, the area south of Gering between the city and the Wildcat Hills. This project was mostly complete by the early 1970's, but several small portions remained unfinished. Highway construction just south of Gering has required improvements and refinement on the parts of the drain system in that area to accommodate the new super highway. Plans at this time include completion of the Yensen Drain portion of the Gering Valley Flood Control Project which was begun in the fall of 2010. Budget constraints within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which funds this project, make it likely that the Yensen Drain will all but complete development of the Gering Valley Flood Control Project.

4. Inspection and Maintenance of the Gering Valley Flood Control Project and Other Flood Control Structures: The North Platte NRD is a member of the Permanent Maintenance Committee of the Gering Valley Flood Control Project along with Scotts Bluff County and the Gering-Fort Laramie, Gering, and Central Irrigation Districts. North Platte NRD works with the other cooperating agencies on the upkeep of all of the structures in the Gering Valley Flood Control Project. This process is ongoing, with annual inspections of the drain and flood control dams. Meetings of the committee outline solutions to problems and maintenance issues and the best use of budgeted funding.

The North Platte NRD and NRCS are also responsible for the annual inspection of several flood control dams in Garden, Morrill, and Banner Counties. Maintenance includes tree removal, rodent control, erosion control, cleaning of siphon and overflow structures, and addressing other problems which may effect the long term functionality of the dams.

Ground water and surface water development, management, utilization, conservation/ pollution control

The goal, as stated in the Ground water Management Plan's ground water reservoir life goal, is "To maintain an adequate supply of acceptable quality ground water to forever fulfill the reasonable ground water demands within the North Platte NRD for domestic, municipal,

agricultural, industrial, wildlife habitat and other uses deemed beneficial by the people of the North Platte NRD.” To attain this goal, the District establishes the following objectives:

1. Continue to monitor groundwater quality and quantity using wells throughout the District.
2. Carry out the duties described in the Groundwater Management Plan, including enforcement of the Groundwater Management Area and development, approval and enforcement of the Lisco-Oshkosh-Lewellen Sub-Area.
3. Investigate specific problems with groundwater quality or quantity as they arise.
4. Use information and education to promote the wise use of water.
5. Cooperate with other agencies in protecting groundwater.
6. Evaluate and seek new programs and funding sources to help protect groundwater.
7. Evaluate the ramifications of LB 962 and adjust District policies and practices as needed.

Current Activities:

5. Integrated Management Plans: Much has changed since the establishment of a Groundwater Management Area over the entire district in 1996, along with enforcing provisions of LB108, which became law the same year. LB108 was designed to deal with problems of both water quality and quantity. Sub-areas, subject to an elevated level of controls, were created in certain areas of the district to help address problems of high nitrate levels and falling groundwater levels. A moratorium was later put on development of new irrigation wells. The Pumpkin Creek Groundwater Management Area was created to help sustain the groundwater in the Pumpkin Creek basin through special rules and allocations on the amount of groundwater that could be used. It remains in existence, with periodic adjustments to the allocation and rules.

LB962 was passed in 2004, with a new set of expectations for Natural Resources Districts. NRDs were to work with stakeholder’s groups to develop two sets of Integrated Management Plans (IMPs) for water management. IMPs comply with the framework of the new law and with the requirements of interstate agreements on the recovery of watersheds. The two IMPs were to be developed by each NRD with the cooperation of the Department of Natural Resources on a district-by-district basis, and with other NRDs and DNR on a basin-wide basis. Rules would then have to be developed by each NRD to implement the ideas outlined in each of the district’s two IMP plans. IMPs are based on depletions to the flow of the river determined by water modeling in each district. One goal of LB962 is to get back to 1997 levels of depletion to the river.

At the time this master plan was being updated, the individual and basin-wide IMPs for the North Platte NRD had been approved. The supporting rules for the IMPs have been adopted, including a 14 inch allocation for water year 2010 (56 inches total over four water years), which

followed an 18 inch allocation in 2009. This required flow meters to be installed on district irrigation wells to monitor the quantity of groundwater applied.

6. Groundwater level monitoring program: Groundwater levels are measured twice yearly at more than 600 wells throughout the district and seventeen recorder wells provide a continuous reading of the water level. In an effort to learn more about the relationship between groundwater and surface water, the district also works with the University of Nebraska and the U.S. Geological Survey.

7. Water quality monitoring program: Water quality is measured by taking about 500 water samples a year for laboratory analysis. Sampling frequency varies with the area and the water quality in a given area.

8. Chemigation Certification program: State law requires farmers to complete training and obtain an applicator's license and chemigation permit before applying any chemical through an irrigation system. Natural resources districts are responsible for inspecting chemigation systems.

9. Water Well Decommissioning Program: The district's well abandonment program provides financial assistance to landowners who have abandoned wells sealed by licensed well drillers. A state law passed by the Nebraska Legislature in 1994 provides state cost-share funds.

10. Groundwater Irrigation Runoff: The Nebraska Groundwater Management and Protection Act gives natural resources districts responsibility for investigating and resolving complaints when groundwater used for irrigation is allowed to run off of the property of origin onto other property.

Development and management of habitat for fish and wildlife/ facilities for parks and recreation

The District's goal in this area is to encourage and assist landowners to provide habitat for wildlife, and to assess District projects for opportunities to provide park and recreation benefits. To attain this goal, the District establishes the following objectives:

1. Continue to participate in the Wild Nebraska Program, continually assessing and evaluating it for maximum effectiveness, with assistance from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.
2. Investigate the feasibility of developing District-owned lands and District-sponsored projects for fish and wildlife habitat. If it is found feasible to develop such lands and projects, do so.
3. Cooperate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to help assure proper wildlife habitat within the District.
4. Assess the need and potential for new recreational facilities as needed.
6. Seek public input about park and recreational needs as needed.

Current Activities:

11. Wild Nebraska Program: The purpose of this cost-share program is to create new wildlife habitat or enhance and improve existing habitat through contracts with private landowners. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission funds approximately 75 percent, and the District approximately 25 percent of the program.

12. Nine Mile Project: Nine Mile Creek in northeastern Scotts Bluff County has undergone several stages of improvements along its course to restore flow, restore the channel, enhance habitat, and provide walk-in areas for recreation. Funding for much of the project has been made available through grants from the Environmental Trust and other groups. The work has been made possible through the cooperation of the land owners, NRCS, and High Plains Weed Management. Restoration work along the creek has been completed, and much progress has been made on invasive species removal, channel improvement, noxious weed control, debris removal, bank stabilization, and replanting of desirable grasses.

Forestry and range management

The District's goal in this area is to encourage and assist private landowners and other local governments to protect and expand forestry resources, both rural and urban, and also to encourage and assist landowners to protect and conserve rangeland. To attain this goal, the District establishes the following objectives:

1. Continue to encourage and provide financial incentives for sound range management practices through the District Conservation Program and Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program.
2. Continue to promote planting of conservation trees and help landowners to do so through the District Conservation Program, Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program, Wild Nebraska Program, and other available programs.
3. Continue to encourage other local governments such as cities and counties to plant trees for the public benefit through the Living Snow Fence and Community Forestry Programs.
4. Continue to encourage the development of a range conservation ethic among young people by funding scholarships for or helping sponsor the Nebraska Range Camp, ACE (Adventure Camp about the Environment) Camp, High Plains Science Camp, land judging and range judging contests.

Current Activities:

13. Conservation Tree Program: The North Platte Natural Resources District typically sells between 150,000 and 200,000 trees and shrubs annually for conservation plantings. The bulk of these are 2-year-old, bare-root seedlings. They include red cedar, ponderosa pine, and other evergreen species, as well as deciduous species and shrubs. The trees are sold to private landowners, and in many cases the District also plants the trees and sprays the site for weed-control for an additional fee. The District offers cost-share to landowners through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program and the District Conservation Program.

14. Living Snow Fence Program: The District provides trees, fence materials, and planting and spraying services to establish windbreaks along county roads. These windbreaks reduce wind erosion, reduce blowing snow and benefit wildlife. The program consists of contracts between the District and County Commissioners of the county where a living snow fence is located.

15. Community Forestry Program: Through the Community Forestry Program, the District offers communities an incentive to improve their tree programs. Any city or village can become eligible for funding by establishing a tree board; conducting a tree inventory; developing a five-year plan for planting, removal and maintenance; submitting a tree program budget to the District; and passing an updated city tree ordinance. The District cost-shares each program for three years, 75 percent the first year, 50 percent the second year and 25 percent the third year. Limits apply according to the size of the city.

16. Tree Pruning Workshop: This is an annual workshop, hosted by NPNRD, on the pruning and care of young trees. It is offered to the public and done in cooperation with the Nebraska Forest Service and the District Forester. The event features hands on learning experiences and the proper use of tools.

17. Buffalo Grass Program: The District offers planting advice and a seed cost-share program for eligible homeowners who would like to plant a buffalo grass lawn for ease of maintenance and conservation of water of alternative types of grass lawns. The District uses information gained in testing done by the University of Nebraska and assists home owners with planning considerations. The program is open to new lawns in areas of the District which may not be covered by other buffalo grass programs.

Water supply for beneficial uses **Sanitary drainage/solid waste disposal**

The District's goal in this area is to cooperate with other agencies in improving water supplies, sanitary drainage and solid waste disposal when requested and when appropriate. To attain this goal, the District establishes the following objectives:

1. When requested, investigate constructing and operating water systems in rural areas.
2. Monitor the solid waste and sanitary drainage situation and take action only when deemed necessary.

3. Cooperate with other agencies.

Current Activities:

17. Harrisburg Water System: The District, working with other local agencies, helped arrange funding, helped to plan, and now manages a municipal water system for the unincorporated community of Harrisburg in Banner County. This occurred as the result of a petition submitted to the District by Harrisburg residents. Construction began in 1996. This was completed and another phase added in 2001. Three production wells serve the customers of the system. The District operates and maintains the entire system, including the wells, transmission piping, pump house, storage tanks, hydrants, and equipment such as valves. The system has been a good addition to the safety of the community, as it provides consistent, safe drinking water and water for fire hydrants, which came to the community for the first time with the completion of the system.

Currently, the North Platte NRD is not involved in activities or programs in the areas of sanitary drainage or solid waste disposal. Cities and counties are given the statutory responsibility for solid waste disposal, and are governed by state and federal statutes and rules and regulations.

Information and Education

The District's goal in this area is to increase public awareness of the importance of protecting and conserving natural resources, and of District policies, programs and activities to protect resources. To attain this goal, the following objectives are established:

1. Continue publishing a newsletter promoting conservation and protection of natural resources, and have information immediately available on the web site at www.npnrd.org. Information on the web site includes calendars, details on meetings, rules and regulations, programs of all types, allocation details, staff information, Board member information, details on chemigation, duties of the NPNRD, and contact information.
2. Continue to develop information outlets and other media providing the public information about District programs. For example, short local television commercials on KDUH/KOTA have helped keep the local public informed on several water and conservation issues, plus coming deadlines for different programs.
3. Increase information and education about water quality and quantity.
4. Continue to sponsor existing programs designed to fulfill both childhood and adult educational needs. Activities in this area include information on a wide variety of issues and topics to every

age group. The programs are listed below and will be continued as long as they fulfill an educational need or provide a benefit.

Current Activities:

18. Information and Education: The District will continue to provide the NPNRD website; a quarterly newsletter, "Resources"; information on various topics related to District programs; news releases; participation in the Master Conservationist awards; and presentation of other conservation awards.

Education efforts consist of programs for schools and community groups; sponsorship of WET (Water Education for Tomorrow- formerly Water Wonders), an annual water education festival for fifth-graders in the district. Scholarships are provided for students to attend the Nebraska Range Camp, and the District has sponsored district and state land and range judging contests on a regular basis. High Plains Science Adventures, Adventure Camp for the Environment, and Envirothon are also sponsored, usually for secondary school students.

The District participates with local schools in the Adopt-a-School program, outdoor classrooms, and helps sponsor poster contests for elementary students.

NPNRD provides no-till topic CD's to agricultural producers from the various no-till conferences, and co-sponsors a No-Till Partnership program with Upper Niobrara-White NRD, South Platte NRD, and several other entities. The No-Till Partnership program was formed in 2008 and features Alliance area producer Mark Watson. Activities include informational field trips and meetings, a news article called "No-Till Notes", and no-till field days each year. The No-Till Partnership organizes the conferences and field days.

Efforts to educate the public on the role of the NPNRD also include sponsoring booths at several local events. Conservation and tree planting are always popular topics. The District works with NARD in manning booths at Husker Harvest Days and the Nebraska State Fair.

Plans for future informational sources about the District include not only maintaining the website, but will also include videos and podcasts available on social media such as Facebook. A Facebook presence has already been established which will aid in the use of tools such as YouTube for educational purposes.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This plan is a guide for the Board of Directors of the North Platte Natural Resources District to use in the planning process over the next 10 years. To the best of our ability, we have tried to assess the needs facing the North Platte NRD and establish objectives that meet those needs. Circumstances and situations change, however, and from time to time might well be necessary to adjust priorities to meet these changes.

One potential catalyst of change is the Nebraska Legislature, which controls the duties and authorities of natural resources districts. As this master plan was being drafted, the Legislature enacted new legislation affecting NRDs' duties in addressing water conflicts. The Legislature also passed legislation placing new restrictions on the levying and spending of property taxes, an important source of revenue for districts. One of the challenges facing the North Platte NRD is to study the ramifications of this new legislation on NRD activities and the District's ability to meet the goals and objectives in this plan.

It is apparent that several areas of responsibility covered in this plan will continue to be high priorities for the District in the foreseeable future: prevention of erosion (especially soil erosion caused by wind and water), groundwater management and pollution control, and to a lesser extent flood control. Several of the District's largest programs are designed to address these areas, and these needs are likely to continue.

It also is apparent that some high priority areas will require more resources. One additional staff member will be necessary to help carry out the District's duties under groundwater management. Continued upgrading of computer equipment and purchasing of additional monitoring equipment also will be necessary.

With the addition of statutory duties and limits on financial resources, it will be necessary for the North Platte NRD to prioritize needs and focus its resources on those needs, while remaining ready to meet any new challenges facing the residents of the District.