



LLNRD Arbor Day Programming Continues Nebraska's Tree Planting Tradition

Since the founding of Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts in 1972, technicians with the Lower Loup NRD have planted more than 12 million trees on farms, ranches, and acreages across the district.

Trees are also an important focus of the LLNRD's Information & Education (I&E) staff. Each year in April, coinciding with the Arbor Day holiday, these professionals conduct educational programs that often include the planting of a tree, and always end with each student receiving a tree seedling of their own.

Within a two-week period in late April and early May 2024, the LLNRD's I&E staff presented Arbor Day programs for 30 fourth grade classes and gave tree seedlings to 746 students.

"Their eyes grow wide when they learn that a Colorado Blue Spruce tree could grow to be more than 100 feet tall and live for more than 200 years," said Information and Education Coordinator Alan Bartels. "We talk about why trees are important and what people use them for, and how the students will need to care for the seedling they

plant. I hope our brief programs plant a small seed of appreciation for the natural world, that like those seedlings, will grow to benefit future generations.

"After interacting with all these students, I believe that Nebraska's longstanding 'Tree Planters State' tradition is secure. When I see their excitement, I imagine these kids as grownups showing their own children and grandchildren a towering tree that began as a small seedling planted following a classroom visit by someone from the Lower Loup NRD."



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Nebraska's NRDs . . .

**Protecting Lives, Protecting
Property, Protecting the Future.**

IN THE LOUP is a publication of the Lower Loup Natural Resources District. It is published quarterly by the LLNRD and is distributed to the residents of the 16 counties that make up the District. **IN THE LOUP** is edited by Alan J. Bartels, Information & Education Coordinator.

A Message from the Manager

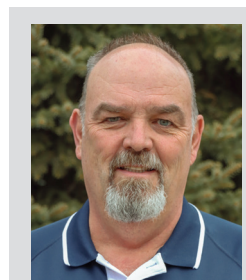
Welcome to the latest issue of the Lower Loup NRD's "In The Loup" newsletter.

If you've read our newsletter in the past, you might have noticed that this one is larger than usual. On any given workday, LLNRD employees are working across the District on tasks such as tree planting and installation of drip irrigation systems, taking soil samples and gathering scientific data, testing recreational waters for safety or measuring static well depth, inspecting chemigation setups or designing buffer strips for landowners, reading flow meters, processing permits and applications, educating school children, maintaining recreation areas and equipment, answering natural resources questions, creating flood control solutions, and much more.

Our work is so widespread across our District's more than 5 million acres that sometimes the general public may not see everything that the LLNRD is working on to help preserve their natural resources. This expanded newsletter was created specifically to help get more of that important information out to our friends and neighbors.

Also on the information front, we recently launched a new website. Changes in technology since our previous website was created will help visitors to our new site find the information they need more quickly and easier than ever before. The website address remains the same as the old website, www.LLNRD.org. The new site will soon include an added feature allowing anyone to sign up to receive text notifications about coming events, meetings, and public hearings; rule changes, important deadlines, and other information that the people who live and work within the Lower Loup NRD may find useful.

Many of us receive more junk mail, emails, texts, and calls than we'd like – I can relate. We don't want to add to that, but we do want to ensure that the information people want and need is available whenever they need it. I hope you will visit our new website often. And if you prefer the sound of a friendly, helpful human voice, you are always welcome to call.



LLNRD General Manager
Russell Callan



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IN THE LOUP

Sargent Flood Resiliency Project

JEO Consulting Group has begun designing the Sargent Flood Resiliency Project to minimize damage due to flooding and high groundwater levels. Funding for the project is being provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, the City of Sargent, and the Lower Loup Natural Resources District.

Storm runoff from north of town has caused significant damage in the past. Drainage improvements to increase capacity in town, and a bypass channel to convey runoff from high rainfall events around town are planned to reduce damage due to flooding. Some surface water irrigated land near the community will be combined with groundwater wells to lower the groundwater levels in town.



JEO Consulting used a drone to record ground elevations as part of the Lower Loup NRD's Sargent Flood Resiliency Project.

JEO recently completed the design surveys for the project and expects environmental surveys to be completed in May, with archaeological field reviews completed in June.

The geotechnical investigation is expected to be completed in May or June.



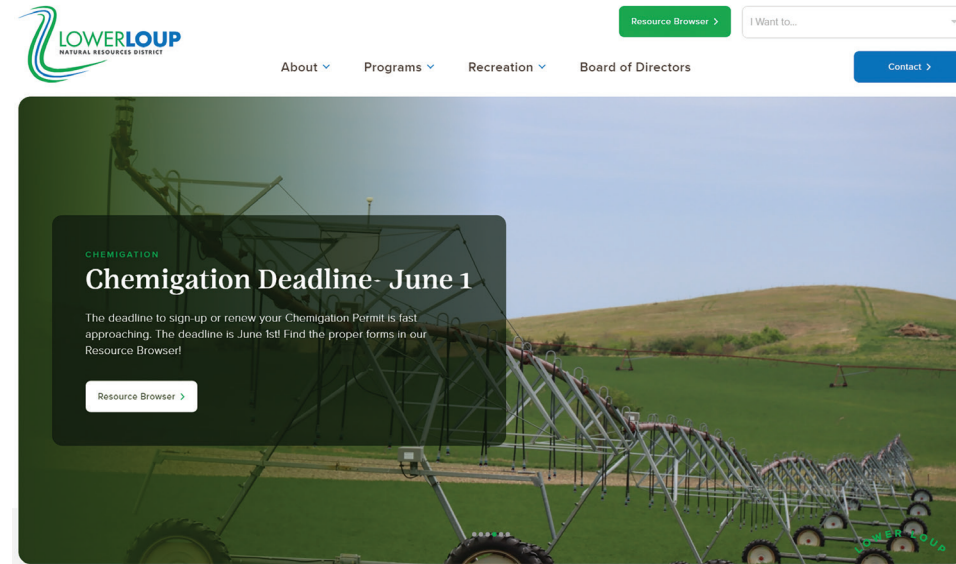
Visit www.LLNRD.org for news, events, forms, applications, rules, newsletters, to opt-in for SMS alerts, and more from LLNRD.

LLNRD Launches New Website

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District (LLNRD) has released a new website designed to make the process of obtaining information easier for everyone who visits. With the addition of updated and intuitive navigation menus, website visitors will be able to navigate to the page(s) they are looking for much quicker and easier than on the previous site, which was more than a decade old.

The site's new Resource Browser is a search tool that will make finding the proper documentation a breeze. Website visitors can search for documents and maps by keyword or by category. The Resource Browser categories are Water/Irrigation, Soils, Trees, Chemigation, Recreation, Rules and Regulations, and Employment.

Another new feature of the site is the scrolling headline at the top of the home screen. The LLNRD will



post important and time sensitive topics in the scrolling headline so website visitors can stay up to date on what's happening in the district.

The agenda for each board meeting is being posted on the top of the Board of Directors page on the new site along with a link to past meeting minutes.

Also, the new Programs tab will provide information on chemigation, irrigated acres, well permits, crop ET and precipitation data, and much more.

The new website will also allow people to opt-in to receive SMS text alerts from the Lower Loup NRD. [Visit www.LLNRD.org](http://www.LLNRD.org)

New Agronomist Derek Vogt

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District would like to introduce the newest member of the field staff, Derek Vogt.

Derek is an agronomist from the Dannebrog area and is working out of the LLNRD headquarters in Ord. Since joining the staff part time in November 2023, and becoming full time in March 2024, Derek has been assisting LLNRD technicians with work related to vadose zone studies and generally helping agricultural producers who have questions about their soil fertility needs.

His position with the LLNRD is a 50/50 split position with the USDA, with funding through the University of Nebraska. So far, his work with the University has involved performing field checks related to CLASSIM, a new age crop model interface that allows for the simulation of multiple growing seasons based on historical and climate data.

Derek looks forward to meeting and eventually working with more of the District's agricultural producers.



Derek Vogt

Nebraska Law Requires Landowners to Properly Decommission Abandoned Wells

Water wells are tremendous tools. Their flows irrigate thirsty crops and livestock. They supply families with water for drinking, washing, and more. But what happens when a well no longer serves a need – like forgotten wells where homesteads once stood – or farm and livestock wells left obsolete after farm management changes or when land changes hands?

There are many of these abandoned wells across the Lower Loup NRD. Each one provides a direct passageway for pollution to reach groundwater aquifers.

Nebraska law requires landowners to hire a professional to properly decommission wells.



The process of plugging a well requires a series of well-planned steps. Simply dumping fill material into the well is not wise. The well needs to be properly sealed to avoid potential contamination.

The first step is to determine how the well was constructed and the geologic setting in which it was created. This information should be available from the company that drilled the well or the Department of Natural Resources.

The next step is removal of all pumps, pipe, and obstructions to the well. This will give the well professional room for proper placement of the plugging material.

The third step is measuring the depth and diameter of the well to determine how much fill material will be required. Knowing the measurement of the depth to standing water will also help.

The LLNRD has a cost-share assistance program for landowners wishing to decommission an abandoned well. The program provides up to 70 percent cost-

share for well abandonment, up to \$500. Applications for this cost-share assistance are available at the Lower Loup NRD Headquarters in Ord and at Natural Resources Conservation Service offices across the District.

Anyone planning to have a well decommissioned must adhere to the following if they want to qualify for cost-share:

- The application must be approved by LLNRD before the work takes place.
- A licensed well decommissioning company must do the work.
- Decommissioning must be in accordance with Nebraska Department of Health regulations.

For more information on well abandonment or an application for cost-share assistance, contact the Lower Loup Natural Resources District, 2620 Airport Drive, Ord, Nebraska, 68862. [You may call the LLNRD at \(308\) 728-3221.](tel:3087283221)

Crediting Nitrogen from Irrigation

As planting winds down and irrigation season rapidly approaches, make sure you credit the nitrogen gained from your irrigation water in this season's nitrogen budget. Year in and year out, nitrogen inputs are one of the highest expenses facing producers of irrigated corn. Knowing the nitrate content of your irrigation water and crediting it toward your nitrogen total can help you save money on fertilizer.

In areas with high groundwater nitrate content, the savings are easily seen. Applying 10 inches of water during the growing season using a well with nitrate levels at 15 ppm can reduce your needed nitrogen fertilizer inputs by 34 lbs/acre. If you don't know the nitrate content of your irrigation well, reach out to the Lower Loup Natural Resources District to have your well added to the list of wells tested annually.

The nitrogen savings are beneficial, but it is key to not over-irrigate. Excess water can damage crops, reduce yield, and can contribute to the leaching of nitrates and other nutrients into water sources. Excess water can increase weed pressure and create conditions favorable to disease. On top of that, research shows that each inch of leached water carries 5 to 10 pounds of nitrogen with it.

Safety on the Farm and Ranch



As farmers begin working fields and ranchers work the last of their calves, it's important for agricultural producers to keep the safety of their families and their hired help in mind. Here are a few useful tips for farm and ranch safety this spring.

Taking inventory of equipment that is in need of repair should be at the top of the list. Check platforms and handrails to make sure they are not loose and take note of anything that is obstructing a pathway. Repairs should be completed as soon as possible to reduce the risk of injury.

Tractors are designed for safe operation, yet many people are

seriously injured or killed while operating or riding one. Every tractor should be equipped for rollover accidents. However, more than half of all farm tractors are not equipped with a rollover protective structure or seat belts. It's estimated these two items could save approximately 350 lives each year on U.S. farms.

Each tractor heading for spring field work should be equipped with a slow-moving vehicle placard while using roadways. These signs are required by state law and warn other drivers of the low maximum speed of the vehicle on the

roadway. Tractors should also have functioning hazard-warning lights. Operating lights and hazard lights provide advance notice for other drivers sharing the road with farm equipment.

The University of Nebraska Medical Center is sponsoring multiple Tractor Safety Days around the state this year. The closest in proximity to the LLNRD are in O'Neill on June 7th and in Grand Island on June 11th and 12th.

[Visit www.UNMC.edu](http://www.UNMC.edu) for more information.

New Director Appointments

Three new members recently joined the Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors.

With these recent appointments, the LLNRD Board of Directors is at its maximum capacity of 21 directors.

Visit www.LLNRD.org to learn more, including maps of the sub-districts served by members of the LLNRD Board of Directors.

Colton DeBower, a precision agricultural specialist at Central Valley Ag, was appointed by the board to the vacant seat in Sub-District 10.

Justin King, a senior environmental specialist for the Nebraska Public Power District, was appointed by the board to the vacant seat in Sub-District 9.

Tom Knutson previously served on the LLNRD Board of Directors from 2011- 2014 and was re-appointed to fill the vacant seat in Sub-District 5.



Colton DeBower



Justin King



Tom Knutson