

IN THE LOUP

Groundwater Levels Lower Across Most of NRD

Groundwater wells in the Lower Loup NRD showed an average decline of 1.05 feet. Lower Loup NRD staff collected the groundwater level readings on 445 irrigation and monitoring wells from March 22 to April 5.

Water Modeling Coordinator Cam Conrad said that, when compared to Spring, 2020, a total of 306 wells (69%) showed a decline in water levels. Conrad stated that conversely, 135 wells (30%) had higher water readings than last year, with an average change of 0.86 feet, and 3 wells reported no change from last year. Only two counties in

the District reported a majority of higher water levels in wells than last year, Loup (63%) and Nance (57%). Conrad said the rest of the counties showed lower water levels in wells than last year, most notably, Boone (96%), Sherman (94%), Wheeler (93%), Buffalo (83%), and Custer (72%). The largest single decrease in water levels at one location was 7.14 feet in southern Greeley County near Scotia, while the largest increase was 4.48 feet higher in southern Nance County near Fullerton.

The largest area of decreasing water levels, compared to 1982, continues to be found in southern

Custer County and northern Buffalo County, south of the South Loup River. Areas between Arnold and Callaway reported declines of more than 3 feet, and water levels south of Pleasanton declined 2-5 feet, compared to 1982 readings. Conrad said water levels in Valley County are more than 25 feet above 1982 levels, fed by recharge from irrigation canals.

The NRD measures water levels in both Spring and Fall. Spring levels indicate the condition of the aquifer as irrigation wells are not typically pumping and levels have recovered from the previous year's irrigation.

Ord Team Wins 2021 State Envirothon Contest



Ord Envirothon team (l to r): Advisor Johnny Ference, Alex Flessner, Tye Bruha, Brodie Darnell, Treaven Scheideler, Vickie Ference, and Advisor Dave Ference

A team from Ord High School took top honors at the 2021 Nebraska Envirothon. Fourteen teams, including Ord, St. Paul and Burwell, competed in the contest at Lake Wanahoo Recreation Area near Wahoo. Ord took first place in the range division and tied with St. Paul

in soils. St. Paul was also first in the policy category.

Ord now qualifies for the National Conservation Foundation's Envirothon in June. That contest will be hosted by Nebraska and will be virtual due to the pandemic.

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Camp Scholarships Available to Students

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District is offering \$100 scholarships to students living in the NRD to attend the 2021 Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) or the 2021 Nebraska Range Youth Camp.

ACE Camp will be held June 6-9 at the State 4-H Camp at Halsey and Range Youth Camp will be held June 7-10 at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

ACE Camp is sponsored by Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts while Range Camp is sponsored by the Nebraska Section of the Society for Range Management, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the

University of Nebraska's Cooperative Extension Service and Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District provides the financial support for campers living within the NRD's boundaries. Written requests



Campers fire water rockets at ACE.

for financial assistance must be made by May 21st for both camps.

ACE Camp is open to students who are completing the 6th, 7th, or 8th grades who want to learn more about natural resources and have a camp adventure. Range camp provides an education in rangelands and rangeland management and is open to students who are at least 14, but not over 18 years old by October 1st.

The fee for ACE Camp is \$225 and for Range Camp, the subsidized cost is \$100.00. For more information, contact Larry Schultz at 308-728-3221 or e-mail larrys@llnrd.org.

Flow Meter Program Funded for Third Year

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District (LLNRD) will receive an additional \$25,000 from the Nebraska Environmental Trust for the "Integrated Management Data Acquisition Program." The Trust Board announced funding for the project at its meeting on April 8, 2021.

This is the third and final year of the award. The Trust grant will be used to install flow meters across the District. The NRD administers a cost-

share program that will combine Trust funds with matching funds from the LLNRD to pay 75% of the

cost of flow meters to accurately record water use.

Flow meters are a management tool that aids producers in supplying the right amount of water at the correct time to their growing crops.

As inputs such as fertilizer continue to increase in price, it is important to not over-water and drive those critical nutrients past the active root zone. In areas with high groundwater nitrates, irrigators can use well pumping numbers to determine how much nitrogen credit they can



Flowmeter funding is available thanks to an Environmental Trust grant.

capitalize on each time they irrigate. The Nebraska Legislature created the Environmental Trust in 1992, providing over \$349 million in grants to over 2,400 projects in the state. Contact Jason Moudry for program details at (308) 728-3221.



A Message From The Manager

Welcome to the latest edition of “In The Loup.” We have compiled more information about the work of the Lower Loup NRD in this issue.

Demand has never been higher for spots at the Lower Loup Natural Resources District’s recreation areas. Outdoor recreation rebounded quickly from the restrictions placed on it early in the pandemic with higher than average use.

Strong demand means more users vying for the amenities provided in each area, Davis Creek and Pibel Lake. The Lower Loup NRD is asking you, as a user, to exercise patience and to be cordial with your fellow campers when using the facilities. Everyone has the same goals for family fun and maintaining a

positive attitude will go a long way in achieving those goals.

Our recreation area rules and regulations can be found on the District web site, www.llnrd.org. Just click on the “Recreation” tab and the link to the rules can be found about half way down the page. The rules tackle numerous situations, including noise, pets, fireworks, alcohol consumption and numerous other areas. A quick survey of the rules and regulations will ensure your stay is enjoyable. The Valley County Sheriff’s office enforces these rules and all state laws at LLNRD facilities. The Lower Loup NRD is proud to offer recreational opportunities to everyone. Your cooperation plays a huge part in



*LLNRD General Manager
Russell Callan*

making the experience a positive one for everyone involved.

Thanks for your patronage and your cooperation. Have a safe, fun summer.

Recreation Areas Are Open for Business

The Lower Loup NRD’s two recreation areas, Pibel Lake south of Bartlett, and Davis Creek south of North Loup, have opened for the summer.

NRD Assistant General Manager Tylr Naprstek said that, despite last year’s temporary shutdown due to COVID, both areas saw great visitation numbers from both overnight campers and day-users throughout the year.

Naprstek reminds campers that half the Davis Creek camp sites can be reserved via reserveamerica.com and the other half are available first-come, first-serve. The non-reservable sites must have camping



Davis Creek campgrounds were full much of 2020.

equipment and appropriate payment in place to be considered occupied. Each RV campsite features a 30/50 amp electric hookup, concrete picnic table, and enclosed fire ring at a cost of \$25 per night.

Naprstek said that the NRD’s partnership with the U.S. Bureau

of Reclamation has allowed for some great new features, including a fully functional shower house, playgrounds, RV waste station, and most recently, a dedicated dispersed tent camping area.

Pibel Lake is solely owned and operated by the LLNRD and has dispersed tent and RV camping with fewer amenities and no overnight camping fee. Naprstek said the few amenities include two handicap accessible fishing piers, playground, and 3 vault toilets. This smaller lake was renovated by the NRD in 2015.

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Nebraska's NRDs . . .
Protecting Lives, Protecting
Property, Protecting the Future.

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POSTAL PATRON

Chemigation Rules Apply to Surface Water Too

Regardless of whether you irrigate using groundwater or surface water, you fall under the same laws for chemigation. Chemigation is the process of applying pesticides or fertilizer through an irrigation system.

Lower Loup NRD officials have discovered some misconceptions about surface water chemigation. Nebraska statutes specifically state that any system which connects directly to a source of ground or surface water, through which a mixture of water and chemicals is applied for agricultural or horticultural purposes, is

considered a chemigation system and has requirements.

A chemigation permit is required for the owner or operator of land who applies or authorizes the application of chemicals to such land by means

of chemigation. The permit holder shall be the party primarily responsible for any liability arising from chemigation on the property. A chemigation applicator's license can be obtained online from University

of Nebraska – Extension. Contact your local NRD for more information regarding the licensing process.

The NRD is responsible for inspecting all equipment used for chemigation to ensure water resources are protected. New permits, which cost \$50, are inspected every year, renewal permits (\$30) are inspected every 3 years to ensure equipment is in top working condition.



Chemigation laws apply to surface water systems.