

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 Larry Schultz and Alan Bartels, NRD Information staff.

Six Teams Qualify for State Envirothon

Six teams in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District have qualified to compete in the Nebraska State Envirothon April 27th at Camp Comeca near Cozad.

Envirothon tests students' knowledge in forestry, natural resources policy, range, soils, aquatics, wildlife, and a special topic. This year the special topic is "Waste to Resources."

The St. Paul team of Nick Busse, Kaleb Baker, Truman Beck, Ben Feeken, and Sam Kramer qualified for state after finishing first in the Central Region Envirothon in Columbus, sponsored by the Lower Loup and Central Platte NRDs.

Another team from St. Paul, two from Loup City, and one from Ord qualified for state as wildcards. A team from Burwell qualified after

winning the northeast region. The State Envirothon winner will represent Nebraska at the NCF-Envirothon to be held in Ohio in July.



Soils testing is hands-on at the Central Region Envirothon.

IN THE LOUP

Drought Management Plan Being Developed

Through a series of stakeholder meetings, the Lower Loup NRD has taken steps to develop a drought management response plan.

Three meetings were held from September, 2021, through February, 2022, and were attended by constituents representing a variety of interests, including surface and groundwater irrigators, ranchers, city administrators, educators, hydropower interests, and other governing entities.

A mock five-year drought scenario was used to gauge individual and community impacts. The participants discussed potential NRD regulations that might be enacted during a drought, and finally a drought response protocol was considered by the stakeholder



Participants discuss elements of the LLNRD Drought Management Plan.

group on its favorability and potential implementation.

The development of drought zones, based on a wide array of data, including soils, rainfall total, aquifer thickness, stream depletion factor, net irrigation requirement and other factors was discussed. These zones will allow

the NRD to consider the severity and potential impacts drought conditions are causing to both surface flows and groundwater conditions.

The plan development process will be completed with a draft plan to be considered by the NRD Board of Directors by Summer, 2022.

Chemigation Permit Deadline is Just Weeks Away

Farmers planning on using chemigation to apply chemicals and/or fertilizer to their crops face a June 1st deadline for a permit renewal from the Lower Loup NRD.

The fee for a chemigation permit renewal is \$30 for each application submitted. Any application received after June 1st will be treated as a new application.

New permit applications require a \$100 fee and an inspection by an NRD technician.

Application forms are available at the Lower Loup Natural Resources District Headquarters, 2620 Airport Drive, in Ord or at the NRD web site, www.llnrd.org. Click on the Resources Tab, then Forms, and scroll down to the Chemigation Permit link.

The forms can also be picked up at your local NRCS office.

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LLNRD No-Till Drills Available for Rent

The Lower Loup NRD makes no-till drills available for rental to District residents.

The drills are in widths of 7½, 8, and 10 feet. Each drill has a small seed box, native seed box, and cool-season box. The small seed box is ideal for small seed varieties like alfalfa, switchgrass, or clover. The native seed box is ideal for warm-season, native grass mixes. The cool-season box is used for cool-season grasses, cover crop mixes, oats, and other mixes with large seed sizes. The drills are hydraulically operated

with pioneer hook-ups and have acre meters to account for planted acres. The rate for renting the drills is \$12.00 an acre with a 3 acre minimum charge. The NRD also has a four-row no-till drill available to rent that can be pulled by an ATV or



LLNRD no-till drills can be rented by District producers.

Spring News Briefs

Camp Scholarships

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District is offering scholarships to students living in the NRD to attend the 2022 Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) June 26th through the 29th at the State 4-H Camp at Halsey or the 2022 Nebraska Range Youth Camp, June 6th through June 9th, at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

The Lower Loup NRD provides the financial support for campers living within the NRD's boundaries. Students only need to make a formal request for assistance from the NRD. Written requests for financial assistance must be made by June 10th 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 is open to students who are at least 14, but not over 18 years old by October 1st and provides an education in rangelands and rangeland management.

The fee for ACE Camp is \$235 and for Range Camp, the subsidized cost is \$75.00. Lower Loup NRD scholarships will cover \$100 of the ACE Camp costs and the entire \$75 cost of Range Camp. Funds are awarded following the successful completion of the camps. Visit www.llnrd.org for more information.

Recreation Areas Open

Services at the Lower Loup NRD's two recreation areas are open for the 2022 season. Both Pibel Lake Recreation Area south of Bartlett and Davis Creek Recreation Area south of North Loup offer visitors

attached via 3-point hitch. This drill is ideal for planting around tree rows or small food plots for upland game and wildlife. The rental rate for the four-row drill is \$30 per day.

All drill rentals are handled on first come, first serve basis and the renter is asked to return the drill promptly. Please call in advance when planning to rent a drill to check for availability. For more information, please contact NRD Range Specialist Dan Ruterbories at (308) 728-3221.

multiple options for summer fun.



An information kiosk and historical marker greet visitors to Pibel Lake Recreation Area.

NRD General Manager Russell Callan said RV sites at Davis Creek Recreation Area can be reserved online at ReserveAmerica.com. At Pibel Lake, no reservations are required.

Restrooms and playground equipment at both rec areas are open. The shower house, RV dump station, and fish cleaning station at Davis Creek are also open.

A Message From The Manager

Welcome to the Spring, 2022, edition of "In The Loup," the LLNRD's quarterly newsletter. This publication allows us to share our natural resources conservation work with the District's residents.

Increasing levels of nitrates in Nebraska groundwater is a growing concern, one that we also face in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District. Nitrogen fertilizer is vital to the success of Nebraska's grain producers, but overapplication is leading to issues with high nitrate levels in groundwater, which can have negative effects on our health and in nature.

The Lower Loup NRD has established three groundwater

2022 VRI Cost-Share Sign-up is Complete

The Lower Loup NRD has completed the sign-up for its Variable Rate Irrigation (VRI) Cost-Share Program in 2022.

The LLNRD offers cost-share to landowners for VRI upgrades to their center pivot systems to control the speed of the center pivot. The cost-share is limited to two applications per landowner per year. There is a cost-share limit of \$2,000.00 per application (\$1.37 per linear foot based on the length of the center pivot).

The Lower Loup VRI Cost-Share Program began in 2019. From 2019 through 2021, the NRD has cost-shared on VRI as an irrigation water management practice on

quality management areas. Area 28 is south of the Loup River, stretching from south of Palmer to south of Columbus. Subarea 29 is found in a township in northeast Wheeler County and Subarea 30 is found northeast of Columbus.

In each of these areas, groundwater nitrate levels exceed the federal limits of 10 parts per million. By implementing restrictions in each area, the NRD is working to lower nitrate levels utilizing strategies that have little to no impact on crop production.

Researchers are investigating the health impacts of high groundwater nitrates. High levels of groundwater nitrates can have



Variable rate irrigation provides water conservation and more.



LLNRD General Manager
Russell Callan

negative health effects on both infants and the elderly. Researchers are also exploring potential links between long-term nitrate exposure and some cancers and adverse reproductive outcomes.

The Lower Loup NRD will continue to work with our residents to tackle the state's growing nitrate concerns.

10,300 irrigated acres within the District. VRI benefits include water, chemical, and fertilizer savings/efficiency, irrigation scheduling, and yield consistency. The VRI application period is in March of each year. Applications are ranked in April.

Producers with approved applications are notified after rankings have been finalized. To start the application process, landowners must contact their local NRCS Field Office. The next application period will begin March 1, 2023. For more information, please contact NRD Range Specialist Dan Ruterbories at (308) 728-3221.