



# Central Platte Natural Resources District

## 2007 Annual Report

The Central Platte Natural Resources District presents this 2007 annual report. The NRD strives to protect groundwater and surface water, reduce flood threats, reduce soil erosion, create and protect wildlife habitat, and educate children and adults to use natural resources wisely. The Central Platte is one of 23 separate NRDs created by the Nebraska Legislature to protect our natural resources. Central Platte boundaries reach from the Lincoln-Dawson county line near Gothenburg to Hwy 81 near Columbus. Parts of the 11 counties represented include: Dawson, Custer, Buffalo, Hall, Howard, Nance, Merrick, Hamilton, Platte, Polk and Frontier. The board of directors is elected to protect and preserve a wide scope of natural resources within the district. There are 21 members on the Central Platte Board, each serving a four-year term. The board consists of one at-large member and two directors in each sub-district who are elected in alternate election years.

**2007 Board Members** Bill Vasey: Chairman Barry Obermiller: Vice-Chairman Jerry Wiese: Treasurer Ed Kyes: Secretary LeRoy Arends, Jim Bendfeldt, Tom Brennan, Alicia Haussler, Brian Keiser, Dwayne Margritz, Dick Mercer, Dan Ohlman, Marvin Reichert Jr, Jay Richeson, Bob Schanou, Loren Schuett, Steve Schuppan Steve Sheen, Jim Shiers, Keith Stafford, Ed Stoltenberg, D Scott Woodman

### Budget

The NRD's total operating Fiscal budget from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007 was \$8.2 million with the levy set at 0.03210 per \$100 valuation. An owner of a house valued at \$100,000 paid \$32.10 for many natural resources benefits found throughout the district. Flood control, water quantity, water quality, tree planting and wildlife restoration are areas where the NRD strives to conserve and preserve natural resources for the residents of central Nebraska. Major projects and expenditures included the COHYST, the proposed Elm Creek Watershed and the Prairie/Silver/Moores Creek Project in Hall County.

### Cost Share Programs

Landowners received **\$436,707.52** in cost share funds towards conservation measures to preserve land and water in the Central Platte Natural Resources District. Programs include: streambank stabilization, tree planting, irrigation reuse, center pivot incentive, surge valves, fertilizer calibration meters, flow meters, prescribed fire, well abandonment and wildlife habitat. The NRD also administers funds through these other programs:

**Natural Resources Commission** provides funds for the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program.

**Department of Agriculture** provides funds for the Buffer Strip Program.

**Game & Parks Commission** provides funds for the Wildlife Habitat Program & WILD Nebraska.

**Environmental Trust** provides funds for Pheasants Forever.

**Programs Not Administered by NRD include NRCS Programs such as:** EQIP-Environmental Quality Incentives Program, WHIP-Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, WRP-Wetlands Reserve Program, CRP-Conservation Reserve Program, and Emergency Watershed Program.

### Water Programs

Nearly 1,000 producers participate in the Groundwater Quality Management Program. The Program's goal is to lower average nitrate levels district-wide. The Program was started in 1988 when average nitrate levels were 19.24 ppm (parts per million). Levels have been lowered through management efforts by landowners, with an average of 16.31 in 2007. Each year, the producer is required to take water and soil samples, complete a usage form and provide appropriate receipts to comply with the program's rules & regulations. The feedback allows the NRD to assess the effect that best management practices are having on water quality.

**Chemigation Certification Permits** are obtained from the NRD to ensure proper application of chemicals through irrigation systems. By state law, a chemigation permit must be obtained before any person can legally chemigate. 150 renewal permits and 131 new permits were issued this year.

**Irrigation Well Registration Program** This program was set up to help landowners register irrigation wells with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. The NRD is checking and helping register the 17,358 irrigation wells in the district.

**Suspension on Drilling New Wells/Expansion Irrigated Acres** In January 2006, the entire NRD was placed in a suspension area on drilling new wells and any expansion of irrigated acres. The original suspension was imposed in November 2003, when the Board imposed a suspension and placed stays on new wells and new irrigated acres over approximately 50 percent of the District. In September 2004, the DNR declared the Platte River Basin as fully appropriated and upstream from Elm Creek overappropriated. The current drought aggravated the situation, but it is believed that if nothing is done, existing surface water and groundwater users will increasingly be faced with less and less water supply.

**Certification of Irrigated Acres** In May 2006, the NRD began certifying irrigated acres in the western part of the District. The NRD is required by LB 962 to have all irrigated acres on record. By July 2007, staff had certified 701,691 acres in Frontier, Custer, Dawson, Buffalo, Hall, Merrick and Hamilton counties. There are an estimated one million irrigated acres in CPNRD. Certification of the remaining acres will continue through 2007.

### Major Projects

Since 1972, the district has provided funds and expertise for over 65 water-related projects. Some projects were large and took several years to complete, whereas others only comprised removing trees and debris from streams. The two major projects for in 2007 were the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Flood Control Project and the proposed Elm Creek Watershed Project.

**Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Flood Control Project:** The NRD and City of Grand Island completed an analysis of the hydrology and 100-year floodplain in the upper parts of the Dry, Prairie, Silver, and Moores Creek watersheds south of Highway 2 and east of Hwy 281. Flood control will be accomplished through the creation of upland and lowland flood control structures such as flood control dams, building berms to keep the creeks within their banks, and through the construction of water detention cells to be built on several hundred acres at the former Cornhusker Army Ammunition Plant. The 10-year, \$15.5 million construction project was approved by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and will receive \$8.3 million in state funding. The remaining \$7.2 million will be financed by the cosponsors. Construction began in 2007.

**Elm Creek Watershed:** A feasibility study was completed and was approved (but not funded) by the Nebraska Resources Development Fund. The proposed plan, developed by Olsson Associates, consists of a 975-acre flood control and re-regulating reservoir located northwest of the village of Elm Creek and two dry flood control structures located on Turkey Creek. The reservoir would provide both traditional flood reduction benefits and non-traditional environmental benefits including recreation. The Turkey Creek structures would reduce current peak flows to downstream areas. The preliminary cost is \$22.8 million. In order to gather scientific data about the leaching possibilities, the board approved a study with Olsson Associates to perform a geotechnical investigation and seepage analysis of the area. The study involved the drilling of approximately 30 test borings at the reservoir site and adjacent lands to determine if leaching would raise adjacent water tables to a level that would create problems for either cropland or basements. The board of directors will make a decision on whether or not to build the reservoir before 2008.

**COHYST:** The NRD's hydrologist continues to participate in the Cooperative Hydrology Study. The Nebraska Environmental Trust awarded funding for the Study for six years. These hydrologic databases are being used to develop regional computer models to provide a better understanding of the groundwater flow system, interrelationships between groundwater and surface water, geology of the region, and other characteristics of the groundwater aquifer. During COHYSTII model development, calibration and review was completed. This past year's work was spent using the models to develop estimates of pumping depletions on the Platte River. The estimates were made for the new irrigated lands developed between 1997 and 2005.

**Platte River Recovery Implementation Program:** The Governors of Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming, as well as the Secretary of the Interior, signed onto the Program and implementation will began January 1, 2007. The goal of the Program is to cooperatively address endangered species habitat issues in the Platte River Basin. The NRD's general manager, biologist and hydrologist will continue work on a variety of fronts including the Water, Land, Technical and Governance committees. The NRD is also participating with others involved in the process including the State of Nebraska and Downstream Water Users. Negotiations on how offset depletions are going to be funded and regulated are still being discussed.

### Locations

The district headquarters is located at 215 N Kaufman Avenue in Grand Island. Phone Number: (308) 385-6282 Website: [www.cpnrd.org](http://www.cpnrd.org)

Four other offices are co-located with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). You may contact those offices at:

Lexington: (308) 324-6314 Kearney: (308) 237-3118 Central City: (308) 946-2251 Grand Island: (308) 382-0814