

Section 8 - INFORMATION, EDUCATION, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

8.1 Introduction

One mission of the NRDs is to inform and educate the general public about the resources in their district and how to protect these resources for future generations. The NRD's staff and Boards should be well informed of current data, studies, and other information that may influence management decisions. The capability to transfer the same level of information to the public and/or target audience will enhance their feedback and input to decision makers, which can streamline the implementation process.

Water resources information and education efforts will generally fall into four areas;

- 1) Activities targeted at informing and educating resource decision makers,
- 2) Activities targeted at informing or educating the public Basin-wide,
- 3) Project specific activities relating to localized problems, and
- 4) Involvement in community functions that promote the improvement and protection of water resources.

Informational material, educational efforts, and the level of public participation will vary depending on if the action is a basin-wide effort or if the effort is a priority watershed or target area. Residents in watersheds that are targeted for enhanced watershed programs or water projects will be offered a more intense program specifically related to their watershed and issues to be addressed. For larger projects, stakeholder groups may be formed and used during project planning and implementation.

The "open door" policy allows NRDs to provide one-on-one assistance to all district residents at any point in time. One-on-one contact with watershed residents, particularly owners/operators, is critical for implementing successful projects. For example, the NRDs require mandatory operating training every few years. The NRD's strives to develop and maintain an open line of communication with the general public as well as other agencies and organizations involved in the management of resources in the basin. In addition to one-on-one contact with the public the NRDs will use several delivery mechanisms including the web site, newsletter, local news media, fliers, tours, workshops, demonstrations, and public meetings to facilitate communication with the public.

8.2 Stakeholder Participation in Management Plan Development

Below is a summary of the level of participation from the public, steering committee, and technical advisory team during establishment of this Plan. The NRD opted to form a formal steering committee, in addition to the technical advisory team, in order to maximize education of the public about the Plan and to obtain feedback on potential water resources management actions.

8.2.1 Steering Committee

The purpose of the steering committee was to gather input from a diverse set of stakeholders that live and work in the Basin. Steering Committee members were selected by both NRDs. Originally, a group of 32 individuals was invited to participate and a total of approximately 20 participated actively throughout the process either by attending meetings or providing post-meeting feedback to the NRDs (Table 8-1).

Primary roles of the Steering Committee are as follows:

- 1) Review elements of the Plan as the Plan is being developed;
- 2) Ask questions, raise issues, and share information with other Basin stakeholders;

- 3) Provide representation of the agricultural economy, industries, municipalities, business owners, and other agencies;
- 4) Attending steering committee meetings and provide feedback.

The steering committee met four times and participated by responding to questionnaires. A summary of each meeting, each held at LBNRD’s office in Davenport, is shown in Table 8-2.

Table 8-1: Steering Committee Members

Name	Representing	Name	Representing
Robert Crumbliss	Farmer (Edgar)	Mary Glenn	Farmer (Fairbury)
Bryan Skalka	Farmer (Deweese)	Bill Glenn	Farmer (Fairbury)
Mark Jagels	Farmer (Davenport)	Kevin Pohlmeier	Mayor – Lawrence
Sacha Lemke	Pivot Dealer	Mason Hoffman	Farmer (Roseland)
Marlin Kimle	Farmer	Keith Berns	Farmer (Bladen)
Bob Marsh	Farmer (Hebron)	Dave Nelson	TBNRD Board (Farmer)
Bill Mize	Farmer (Deshler)	Tony Likens	Farmer
Rex Kirchoff	Farmer (Superior)	Wayne Pohlman	Farmer
Kevin Kissinger	Farmer (Glenvil)/NRD Board Member		
Randy Harms	Farmer (Glenvil)		
Ken Herz	Farmer (Lawrence)		

Table 8-2: Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Meeting	Topic	Date/Time
1	Steering committee roles and responsibilities, project introduction.	March 25th at 7:00 pm
2	Areas of interest, summary of data collection and assessment	January 15, 2015 at 7:00pm
3	Plan Recommendations	April 15, 2015 at 7:00pm
4	Draft Plan Review	June 30, 2015 at 7:00pm

8.2.2 Technical Advisory Team

Technical guidance and input from the Technical Advisory Team was vital to establishing the Plan. This group consisted of technical staff representing different agencies and is listed below in Table 8-3. Each member was encouraged to attend all Steering Committee meetings and was consulted by members of the project team throughout the planning process. Members of the Technical Advisory Team were more actively involved in the planning process and were responsible for reviewing and commenting on Plan components and providing direction for public involvement.

During plan establishment, correspondence with a smaller group of representatives from the Technical Advisory Team occurred on a regular basis as needed. This smaller group was informal and referred to as the ‘project team’. Members of the project team are indicated by an asterisk next to their name in Table 8-3 below.

Table 8-3: Technical Advisory Team

Name	Representing
Marty Stange	City of Hastings
Elbert Traylor*	NDEQ
Carla McCullough	NDEQ
Janet Valasek	NRCS
Brad Seitz	NGPC Biologist
Jennifer Rees	UNL Extension
Andy Bishop	FWS Rainwater Basin
Sierra Meyer	Bruning-Davenport Schools
John Thorburn*	Tri-Basin NRD
Marlene Faimon*	LBNRD
Daryl Andersen*	LBNRD
Mike Onnen*	LBNRD
Dale Schlautman*	EA
Brandi Flyr*	EA
Jonathan Mohr*	LakeTech
Paul Brakhage*	LakeTech
John Holz*	FYRA Engineering
Mike Sotak*	FYRA Engineering

8.2.3 Open House Events

Basin stakeholders had an opportunity to meet first hand with those working on the development of the plan at a series of Open Houses held throughout the Basin at the conclusion of the planning process. A total of 79 individuals not associated with the NRD, EA, or LakeTech attended the meetings. The purpose was to educate basin stakeholders on the plan’s intent, explain key recommendations, and to receive input on the draft plan. A total of seven Open Houses were held across the Basin in Davenport, Blue Hill, Hastings, Fairfield, Fairbury, Minden and Deshler. A flyer was distributed by the NRD to announce the time and location of the different Open House meetings, and can be seen in Figure 8-1 below. The lists of all those who attended the different meetings were compiled and are included in Appendix C

Figure 8-1: Open House Flyer

YOU ARE INVITED!

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

to discuss the

Little Blue River Basin Water Management Plan

What will the Plan do? What is the intent? What actions will be taken over the next 10 years?

Join us at one of the upcoming meetings to learn all about the Plan and how it will help ensure water sustainability for future generations.





PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE LOCATIONS – ALL MEETINGS AT 7PM (except Minden)

- **Monday August 3rd - Hastings** - Adams County Fairgrounds Large North Conference Room, 947 South Baltimore
- **Tuesday August 4th - Blue Hill** - City Council Chambers, 517 West Gage
- **Wednesday August 5th – Fairfield** – American Legion, 413 N D St – South Room
- **Thursday August 6th – Fairbury** - Union Bank, 1313 K Street, Basement
- **Monday August 10th – Davenport** - LBNRD Office, 100 East 6th Street
- **Friday August 14th at 2:30pm – Minden** – Kearney Co. Fairgrounds 4-H Bld., 2200 N. Hwy. 10
- **Monday August 17th – Deshler** – Thayer Co. Fairgrounds, 1302 4th Street, Main Building South Meeting Room

To review the draft plan, please visit Little Blue NRD's website (www.littlebluenrd.org), click on the 'Groundwater' tab, then the 'Basin Water Plan' tab. Any questions or comments may be directed to Marlene Faimon at mfaimon@littlebluenrd.org or call Little Blue NRD at 402-364-2145.






*August 14th meeting in Minden was re-scheduled to August 20th

8.2.4 Additional Outreach Methods

During development of the Plan update information was provided and disseminated through the LBNRD. Outreach efforts focused on ensuring area residents were aware of the Plan's development. The following summarized additional outreach efforts:

- Press releases – A press release was sent to local newspapers in February 2015. The press release was also made available on the NRD's websites.

8.3 Public Involvement Strategy

The primary mechanism in effective plan implementation is changing how people living in and around the Basin manage their property in order to benefit the environment. This can be achieved through a strong

education and outreach effort utilizing the support of Basin stakeholders such as the NRCS, UNL Extension, NGPC, neighboring NRD, and others. This section discusses actions to be taken to ensure the public is involved, educated, and that collectively their actions have a positive impact on the health of the Basin's water resources.

The strategy is supported by direct feedback received after completion of a questionnaire in May 2015. A total of 17 responses were received from the steering committee and Board Members. According to this feedback, the topics that are the most important to discuss are:

- Importance of water sustainability
- Information on resource conditions (trends, recent data, etc.)
- Opportunities to make a difference and incentives to support implementation.

8.3.1 Target Audience

It will be important to include a diverse group in the public involvement strategy including the target audience, and those that will relay the message to support plan implementation. The list below identifies key groups to be included as the target audience:

- Agricultural property owners and producers
- Watershed residents and property owners
- Business owners
- County, City, and Village governments
- Local Elementary and High Schools
- Crop consultants and agronomists
- Agricultural chemical representatives.

8.3.2 Communication Methods

Outreach to the public can be communicated in several ways. According to the education and outreach survey, the most effective communication methods are newsletters, Internet, letters and mailings, news media, use of a watershed coordination, outreach at operator training, and informational booths. The following are recommended to be used to communicate efforts that are ongoing:

- Highway signage – creating a brand for the Basin. Use of signage to increase awareness of issues such as groundwater declines, water quality improvements, use of conservation practices, etc.
- Use of social media such as Facebook and YouTube
- Creation of an 'app' to provide outreach, reminders for training, current events, etc.
- News releases to local newspapers, radio stations, magazines, and local TV programs
- Traveling Display – create several poster presentation boards that discuss the Plan and the importance for property owners and agricultural producers are to its success, project benefits, availability of cost-share and incentives, and contact information to be placed at areas highly visible to agricultural producers. Utilize the traveling display at operator education and certification workshops.

8.3.3 Strategy and Tactics

Adequate attendance at public involvement events can be challenging and is vital to spread the word about available projects and programs. There are several barriers to consider and incentives to offer that can increase the attendance at events. Below are several considerations when organizing events:

Barriers

- Absentee property owners – several agricultural parcels are operated by a tenant whose owner may not live nearby.
- Regulatory perception – although the majority of actions in the plan are voluntary, the public may perceive this as being a regulatory action.
- Agriculture BMPs – due to the use of very large equipment some BMPs are viewed as a hindrance to production, such as terraces and grassed waterways.
- Maintenance – property owners may be unwilling to attend events because they may be unwilling to maintain BMPs.
- Timing of meetings – scheduling can always be a barrier.
- Presentation techniques – rather than a traditional sit-down meeting, use a booth rotational method to allow for more one-on-one interaction.

Non-Financial Incentives

- Giveaways – provide coupons, products, and other items as an incentive for attending events (e.g. no cost water nitrate tests to attendees).
- Food – provide meals, snacks, and refreshments at events, consider a BBQ.
- Advertising – utilize creative advertising to encourage attendance.
- Personalized invitations – send letters of invite to the target audience.
- Economic sustainability – explain how the Plan helps achieve the region's economic sustainability by protecting the supply and quality of water resources for future use.
- Waiving producer training requirements for operations which demonstrate the use of a high number of NRD approved on farm BMPs.
- Recognition of outstanding conservation.

8.3.4 Action Items

The list below is a composite of ideas that can be utilized to involve the public in the implementation process. This list has been separated into three groups: education and outreach, partnership, and information.

Education and Outreach

- 1) Press releases – provide information to local newspapers and resource agency's websites.
- 2) Provide updates when a program is started or construction is underway on a project.
- 3) Advertise the availability of programs, cost-share, and financial incentives for property owners.
- 4) Public open house events – utilize public meetings to spread the word about cost-share and incentives.
- 5) Tours – allow stakeholders to visit sites during and after construction and BMP implementation.

- 6) Demonstration sites – incorporate public education into all project sites. Promote property owners to allow other agricultural producers the ability to visit project sites for use as demonstrations.
- 7) Utilize the traveling display at other training events such nitrate or pesticide certification and other similar type classes.

Partnership

- 1) Maintain an active Technical Advisory Team – continue to communicate with the project team throughout the implementation timeline to ensure a collaborative work effort.
- 2) Involvement through local Elementary and Secondary Schools – include youth in creek restoration and watershed improvement activities such as litter pick-up, water quality monitoring, biological monitoring, etc.

Information

- 1) Continue to provide updated information on websites or other social media – showcase the projects, provide information on projects including schedules and timelines, project sponsors, funding sources, etc.
- 2) Signage / Informational Kiosk – considering building signage in order to educate residents and property owners about the Plan.
- 3) Newsletters – at least twice a year provide information on implementation progress and ask for input.
- 4) Tours - Provide annual tours highlighting water quality improvements and other project sites.

8.3.5 Evaluation

Measuring the effectiveness of education and outreach can be completed several different ways and can be an evaluation criteria for showing the effectiveness of BMPs utilized in this plan. Below are several methods that can be used to evaluate the public involvement strategy:

- Utilize sign-in sheets to tally total attendance of events over time. Appoint someone to keep a record of attendance through the implementation period.
- Provide opportunities for the public to deliver input on projects and programs at public events.
- Use follow-up surveys, both mail and online, to gather information
- Follow-up with phone calls
- Take lots of pictures at public events