

# Little Blue Natural Resources District

*Protecting Lives • Protecting Property • Protecting the Future*

## STAFF REPORT - OCTOBER 2018

### Manager

**MIKE ONNEN**

Mike was honored at a recent Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Management Board meeting for his nearly 30 years of service with the group. He began serving on the Technical Committee in 1989 prior to the formal organization of the RWBJV, and was appointed by NARD in 1992 as their representative to the JV Management Board. The RWBJV was established under the aegis of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP), an international agreement to restore and protect North American waterfowl populations through conservation efforts. The JV continues to do some great work in South-Central Nebraska, providing assistance to landowners in wetland management, restoration and protection. It has been instrumental in seeking win-win situations for landowners who own those hard to manage wetland basins.

Mike with RBWJV Coordinator Andy Bishop



# Manager (Continued)

## LONE STAR FISH KILL FINDINGS

The Game and Parks Commission has done some preliminary investigations into reports of fish kills in several Nebraska lakes this fall. Lone Star Recreation Area was one lake that they looked at. It appears that there was more fish killed than originally believed as gill net surveys did not yield many fish. Jeff Jackson with G&Ps said the oxygen level were quite low, which is fairly common when you have very little wind through the summer, then have a cloudy spell. He suspects that many of the fish killed may have actually sank to the bottom rather than floating to the top. He also said that they did catch a carp, which he said was cause for concern for the game fish. The G&Ps plans to do a lake shocking later this year to get a better idea of the impact of the fish kill.

## IMP UPDATE

Mike met with Amy Zoller and John Thorburn during the NARD Conference to discuss progress on the IMPs and the controls to be implemented. DNR is still working through some issues with matters concerning their controls. Mike will meet with DNR on October 15th to help develop a clearer plan for those controls. In the mean-time,

we did establish the date for the final joint IMP stakeholders meeting for November 19th in Hastings. We plan to review the goals and objectives of each district and discuss the rules in place to manage our interconnected ground and surface water.

## GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT ACT COALITION

The Groundwater Management Act Coalition met in Kearney following the conference to discuss various matters. Our bank account is getting small and the group felt it is important to maintain an adequate balance to be in a position to address legal matters needed to protect NRD's groundwater interests.

One case that has taken some resources is a challenge to the Groundwater Management Act regarding a cease and desist order for failing to report necessary data to the Lower Loup NRD. The Appellant has taken the case all the way to the Supreme Court and the Coalition is supporting the Lower Loup due to the impacts the case could have on other districts. The group passed a motion to solicit dues from members based on the percentage of irrigated acres to restore the account balance.

In another matter, the Coalition voted to keep the secretary/treasurer position with the Little Blue NRD and appoint Donnie Engelhardt to serve in that capacity until a new manager is found.

## LARM

Mike and Marie met with LARM to go through and update the property inventory and new insurance package for the District.

## HARZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

The kick-off meeting of the Hazard Mitigation Plan application was held on October 2nd. JEO will begin putting the grant application to the Nebraska Emergency Management Association together in the next couple weeks.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<i>Office Closed</i>	<i>Oct 8</i>
<i>Projects &amp; Planning Mtg.</i>	<i>Oct 9</i>
<i>Regular Board Meeting</i>	<i>Oct 9</i>
<i>Quarterly I &amp; E Meeting</i>	<i>Oct 24</i>
<i>NRCS Secretary Meeting</i>	<i>Oct 25</i>
<i>Scrap Tire Recycling</i>	<i>Oct 26</i>
<i>- Hebron, Geneva, Clay Center</i>	
<i>Office Closed</i>	<i>Nov 12</i>
<i>Regular Board Meeting</i>	<i>Nov 13</i>





## Manager (Continued)

### AGRICULTURAL LAND EASEMENTS

Mike and Donnie met with the RWBJV, NRCS and Upper Big Blue NRD to discuss matters concerning the Agricultural Land Easements which the Board approved applications for earlier this year. The process seems pretty complex but the RWBJV has been a big help in getting all the proper documents prepared for the submittal. The next step will be land appraisals for the two tracts being considered. Mike and Donnie will meet with Hasting Utilities soon to review shared and current water quality issues. We also plan to discuss the subarea activities and progress on attaining water quality goals.

### QUANTITY VS. QUALITY

Donnie attended the NARD Conference where he gave a presentation on Quality vs Quantity where he touched on how to balance soil nutrients to create healthier future.

### DRONE LICENCE

Donnie also passed the UAS part 107 drone license.

### SOIL PROBE

Donnie is currently working on a soil probe with a couple different companies to be able to track real time every 15 min how soil biology and nutrients react together giving us answers on how nitrates and other elements work in the soil.

### OPERATOR TRAINING

He is currently working on getting presentations figured out for this year's operator training.

### CLAY CENTER NRCS SECRETARY

Donnie is happy to hire Allison Peshek from the Clay Center area as our new secretary for our Clay Center Secretary position.

# Assistant Manager

**DONNIE ENGELHARDT**



# Administrative Secretary

MARIE HERBEK



## BUDGET SUBMISSION

The State Budget Document was electronically submitted to the State Auditor's office on September 18th. Copies were also sent to each of the seven County Clerk's offices and the Department of Natural Resources. Another budget in the books!

## AUDIT UPDATE

A few questions have been received from Christy as she finishes up the audit.

**'We hope to have the audit completed and ready to present to the Board at the November meeting' - Marie**

## NARD CONFERENCE

Marie attended the NARD Conference in Kearney September 24 - 26. Round table discussion was held on keeping health insurance through Mid-American Benefits after retirement and what the cost insurance would be and methods used to bill the retired employee. We also discussed the necessary steps for submitting new Board of Director's information to the Secretary of State.

Stacie Becker of Benefits Plan spoke to us about procedures for submitting employee's monthly retirement payments using an ACH deposit rather than writing checks. The Department of Labor prefers this method as it is done in a more timely manner. Marie is currently working with Stacie to get this set up for LBNRD. Stacie also updated us on processes when adding new employees to the retirement program, amounts employees can pay in if they elect to participate in the 457 supplemental retirement plan and withdrawing money from the Plan after retirement.

## EARTH JAMBOREE

Marie assisted at the Earth Jamboree in Clay Center as a guide on Wednesday and Mandy assisted Liz both days.







**Thank you Kevin Orvis for 25 years of service to the LBNRD!**

# Projects Manager

**KEVIN ORVIS**

CELEBRATING  
**25**  
YEARS

## TEST PUMPS

The last two weeks of the month there were 4 test pumps completed. Stertz, SE 15-2N-03E, found more gravel than what the study had. It made a very good well with a maximum of 630 gpm and an average of 624.

Christ, also in Jefferson county and within a couple miles of Stertz at SW 11-2N-03E, was set at 575 gpm but averaged 550. Again, the well log shows more

saturated thickness than expected.

RJW Farms in Thayer county located in the W NE 26-2N-03W sat right at 450 gpm over the 24 hours. The totalizer on the meter averaged 447. Gravel thickness was very similar to what the report said, but the actual yield in gallons per foot was more than what was calculated in the report.

## FLOW METER REVIEW

Time has also been spent reviewing the data we'll give to Tri-City Meters for maintenance. We would like to make sure that all names, legals, and GPS coordinates are accurate before he begins his work.

## RURAL WATER PROJECTS

On the water project, staff again met with representatives of the City and Nebraska Rural Water

Association. The NeRWA had a very detailed summary of their suggested rate structure for the City and Project. It isn't like what the engineer from Olson's has proposed and as of yet no other talks have occurred.

We are checking meter readings on the water project this fall, comparing what the customers have turned in and looking for leaks. Repairs to plumbing issues in the meter pits continue to pop up and we'll need to keep checking on that.

We also have a line on the very end of main that keeps freezing up during winter cold spells. It runs right down the center of a county road and it appears that over time the road has been lowered, leaving the line susceptible to frost. We're requesting price quotes from area plumbers to trench in a new line. We'll use pipe we have in stock and district staff can help put it together and get it in the trench.

# Watershed Coordinator

## DYLAN LONG

### COST-SHARE APPLICATIONS

We have been receiving Cost-share applications for 10% Little Blue NRD incentive in the Big Sandy Water Quality Initiative Area.

The applications that have been coming in have mostly been for buffer strips, pest management, tillage management, irrigation management, and terraces.

The map provided below indicates the location the applications have been received from.

Application deadline was July 20th, 2018.

### CITY OF FAIRBURY

The City of Fairbury held their first stakeholder meeting for developing a Drinking Water Protection Plan. The group that attended included local farmers, representatives from the sand pit, and city board members.

Drinking Water Protection Plans are developed to allow communities to implement practices to address water quality issues.

Upon completion and approval of the Plan, Fairbury's Wellhead Protection Area would be eligible for grant funds to address nitrate issues.

### CRYSTAL LAKE



The construction at Crystal Lake is nearly completed.

Some grading work and seeding is what the contractor has left to complete. Nebraska Game & Parks stocked the lake this month with largemouth bass and bluegill.







## EARTH JAMBOREE

Five hundred and thirty eight students from seventeen schools located across the Little Blue NRD took part in the 2018 Earth Jamboree held in Clay Center, Nebraska.

Students rotated through eight sessions that included: Science on the Farm, Wild Tracker, Amazing World Under Our Feet, Junk Art, Wild World of Pest Management, Chemical Look Alikes, Treasure Hunt & Environmental Jeopardy.

Students competed in the Junk Art contest. Winners were selected by event staff. Mr. Gallant of Harvard & Mrs. Faimon of Red Cloud received gift cards for school supplies.

Students that attended were asked to complete a pre & post test. Average pre-test score was 54.22 out of a possible 126 points. Post-test scores averaged 80.64 points which shows the students increased their test scores by 48.65% (meaning they learned during the event.)

Teachers were asked to complete a post-event feedback survey in which 87.5% rated their overall satisfaction with the event a 4 or above and the other 12.5% rating the event at the 3 out of 5. 75% of the teachers reported they were very likely to attend another event with the other 25% reporting they were likely to attend another event.

## SEPTEMBER HAPPENINGS

Elysabeth had a busy month of September. NE Environmental Trust grants were due on Sept 4th in which she submitted a grant to place 3 pollinator habitats in 3 of the recreational areas. She attended Husker Harvest Days as a greeter for two days. We had more than 130 pictures of kids, students and families at our Tree Selfie Picture Station inside our building (this is something new we tried this year). This means we're building relationships with an estimated 600 people who are sharing these pictures on their social media pages, helping us spread the word of good conservation!

Liz attended the Annual Conference for the first time this year and took home some great tips for creating promotional videos and tips for securing our in office networks.

## Media & Communications (Continued)

### ELECTRONIC RECYCLING

Elysabeth is the Trailblazers RC&D representative for the Little Blue NRD. The Trailblazers Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) located in Red Cloud spearheaded the electronic waste collection efforts through grants secured with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

**Little Blue NRD residents recycled 90,834 pounds of e-waste that could have otherwise been thrown into landfills!**

Several agencies worked together to make this particular effort a success: Little Blue NRD, Lower Republican NRD, Trailblazers RC&D, Nebraska DEQ, Harlan County Commissioners, Franklin County Supervisors, Webster County Commissioners, Nuckolls County Commissioners,

Clay County Supervisors, Fillmore County Supervisors, Thayer County Commissioners, various FFA chapters and multiple volunteers! The Little Blue NRD would like to congratulate all those involved in having such a successful event!

A total of 129,365 pounds of e-waste was collected from seven locations across the Little Blue and Lower Republican NRDs.

<u>NRD</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Pounds Collected</u>
LRNRD	Alma	6,843
LBNRD	Clay Center	11,824
LRNRD	Franklin	8,965
LBNRD	Geneva	28,965
LRNRD	Guide Rock	22,753
LBNRD	Hebron	31,256
LBNRD	Nelson	18,789
<b>Total</b>		<b>129,395</b>

Little Blue Total	90,834 Pounds	45 Tons
Lower Rep. Total	38,561 Pounds	19 Tons

**We have 3,085 (51.8%) certified acres reports completed and entered into Beehive. Currently there are 305,778 total groundwater irrigated acres reported with an estimated 284,069 acres left to be certified.**

There are approximately 943 landowners that have not submitted their certified irrigated acre reports. We did receive 78 certified acre reports in the month of September, with 13 walk ins/appointments. There have been a few landowners and tenants contact us to verify if we have received their reports, though not as many as we had initially anticipated. Alicia is currently working on the certified acre reports received during the month of August. Eighty four pumpage reports have been received since they were mailed in September. Reminder postcards are scheduled to go out this month.

Alicia was able to attend the two day conference in Kearney. It was a great learning experience. The meetings with the different districts was a great way to compare notes and share experiences. The sessions were very educational with a positive outlook.

# Database Specialist

**ALICIA EPPS &  
ANGIE HAER**