



STAFF REPORT

APRIL 2019

Agenda Item #10

Assistant Manager Report - Donnie Engelhardt

Donnie has been busy with complaints due to the flooding. With all the trash in tubes and on pivot bridges there is a lot of cleanup to do if we don't want fields to get flooded from rain or irrigation. Also we have some issues with our Weirs on Sand Creek after the flooding. The banks on at least two of the weirs have eroded around or underneath the structures leaving some repair work to do. Along with this we have a landowner that is complaining of water coming up from the ground creating wet spots in his field as a result of our weirs. We are in the process of getting elevations determined to see if the water in our structures are higher than the water coming up in his field.

We also have some decision to make with villages and ditch work projects. Reynolds, Hubbell, and Shickley. We will be discussing this at the May board meeting. Cost share will also be a topic for the May board meeting trying to get a clearer definition of practices.

Met with RWBJV to discuss plans on the Skinner and Johnson easement projects turning some cropland back into wetlands. Waiting on appraisal numbers to move forward.

There has been some concern about the MARC Dam from Kathy Kluver, she is worried that because the dam is listed as high risk on the DNR website that it might break. I have met with her and John Reickman to evaluate the management of the dam and the condition of the dam. It is a high risk dam only because there will be two homes effected downstream if the dam were to break. Not because the dam is in poor condition.

Operations Supervisor - Kent Thompson

Kent has started looking at maintenance on water shed dams and rec areas. Little cedars on water-shed dams seem to be cropping up everywhere this spring. Spring tree orders are coming in and he's keeping inventory up-to-date and getting ready for spring tree planting.

Administrative Secretary - Marie Herbek

With First National Bank, Fairbury becoming a member of Heartland Bank I have been in the process of making necessary changes on our end. The online account has been created which is now how we will get monthly statements for the Rural Water Projects checking accounts to avoid a \$3 paper statement charge. The Heartland Bank account structure is different from First National Bank and will require us ensure we keep the new minimum amounts in each account to avoid maintenance fees. Paula Schultz has also been involved in this transition as well.

Mandy and myself are kept busy with payments being received for chemigation permits and tree sales. Several meter repair bills were also sent out along with some irrigation management supplies being sold. Spring always brings an increase in phone calls and walk-in traffic as farmers begin preparing for the new growing season.

Preparations for Kyle's first day have been ongoing, hopefully we will have everything in place for him to feel at home. Welcome aboard Kyle!



Natural Resources Coordinator - Erika Brinegar

March has been a busy month of figuring out this full-time gig, checking out flooding, and getting certified acres into the database.

We've been working diligently getting all of these acres into the system. There is a light at the end of the tunnel!

West of Holstein, they're working on a series of 4 instream weir structures and a low-head embankment structure, designed to provide recharge. The low-head embankment structure has a 5 foot tall grouted rip rap embankment across the channel. This is reinforced with sheet piling. The embankment doubles as a channel crossing for vehicles or livestock. The instream weir structures include a 4 foot tall rip rap embankment across the channel that are also reinforced with sheet piling. Two of the embankments are grouted and wide enough for channel crossing; the other two are narrower and not grouted. There is also a water-level control pipe with a valve to provide the ability to raise and lower the water level behind the low-head embankment to better operate and maintain the structure. When the weather clears up, the only remaining work is fine grading and seeding. The rest of the construction on the 5 structures is primarily completed.

At Crystal lake, there is some cleaning up to do from the floods and we lost a few picnic tables, but the lake held up well. The dredging is finished and the angler access and aquatic habitat components were installed. This includes sidewalks, parking pad, pit latrine, vegetation barriers, and angler access pads. The water quality wetland and associated water level control structure was also completed. We are looking to get three educational signs up out there that include information about the project, the fish in the lake, and about the wetlands.

On the oxbow project, they have started removing trees at the Davenport and Ayr sites. They are slowly stockpiling rip rap at the edge of the Davenport site. It is also wet and muddy out there so we will have to wait awhile for it to dry up to continue working. Most of the bypass channel was under a couple of feet of water.

Projects Manager - Kevin Orvis

We'll start collecting spring water levels the first of April, the goal is to have the weighted average graphs ready for the May Board meeting. The ground finally dried up enough we were able to get another round of flow meters into the shop for repairs. The NDOR is going to let bids for resurfacing Highway 15 north of Fairbury. They are replacing some steel culverts, extending concrete boxes, and taking some extra ROW in some places. We'll need to check that a water line paralleling the highway isn't in conflict. Jim Schroeder, Bill Glenn, and Kevin attended Fairbury's Power Board meeting the morning of March 19th. We discussed standing issues of bulk or residential, rate schedules, and contract negotiation. As has been coming for some time the Power Board forwarded a rate ordinance to the City Council which will increase the Project's water expense about 85% without any increase in gpm. For finding an alternate source of water for the project; the Project Work Plan was approved by NDEQ, and we're now developing a Quality Assurance Plan. Sites are being looked at for test wells and we'll talk with drillers soon. NeRWA contacted the office; they're trying to set up a meeting between them, Village of Alexandria, USDA Rural Development, and the Water Project to discuss well supply options.

Media & Communications Specialist - Elysabeth Kierl

Liz took photos and videos and Donnie also flew the drone around certain areas to gather footage during the March 2019 floods in the Little Blue District. We did lose eight picnic tables and had the restrooms flood at Crystal Lake, however this was very minimal compared to damage done in other districts. The pictures and drone footage were used to submit social media safety campaigns for those following the Little Blue NRD on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & LinkedIn. These campaigns increased post reach on Facebook alone by 61,194%, reaching 180,818 views.

The Quarterly meeting with the NRCS staff was held on Wednesday, March 27th in Nelson, Nebraska. Liz reported current events happening within the NRD. She introduced Erika to the team and then they sat down with NRCS to discuss cost-share questions they had. It was decided that the NRD staff would put together a book to distribute to NRCS staff yearly. An updated version will be available on the website with the updates in red so that they can be easily visible. After a year, any changes, additions, etc. would be incorporated into a new document, submitted to NRCS staff and board of directors for review and then be redistributed. This will help everyone to utilize the cost-share programs uniformly and efficiently.

Thanks to a grant received by the Trailblazer RC&D, Household Hazardous Waste events within the Little Blue NRD were held at Clay Center & Nelson on Friday, March 29th; followed by events in Lower Republican NRD on March 30th in Red Cloud & Alma. It was rainy and cold, but a total of 134 vehicles delivered hazardous waste material to the two events held within the Little Blue NRD. In the Little Blue alone, we collected 3.89 tons of paint, 1.24 tons of pesticides, 880 pounds of batteries, 30 gallons of antifreeze, 30 pounds of recyclable materials, 10 pounds of acidic & basic materials, and 164 fluorescent light bulbs. The used oil totals have yet to be reported.

Liz has been working to incorporate an operating training module into the Little Blue website. She has started to plan for the Master Plan that is due December 31st, 2019. She also has been working to develop a tree curriculum to take to schools for the Earth & Arbor Day programs. Seven hundred thirty-two (732) free trees have been ordered for six school programs within the District and Liz will be presenting to five of those six schools. Liz & Donnie will be presenting the water table once again at Camp Jefferson on April 23rd & 25th.

Database Specialist- Alicia Epps

In March Alicia tracked down the remaining Irrigated Certification Reports, and those have been turned in. Certified Irrigated Acre 78% COMPLETED 4% STARTED 18% NOT STARTED. Our goal for April is obviously to complete them all.

Reminders

April 4—General Manager's first day

April 23rd, 25th—Earth Jamboree Camp Jefferson

Arbor Day April 26th—Office Close

June 1st—Chemigation Renewals due in the office.