

Manager's Report
October 14, 2025

September was wet. Really wet. We got 3.56" of rain in Holdrege. That's more than 1.25" above average and almost 3.5" more than we received in September 2024. With this information in mind, it would seem like September was a less than ideal month for an outdoor wedding. Plans had been made, however, so we went ahead with my son Jim and his fiancée' Nora's wedding at Platte River State Park on Saturday, September 20. It rained steadily the day before, but, on the wedding day the weather was cloudy and cool, but dry. The wedding went well, a good time was had by all and we're happy to welcome Nora into our family. Jim is working on a graduate degree at UN-L, so the happy couple will continue to live in Lincoln.

Jim and Nora's wedding was a happy highlight of last month. A sad moment happened at the end of the month when NRD director Dave Raffety resigned from the board (see resignation letter in packet). Dave has been a director for almost 30 years. He joined the board in July 1996. Dave faithfully served Sub-District #6, taking a particular interest in our drainage improvement projects (IPAs). Sub-district #6 is basically the North half of Kearney County and two townships in northeast Phelps County (see the election sub-district map on the TBNRD website for more details). The board needs to accept Raffety's resignation at our next meeting, then we will advertise for candidates for the seat. Our plan is to allow candidates to apply until November 7 (they must apply in writing), then the Executive committee will review candidates and, perhaps, interview them. They will then recommend a replacement for the board to consider during the November meeting. If the successful candidate is present, they can take their oath and assume office immediately.

The other main agenda item for this month is approval of our scope of work agreement with USDA-NRCS. We may need to table that item until next month, however, if the federal government shutdown continues through next week. If the federal shutdown continues, Cami Kerner won't be able to attend our board meeting to answer questions about the agreement. Meanwhile, our field office secretaries are keeping busy here at the NRD office helping Tammy update our databases.

We need to hold a Planning Committee meeting sometime in the next month. There are two main topics: determining a setback distance for domestic wells and reviewing Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP) sign-up options. We can wait until a rainy day or until harvest is winding down, but I would like to have the committee meet before next month's board meeting.

September was busy at the NRD. Staff helped at Husker Harvest Days. We also put on Rainwater Basin Conservation Day, in spite of wet weather. It was wet enough that we couldn't hold the event at Sacramento Wildlife Management Area. We set up several "learning stations" around the old Funk School. The kids had a great time, in spite of abundant mosquitoes.

Several staff and two directors attended the NARD Fall Conference in Kearney. Dave Raffety carried out his responsibility as alternate delegate to the conference.

There weren't any policy resolutions, so there wasn't a business session. We did get information from NDWEE about Republican Basin Compact compliance during our Republican Basin Caucus. Next year will be a "Water-short year" according to compact terms, so Nebraska will need to provide about 13,000 acre-feet of water in Harlan County Lake for Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District. Preliminary data indicate that Tri-Basin NRD will still be in compliance with our Republican Basin IMP, but we may want to operate the Holen augmentation well to help the state maintain compact compliance, if requested. I would also like to mention that TBNRD director Larry Reynolds received a 40 years of service award from our state association during lunch. Congratulations, Larry!

I attended a meeting of the Governor's Water Policy Task Force in Kearney on September 23 (see agenda in packet). This group is still in the process of developing recommendations for changes in state-level water policy to address ongoing water quality and quantity management issues. The task force has already been admonished against recommending mandatory management actions, so they will try to accomplish their goals by incentivizing changes in water user behavior. They are fortunate to have a grant from the USEPA called "One Red" that will provide \$160 million for incentive programs. NDWEE director Jesse Bradley believes that NRDs are ideally suited to implement such incentive programs, as we have administered the NE Soil and Water Conservation Program and Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Program. The task force is expected to provide its recommendations to the Governor in December.

I am currently Chairman of the Platte Overappropriated Area Committee. In that role, I am responsible for responding to stakeholder requests for the committee to review Platte Basin IMPs or the Upper Platte Basinwide Plan. Last July, we received a letter from CNPPID and NPPD, raising concerns about North Platte NRD's plans to increase groundwater users allocations in the Pumpkin Creek basin from 12" per acre per year to 14" per acre per year. See the CNPPID/NPPD letter and my response on behalf of the POAC in your packet.

That's all that I have to pass along this month. Don't forget that we meet at **7:30 PM** next Wednesday. Until then, I hope that harvest goes well and that you make time to stay safe during this busy season.