

Manager's Report

September 4, 2026

August had slightly above average rainfall, with 2.95" recorded for the month (see weather data in packet). We recorded rain 18 of 31 days last month. We had one nice rain of 1.29", but most of the rain came in little showers of 0.10" or less. Little showers might help morale a bit, but they won't pull us out of this drought.

The auditors were here this week. This was our first audit by CORE CPAs from Hastings. One of our auditors was Tristan Junker, a former Holdrege resident and a classmate of my older children. They anticipate presenting a report to the board in November or December.

The board asked me to find some help to work with Nicole to prepare of our audit and to reconcile our QuickBooks software with our bank statements. I contacted KSO Accounting in Kearney and they assigned Paige Gray to help us. She worked with Nicole for a day last week and she will return next week for a few hours. She anticipates that will be sufficient to resolve the discrepancies in our accounts. She helped Nicole resolve the inconsistencies in the budget as well. Directors will find a corrected budget notice in the packet. The next step in the budgeting process is to set the property tax levy and tax asking. We will hold a hearing for that purpose at the beginning of this month's meeting.

The Planning Committee met Tuesday of this week (see minutes in packet). They had three agenda items. The main topic of discussion was how to manage groundwater use by CNPPID customers if CNPPID has to reduce or entirely curtail canal water deliveries. After considerable discussion, the committee recommends that the board require all future applicants for Supplemental-to-Surface Water well permits to agree to an allocation of 15" per acre for five years. Such an allocation would be reviewed in a year when CNPPID determines that it needs to limit water deliveries. The committee also recommends that owners of such newly-permitted commingled wells will not be allowed to enroll fields irrigated by those wells in the Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP).

I will ask the board to approve the district's participation in DWEE's new ONE RED program. This program will include the current Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Program (NRIP) and Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE) programs, which have been very popular with our constituents. A new aspect of the ONE RED program is that landowners are required, as a condition of participation, to share agronomic data (crop yields, fertilizer applied, water applied, etc.) for inclusion in an anonymized database. Farmers get \$2000 for enrollment and \$1000 per year simply for sharing their data. As an NRD, we are being asked to promote the program, sign up our constituents and share data that we acquire from them.

The district will receive \$75,000 per year for staff time and expenses. In the packet you will find a bank agreement and various ONE RED program information.

Our North Dry Creek/Lost Creek Watershed Protection and Flood Operations (WFPO) planning proposal has been sent on to Washington, DC by state level NRCS officials. This simple but important step will move us up in the line for approval. We initially requested this study in 2022. With any luck, it might get done before I retire.

We have also been working with NRCS to try to get approval to have CNPPID deliver excess flows from the Platte to the MOSAIC wetland north of Axtell. I sent a letter to NRCS State Conservationist Rob Lawson, urging him to authorize such diversions (see letter in packet). This 80+ acre wetland is ideally located to provide groundwater recharge. NRCS approval is needed because both landowners enrolled their properties in the USDA Wetland Reserve Program. We should know within a couple months whether this site will be available for excess flow deliveries this winter.

September will be a busy month for meetings and activities. NRD staff will help at Husker Harvest days on the 15th-17th. We will host the Little Blue Basin annual IMP review meeting at Minden Exchange Bank on Tuesday, September 22 at 1:30 PM. We will educate nearly 400 seventh and eighth grade students about soil and water conservation during Rainwater Basin Conservation Day at Sacramento WMA on Thursday, September 24. Finally, we have the NARD Fall Conference in Kearney on September 28 and 29.

That's all that I can think of to say for this month. I hope to see all of you Wednesday, September 16 at 1:30 PM. By the way, Chairman Garrelts would like to move the October board meeting back a week to allow for harvest. Check your calendar and see whether Wednesday, October 28 is an option for you to attend the board meeting.