

# IN PERSPECTIVE



## Central Platte NRD Newsletter

Volume 30 No. 6 August 2026

(308) 385-6282 www.cpnrd.org 215 Kaufman Avenue, Grand Island NE

## A Century of Service: Thirty Mile Canal Celebrates 100 Years

### Manager Jim Harris Celebrates 50 years of service

**The Thirty Mile Canal in Dawson County marked two significant milestones in July: the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canal and Manager Jim Harris's 50 years of service.**

The canal's history began in 1926, when its first water right was approved. Construction followed in 1927, and the canal was dedicated on July 13, 1928, with water rights to irrigate 15,000 acres.

More than 10,000 people traveled by train to attend the dedication, where the canal was celebrated as a place "Where IRRIGATION Is Turning a LAND OF PROMISE Into A LAND OF PRODUCTION."

The \$350,000 project was funded by 121 farmer stockholders and completed just 15 months after their first meeting at a cost of less than \$25 per acre. In the generations since, the canal has provided dependable irrigation water to producers throughout the area.

### A Partnership for Water Management

The Central Platte NRD and Thirty Mile Canal Company formed a partnership in 2012 to improve irrigation efficiency and strengthen long-term water management.

The \$5 million project included CPNRD's \$1.9 million purchase of a 50% interest in the company's property and water delivery system. Grants from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (40%) and Nebraska Environmental Trust (20%) covered 60% of the Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement and Coalition Project's costs. The modernization included replacement and/or installation of 8 bridges, 8 check structures, 9 drop structures, 3 roadway pipe crossings, 2 pipe laterals, 4 additional structures, 5 flow-measurement devices and riprap.



*Thirty Mile Canal headgates in Dawson County*

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## CENTRAL PLATTE NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| Director                       | Subdistrict |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Keith Ostermeier, Grand Island | At-Large    |
| Jay Richeson, Gothenburg       | 1           |
| Brian Keiser, Gothenburg       | 1           |
| Dwayne Margritz, Lexington     | 2           |
| Tom Downey, Lexington          | 2           |
| Marvion Reichert, Elm Creek    | 3           |
| Luke Ourada, Elm Creek         | 3           |
| Lon Bohn, Gibbon               | 4           |
| Ryan Kegley, Kearney           | 4           |
| Deb VanMatre, Gibbon           | 5           |
| Mike Wilkens, Gibbon           | 5           |
| Jerry Milner, Grand Island     | 6           |
| Mick Reynolds, Wood River      | 6           |
| John Stoltenberg, Cairo        | 7           |
| Ed Stoltenberg, Cairo          | 7           |
| Todd Arends, Grand Island      | 8           |
| Kevin Werner, Grand Island     | 8           |
| Amy Kyes, Central City         | 9           |
| Doug Reeves, Archer            | 9           |
| Chuck Maser, Grand Island      | 10          |
| Barry Obermiller, Grand Island | 10          |

### Board Officers

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Chairman      | Deb VanMatre     |
| Vice Chairman | Tom Downey       |
| Secretary     | Keith Ostermeier |
| Treasurer     | Marvion Reichert |

| Staff Member        | Position                   |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Lyndon Vogt         | General Manager            |
| Jesse Mintken       | Assistant Manager          |
| Tom Backer          | Projects Assistant         |
| David Carr          | Range Management           |
| Zachary Charity     | RWBJV Easement Specialist  |
| Kelly Cole          | Administrative Assistant   |
| Darren Cudaback     | Precision Conservation     |
| Tricia Dudley       | Water Quality Specialist   |
| Brandi Flyr         | Hydrologist                |
| Korey Gerken        | Cozad Ditch Rider          |
| Jim Harris          | TMID Manager               |
| Chase Heck          | Prescribed Fire Specialist |
| Bill Hiatt          | Resources Conservationist  |
| Devin Hingst        | Resources Conservationist  |
| Dean Krull          | UNL/CPNRD Project Coord.   |
| Marcia Lee          | Information/Ed Specialist  |
| Shane Max           | Resources Conservationist  |
| Cara Crandell       | Office Assistant           |
| Marci Ostergard     | TMID Office Assistant      |
| Mike Ostergard      | TMID Technician            |
| Collin Quandt       | Agronomist                 |
| Michael Schmeckle   | Cozad Ditch Manager        |
| Brody Vorderstrasse | Communications Assistant   |
| Angela Warner       | GIS Coordinator            |
| Courtney Widup      | Water Resources Technician |
| Luke Zakrzewski     | GIS Image Analyst          |

### NRD/NRCS Office Assistant County

|                   |         |
|-------------------|---------|
| Lexie Zubia       | Hall    |
| Kyla Friedrichsen | Merrick |
| Lisa Kennicutt    | Dawson  |
| Shelly Lippincott | Buffalo |

Receive the *In Perspective Newsletter* by email:  
send your email address to [lee@cpnrd.org](mailto:lee@cpnrd.org)

# Board of Directors Updates

## FY2027 Budget Approved

CPNRD's Board of Directors approved a \$23.2 million fiscal year budget in July. The 2027 budget is \$8.5 million lower than last year's \$31.8 million budget and \$11.4 million lower than the 2025 budget.



A public hearing to set the FY2027 property tax request and levy will be held at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday, September 3, immediately before the August Board meeting. (The August meeting was moved to September 3<sup>rd</sup> to allow time for the required public notices.)

The property tax request is expected to remain unchanged at \$5.3 million, based on current balances and projected revenues. The District anticipates a 6% increase in total property valuation; however, the final valuation will not be known until information is received from assessors in the District's 11 counties. Based on the property tax request on last year's valuation plus 6%, the levy for FY 2026/2027 would be approximately 0.020507 compared to last year's levy of 0.021738.

## 2026/2027 Budget Summary General and Sinking Fund

|                                         |                         |
|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Cash/ Investments/ Treasurer's Balance: | \$ 10,655,403.57        |
| Federal Funds to Receive:               | \$ 998,153.79           |
| State Funds to Receive:                 | \$ 303,700.00           |
| Co-Sponsor Funds to Receive:            | \$ 4,266,821.65         |
| Investment/ Miscellaneous Income:       | <u>\$ 1,684,561.72</u>  |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>                           | <b>\$17,908,640.73</b>  |
| Total Budget Requirements:              | <u>- 23,256,469.64</u>  |
|                                         | <b>- \$5,347,828.91</b> |
| Amount of Tax Money Requesting:         | \$5,294,350.67          |
| County Treasurers Commission (1%):      | <u>+ 53,478.24</u>      |
|                                         | <b>\$5,347,828.91</b>   |

### Estimated FY 2026/2027 Levy (last year's valuation + 6%)

General Fund 0.020507 | Sinking Fund 0.000000

## Important Dates



### September 1

Transfer irrigated acres: Sept. 1 - March 1

### September 3

1:45 p.m. FY2027 Levy Hearing  
2:00 p.m. August Board Meeting  
215 Kaufman Ave. Grand Island

### September 7

Labor Day observed. Office closed.

### September 24

2:00 p.m. September Board Meeting

### October 22

2:00 p.m. October Board Meeting

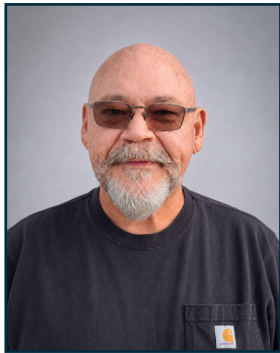
# A Century of Service *(continued)*

The main benefits of the project include groundwater recharge to enhance surface water and ground water supplies, protect water quality and help CPNRD move closer to a fully appropriated status. The rehabilitations also provide enhanced flows to the Platte River by diverting and retiming excess flows to the river; returning natural flow irrigation rights to the river; and help meet requirements of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program agreement and LB962 to return the Platte River to its 1997 level of use.

In 2013, Thirty Mile Canal Company reorganized as the Thirty Mile Irrigation District (TMID), becoming a political subdivision of the State of Nebraska. The following year, CPNRD and TMID established the Stream Flow Enhancement Alliance to coordinate delivery of surface water for irrigation and groundwater recharge.

During the non-irrigation season, excess Platte River flows are diverted into the canal. Water seepage from the canal recharges groundwater that is hydrologically connected to the Platte River, supporting groundwater supplies and return flows to the river.

In 2021, a field office and storage facility were built at 75887 Road 414 in Cozad. The facility provides a shared location for CPNRD staff and strengthens coordination between the organizations. In 2025, updated check structures and five automated Rubicon gates were installed to improve water measurement, control, and delivery efficiency throughout the canal system.



*Jim Harris, Manager,  
Thirty Mile Irrigation  
District*

“Thirty Mile Canal has supported producers and communities for 100 years because generations of people have been willing to invest in its future,” said Lyndon Vogt, CPNRD General Manager. “Jim Harris’s 50 years of service reflect that same commitment. Together, TMID and CPNRD are honoring that legacy by improving how water is delivered, measured and managed for the next generation.”

During his five decades of service, Harris has performed all aspects of the canal’s daily operations, including ordering water, operating head gates and river gates, monitoring river returns, and coordinating irrigation-water deliveries.

As Thirty Mile Canal begins its second century, TMID remains committed to the purpose that first brought local farmers together a century ago: providing reliable irrigation water while continuing a tradition of innovation, partnership and water stewardship.

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## Conservation Pays

### *Cost-Share Programs to Support Your Conservation Goals*

#### **NEW CHEMIGATION COST-SHARE PROGRAM**

CPNRD’s new Chemigation Incentive Program provides reimbursement of 50% of actual costs up to \$3,500 per field with a lifetime maximum reimbursement of \$7,000. Participation is limited to two fields or a maximum of 320 acres per landowner. To qualify, landowners must also be enrolled in the Sensor-Based Nutrient Management Program. The program is intended to encourage producers to utilize chemigation as a fertilizer application method, helping improve nutrient management and protect groundwater resources.

Eligible expenses include:

- chemical injection pumps
- injection valves
- low-pressure drains
- interlocks
- mainline check valves
- discharge hoses



**Your CPNRD Contact:** Kelly Cole | 308-395-7134 | [cole@cpnrd.org](mailto:cole@cpnrd.org)

**Learn more:** [cpnrd.org](https://cpnrd.org)

# Explore Our Blue Planet & Monarch Migration

## With Nebraska's NRDs at the Nebraska State Fair

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts will present the Blue Planet activity during Largest Classroom Days at the Nebraska State Fair. Using an inflatable globe, students will estimate how much of Earth's surface is covered by water.

Test your knowledge with Blue Planet trivia at the Raising Nebraska Building from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on August 28 and September 1–2.



**LARGEST CLASSROOM DAYS**  
**Monarch Tagging Event!**

**Catch, tag & release Monarch butterflies as they travel on their amazing migration!**

**Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Join Us!**

**Led by CCC Staff:**

- Dr. Crystal Ramm, Entomologist
- Ben Newton, Environmental Sustainability Director

**Stop by from: 10:00 - 1:00**

**Find us at the Outdoor Learning Area GAZEBO near Raising Nebraska**

### *Visiting the Nebraska State Fair on September 2nd?*

Central Platte NRD has teamed up with the Central Community College and Conservation Nebraska to host a Monarch Tagging Event at the Groundwater Guardians' Outdoor Learning Area.

Visit the gazebo outside the Raising Nebraska Building to learn how to catch, tag and release monarch butterflies and why tagging is important during their migration.

The Monarch Tagging Event will be held on Wednesday, September 2, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. No registration necessary. Butterfly nets provided.

Stop by the Raising Nebraska Building to explore our Blue Planet and experience monarch migration with these fun, hands-on activities!

## Meet Cara Crandell - CPNRD Office Assistant



*Cara Crandell,  
Office Assistant*

Cara joined the Central Platte NRD in June 2026 as the front office assistant at the Grand Island office. She grew up in Inland, Nebraska, and graduated from Hastings Senior High School in 2011. She earned a bachelor's degree in Grazing Livestock Systems and Animal Science—Production and Management from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln in 2015.

Cara lives in Trumbull with her two dogs and cat. In her free time, she helps care for sheep, goats, horses and cattle on her parents' farm. She also serves as a 4-H archery instructor for Adams County Shooting Sports and as secretary of the Cottonwood Archery Club in Hastings. Cara also enjoys camping, crafting and baking when she has the time.

**Contact:** Cara Crandell | 308-385-6282 | [crandell@cpnrd.org](mailto:crandell@cpnrd.org)

# New Office Nears Completion

*Current Kaufman Avenue property listed for sale*

**The wait is nearly over as Central Platte NRD's new office and education center nears completion at the Prairie Silver Moores Flood Mitigation Site!**

We look forward to welcoming you to our new address at 9644 W. 13th Street, Wood River. Expected to open this fall, the new facility represents a long-term investment in conservation education, natural resource stewardship, and public engagement.

Landowners, students and educators, and community members will have opportunities to explore Nebraska's natural resources through interactive exhibits, educational programming, and outdoor demonstration sites.

The CPNRD Board began considering the facility in 2020 after the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission approved using the remaining \$1.7 million designated for the Prairie Silver Moores project toward the education center. Combined with anticipated proceeds from the sale of the District's current office, the funding allowed the Board to move forward without increasing property taxes for construction.



*CPNRD's new office and education center is nearing completion. Staff plans to relocate to the facility in late fall.*

## Planning and Construction

Construction began in 2024 after the Board approved a contract with Rogge General Contractors of Lincoln. The building includes approximately 20,000 square feet on the main level and a matching lower level, providing nearly 40,000 square feet for District operations, educational programs and community events.

The facility will feature expanded office space, interactive exhibits and a large boardroom that can also serve as a classroom and meeting area. It will overlook a primary detention cell of the Prairie Silver Moores project that functions as a wetland, temporarily holding stormwater while supporting native emergent plants and wet-meadow grasses that provide wildlife habitat and opportunities for conservation education. Future outdoor features are planned to include walking trails, windbreaks, pollinator plantings, and interactive demonstrations for irrigation, crops, and groundwater monitoring wells.

As the new facility nears completion, CPNRD is preparing to sell its current office at 215 Kaufman Avenue in Grand Island. In July, the Board of Directors approved listing the property with Berkshire Hathaway for \$1.9 million. The decision followed the Board's rejection of two sealed bids in June after determining that both offers were significantly below the property's appraised value.

## Producer Reminders

### Chemigation System Inspections

Chemigation systems must be inspected every three years. Each spring, CPNRD notifies producers and landowners whose systems are due for inspection. If you received a notification, call to schedule your inspection before September 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Your CPNRD Contact:** Cara Crandell | 308-385-6282 | [crandell@cpnrd.org](mailto:crandell@cpnrd.org)



# Put Prescribed Fire to Work on Your Land

Are eastern red cedars, invasive weeds or declining forage quality affecting your pasture? Prescribed fire is a proven management tool that can help restore healthy grasslands, improve forage production and protect grazing acres. Farmers and ranchers throughout the CPNRD have successfully used prescribed burns to improve pasture health and productivity. Without periodic fire, eastern red cedar can spread rapidly and take productive grazing acres out of use. Pastures that are consistently grazed during the fall or winter without spring management may also become dominated by cool-season grasses and invasive weeds, reducing forage quality and wildlife habitat.

Although prescribed fire may seem intimidating, landowners do not have to manage a burn alone. CPNRD staff can assist with evaluating your property, develop burn plans, provide assistance during the burn and help prescribed burn associations pursue grant funding.

## Fullerton Burn Demonstrates Safe, Effective Use

A 143-acre prescribed burn near Fullerton in March demonstrated how proper conditions, equipment and experienced personnel can safely achieve rangeland management goals. Because Prairie Creek bisects the property, the burn was completed in two units. The 12-person crew included staff from CPNRD and Pheasants Forever. Equipment included two fire engines, three UTVs, one ATV and a 1,200-gallon water tender.

The larger south unit required additional time, while the smaller north unit burned quickly. Both units were completed safely and according to plan, with no spot fires or injuries. Crews conducted mop-up operations into the evening, and a follow-up inspection the next morning confirmed that no heat or areas of concern remained following overnight snowfall.

## PRESCRIBED BURN RATES

### OPTION 1:

- No fee charged for landowner-led burns. CPNRD staff will assist with burn if requested.

### OPTION 2:

- 40 acres or less: \$2,000 (minimum charge)
- 41–159 acres: \$2,000 + \$16/acre over 40 acres
- 160–319 acres: \$2,000 + \$8/acre over 40 acres
- 320+ acres: Cost determined case-by-case

## Cost-Share Assistance Available

In addition to staff assistance, CPNRD offers 50% cost-share to landowners, including those not enrolled in another conservation program or contract.

If eastern red cedar, invasive weeds or declining forage quality are affecting your property, prescribed fire may be an effective management option. Contact CPNRD to determine whether a prescribed burn is right for your land.

**Your CPNRD Contacts:** Bill Hiatt 308-395-7365 | [hiatt@cpnrd.org](mailto:hiatt@cpnrd.org) Chase Heck 308-395-7654 | [heck@cpnrd.org](mailto:heck@cpnrd.org)



*The south unit required additional time to complete, demonstrating the value of having trained personnel on site throughout a prescribed burn.*



*The north unit of the Fullerton prescribed burn was completed quickly and safely while protecting the adjacent calving pen.*



## Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council Annual Conference

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 | 9:00 AM- 4:00 PM | Kearney Holiday Inn

Mark your calendar for the Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council Annual Conference! Lunch is included with registration. Watch for more details in the next *In Perspective* newsletter, or follow Central Platte NRD on Facebook and X for updates.

