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Defining Visions of Nebraska’s Water Future

by Steve Ress

Visions of Nebraska’s water future into the middle of the coming millennium were varied and plentiful when more than 125 gathered in Kearney for last month’s 28th annual Nebraska Water Conference.

Snow and ice again greeted speakers and participants at Kearney’s Regency Inn March 8-10 for the second of three scheduled “Nebraska Water 2000” conferences.

Though there were a number of visionary presentations about the possible future directions of state water use, sources and allocations, conference attendees were asked not only to listen, but to participate in forming group visions about what the future may hold for Nebraska water and its many interests and users.

They divided into eight random groups to develop visions of Nebraska’s water future, with help from student facilitators from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communications (AgLEC). Groups developed their initial visions on the first morning of the conference, on March 9 and then met again for a couple of hours the following morning to revise those visions and from them, develop quantifiable goals and strategies.

“The interactive setting of the conference was a key to its success. What we wanted to find out was how the planning process could impact future use for the state’s water resources and we got some very interesting responses and plans of action,” said conference organizer Bob Kuzelka, assistant to the director of the NU Water Center/Environmental Programs.

To begin and later refine the process, groups used visionary presentations by speakers such as U. Gale Hutton, Director of Water, Wetlands and Pesticides Division, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region VII, Kansas City, KS to help them focus on possible future issues involving water.

Their thought processes and discussions were aided by a presentation on the successes and failures of water planning in Nebraska by Director Dayle Williamson and Steve Gaul of the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission; who plans your water by Glenn Johnson, Director of the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District; planning for drinking water supplies by David Little of the Denver Water Board; and why and how to plan for water by Curt Brown and Fred Ore of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

“Planning can be a difficult topic to get your arms around, so I’m thankful that we had such good speakers to help in focusing our groups as they developed and revised their plans,” Kuzelka said.

Entertainment was provided by Texas Heritage Museum director T. Lindsay Baker, who gave a "Life on the Buffalo range....T. Lindsay Baker of the Texas Heritage Museum dressed the part of an 1870's buffalo skinner for one of two presentations at last month's Nebraska Water Conference in Kearney (photo: Steve Ress)."

(Continued on page 4)
What are the areas in which we need to operate with constrained budgets? We have somewhat limited options. One, of course, is to reduce the scope of our programs and the services available.

Another is to pursue external funding opportunities whenever and wherever they can be found. Realistically, we may well have to do both. We have already begun meetings with some of the agencies and organizations with which the unit has linkages. We are doing a lot of listening and plan to do a great deal more. Among those from whom we want, indeed need, to hear are you, the readers of the Water Current. Please let us know your opinions on the issues I have outlined. Our mailing address, telephone and FAX numbers and web site address appear at the bottom of this page. We look forward to hearing from you.

Approximately six to nine months from now, a report will be prepared for the director of NU's School of Natural Resource Sciences and administrators of the NU Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It will contain recommendations on the future organization, operations and priorities for the Water Center/Environmental Programs unit. In a real sense, all Nebraskans, directly or indirectly, have an interest in that future, so please...let us hear your opinions.

Readers planning to participate in this summer's water tour will be able to register for two tours, if they wish. Responsibility for planning the annual tours, in recent years, has rotated between the Four States Irrigation Council one year and the Nebraska Water Conference Council the next.

This summer's Four States tour will be held Aug. 4-6 and will visit several sites in the Thermopolis, WY vicinity. Plans call for visits to the Highland Hanover Irrigation District, Ti Hack Dam and Reservoir, the Buffalo hydro project, the Meeteetse and Greybull Irrigation District and the new Roach Gulch Reservoir, now under construction.

For more information, contact Norm DeMott at the Goshen Irrigation District in Torrington, WY at (307)532-7031.

The Nebraska Water Conference Council, Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District are co-sponsoring another tour in Northeast Nebraska and the Sandhills July 19-21. Several of the initiatives in the President's Clean Water Action Plan are expected to have pervasive impacts on various areas of our state. A tour is therefore being planned that will feature stops in the Norfolk, Valentine and Thedford areas. Tour details will be available in the next few weeks.
Jess, Harnsberger, “Nebraska Plan” Team Honored as Water Stewards at Kearney

by Steve Ress

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Senior Lecture J. Michael Jess, UNL College of Law Professor Richard S. Harnsberger and 24 “Nebraska Plan” team members were honored for their commitment to state water resources at last month’s Nebraska Water Conference in Kearney.

The Nebraska Water Conference Council and NU Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources presented their 27th annual Pioneer and Progress Awards to Jess and Nebraska Plan team members. Team members were appointed by former Governor Ben Nelson to develop a plan to renew federal power licenses involving Kingsley Dam and Lake McConaughy. Pioneer and Progress Awards are presented to an individual and an organization with outstanding accomplishments in water resources.

The Groundwater Foundation presented its 14th annual Maurice Kremer Groundwater Achievement Award to Harnsberger for his many years of commitment to water education and scholarship.

Jess was chosen to receive the Pioneer Award based on his many years of involvement in helping to shape Nebraska water law through his long association with the Nebraska Department of Water Resources (DWR). He joined DWR in 1975 and served as its director from 1981 until earlier this year.

“Nebraska Plan” team members received the Progress award for their innovative proposals to renew federal power licenses held by the Nebraska Public Power District and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District involving Kingsley Dam and Lake McConaughy.

Team members receiving plaques were: Steve Anschutz, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; William J. Bailey Jr., Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Brian Brels, Nebraska Public Power District; Ann Bleed, Nebraska Department of Water Resources; Gerald Chaffin, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Jim Cook, Nebraska Natural Resources Commission; Paul Currier, Platte River Whooping Crane Trust; John Detuerk Jr., Big Mac Sportsman’s Council; Tom Emerton, Platte River Whooping Crane Trust; Don Kraus, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District; Frank Kwapnioski, Nebraska Public Power District; Jim Lundgren, Nebraska Water Users Inc.; Dave Mazour, Tri-State G&T; Bob McCue, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Former Nebraska Governor E. Benjamin Nelson, Lamson Dugan and Murray; Ed Pembleton, National Audubon Society; Paul Prentiss, Nebraska Wildlife Federation; Dave Sands, National Audubon Society; Tom Schwarz, Nebraska Water Users Association; Wes Sheets, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission; Leroy Sievers, Nebraska Department of Water Resources; Gayle R. Verbeck, Big Mac Sportsman’s Council; Dale L. Wahlgren, Platte River Flood Control Association; and Shuhai Zheng, Nebraska Natural Resources Commission.

UNL College of Law professor Harnsberger was honored with The Groundwater Foundation’s annual Maurice Kremer Groundwater Achievement Award (photo: Steve Ress).

Rather than just matching downstream (river) flows and predetermined releases of water from Lake McConaughy, their plan calls for intervention and management based on judgment as a fair alternative,” Kuzelka said of the team’s work.

(Continued on page 6)
University of Nebraska Hires Jess Jess

J. Michael Jess, former director of the Nebraska Department of Water Resources has been hired by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a hydrologic investigator and public policy liaison, as well as to help find funding for research related to public-policy objectives in the natural resources area.

Jess holds a joint appointment with UNL's Conservation and Survey Division (CSD) and School of Natural Resource Sciences (SNRS), both of which are within NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR).

"Mike has a wealth of water-related knowledge that we expect will be of great value to the university, its students and public," said CSD director Mark Kuzila. "We look forward to having someone of Mike's stature, integrity and experience helping us on a range of issues related to water and other natural resources."

Jess said he thought he could provide an independent perspective and help both students and the public better understand the complex responsibilities related to self-government in natural resources.

It is anticipated that he will work on several projects in conjunction with UNL's Water Center/Environmental Programs as part of his joint appointment with the SNRS.

Defining Visions of Nebraska's Water Future

(continued from page 1)

resounding period presentation on the life and times of an 1870’s plains buffalo Skinner at Tuesday’s luncheon and a slide presentation on windmills after Tuesday evening’s awards banquet.

Wednesday morning began with a breakfast address by Governor Mike Johanns, followed by the second of two panel discussions and question and answer sessions on factors affecting the state’s water future. Panel participants represented a wide range of water use interests, including production agriculture, power generation and wildlife habitat.

The eight visionary groups then met to revise their visions of the state’s water future and develop their goals and strategies for accomplishing their visions. The visions, goals and strategies they developed will be presented in the next issue of the Water Current newsletter.

After the conference adjourned, UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources Associate Vice Chancellor Edna McBreen chaired an optional workshop on a proposed International Center for Groundwater Research that has been proposed for the UNL campus.

Last year’s water conference opened the “Nebraska Water 2000” series with “Information for the Future.” The series concludes next year with a look at “Management for the Future.” That conference is scheduled to be held in Lincoln March 6-8, 2000.

The conference was sponsored by the Nebraska Water Conference Council, Nebraska Department of Water Resources, The Groundwater Foundation, Kearney Visitors Bureau, NU’s Conservation and Survey Division, Water Center/Environmental Programs, School of Natural Resource Sciences, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, UNL and the Nebraska Chapter American Planning Association.
Managing Pesticides to Minimize Risk

by Larry D. Schulze
NU Pesticide Coordinator

Pesticides are an Integrated Pest Management tool for Nebraska crops. More than 30,000 certified private applicators (producers), and 8,500 commercial applicators in Nebraska recognize responsible pesticide use is essential.

Fortunately, an agricultural chemical exposure survey conducted by The Poison Center at Children’s Hospital in Omaha in 1994 showed only 32 Nebraska producers reported pesticide exposure. All of these exposures could have been avoided by wearing proper protective clothing and equipment. If pesticides are mishandled, and protective clothing and equipment incorrectly used, exposure problems will occur. Plus, failure to use pesticides safely and read labels may subject the applicator to federal and/or state sanctions or penalties.

Pesticide poisoning most commonly occurs through the skin, but exposure can occur orally or by inhalation. Vomiting, nausea, sweating, headache, dizziness and pin-point pupils are symptoms of pesticide poisoning. What a victim might think is a cold or flu could be clues that pesticide poisoning has occurred.

Pesticides have varying degrees of toxicity. A pesticide label will have one of three signal words that clearly indicate the degree of potential risk to a user. These words don’t relate to product effectiveness. The key words are danger, meaning highly toxic; warning, moderately toxic; and caution, low toxicity. Knowing the level of potential toxicity often guides product selection and purchase.

The common route of pesticide exposure through the skin is easy to prevent by proper use of chemical resistant gloves, goggles, apron and/or other personal protective equipment required by the label. If contact occurs, immediately and thoroughly wash the skin with soap and water. Skin irritation can result from continuous exposure if left untreated. Not all pesticides have antidotes, but these steps can help recovery. Wear chemical-resistant gloves when assisting victims.

Keep emergency numbers available and don’t hesitate to contact medical authorities if signs and symptoms of pesticide poisoning occur. Contact your doctor or seek medical advice from The Poison Center at Children’s Hospital in Omaha by calling (800)955-9119. A non-emergency source of medical information related to pesticides is the National Pesticide Telecommunications Network, (800) 858-7378.

Don’t be a statistic this year. Handle pesticides safely and wear protective clothing to avoid direct bodily contact. Wear eyewear, footgear and gloves if labels specify.

At minimum, wear a long-sleeved cotton shirt and long-legged cotton pants, or coveralls that fully cover arms and legs. Wear shoes and socks. Leather shoes are suitable while using most pesticides. Leather will absorb liquids, however. Wear chemical-resistant boots for highly toxic liquid pesticides and when there will be prolonged exposure to pesticide spray. Pesticide mixers/loaders should check labels for specific protective clothing and equipment that may be different from that of applicators.

For more information on pesticides, visit the University of Nebraska Pest Management Resources Web site at http://www.ianr.unl.edu/ianr/pat/epmhome.html or see NebGuide G85-758, “Protective Clothing and Equipment for Pesticide Applicators” from a local Cooperative Extension office.
Water News Briefs

Free Drinking Water Week Packets

A limited number of fun facts and activities packets are available for extension educators in observance of National Drinking Water Week, May 2-9. The colorful packets are ideal for elementary and middle school classes or other groups or organizations studying water or environmental topics. The theme of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) packets is "Celebrate Water.”

Packets are available free on a first-come, first-served basis by contacting Steve Ress at (402)472-3305 or e-mail sress@unl.edu

AWWA ANNOUNCES RESEARCH PROJECT FUNDS

The American Water Works Association Research Foundation (AWWARF), a non-profit organization dedicated to advancing the science of water, announces the selection of new research projects approved for funding in 1999.

AWWARF sponsors practical, applied research for the drinking water community and since 1986, has managed research projects worth over $100 million.

Requests for proposals (RFPs) for these projects are available on the AWWARF web site at www.awarf.com. Proposals submitted in response to RFPs must be postmarked by May 3 for projects with budgets up to $250,000 in AWWARF funds. Proposals seeking $250,000 or more in AWWARF funds must be postmarked by July 15.

The new research projects cover topics including utility management, treatment chemistry, customer issues, distribution system water quality, and source water quality and monitoring.

All project proposals must include, unless otherwise indicated, 25 percent of the total project budget as in-kind or cash contribution. In-kind contributions can be in the form of labor, laboratory services, or other support, and may come from utilities, consulting firms and universities.

For additional information, contact AWWARF at (303)347-6211 or (303)347-6117.

TGF MEMBERSHIPS

Groundwater supplies a large percentage of the world's drinking and irrigation water and this important resource is the responsibility of all of us. To learn more about groundwater and get involved, consider becoming a member of the Lincoln-based Groundwater Foundation. Membership directly supports water education programs for youth such as the Children's Groundwater Festival, Awesome Aquifer Club and Groundwater University. Members also receive the award-winning journal, The Aquifer.

A variety of membership options are available. Individual memberships are $25, family memberships are $40 and organizational memberships are $60 per year. Membership dues are tax deductible. To become a member contact Cindy L. Kreifels at (800)858-4844, (402)434-2740 or go to www.groundwater.org

Nebraska Water Tour

Not only will you see some of Nebraska's best kept water and agricultural secrets, but you'll be able to play in the water as well when the Nebraska Water Conference Council, Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District offer a tour of water and agricultural "Alternatives and Opportunities" July 19-21.

Though planning is only in initial phases, the tour will stop at water, agricultural and water-related small businesses in the Norfolk, Long Pine, Valentine and Thedford areas. Tour buses will leave Kearney and Lincoln on Monday, July 19 and return to those locations on Wednesday, July 21. Overnight stops will be in Norfolk and Valentine....where tour participants will have time to enjoy a canoe trip or tube float down the scenic Niobrara River before a picnic steak fry fit for a hungry king.

A tour and meal at Nebraska's oldest vineyard, near Norfolk, is also being planned, along with a stop at one of the state's newest bottled water businesses in historic and scenic Long Pine. Plenty of Sandhills scenery will be included along the route.

Registration details will be mailed to Water Current subscribers in the next few weeks. Additional information will be included in the June issue of the Water Current newsletter. Mark your calendars and plan now to attend.

JESS, HARNSBERGER, "NEBRASKA PLAN" TEAM HONORED AS WATER STEWARDS

(continued from page 3)

Kremer Award because of his dedicated scholarship, mentoring of students and service to Nebraska’s environment though active support for, and participation in, environmental organizations.

"Thanks to his work, all of us involved in water education and management have a more complete and clear understanding of the policies and issues affecting our groundwater,” said Groundwater Foundation founder and president Susan Seacrest.

The Kremer award is named for former State Senator Maurice Kremer of Aurora and is presented annually to a Nebraskan who has demonstrated lifelong and substantive service to preserving Nebraska's groundwater resources.
Bob Kuzelka and Jerry Obrist (left and right, standing) took American Water Works Association Research Foundation executive director Jim Manwaring (center, standing) on a tour of the Lincoln municipal water plant in Ashland when Manwaring spoke at UNL as a Williams lecturer in the 1999 Water Resources Seminar in early February (photo: Steve Ress).

23. For an enrollment application and more information, contact Wendy Conrad, Groundwater University Director, P.O. Box 22558, Lincoln, NE 68542, phone (800) 858-4844 or e-mail wendy@groundwater.org.

AUGUST

9-13: Nebraska Forestry Shortcourse, Chadron State College, Chadron. For information and registration details, contact Dr. Scott J. Josiah, Extension Forester, 107 Plant Industry, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0814, phone (402) 472-6511 or e-mail sjosiah2@unl.edu.
Help Us Improve the Water Current:

Help us to publish a better Water Current. Tell us what we can do to make it better.

Take a few minutes to fill-out and return this page and we will send you a Water Center/Environmental Programs pencil and refrigerator magnet and enter your name in a drawing for one of three Water Center/Environmental Programs ceramic coffee mugs. To be eligible for the drawings, return your completed survey by Friday, May 21. Mail it to Steve Ress, Water Center/Environmental Programs, University of Nebraska, P.O. Box 830844, Lincoln, NE 68583-0844 or FAX it to (402)472-3574. NU subscribers may return surveys via campus mail to: 103 NRH, EC 0844. Please mail or FAX the entire page (so we have your name for the coffee mug drawings). Responses will be tabulated. Individual responses will be held in strictest confidence.

1. Rank, in order of importance to you, the usefulness of the following general areas of the Water Current (1 - most important to 8 - least important):
   - Announcements about publications, RFPs, videos, electronic information, etc.
   - Calendar
   - Feature articles on faculty members and/or researchers
   - Previews of upcoming events
   - Director’s Notes (Page #2)
   - Feature articles on water and environmental research
   - Water News Briefs
   - Information about upcoming conferences, lectures, courses, etc.

2. What are some topics you would like to see covered in future issues of the newsletter?

3. What is your primary interest in the Water Current?

4. Do you read each issue of the Water Current you receive?
   _____ Yes  _____ No

5. On average, how much time do you spend reading each issue?
   _____ Less than 5 minutes, _____ 5-10,
   _____ 10-15, _____ 15 minutes or more.

6. Do you circulate your copy of the Water Current to anyone else?
   _____ Yes (if so, how many others read it _____)
   _____ No

7. Should the Water Current be published
   _____ more often  _____ less often
   _____ Remain at six issues per year

8. Should the Water Current
   print more pages _____ print fewer pages _____
   maintain the present 8-10 pages _____

9. Are there general areas of coverage that the newsletter devotes too much (or not enough) space to?

10. Your occupation?

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