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NRD IS SURVEYING TURKEY CREEK AREA

The Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District (NRD) is in the process of a feasibility study to look at flood control in the Turkey Creek watershed. Area landowners were notified recently by director Ron Fleecs that NRD employees are working on site surveys to complete a feasibility study.

The NRD has taken action to hire an engineering consulting firm to study the watershed to determine if it would be financially feasible to construct a number of dams (12 - 16) to reduce flooding on Turkey Creek and its tributaries in Saline County.

To begin this study, the NRD, with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), will be obtaining valley cross sections of the flood plain of Turkey Creek and tributaries to determine what areas would be flooded and where damages from floods would occur to lands within a 100 year, 50 year, 25 year, or smaller flood plain. Saline County is the base of the Turkey Creek Watershed which also drains a large area in Fillmore County and even reaches into parts of Clay County.

Surveys for these valley cross sections in Saline County will be done mostly at county road locations and at locations 100' - 300' upstream or downstream from the county road. However, there are some valley sections that will need to be done on section lines where there are no county roads. There is a state law that gives the NRD the right to conduct these surveys and my advice is to wear orange this time of year!

Looking at the effects of drought the past two years in our area, I have observed how our local NRD delayed water restrictions along the Big Blue River by releasing water from dams in Gage County and one in Saline County. These dam releases had a positive effect for some of our irrigators the past two years along the Big Blue River. Even though the main intent of a new dam project is flood control and reducing erosion damage across area farmland, there is another benefit during drought. When water can be released to help other farmers and to do this in a way that game fish are not hurt, that provides another positive economic benefit to our area. On the other hand, if land treatment is not applied in the small watershed areas above the dams, the life of the new dams greatly decrease and the amount of water they can hold.

Right now, it is important for landowners to be aware the project is only in the feasibility stage. As a result, if the project is not cost effective, the NRD will redirect its resources to other causes. However, as a result of the study, if the project is feasible, the District will hold meetings to educate the public and ask for additional input. There will be funding challenges but not as large as the Swan project because there were more larger dams that were built in the Swan Creek project area. It will be important for public input at the appropriate time if the project does become feasible and to keep communication lines open when new projects are taken on.

Many Saline County landowners can be very proud of their soil and water conservation accomplishments over the past decade. By increasing the number of pivots versus gated pipe,



building reuse pits, installing surge valves, building terraces, increasing CRP acres, seeding buffer strips, converting to no-till or reduce till farming, to name a few items, there is no doubt in my mind we are sending less water down stream in the Turkey and Blue River Basin. If the Turkey Creek project becomes feasible, this will be the next large conservation step for our area.

For more information about the Turkey Creek Watershed feasibility study, contact the Lower Big Blue NRD in Beatrice at 228-3402 or e-mail Joan Fischer at atjcf@lbbnrd.org

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