

Contact:  
Joanna Pope, Public Affairs Officer  
Nebraska NRCS  
Lincoln, Nebraska  
402-437-4123

## **Watershed Structures Prevent Flooding Damages**

### ***Over \$1 Million in Flood Damages Prevented in Southeast Nebraska during wet summer.***

LINCOLN, September 17, 2014 – Most Nebraskans would agree, it's been a cooler and wetter summer than usual. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, this was the wettest August for the contiguous U.S. since 1977, and Nebraska has had one of its 10 wettest summers on record.

Residents in the Oak-Middle and North Oak Creek watersheds - which includes Butler, Lancaster, Saunders, and Seward counties - recently experienced first-hand the effects of this wetter-than-usual summer. During the last week of August and first week of September, some portions of these watersheds experienced over a foot of rain.

Although there were people affected by flood damages, flooding could have been much worse if not for the watershed control structures built throughout the watersheds, according to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

NRCS State Conservationist Craig Derickson said, "Over 50 years ago, NRCS worked with local landowners to construct watershed structures to help reduce flooding damages. Those structures are still doing their job today."

NRCS, with assistance from the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, has constructed many flood control structures in Butler, Lancaster, Saunders, and Seward counties through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act. These funds authorized NRCS to provide assistance with the planning and installation of flood control structures like small dams and grade stabilization structures, and in applying conservation practices like no-till, terraces and waterways.

The Lower Platte South NRD sponsored the projects and purchased the land rights in order to build the flood control structures. NRCS provided engineering expertise and over \$4 million to construct the 31 flood control structures throughout the watersheds.

Flood control structures may easily go unnoticed across the landscape. But after a heavy rain event, like what was recently experienced in southeast Nebraska, these structures spring in to action. They capture rushing flood water and hold the water back allowing it to be slowly released downstream. Slowing the water down and allowing it to be gradually released reduces damage to roads, bridges, fences, cropland and other property.

According to NRCS Hydraulic Engineer Arlis Plummer, the existing flood control structures in Butler, Lancaster, Saunders, and Seward counties helped prevent over \$1 million in flood damages from the recent storms.

“With big rain events we really see the benefit of flood control structures. They work together with conservation practices to prevent damage to infrastructure. When things like roads and bridges are spared from damages, then we’re talking about a lot of dollars saved,” Plummer said.

Larry Stuchlik is a long-time resident of the North Oak Creek watershed. He can remember what the watershed was like before the structures were built.

“In 1963 they had a 14 inch rain up by Brainard. The water was flowing through the valley there in a river over a mile and a half wide. I remember there being fatalities in Valparaiso,” Stuchlik said.

Stuchlik now says that “those watershed structures really save us.” After this last heavy rain – over 9 inches in a two-day period – the watershed structure on his property captured the water behind the structure and then let the water flow out slowly through a pipe.

“The creek on our property flowed a long time, but we didn’t have any damages. The watershed structure worked like it was supposed to,” Stuchlik said.

With nearly 900 watershed dams constructed statewide, the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act has benefited over 1.6 million acres in Nebraska. Benefits include significant savings in soil erosion, water conservation, road and bridge damage reduction, wetland/upland wildlife habitat creation and most importantly, saved lives and property. The total benefits to Nebraska exceed \$37 million each year, according to NRCS.

For more information on installing conservation practices on your land to help prevent erosion and reduce flooding, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service office located in the USDA Service Center, or learn more at [www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov).