

The University of Nebraska Water Resources Advisory Panel

Why organize a Water Resources Advisory Panel?

Recognizing the critical importance of water to the environmental and economic well-being of our State, the University of Nebraska has had an ongoing commitment to excellence in water resources research, education and outreach for decades. In 2006 the state was facing increasing pressure to address serious water issues as a result of interstate compacts and agreements, state statutes, continuing drought and other factors. With these factors converging, the Water Resources Advisory Panel (WRAP) was created in 2006 to better connect the University with the wisdom of outside experts and those who often rely on NU water-related research, education and outreach to make decisions impacting Nebraska's water resources.

What is the WRAP?

Fifteen individuals representing a cross section of the Nebraska water decision-making community serve on the WRAP to provide guidance to the University of Nebraska on state water research needs, education, and outreach programs. The WRAP is convened by Dr. Ronnie Green, NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor and Dr. Prem Paul, Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development. The WRAP generally meets three times a year – in January, April, and September.

Who are the current WRAP members?

Mr. Frank Albrecht, Realty and Environmental Services, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Mr. Jerry Obrist, Chief Engineer, City of Lincoln Water System

Mr. Brian Barels, Water Resources Manager, Nebraska Public Power District

Mr. Lee Orton, Executive Director, Nebraska Well Drillers Association

Mr. Mark Brohman, Executive Director, Nebraska Environmental Trust

Mr. Jay Rempe, Director of State Governmental Relations, Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation

Senator Tom Carlson, District 38 and Natural Resources Committee Chair, Nebraska Legislature

Senator Ken Schilz, District 47, and Agriculture Committee Chair, Nebraska Legislature

Mr. Eugene Glock, Cedar Bell Farms

Dr. Jim Schneider, Deputy Director, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

Dr. Jerry Kenny, Executive Director, Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

Mr. Lyndon Vogt, General Manager, Central Platte NRD

Ms. Marian Langan, Director, Audubon Nebraska

Mr. Dayle Williamson (retired), Offices of Senator Ben Nelson

Mr. Mike Linder, Director, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

Also working closely with the WRAP are Ron Yoder, Associate Vice Chancellor, IANR; Monica Norby, Associate Director, Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute; and Chittaranjan Ray, Professor and Director, Nebraska Water Center. Rachael Herpel, Research and Outreach Coordinator, serves as the liaison and coordinator for WRAP activities and faculty activities associated with the WRAP.

What has the WRAP achieved?

- **Research Priorities** - In 2006 the WRAP conducted a comprehensive survey of the state's water research needs and developed a state water research priorities list. The WRAP updated and re-ranked this list in 2009. These results were then communicated to faculty.
- **Specific Projects** – Three projects were developed in direct response to the WRAP's top priorities:
 - *Riparian Vegetation Impacts on Water Quantity, Quality, and Stream Ecology*. The first year of this project was funded internally by the NU Rural Initiative and IANR. Subsequent funding has been provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.
 - *Measurement of Evapotranspiration, Plant Physiology, and Other Surface Energy Fluxes in Relation to Tillage Practices*. Substantial IANR funding for equipment, on top of NUs in-kind funding, enabled this research to get underway. Subsequent funding has been provided by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.
 - The *Center Pivot Water Conservation Project* was developed in part to address the education and outreach needs identified during the priority ranking process. Funding has been provided by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, and Nebraska's Center Pivot Manufacturers - Lindsay Corporation, Reinke Manufacturing, T-L Irrigation Co., and Valley Irrigation.
- **Additional Project Support** – The *NU Water-Related Research Database* was used to identify how faculty's current and completed research applies to each topic. Often in high priority areas, faculty members are already working closely with state agencies and other Nebraska partners to secure local, state and federal funds to implement collaborative projects. Where gaps still remain, collaborative efforts are underway to fill those gaps.
- **Serving the University** – WRAP activities provide an opportunity for WRAP members to:
 - increase their understanding of University research, education, and outreach activities
 - recognize and support existing University efforts
 - identify unmet University needs
 - strategize with University administration and faculty on how these needs may be met
- **Serving the State** – At the end of 2009 WRAP members were asked to identify a “special ingredient” the WRAP adds to how the University serves the state. Members commented that the WRAP is:
 - critical to providing citizen and stakeholder input into UNL water resources programming
 - providing a dose of reality and the perspective of people who deal with water issues every day
 - keeping faculty grounded in what Nebraska really needs

Where do we go from here?

Significant progress has been made with cooperation from many people, both within the University and from across the state, to better understand state water issues and to collaborate to address water research needs. A remarkable precedent has been set where projects receiving internal NU funds go on to secure state and other funds on a 6 to 1 ratio. The University and the WRAP have built on this success and will continue to work together to address current and future water issues facing Nebraska.

For More Information:

water.unl.edu/wrap

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