



UPPER BIG BLUE NRD

Natural Resources District

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Upper Big Blue NRD Receives Prestigious National Grant

York, NE--The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District was one of 19 districts in 14 states awarded a National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) grant to boost technical assistance capacity for urban agriculture conservation projects. The grant amount is \$50,000 and was the only award in the State of Nebraska.

The Upper Big Blue NRD will be using these funds to help underwrite a special project that it is involved with helping the City of York improve its wellfield by planting cover & rotational crops, berry shrubs, a business-sponsored community garden, and a pollinator habitat within the city wellfield acreage. Called "Project GROW" (Growing Rotational crops On Wellfields), the goals are to improve soil health, erosion control, non-leaching of nitrogen into the water table, and increasing water holding capacity in the soil, all culminating to protect York's water quality at the wellfield.

According to David Eigenberg, General Manager of the Upper Big Blue NRD, "On behalf of the NRD Board of Directors, we are grateful and enthusiastic about such an opportunity to further the mission of sustaining Nebraska's natural resources in York and across the District. This grant provides a national scope of what the NRD and the City of York can accomplish together in partnership."

NACD established the Urban Agriculture Conservation Grants Initiative in 2016 to help conservation districts and their partners provide much needed technical assistance for agricultural conservation in urban areas with limited access to fresh and healthy foods. Since then, NACD has awarded a total of \$3 million in grants to 61 conservation districts in 30 states through this initiative.

"Today, 86-percent of Americans live in urban areas, which cover just 28-percent of the nation's land area. The landscapes our customers own and manage have changed since the Dust Bowl when many of our nation's 3,000 conservation districts were first established, and so has conservation districts' approach to serving them," NACD President Brent Van Dyke said.

"A majority of conservation districts are now involved in some form of urban and community conservation work. As a delivery system, and as a conservation family, we've risen to the challenge of providing world-class technical support whenever – and wherever – it is needed," Van Dyke continued.

The Upper Big Blue will begin preparations to implement "Project GROW" this fall after harvest at the wellfield acreage.

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