

Reject NRD bid to build more dams—May 5

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District is asking Omaha area taxpayers to continue funding its plans to spend money to build area flood control dams (“A ‘for’ vote fights floods,” May 2 World-Herald). Unfortunately, these dam projects may not make economic sense. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in earlier years determined that flood mitigation projects were not economically feasible. That is why the feds are not providing 50 percent cost shares to these projects.

The NRD conducts many costly engineering design studies but no corresponding (and relatively low-cost) economic feasibility studies. Instead it misleads taxpayers and others by claiming that \$2.6 billion in flood damages would occur in Omaha if the area suffered a flood similar to the one that hit Ames, Iowa, in 2010.

But I recently completed a University of Nebraska at Omaha research study funded by the National Institute of Water Resources and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that demonstrated that the use of same structural building data sources used by the NRD “Ames to Omaha Study” overestimates flood damage to homes and commercial buildings by 76 percent to 200 percent.

The NRD has never demonstrated to what extent its \$300 million of dam building would actually reduce likely flood damage in the Omaha area and who would be the main beneficiaries of this damage reduction.

Until the NRD can demonstrate that building dams in Omaha for flood control is economically feasible for the community as a whole, voters should reject any additional funding for their activities.

Steven Shultz, Omaha

How much is too much for Papio NRD? May 6

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District is asking taxpayers to contribute another \$80 million to its stockpile in the form of bonds. As I see it, the Papio NRD is yet another government entity wanting to spend our hard-earned money foolishly, and it has raised property taxes in the past.

Two things struck me as I was reading The World-Herald’s April 24 article on the NRD, “Is NRD spending money like water?” First, it seems like a land grab. Government entities are not in the business of land development, especially NRDs whose mission is to preserve the natural resources. And I think it is fishy that engineering firms and construction companies are supporting the bonding.

I, for one, will not vote to give more money and power to the Papio NRD. Join me in voting against the Papio NRD bonds and tax increase.

Shawn Melotz, Omaha

NRD's true mission—May 8

A May 5 Public Pulse letter (“Reject NRD bid to build more dams”) needs to be clarified.

First, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District is not asking area taxpayers to continue funding its plan. Area taxpayers are asking Nebraskans to give NRDs the authority to issue bonds that will help support their collective mission.

Our state NRDs' mission includes providing flood control, along with many other benefits that come with these projects — improvement to water quality, streambank stabilization, wildlife habitat creation and recreational opportunities. That is not mentioning ancillary benefits such as the well-documented improvement to property values around, near and below reservoirs that are planned by NRDs.

The letter acknowledged that the NRD plan “may” not make economic sense. Several studies have been prepared — including one my firm, Fyra Engineering, worked on — to show that these projects do, in fact, make economic sense.

The reason the federal government is not supporting these projects has nothing to do with their economic feasibility (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers can attest to that).

The Papio-Missouri River NRD has gone to great lengths to continuously update the Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership Plan for local efforts. Supporters of this plan, which includes municipalities, citizens at large, outdoors enthusiasts, and the real estate, legal, construction, design and development communities, are urging a vote for the plan.

Mike Sotak, Omaha

An unneeded measure—May 8

It is disappointing to see The World-Herald's endorsement of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District's request to increase its bonding authority for flood control projects (“A ‘for’ vote fights floods,” May 2). Why spend millions of dollars on flood control when there are many less expensive ways for individuals, groups and businesses to reduce flooding with wise planning and building, and local capture of water?

Katherine Townsend, Papillion