

From: Tyler Weishahn, LBBNRD Assistant Manager

Date: March 31, 2026

RE: 2025 Water Sustainability Fund Annual Report – Little Indian Creek Watershed Flood Prevention and Operations WFPO #10013

A brief timeline of LBBNRD Board action regarding the project in relation to the Water Sustainability Fund:

- March 9, 2023 – Board approval/signature of letter to NRCS State Conservationist, Rob Lawson outlining the importance of the WFPO program to the LBBNRD.
- September 21, 2023 – LBBNRD annual budget approval
- March 15, 2025 -- final public notice of project
- April 15, 2025 – project will be submitted to NRCS Chief for authorization and funding
- June 2025 – NRCS Chief Authorization Approval and Funding of the Little Indian Creek Watershed Project
- December 2025 NRCS requests federal funding in the amount of \$9.2 million for final design of the flood control structures.
- March 2026 NRD Request \$8.2 million in Direct Congressional Appropriations for additional design and construction.

This report is for the period between March 31, 2025, and March 31, 2026.

- 1) Project progress to date for the first report, then progress since the last annual report for future projects, including where you are relative to completing the project.
  - a. 100 percent of the Indian Creek Watershed Plan including the Environmental Assessment is complete.
  - b. March 15, 2025, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a program within the U.S. Department of Agriculture, prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) titled “Indian Creek Watershed Plan, Gage County, Nebraska” in partnership with the Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District. The environmental assessment of this federally assisted action indicates that the project will not cause significant local, regional, or national impacts on the environment. As a result of these findings, the NRCS State Conservationist has determined that the preparation and review of an environmental impact statement is not needed for this project. Project is authorized for federal funding.

The proposed action includes constructing 24 new dams throughout the Little Indian Creek Watershed to manage and reduce flood damage effectively. These dams will work together to control a drainage area of roughly 25.66 square miles. The main objective is to protect the City of Beatrice and surrounding agricultural lands from the harmful effects of frequent flooding. The initiative aims to reduce flood damage by managing runoff, erosion, and sediment, and controlling surface water from heavy rainfall and stream overflow. Additionally, this project may reduce or eliminate the need for some residents to carry flood insurance.

- c. No administrative action on implementation of the proposal will be taken until after April 15, 2025
  - d. NRCS National approved press release 7/17/2025. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District (LBBNRD), received official approval in June for the Indian Creek Watershed Improvement Plan in southeastern Nebraska.
  - e. September 2025 LBBNRD in communication with Senator Fischer's pursuing Congressionally Directed Spending. Will submit application in the amount of \$8 million the Spring of 2026.
  - f. December 2025 NRCS submits for WFPO funding for the Little Indian Creek project in the amount of \$9.2 million for design of 22 low hazard, 1 significant hazard, and 1 high hazard potential dams.
  - g. March 2026 NRD submits application to Senator Fischer requesting Congressionally directed funding for the project in the amount of \$8 million.
- 2) List project-related activities planned for the coming year.
- a. Begin working on permitting and compliance requirements.
  - b. Continue corresponding with landowners.
  - c. Final design of watershed structures when funding is received.
- 3) Forecast or projected cash flow for remainder of the project. This should be high level, not a detailed list, to give the Commission a projection of the fund's cash flow.
- a. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will pay for all engineering design and construction costs, pending approval of the final Plan-EA, Water Sustainability Funding will provide cost-share funding for only land acquisition and permitting and compliance, and the LBBNRD will pay for operation and maintenance costs.
  - b. FY2027 - \$500,000 in permitting and compliance costs
  - c. FY2028 - \$584,271 in permitting and compliance costs and \$474,062 toward land acquisition
  - d. FY2028 - \$474,062 toward land acquisition
  - e. FY2029 and beyond - \$948,124 toward land acquisition
  - f. Total WSF-specific project costs of \$2,980,519 (WSF - \$1,788,300 + LBBNRD - \$1,192,219)
- 4) Reassessment of the likelihood that benefits projected in the application will be realized and, for the "Final Report," a description of benefits realized or reasonably expected to be realized as compared to those stated in their application.
- a. Upon authorization by the NRCS Chief, funding for design and construction will be released, at which time design and permitting along with land rights negotiations will commence. Construction will be completed in a phased approach.
  - b. Land acquisition and easements, as well as permits and compliance are critical components for implementation of the overall project objective of providing flood risk reduction to the watershed.

List of public outreach and WSF acknowledgement efforts:

- *The Blue Buzz* Lower Big Blue NRD Newsletter & LBBNRD Website
- News Release (October 27, 2025): Beatrice Daily Sun, Crete News, Fairbury Journal-News, Pawnee Republican, News Channel Nebraska, KOLN, and KLKN