

A PERSPECTIVE ON PRESENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

An optimist will tell you the glass is half-full; the pessimist, half-empty; and the engineer will tell you the glass is twice the size it needs to be.

THINGS ARE SHAPING UP / POSITIVES ABOUND.

- The drought that hammered us for ten years has ended. Dams, rivers, and streams are full and flowing and ground-water levels are up. News articles five or so years ago blamed irrigation for low water levels in Lake McConaughy and Harlan Reservoir. The media, regulators and environmentalists cursed irrigation, wildly proclaiming that it would prevent our reservoirs from ever filling up again. They fomented fear, animosity and anger and tried to turn the public against irrigators. They were wrong, but will they acknowledge so? Doubtful.
 - Term limits, which first became effective in 2006, has had a positive influence on the quality of the state legislature. Good old boys, cronies, and tired, ineffective senators were rooted out. In their place came younger blood, fresh perspectives, new energy as well as an independence from lobbyists. The situation at the State Capitol today is so much better than it was just five years ago.
 - State senators representing rural legislative districts are today superior by and large to their predecessors. Some of the best who do great work defending agriculture and irrigation rights are Tom Carlson (Holdrege), Mark Christensen (Imperial), Tom Hansen (North Platte), Chris Langemeier (Schuyler), Ken Schilz (Ogallala), Deb Fischer (Valentine), Lydia Brasch (Bancroft), and Annette Dubas (Fullerton).
 - The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) now appears to be led by a director who does not have a strong environmental agenda. Brian Dunnigan seems to be fair-minded, flexible, objective and moderate. He displayed these qualities back in March 2009 when he reversed a preliminary determination that the Lower Platte River Basin was fully appropriated. Once educated by the best scientific data presented at various public hearings in the region, he knew he had made a mistake and corrected it. We packed the hearing rooms and had a lot to do with the reversal by the DNR. (See our April 2009 newsletter for the story.)
 - The Nebraska Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled in key cases, most notably the Spear T Ranch case (2005), that natural resources districts, not the state, regulate groundwater. The movement led by the Central Public Power and Irrigation District to force groundwater to be regulated as surface water has hit the wall. This is a good thing, and we thank our state supreme court for their thoughtful
- and correct rulings.
- In the Republican River dispute with Kansas, Nebraska seems to be gaining positive momentum. Recent arbitrator rulings have tended to be more favorable for Nebraska. Our natural resources districts in the basin are working constantly to devise and implement management plans that will help ensure compact compliance, even in dry periods. Prior newsletters detail these issues.
 - Despite what you read in the newspapers or hear from the environmentalists, the Ogallala Aquifer underlying Nebraska is stable and rising in many areas. Exceptions are in Box Butte, Perkins, Chase and Dundy counties. Current data prepared by United States Geological Survey confirm this overall good news.
 - The global warming hysteria has finally started to fizzle out. The science simply does not validate it, and ordinary people more and more are paying attention and realizing it's one big con job. We have enough real problems to worry about and deal with (the economy, terrorism, Middle East, state and federal budget crises, etc.) that force fabricated crises like global warming to become irrelevant to our lives.
 - Worldwide, there is a growing demand for feed, food, fiber and fuel from U.S. rural resources. American farmers and ranchers produce for a global economy that is growing every day. American farmers and ranchers are the most productive in the world. Two-thirds of all corn grown in the world and one-half of the world's soybean crops are harvested from U.S. farms. American cattlemen produce one-fourth of the world's beef supply.
 - The Middle East has oil. We have food. They export oil and import food. They receive only a small percent of the world's rainfall. Their populations are booming. When they raise the price of oil, causing fuel prices to rise, the price of our crops rises commensurately. Food and water are truly more valuable than oil. Let's leverage this commodity supremacy we have, and at the same time, tap our own plentiful energy resources to rid us of this sick dependence on those who seek our destruction.
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- "It is in such times of civil unrest that the world turns again to real goods and real people. We turn back to the very farmers we had turned our backs on during the past 50 years. The surviving world turns back to embrace the food commodities it desperately needs. There will be great demand and a small supply. Farmers shall rule the next several decades."*
- Floy Lilley, J.D., Auburn, Alabama 2010