Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network
Groundwater Education Legislative Breakfast
Thursday January 16th, 2019 8:00-9:30 am
Ferguson House (700 South 16th Street), Lincoln, Nebraska

Present:
Jane Griffin – Groundwater Foundation (GF), Ryan Chapman – Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE), Marty Link – NDEE, Jennifer Swanson – Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD), Mark Brohman – Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), Marilyn Tabor – NET, Tatiana Davila – NDEE, Sam Radford – NDEE, Andrew Kale – Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Sara Brock – GF, Dave Miesbach – NDEE, Aaron Hird – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Riley Hackbart – NRCS, Crystal Powers – Nebraska Water Center


Meeting Summary:
The Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network Groundwater Education Legislative Breakfast took place at the Ferguson House on Thursday, January 16th from 8:00 am to 10:00 am. The meeting was an opportunity for senators and their staff to learn about and discuss wellhead protection and groundwater issues in Nebraska with WHPN members. Refreshments and breakfast burritos were provided by Nebraska Association of Resource Districts.

At 8:10, Aaron Hird, Nebraska State Soil Health Specialist with the NRCS, talked about the importance of no-till and cover crop practices for the resiliency of soils. These best management practices allow the biological systems in the soil to build and retain structure, which in turn provides an environment where microbe and plant life can thrive. Having healthy, stable, and thriving soils solves many watershed issues including contaminant runoff, flooding and over-irrigation. Hird brought along soil samples from University of Nebraska – Lincoln research plots and demonstrated the differences in filtration rates, runoff, and loss of topsoil for conventional and no-till practices.

Dave Miesbach, NDEE, demonstrated the hydrologic cycle via a groundwater flow model built on a portable trailer. By adding a dye (contaminant) to the groundwater, the audience could see the effects of pressure changes (from pumping wells) on contaminant transport. He also demonstrated the risks of drilling a new, deeper well to seek clean water for a community when the shallow well is contaminated with nitrate. The risk is potentially providing a conduit for contaminants through an impermeable layer
to a deep aquifer. The flow model, formerly operated by UNL-Extension, is available for organizations to rent out from NDEE for educational events.

Folders containing prints of the poster displays and information on water protection programs and resources from NDEE and the Groundwater Foundation were provided for every senator. Those not in attendance received theirs in from the legislative mailroom inside the capitol.