



The Communicator

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'Sen. George Norris' to be special guest at Central District Water Users 2011 annual meeting



Dave Landis as Sen. George W. Norris. Landis has played the role of Sen. Norris in one-man shows since first appearing as the senator at a celebration of Nebraska's 125th anniversary in 1992.

**Tues., Feb. 8, 2011
at 1:30 p.m.**

**The Tassel
Performing Arts
Center**

**(just north of Holdrege
High School)**

The public is invited to join Central's irrigation customers for an inspirational one-man performance by Dave Landis, the former state senator who has received rave reviews for his portrayal of U.S. Sen. George Norris of McCook.

Sen. Norris was one of the most influential lawmakers in U.S. history and was among eight senators profiled in John F. Kennedy's 1955 book, *"Profiles in Courage."*



U.S. Sen. George W. Norris. Norris represented Nebraska in the House of Representatives from 1899-1913 and in the Senate from 1913-43. A skilled orator and tenacious legislator, Norris is best known as the "father of the TVA" and as co-author of the Rural Electrification Act of 1936.

Power and water are two resources that we simply can't do without. Fortunately, both are readily available today.

But that wasn't the case 75 years ago in most rural parts of Nebraska, until a small-town attorney turned U.S. senator embarked on a mission to banish the darkness that covered rural America.

Electricity was commonplace in America's cities and towns, but largely unavailable to rural parts of the county. Thanks to the efforts of a handful of leaders with a vision, electrical power would soon spread to virtually every farm and ranch in the nation.

One of these leaders was the aforementioned attorney from McCook, Sen.

George W. Norris (1861-1944). He was a co-sponsor of legislation introduced in the U.S. Senate in early 1936 to establish the Rural Electrification Administration. Congress passed the legislation in May of the same year and the powerful and productive benefits of electricity would soon change the lives

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'Sen. Norris' to speak at CDWU meeting *(continued from page 1)*

of Americans who lived on farms and ranches at a time when the rural population was much larger than it is today.

Norris is perhaps best known as the force behind the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority, a federal corporation created by Congress in 1933 to provide navigation, flood control, electricity generation, and economic development in the Tennessee Valley, a region hit hard by the Great Depression.

Norris had built such a rapport with Franklin Roosevelt that FDR reportedly signed the TVA bill without reading it, saying that if Norris approved of the legislation, there was no need to examine it further.

Norris is also known as the father of Nebraska's one-house legislature, the Unicameral. He reasoned, true to his Populist way of thinking, that discarding the traditional House/Senate form

of government in Nebraska gave the people a greater voice in government.

His contributions to the creation of The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District are perhaps not as well known, but the combination of irrigation water and electricity provided by the District in the early 1940s helped transform south-central Nebraska, particularly Phelps, Kearney and Gosper counties. Without Norris' assistance in Washington, D.C., it is conceivable that Central's project would never have been built.

First elected to the House of Representatives in 1899 and to the Senate in 1912, his accomplishments in Congress earned him recognition by most historians as one of the most influential lawmakers in American history.

To mark the 75th anniversary of the REA's creation and Sen. Norris' role in

bringing water and power to Nebraska, the Central District Water Users are sponsoring a performance by former state senator David Landis as Sen. Norris. Landis gives a remarkable performance as the senator, who was known for his eloquent and impassioned style of speaking.

The 40-minute performance is scheduled to start at 1:30 p.m., on Tues., Feb. 8 at The Tassel Performing Arts Center in Holdrege. The public is invited to attend. It is an opportunity to relive history in the words of Sen. Norris as he discusses two of our most important resources – power and water – that today are perhaps too much taken for granted.

Landis' performance will be immediately followed at The Tassel by a short business meeting for all CDWU members.



Sen. Norris among influential supporters of the "Tri-County Project" — Sen. George W. Norris was an early supporter of the plan to build an irrigation project in south-central Nebraska. Sen. Norris is shown here with a group of supporters touring the project area in 1931 (near the proposed site of the Plum Creek Reservoirs, which were dropped in favor of the site that would become Lake McConaughy). Left to right, W.C. Cooper, secretary of the Hastings Chamber of Commerce; Clark Mickey, civil engineering department at the University of Nebraska; Nebraska Congressman A.C. Shallenberger; Charles W. McConaughy, chairman of the Central Nebraska Supplemental Water Association (an organization that preceded formation of the Central District); Sen. Norris; Adolph Head, secretary of the Holdrege Chamber of Commerce; Nebraska Congressman J.N. Norton; Val Kuska, agricultural department agent for the Burlington Railroad; Fred R. Kingsley; and Charles W. Wallace, both board members with the Central Nebraska Supplemental Water Association.

Holdrege Water Conference

Thursday, Feb. 3

Phelps County Ag Center, Holdrege, Neb., 10:15 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Update on Local NRCS Programs - Kevin Breece, District Conservationist; and Curtis Scheele, Irrigation Water Management Specialist

Using Technology to Manage Pivots - Bill Kranz, UNL Irrigation Specialist

Consumptive Water Use - Derrell Martin, Professor of Biological Systems Engineering & Extension Specialist in Irrigation and Water Resources Engineering

Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs in Nebraska - Craig Derickson, NRCS State Conservationist

Climate Change - Tapan Pathak, UNL Extension Educator for Climate Variability and Climate Change

The 1935 Republican River Flood - Joy Hayden, National Weather Service

Small Hydropower in Nebraska - Eric Hixson, CNPPID Engineering Services Manager

Platte Basin Water Supply Update - Cory Steinke, CNPPID Civil Engineer

Aquifer and Groundwater Levels - John Thorburn, TBNRD Manager

No admission fee; lunch courtesy of conference sponsors: Holdrege Chamber of Commerce, The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, and :UNL Phelps-Gosper Extension

On the Lakefront

Central is providing eagle-watching opportunities to the public again this winter, and so far the viewing has been good. As of the third week of January, up to 30 bald eagles have been seen at both sites where Central provides viewing opportunities.

The facilities are located at the Johnson No. 2 (J-2) hydroplant near Lexington and in a building below Kingsley Dam. The facilities are open on Saturdays and Sundays through mid-February.

J-2, located south of Lexington near the

intersection of county roads 749 and 750, is open from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Kingsley facility, located below the south end of the dam, is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Central has been providing eagle-viewing opportunities at J-2 since 1988 and at Kingsley Dam since 1990. The eagles are attracted to feed on fish in the open water below the plants, particularly when rivers and lakes in the area are covered with ice.

Several factors influence the number of eagles near the facilities on any given day, including weather, ice cover on area lakes and rivers, how many eagles are wintering in the area, and whether the hydroplants are on-line. The best viewing time is normally earlier in the day. There is no charge to visit the facilities.

For more information, visit Central's Web page at www.cnppid.com or call (308) 995-8601.



The Central Nebraska Public Power
and Irrigation District
P.O. Box 740
Holdrege, NE 68949-0740

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Annual Water tour set for July 12-14

The annual UNL Water Center's Water and Natural Resources Tour will take place on July 12-14 with a focus on water issues in the Niobrara and Loup River basins.

"At this point, the organizing committee has a long list of possibilities for the three-day tour," said Michael Jess, tour co-organizer and host. "Time, distance and logistics will dictate the destinations that are included in the tour."

A final tour itinerary will be completed by early April, and the cost for tour

participants will be set.

Lodging for the two nights will likely be in Ainsworth and Valentine. An outdoor cookout in the Valentine area, as well as a tour of locally produced wine grapes and gourmet vinegars are being investigated.

"I expect participants will be exposed to project features and activities supported by three irrigation districts and two Natural Resources Districts," Jess said.

Additional features in the tour area could include the Niobrara Valley Preserve, Sargent Irrigation Co., UNL's Barta Brothers Ranch research station, Merritt Reservoir, Seven Springs Bottled Water Co., in Long Pine, Sandhills Implement Co., Ft. Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge and Snake River Falls Ranch, Jess said. A float trip on the Niobrara River is also being considered.

Issues related to the High Plains Aquifer will be covered on the tour. The

aquifer is one of the largest in the world — about 174,000 square miles in parts of eight states — and is relied upon for irrigated agriculture, drinking water and other uses.

Tour cosponsors are The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce, Gateway Farm Expo, UNL's Water Center and Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and others.

For updates on tour, check online at watercenter.unl.edu.

Information provided by Steve Ress, Communications Coordinator, UNL Water Center

<http://www.cnppid.com>

On the Web

Central's video, "Inside Nebraska's Water," can be viewed on-line at Central's web site. Learn more about the importance of sustainability of Nebraska's water resources at: www.cnppid.com

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