The year 2012 marks 40 years of protecting lives, property and future of natural resources for Nebraska's 23 natural resources districts.

Throughout 2012, the NRDs will be celebrating the success of projects and programs that help protect Nebraska's natural resources. NRDs are unique to Nebraska because they are governed by locally elected boards and Nebraska is the only state in the union to have this system. A handful of board members, managers and staff have been a part of the system since the NRD creation in 1972.

Sen. Maurice Kremer introduced and the Nebraska Legislature enacted Legislative Bill 1357 in 1969 to combine Nebraska's 154 special purpose entities into 24 natural resources districts by July, 1972.

The original 24 NRDs' boundaries were organized based on Nebraska's major river basins which allows for better management practices to be applied to similar topography. In 1989, the Middle Missouri NRD and the Papio NRD were merged into one, becoming the Papio-Missouri NRD which resulted in the current 23-NRD system.

"For the last 40 years, the 23 NRDs across the state have been addressing natural resources issues and concerns with local solutions," said Ron Bishop, who has been the manager at Central Platte NRD since 1972.

Natural resources districts were created to solve flood control, soil erosion, irrigation run-off, and groundwater quantity and quality issues. Nebraska's NRDs are involved in a wide variety of projects and programs to conserve and protect the state's natural resources. NRDs are charged under state law with 12 areas of responsibility including flood control, soil erosion, groundwater management and many others.

"While all NRDs share the 12 main responsibilities, each district sets its own priorities and develops its own programs to best serve local needs and to protect Nebraska's natural resources for the future generations" said Bishop.

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD), the trade association for Nebraska's 23 natural resources districts, works with individual NRDs to protect lives, protect property, and protect the future of Nebraska's natural resources.

These districts are unique to Nebraska. NRDs are local government entities with broad responsibilities to protect our natural resources. Major Nebraska river basins form the boundaries of the 23 NRDs, enabling districts to respond best to local conservation and resource management needs. To learn more about Nebraska NRDs visit www.nrdnet.org.