

Bruning Dam vandalized

Written by hebronjournal

Tuesday, 30 November 2010 20:00 - Last Updated Tuesday, 07 December 2010 21:16

Nebraska Natural Resource District general manager for the Thayer County area Mike Onnen released information about a damaged valve at the Bruning Dam. The damage was caused by vandals, he says. "It is senseless," Onnen said in a news release this week. "It is simply senseless that folks get their kicks from damaging public property. This project has served the area well from the standpoint of flood control and groundwater recharge."

The Bruning Dam has become a popular spot for sportsman over the years, particularly for duck hunters who enjoy the large water body and a good transient goose and duck migration during the fall. But this fall, duck hunters have witnessed a shrinking reservoir and fewer duck hunting opportunities.

Sometime this fall, vandals threw large chunks of concrete rubble down the riser of the dam and smashed the alfalfa valve which is used by the district in case repairs are needed on the structure. As a result, water has gushed through the broken valve for the last several weeks and repairs are impossible due to the pressure on the valve from the volume of water in the reservoir.

Onnen commented that an added benefit to the area is the 240 acres that are open for public hunting and fishing. "But such recreation opportunities will be limited in the months ahead because of the irresponsible actions of vandals," he said.

Little Blue NRD staff spent a day removing the concrete to expose the broken valve, then opened the valve the rest of the way to start drawing water out of the reservoir for repairs. Because there is no way to shut the water off with a broken valve, the reservoir will have to be completely drained before the valve can be replaced.

The county was also impacted by the vandalism. Thayer County Road Superintendent Dick Heinrichs had planned to replace a damaged Missouri crossing across Dry Sandy Creek near the county line, but with water flowing down the creek, construction was not feasible. "We have decided to wait until the lake is drawn down, but it will probably mean missing the fall construction season or taking a chance pouring concrete when the temperatures are much colder," Heinrichs added.

"It is not so much the cost of the valve," says Onnen. "Values are inexpensive in the big scheme of things, but the cost for employee time and equipment, lost groundwater recharge

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opportunities, lost construction options and lost hunting and fishing opportunities do have a negative impact on the whole community.”

The District is asking that anyone with information relating to the vandalism, should contact the NRD office at 402-364-2145.