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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Notice of Public Scoping Meeting for Box Butte Creek Watershed Plan and Environment Assessment

Media Contact: Patrick O'Brien, 308-432-6190, obrien@unwnrd.org

The Upper Niobrara White Natural Resources District (UNWNRD) has entered into an agreement to develop a watershed plan and environmental assessment document (Watershed Plan-EA) for the Box Butte Creek Watershed, under the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations program administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). As part of this process, UNWNRD is hosting an online public scoping meeting to inform the public of the project and to gather input on the most relevant issues. **The online public scoping meeting will be available from Tuesday, December 15, through Thursday, January 14, 2021 on the UNWNRD website:**

www.unwnrd.org

The Box Butte Creek Watershed Plan-EA study area is approximately 162,000 acres in northeast Box Butte County and west-central Sheridan County. The land is primarily agricultural and consists of grass/pasture and row crops. The Watershed Plan-EA will also partially cover the village of Hemingford, with a population of approximately 800.

Flooding in the Box Butte Creek Watershed has becoming a growing issue in recent years. Four major flooding events with watershed wide impacts have occurred in the last ten year, including both 2018 and 2019. Flooding of the Box Butte Creek during significant precipitation events impacts homesteads, fences, and agricultural land, and causes crop damages, excessive soil erosion, loss of agricultural land, degradation of water quality, and damage to both private property and public roads.

In addition, over the past 25 years, significant groundwater declines have occurred in the Box Butte Creek watershed. These declines have resulted in lost agricultural production, limits on existing and new groundwater uses, domestic and agricultural well modifications, and base stream flow reductions that have resulted in fish and wildlife impacts and degraded surface water quality.

The Watershed Plan-EA will help identify structural and non-structural alternatives to provide flood damage reduction and/or groundwater recharge while considering opportunities for fish and wildlife habitat and recreation.

This project is being evaluated in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NEPA process includes a written record of the analysis of potential impacts on the environment resulting from the proposed project. Impacts on both the natural and socioeconomic environment are evaluated.

If you or someone you know does not have internet access, information may be obtained through:

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Comments on the Watershed Plan-EA will be accepted through January 14, 2021 and can be submitted through the online public scoping meeting or the contacts above.