

INTERVIEW WITH MIKE CLEMENTS
BY JIM BARR
July 18, 2014

1 MR. BARR: This is Jim Barr. It's July 18th. I'm
2 in Alma, Nebraska, visiting with Mike Clements. And, Mike,
3 would you like to just give a little bit of a background on
4 your history and that sort of thing?

5 MR. CLEMENTS: Absolutely. Well, I grew up in the
6 area. I actually attended Riverton High School through the
7 tenth grade and then the high school closed and I did my
8 last two years at Franklin, so that's where I graduated a
9 long time ago. My grandfather farmed on the Republican
10 River just south of Riverton and my dad, early on, was
11 involved in the farming process. And then later on, he
12 became the postmaster down at Riverton. I went to Kearney
13 State College, got a degree in business administration. And
14 right out of college, went to work for the phone company.
15 Started off with Northwestern Bell, had a long career with
16 Bell, AT&T, Lucent Technologies, and when I finally left
17 back in 2001, I was the regional project manager for Lucent
18 Technologies. And at that point in time, after taking an
19 early retirement, I had a golden opportunity to come back
20 down to where my roots are. I'd been in Omaha for about 26
21 years. And so, I was very -- the good Lord blessed me and
22 gave me an opportunity with this job. Some people believed
23 in me, because quite frankly, somebody that had worked for
24 the Bell system and AT&T for 25 years doesn't have a whole
25 lot of past experience in natural resources. But this job

1 entails a lot of things. And there's a lot of public
2 speaking, a lot of PR, and a lot of other things that I felt
3 that I had some very good talents in. And a lot of it, I
4 had to learn on my own, which is the best way to do it. And
5 I won't say that the first year or two wasn't a struggle,
6 because it was. But after that, kind of got into a groove
7 and got comfortable and that's essentially kind of how I got
8 started. I came here in July of 2001, so I've been here for
9 just over 13 years now. And it was quite interesting,
10 because that was right about the time that things were
11 heating up once again, with Kansas and Colorado on the
12 Republican River. And I'm sure we will maybe talk more
13 about that later.

14 But I'm divorced. I have two beautiful daughters
15 that are married, live in Omaha, and I have five
16 grandchildren. So, I live right here in Alma and I'm very
17 involved in the community. Serve on the -- I'm the
18 president of the Harlan County Extension Board and I also
19 serve on the Alma City Council.

20 MR. BARR: What sort of thing -- well, first of
21 all, did you have any recollections of the NRD development
22 from your vantage point or any acquaintance with it at all
23 during that period of time? And, if so, just kind of
24 summarize it.

25 MR. CLEMENTS: Some, but not to -- I was

1 overwhelmed by, when I got here, about how little I really
2 did know what the NRDs do. I have some good friends, a real
3 good friend from Riverton, who was on the NRD board here at
4 the time, and visited with him, and he would, from time to
5 time, would kind of let me know some of the things that
6 they're involved with. It's a totally different world out
7 here as opposed to the Papio-Missouri in Omaha. I was,
8 again, kind of familiar with some of their projects down
9 there, because they have a lot of recreational sites and
10 such. But out here it's, like I said, it's a completely
11 different ballgame. And that's quite honestly, that's one
12 of the reasons for the creation of the NRDs to begin with is
13 local control. People do things maybe a little bit
14 different in south-central Nebraska than they do in
15 northeastern Nebraska or western Nebraska. And I think it's
16 worked out great.

17 MR. BARR: What were some of the NRD activities
18 that were ongoing about the time you started?

19 MR. CLEMENTS: Well, when I started, and I say
20 this and I don't want to say this in a negative manner, but
21 we have become, in the Republican Basin, we have been forced
22 to become more of a regulatory agency than a conservation
23 district, and that troubles me. We still -- I strive really
24 hard to hang on to the conservation programs and measures
25 that we are involved with, because we are still -- we still

1 have a tree program. We still have the NSWCP cost share,
2 chemigation, and all that other stuff. But the litigation
3 with Kansas and everything is the number one priority.

4 MR. BARR: What stage was that in when you
5 started? I was just trying to recollect.

6 MR. CLEMENTS: Kansas had already filed suit and
7 they were -- when I started was right about the time that
8 the Special Master suggested that the two states try and
9 reach a settlement agreement. And that's when that process
10 really got started. And that went on, like I said, I
11 started in '01. The settlement agreement was reached in
12 late 2002. And as everybody knows, I think Nebraska kind of
13 come out a little bit on the short end of the stick when it
14 come to that, but it is what it is, and we can't change it.
15 And, you know, we're moving forward and we're doing
16 everything that we can to make sure that we stay in
17 compliance with that settlement agreement.

18 MR. BARR: Do you want to just kind of recount
19 some of the things that have happened over that period,
20 particularly in relation to the Kansas discussions and
21 lawsuits?

22 MR. CLEMENTS: Absolutely.

23 MR. BARR: You can go on as long as you want to.

24 MR. CLEMENTS: Well, it's interesting, because
25 in -- because of the settlement -- let me back up and just

1 say a couple of things about the settlement. Really, what
2 it really affected was primarily the accounting procedures
3 that apply. The big hit, I guess, what Nebraska had
4 contended all along was that there was no connection between
5 surface water and groundwater. We recognize the connection
6 in the alluvial, but not from the Upland Basin. And when
7 the Court ruled that there is and that the consumptive use
8 from all wells that are hydrologically connected to the
9 Republican River must be counted. Prior to that, it was
10 only -- it was essentially municipal usage, evaporation, and
11 consumptive use of alluvial wells that was primarily
12 counted. With the settlement agreement, we threw in all
13 wells. And at that -- with that ruling also came the fact
14 that, hey, there needs to be some way of tracking this
15 usage. So, the three states went together, hired a number
16 of consultants, and put together a groundwater model in less
17 than a year's time that all three states agreed to and that
18 we're abiding by to this day. Is it 100 percent accurate?
19 Absolutely not. But there are flaws in the model and the
20 most recent litigation with Kansas, Nebraska pointed out a
21 major flaw that will be corrected.

22 But anyway, so because of the settlement
23 agreement, in December 9th of 2002, our district implemented
24 a moratorium on drilling any new irrigation wells. And that
25 was quite a deal back then as you can well imagine. But I

1 will take my hat off to the producers of this region,
2 because they have adapted very well. And it's been just one
3 thing right after another, and every time -- they don't like
4 it, but they've learned to live with it. And so then,
5 because of LB 962, in December of 2004, we implemented a
6 moratorium on developing any new irrigated acres. Right
7 about that same time, in 2004, we certified all of our
8 irrigated acres. A major process. We got that 327,000
9 acres, you set down with each and every landowner in the
10 district and you go through maps and aerial photos, and I
11 still take my hat off to all my staff, my field office
12 secretaries that were very involved in this process.

13 Since that time, we have -- we still have all the
14 old maps and everything that we use a lot, but we have
15 digitized all that to where we have it on computer. But
16 anyway, we did that, we got that process done, and then, we
17 developed -- our district developed one of the first
18 integrated management plans in the state of Nebraska in
19 conjunction with the Middle and the Upper Republican NRDs.
20 We were all about the same time. And that was in 2005. It
21 became a -- it was a three-year plan. It ran for '05, '6,
22 and '7. And that particular plan, it was kind of unique.
23 Highway 183, which runs through Alma, is about in the middle
24 of our district, and we had a split allocation. If you were
25 west of 183, you had 12 inches a year for three years, for a

1 total of a 36-inch allocation. If you were east, you had
2 11, simply because of the differing rainfall amounts as you
3 move from east to west. We had that, like I said, '5, '6,
4 and '7. And what you have to realize is, we're still in a
5 severe drought in 2005 and started to come out of it a
6 little bit in '06, and then, '07, things really turned
7 around. But when you're going from essentially no
8 regulation to pretty drastic regulation, it takes a while to
9 adapt and it takes a while for you to really see the
10 measures that you put in place, particularly when you're
11 regulating groundwater. I mean, you don't shut a well down
12 or cut it back and see an immediate impact on the river
13 unless it's setting 50 feet from the bank of the river.
14 So, I think the things that we did with that first
15 integrated management plan did work. I think that we were a
16 bit -- and the Middle and the Upper River in the same boat,
17 a little bit behind the eight ball because of the severity
18 of the drought. And needless to say, Nebraska did overuse
19 our allocation in 2005 and 2006. And I can talk a little
20 bit more about that as I get further down the road here.

21 But in 2008, we introduced, approved our second
22 generation, if you will, integrated management plan. And
23 that was a five-year plan. That was one of the things that
24 the producers said, we'd like to see a little bit longer as
25 far as allowing us to be able to plan our operations, which

1 I totally agree with, too. And so, that went from '8, '9,
2 '10, '11, and '12. 2012 was the last year. We did cut the
3 allocations back and we did eliminate the divide in the
4 middle of the district. We went with nine inches
5 district-wide. And again, producers, they adapted.

6 The Republican Basin is probably 95 percent, in
7 our district, 95 percent no-till. We're light years ahead
8 of other parts of the state. You don't even have to get
9 very far north of here or east of here to see a lot of
10 tillage. And it just -- it's one of the things that the
11 guys had to do down here to conserve water. Nine inches on
12 the east end of the district in most years is plenty. When
13 you get on the west end of the district, it's deficit
14 irrigation, unless we've got average or above average
15 rainfall.

16 So, the second generation integrated management
17 plan, that was the big change was cutting the allocations
18 back. We made some other minor adjustments in the plan, but
19 that was pretty much it. Then in late 2012, we came out
20 with our third generation, which, you know, five-year plan
21 runs for '13, '14, '15, '16, and '17. And that plan
22 essentially made some -- we made some major modifications in
23 how we're going to manage groundwater in drought situations.
24 And this is -- we work closely with the Department of
25 Natural Resources to come up with -- you've heard of the

1 terminology water-short year. Well, there's one step beyond
2 that and that is a compact call year, where the Department
3 will determine whether or not a particular district is in
4 the red or in the black for a particular year. And this
5 plan addresses all that, how we're going to handle it. It
6 even goes as far -- it acknowledges augmentation projects,
7 dry year leasing programs, various things that we can do
8 before we would ever have to get to shutting a well off.
9 And it does address that, too. Worst case scenario, if
10 everything that we have in place is still not enough to meet
11 a short-fall for a particular year, rapid response wells
12 will be shut off. And I pray to God that that's something
13 that we never have to do. We were this close to it, very
14 close to it this year, and if we would not have had our
15 N-CORPE project in place when we got it in place, there
16 would have been -- all of the rapid response wells in our
17 district would have been off this year.

18 But the new integrated management plans, I think,
19 were instrumental in helping Nebraska defend herself against
20 a second lawsuit that was brought forward by Kansas because
21 of the overuse of water by Nebraska in 2005 and 2006. And
22 that second Supreme Court trial was held in Portland, Maine,
23 in August of 2012. And I was going to go out, but I got
24 subpoenaed by Kansas so that solidified the fact that I
25 would be there. I'd planned on sitting a little further

1 back in the courtroom --

2 (Laughter.)

3 -- than where I had to sit for a couple of hours
4 one day. But I just can't say enough about Nebraska
5 Attorney General's Office and the outside legal counsel that
6 they had helping them. They just did an outstanding job.
7 Very prepared. Out-performed Kansas. I mean, it was just
8 unbelievable the job that they did.

9 MR. BARR: Do you want to mention a name or two?

10 MR. CLEMENTS: Yeah, Justin Lavene, Don Blankenau,
11 Tom Wilmoth. They're the three that carried the ball for
12 the State of Nebraska. And as I said, throughout that
13 trial, I think what Nebraska was able to convince to the
14 Special Master was, we have -- these NRDs down here have a
15 third generation integrated management plan that has very
16 drastic measures in it. And we need to give these plans a
17 chance to work. We were just rolling them out. They were
18 going -- they rolled out in 2013. This trial takes place in
19 2012. And the Special Master bought into it. And there was
20 essentially -- the main issues that were on the table was
21 Kansas wanted 80- -- actually, it was up to \$85 million in
22 damages. Kansas wanted to see 300,000 groundwater irrigated
23 acres in the Republican Basin shut off permanently. Not in
24 water-short years, not in compact call years, permanently.
25 And also, Kansas wanted the appointment of a river master to

1 the Republican Basin. And then, it was quite unique,
2 because Nebraska brought a major issue to the table, too,
3 because we had found probably four or five years ago, a
4 major flaw in the accounting and how the imported water that
5 comes into the district from the Platte was counted -- the
6 consumptive use of that water, any of that water that's
7 pumped should not be counted as a consumptive use because
8 it's not water that originated here. And the accounting has
9 it, as it's doing as we speak, it's still counting that.
10 And so, that was a flaw that cost Nebraska anywhere from 10-
11 to 16,000 acre feet every year over a higher consumptive use
12 number than what we really should have. And at the end of
13 the day, when the Special Master made his final ruling, he
14 awarded Kansas five million dollars in damages, not 85. He
15 dismissed their contention of shutting off 300,000 acres
16 permanently. He dismissed the appointment of a river
17 master. And he ruled in favor of Nebraska on the accounting
18 problem, said it should be corrected back to 2007, and said
19 we should use the formula that Nebraska has developed to
20 correct the problem. And so, that was huge. That was his
21 final recommendation to the Supreme Court. That came out
22 last September, and we're just waiting -- the Supreme Court
23 can allow oral arguments, if they -- the high court
24 actually, before the high court, and I just found out a
25 couple days ago that they are going to do that. And it's

1 October 14th at 10:00 a.m. And I think each state will have
2 about 30 minutes to go up before the Court. And obviously,
3 Kansas was pressing for this, because they lost on the
4 Special Master rulings. So, that's kind of where we're at.
5 I expect a final ruling from the Court in -- hopefully, by
6 the first of the year, but probably early on in 2015.

7 As all of this was taking place in September of
8 2012, at our fall convention that the NRDs have every year
9 in Kearney, we learned of a property out by North Platte,
10 Nebraska, a large, essentially one-owner property. It was
11 owned by a group of out-of-state investors, that was about
12 12 miles southwest of North Platte, that was for sale. And
13 19,500 total acres, of that about 16,000 irrigated acres.
14 Immediately, the light went on and the three managers,
15 myself, Jasper Fanning, and Dan Smith at the time for the
16 Middle Republican, sat down, started talking about it that
17 very day that we learned of this. And this thing escalated.
18 The next thing you know, we've brought in a partner from the
19 Platte, the Twin Platte. And we had the property purchased
20 by November and were ready to let bids and start
21 construction by late December or early January. The
22 purchase price of the property was \$82 million. We were
23 able to buy it for about four million under the appraised
24 value. There were two other parties that were interested in
25 the property. We were able to get it bought. We were just

1 at the point to where we were going to issue bonds for the
2 purchase price of the property when we got sued by two
3 irrigation districts down here, the Frenchman-Cambridge
4 Irrigation District and the Bostwick Irrigation District.
5 And that lawsuit was filed in late December. Well,
6 obviously, you can't issue bonds when you're in litigation.
7 Nobody will write those. So, that really -- that lawsuit
8 held this project up almost an entire year before we got
9 a -- before the suit was dismissed in district court --
10 federal court, I should say. And so, we actually got
11 started on the construction phase in the fall, late fall,
12 October of 2013. And by April -- actually, by mid-March of
13 2014, it was pretty much done on the Republican side.
14 There's still -- the Platte still hasn't run their pipeline.
15 Obviously, we had a few minor issues that we had to work
16 out, but all 30 wells that are supplying the water to the
17 project were operating at 100 percent by mid-April and they
18 have been since then. We spent, on the Republican side, an
19 additional about \$16 million on developing the well field,
20 the infrastructure in the well field, and the 42-inch
21 diameter pipeline that went south about five miles to
22 Madison Creek. On the Platte side, they're also going to be
23 spending close to \$20 million on running the pipeline
24 approximately ten miles to the Platte River. So, all in
25 all, the total project is coming in at about \$120 million.

1 We have bonded the money we've spent for the purchase of the
2 property. We've bonded the money we spent for the
3 development of the well field. And we have bonded the money
4 that we had tied up in interim financing.

5 The unfortunate thing is the litigation cost us
6 about a percentage point on issuing the bonds. And so, it
7 ended up costing us -- when you look at a 25-year term, one
8 percent, I'm not going to tell you exactly how much, but it
9 was several million dollars. But anyway, that's -- it is
10 what it is. The project is moving forward. And had we, for
11 the Lower Republican and for the Middle Republican, as well,
12 but I'll just speak for our district, for the Lower
13 Republican, had we not had this project online this year
14 when we did, if I didn't say it before, we would have been
15 shutting off all of the rapid response wells in our district
16 in the summer of 2014. So, it was huge to us. The project
17 is paid for by the irrigators with a \$10 an acre occupation
18 tax. And obviously, they're the prime beneficiaries of
19 this, although everybody benefits from this. Main Street
20 Alma benefits from this. But the irrigators are paying the
21 lion's share of it.

22 MR. BARR: What's the project do on the Twin
23 Platte area?

24 MR. CLEMENTS: Okay. On the Twin Platte, and I
25 didn't explain either how much we can pump out of that. On

1 the Republican side, at full capacity, we can pump 60,000
2 acre feet a year. On the Platte side, they are going to
3 need about 7,500 acre feet every year. And it's for the
4 Platte River Implementation and Recovery Program. They do
5 not need that until 2016, so that construction's going to
6 take place next year. But they need a steady supply of
7 7,500 acre feet. A little different situation on the
8 Republican side. We're hoping that on average we only need
9 to pump it one out of every three years, but that remains to
10 be seen. The whole purpose is to not pump any more water
11 than what was historically being pumped onto the crops year
12 after year after year.

13 MR. BARR: This is a fairly sensitive recorder.

14 MR. CLEMENTS: I'm sorry, we should have --

15 MR. BARR: No problem. I think it'll be all
16 right. It generally just gets what's in front of us here.

17 If all goes well, do you think this is kind of the
18 pattern that we're going to see that we've got ways to react
19 to the problems as they come up?

20 MR. CLEMENTS: I do.

21 MR. BARR: In at least average and unremarkable
22 drought periods. But I suppose there may be some years that
23 even exceed this possibility.

24 MR. CLEMENTS: I think, and I've said this many
25 times before, there's no silver bullet that's going to be

1 the answer to everything, and that includes N-CORPE, the
2 Upper Rock Creek Augmentation Project. I think it takes a
3 combination of a lot of different things. And that's where
4 I get back to the management actions that we've implemented
5 back in 2005. We're seeing results from that today. And
6 it's cutting back on groundwater pumping, and it's doing a
7 combination of things, of management. Dry Year Lease
8 Program, we've had two very successful back-to-back years
9 with that where we temporarily retired 4,000 acres and we
10 did the same 4,000 the second year and got twice the bang
11 for our buck.

12 So, things like that, the CREP program, EQIP
13 program, Irrigated to Dry, the AWEP program, which was
14 wonderful. We were fortunate enough to get a \$4 million
15 grant. We had to put a million in for match, and we retired
16 thousands of acres permanently. That particular program had
17 a permanent or a temporary retirement.

18 MR. BARR: What does that stand for, AWEP?

19 MR. CLEMENTS: Agricultural Water Enhancement
20 Program.

21 MR. BARR: And that is run by?

22 MR. CLEMENTS: It's USDA. You would be very
23 familiar with that.

24 MR. BARR: Well, the transcriber (indiscernible).

25 (Laughter.)

1 MR. CLEMENTS: I can't say enough about our
2 involvement with the USDA and with NRCS and with FSA.
3 Obviously, the CREP program was the FSA's, was their baby.
4 I was fortunate enough to be on the advisory committee when
5 that particular program was developed, and I was actually
6 fortunate enough to be with the individual whose idea it was
7 to begin with one afternoon on the golf course. His name is
8 Bob Bettger.

9 MR. BARR: Oh, sure.

10 MR. CLEMENTS: And it was his idea. And it just
11 took off from there.

12 MR. BARR: He was in a position to work with his
13 boss on that, Tom Osborne.

14 MR. CLEMENTS: Yes. Had it not been for them, we
15 would not have seen CREP as it existed today, because we
16 used it for a different purpose than what it had been used
17 previously. But getting back to your question, you know,
18 all of these other things, we still need to have in place.
19 And then, if we can put, the big kicker, if you will,
20 something that we can use when we really get into a severe
21 drought, because when we're in a normal weather pattern,
22 we're not going to need to pump this. If we'd have had the
23 N-CORPE project in 2007, '8, '9, '10, and '11, there's five
24 years in a row that we would not have pumped. So, it's
25 just -- and the nice thing about N-CORPE Rock Creek is you

1 see an immediate benefit from a measurable -- immediate
2 measurable benefit. Whereas, if you're regulating wells,
3 you're at the mercy of the groundwater model. And, you
4 know, not to say that the models aren't tremendous tools,
5 but --

6 MR. BARR: Is there work going on in terms of the
7 evaluation of the models and --

8 MR. CLEMENTS: Obviously, the latest thing is
9 correcting the problem, but as far as other things, I'll be
10 honest with you. It's really difficult to get all three
11 states to agree to anything, because they're so protective
12 that, "Well, if you're going to change that, is that really
13 going to help us or hurt us?" I don't see a lot of ongoing
14 work to fix the problems.

15 MR. BARR: You mentioned earlier that close to 95
16 percent of the cropland is no till.

17 MR. CLEMENTS: Yes.

18 MR. BARR: What other changes in agricultural
19 practices have you seen in the course of the 15 years or
20 whatever?

21 MR. CLEMENTS: Well, obviously, the big change is
22 converting from gravity to pivot. Just huge. When I came
23 down here, I would say there was probably more gravity than
24 pivot in 2001. That has just completely turned around and
25 being more efficient. And when you look at that, there's

1 two sides of that, too, because there's -- not that we're
2 not all for the pivots, because we are, but when you have a
3 pivot, you have less runoff, and when you have less runoff,
4 the Republican River is a runoff river. And so that's
5 another reason why you don't see the flows like you did,
6 even, 15 or 20 years ago. Like I said, the pivots are huge.
7 We have even seen conversion to subsurface drip, not to the
8 extent that we -- that I thought it would be at this point
9 in time, and I think we're still looking at a cost factor
10 and some issues with rodents and other things. But we have
11 a substantial number of drip systems in our district. I'd
12 say those two things coupled with the no-till farming
13 practices, and seeing guys going into rotations where -- or
14 going into a corn, beans, wheat type of a pattern. We're
15 seeing a number of people doing that rather than just corn
16 on corn on corn every year. And there's a lot of added
17 benefits to that, too, from a conservation standpoint.

18 MR. BARR: Just talked with a producer who's using
19 peas and a wheat follow-up.

20 MR. CLEMENTS: I've heard about that and I've
21 heard -- that'll be interesting to see how that turns out.

22 MR. BARR: He said last year his peas -- dryland
23 peas made a little better than his dryland beans. And the
24 interesting thing is that the water requirement is in a
25 different time of the year than -- the beans take a good

1 share of it towards the end.

2 MR. CLEMENTS: Right. So, the peas take it --

3 MR. BARR: He's harvesting now. So, I mean, there
4 won't take much after this until it's put wheat.

5 MR. CLEMENTS: So, they have local markets for
6 those, then?

7 MR. BARR: No, that's a problem. He has one,
8 because he's doing it for seed, but I think Gering or
9 Scottsbluff is the closest market, so that is a problem.
10 But I don't know, if this develops, that might be something
11 that could develop in a more local situation, too.

12 MR. CLEMENTS: Absolutely.

13 MR. BARR: That's a pretty good description on
14 what's happened on the Kansas situation. Do you want to
15 have any thoughts on how that's affected the rest of the
16 operation of NRD, other programs or projects or how those
17 had developed in that period, too?

18 MR. CLEMENTS: Yeah. Obviously, we -- my staff
19 has grown tremendously from when I started and we were in
20 the basement of the courthouse here in Alma, Nebraska.
21 We've grown to -- we've got 12 full-time people at the
22 essentially working for the district, eight full-time people
23 here at the district office. And we had some other things,
24 too. We had another major event that happened, I think. We
25 developed our rural water project back in 2004. Huge to

1 this area. It took a lot of time and a lot of effort for
2 several years to get this thing to happen. And that was a
3 major star for our district. And we provide -- we started
4 off with 120 users, and the system is up to 180, as we speak
5 today. So, we've grown.

6 MR. BARR: What general area does that cover?

7 MR. CLEMENTS: It goes, basically, from three
8 miles west of Franklin to about seven miles east of Guide
9 Rock. So, it's about 45 miles long, about eight miles wide,
10 and it goes right down the river valley. It goes to the
11 state line, and then we have some connections just north of
12 Highway 136. But that's kind of where it goes, right down
13 the valley. A number of reasons for developing the project.
14 You know, we had nitrate problems, okra problems, that's one
15 of the main issues. And then, even quantity problems in
16 some areas where guys couldn't even get good domestic wells
17 for their house and livestock. So, we developed that. It's
18 been a huge success. We've really, really tried to -- very
19 hard to continue on with the conservation measures and the
20 other programs that we have going on. And there is more
21 than just dealing with Kansas and regulating wells. That's
22 our number one responsibility. But, you know, we're
23 involved -- right now our guys -- I have three full-time
24 field technicians. When I started in 2001, we had one. I
25 have an administrative assistant that handles a lot of my

1 correspondence and stuff for me, as well as she handles all
2 of our board meeting criteria. We have a full-time water
3 resources administrator who has a lot of responsibility, and
4 she's in charge of tracking all the water usage. I have an
5 information and education person that also serves as our
6 rural water secretary, and three field technicians, and an
7 assistant manager all here at the district office. And
8 then, we have field office secretaries in four of the NRCS
9 offices in our district.

10 But we've still very involved in, like I said,
11 we're doing chemigation right now. We measure about 300
12 wells every spring to -- for static water level
13 measurements. We take water samples on about 280 wells
14 every -- throughout the summer to check for nitrates. We're
15 just -- these are the kinds of conservation issues that the
16 district is involved with. We still plant trees. We sold
17 over 22,000 trees this year, which was good. You say that,
18 you know, 20 years ago, we were selling 60, but those times
19 have changed. And so, we are very -- promoting the Nebraska
20 Soil and Water Conservation program. We have cost
21 share -- we provide cost share for that, which will help pay
22 for buried pipeline, pivot points, or dugouts, you know, a
23 number of different things that we cover with that
24 particular program.

25 MR. BARR: You've also had a fairly close working

1 relationship with the other two NRDs haven't you? What sort
2 of developments have happened as, not only the Nebraska
3 side, but perhaps maybe there's some Kansas connection, I
4 don't know.

5 MR. CLEMENTS: I've worked very, very closely with
6 the Middle and the Upper Republican. And, you know, I'm so
7 proud of my board and I'm so proud of, particularly, the
8 board at the Upper Republican, because, as you well know,
9 you go back a few years, we were not always good neighbors.
10 I don't know if that's the right way to put it, but we were
11 able to see that maybe some things needed to be changed and
12 we needed to be more open-minded about some of the things
13 what we're involved with and how we work together. And over
14 the course of the last few years, we've really, really
15 become strong allies, good partners, and we're in N-CORPE
16 with the Middle and Upper end, and Twin Platte NRD. And I
17 can't say enough about how good we work together. We have a
18 great communication between the managers. And, you know,
19 it's just the reflection on what we can do if we really want
20 to try. We can fold up and crawl into a shell and just want
21 to protect our own turf, or we can try and be more creative
22 and work together as a group. And I think one of the things
23 that is going to be coming up here now, because of
24 legislation that was passed just this year, is the
25 implementation of a basin-wide integrated management plan.

1 And we're going to be working very closely with the Lower,
2 the Middle, the Upper, and Tri-Basin, and the Department of
3 Natural Resources. And I think, most importantly, a number
4 of stakeholders that will be involved in developing these
5 basin-wide plans that include a wide array of individuals
6 and organizations.

7 MR. BARR: Well, at this point, I don't have any
8 more specific questions, but we have this reflection
9 question of if you have any thoughts on this general area or
10 anything else you'd like to add to the interview, this is
11 the time to do it.

12 MR. CLEMENTS: I guess I would just close in
13 saying that as I've stated in the past, you know, we need to
14 still hang on to our conservation district as much as we
15 can. And I've really tried very hard to make sure that
16 we've been able to do that, because, like I said, Kansas is
17 always there. Regulating wells is always there. And that's
18 always been our number one priority and it still is. But
19 there's a lot of other good things that we do that I don't
20 want to lose. And I think that my message to the producers
21 is keep doing what you're doing. You guys are tremendous,
22 you're creative. And I will commit to working as hard as I
23 can to make this district successful.

24 MR. BARR: Well, thank you very much.

25 MR. CLEMENTS: Jim, thank you.