

PRAIRIE IN PROGRESS

Monarch butterflies are in trouble. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates about 970 million monarchs have vanished since 1990. Why is this happening, and what is being done to save the species?

Scientists say the sharp decline coincides with the depletion of the milkweed plant; widespread pesticide use has largely eradicated the plant. Milkweed is essential to the monarch since it is where the butterflies lay their eggs and is the only food their caterpillars will eat.

In Nebraska and Iowa, monarch refuges are popping up, including at several Omaha Public Power District and Nebraska Public Power District locations.

In April and May, groups of volunteers from OPPD helped spread seed mix at a "Prairie in Progress" site being restored near the utility's Nebraska City Station. At the OPPD Arboretum in Omaha, 2,000 pollinator plant plugs were installed for a pollinator garden.

Prairies in planning

OPPD is expanding its prairie presence at three locations and plans to add more locations in the future.

Fort Calhoun Station

Site has restored prairie habitat and is adding 70 acres.

OPPD property 142nd and State Street

Prairie habitat will be planted on 20 acres near Bennington in 2018.

Nebraska City Station

Prairie habitat will be planted on 70 acres in 2018.

260 acres of OPPD property will eventually be converted into natural prairie

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETINGS

Committee: Tuesday, September 11, 8:30 a.m., Energy Plaza, 444 S. 16th St., Omaha. **Regular board meeting:** Thursday, September 13, 4 p.m., same location. Hearing-impaired may call 402-636-3208, 72 hours prior to request an interpreter. Meetings are livestreamed online at oppd.com.

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Flurry of road projects keeping OPPD crews busy



Development, growth drive need for wider roads in parts of the metro, which involves work by OPPD.

Like other parts of OPPD's service area, Omaha is growing.

If there was any doubt, drive west and north to see several major road construction projects underway to accommodate increased traffic. That also means it's a busy time for OPPD crews.

As highways are repaved and major thoroughfares are widened, relocating electrical equipment is often necessary.

It also takes good coordination and communication between contractors, cities, counties, the state and OPPD to make sure the projects are completed on time and within budget.

The following is a sampling of current roads projects involving OPPD. Most require relocating electrical equipment to allow for street-widening and intersection

improvements.

- 114th Street, Pacific to Burke
- 144th Street for West Farm development
- 168th Street from West Dodge Road to Maple Street
- 132nd Street and West Center Road
- 156th Street north of Dodge (in preparation for future improvements)

Todd McLochlin, manager of utilities and right of way coordination at OPPD, said it is unusual for road projects to be concentrated in one area, as they are usually spread out across the metro. But with the development occurring in this area, there was more of an urgent need to address work.

"We will work with the cities and counties to get a design on

the roads four to six years before construction even starts," he said.

OPPD gets involved at the design phase, when the utility identifies infrastructure in the area and communicates what work would need to be done. That can help

the city, county or state adjust their design. The same is done with infrastructure for water, gas and cable companies, among others.

The early involvement helps reduce costs for taxpayers and utility customers alike.

Farm safety is key in summer



Farmers are active in the fields right now, planting, spraying and caring for their crops. But they should also be sure to look up, look out and look around for electrical equipment.

Summer is a good time to review safety precautions. Some suggestions:

- If you are doing any digging, be sure to call Nebraska 811 for locating services.
- Don't stack hay or round bales near electrical lines to avoid electrical contact with hay loaders or other moving equipment.

- Always lower arms and attachments on equipment when moving from field to field.
- Be aware of the location of anchors for overhead power lines.

- When moving farm equipment, know the loaded height of the trucks and equipment so contact isn't made.

Regardless of the time of year, never approach a downed power line. If a line does come down while you are operating machinery, DO NOT leave the equipment. Call 911 and OPPD immediately so they can help you exit safely.

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