



Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership Top FAQs



Q1: Does the Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership plan to build 29 dams in the metro Omaha area?

A1: This speculation is one of the most significant errors in fact being reported by area news media sources and other individuals about the various studies and policies being promoted by the Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership over the past six years.

Neither the Partnership nor any of its individual member jurisdictions, including the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, has initiated, approved or funded any plans or authorized the construction or land acquisitions to build 29 dams.

Several types of studies have been authorized to determine the best approaches for improving water quality and preventing flooding in our watershed. Low impact development, water quality basins and water detention are receiving thorough analysis and consideration to keep our watershed safe and clean. This involves scientific examination of the hydrological conditions and potential options throughout the watershed to meet current and future watershed management needs.

This speculation appears to have resulted from the inaccurate use of the word “plan” as part of a label put on a single Partnership water quality basin and water detention study map drafted in 2006. A conceptual study map is not a plan, and it is inaccurate to characterize a study map as a plan. Additionally, none of the studies funded by the Partnership concluded that 29 dams should be built.

In summary, there is currently no plan to build a certain number of dams. Virtually every jurisdiction of the Partnership, including the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District, has denounced this speculation as unfounded. All options for water quality improvement and flood prevention are being studied and openly discussed with the public and area governmental jurisdictions.

Q2: Is the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District leading and directing the Partnership?

A2: The Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership is a collaboration among 11 local jurisdictions to meet the mutual water quality and flood prevention needs affecting our communities across the watershed. The local jurisdictions include the cities of Bellevue, Bennington, Boys Town, Gretna, La Vista, Omaha, Papillion and Ralston, and Douglas and Sarpy counties. Each jurisdiction contributes funds for the studies conducted on their behalf. Each jurisdiction has an equal say in the studies and policies being developed together.

The Papio-Missouri Natural Resource District serves in a voluntary capacity as the administrative agent for the Partnership’s activities.

Q3: Why are people saying that the Partnership was established only to examine water quality needs to help jurisdictions meet EPA permit requirements?

A3: The EPA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit requirements were the initial rationale for most of the jurisdictions within the Papillion Creek Watershed to establish the Partnership. Jurisdictions saw the need to pool resources and expertise to fulfill EPA requirements. It is important to note that NPDES requires both water quality and water quantity issues to be addressed. Improving water quality includes examining water quantity. The volume and speed of water flow directly affects how much and how quickly pollution is carried into our waterways.

Once the Partnership examined the watershed implications from current and projected land uses on both water quality and flood prevention, it was clear that a comprehensive set of regional policies

were vital to keeping the watershed green, clean and safe.

In addition to its recommended watershed management policies, the Partnership is studying a range of methods to help address water quality, flood prevention and land use needs including low impact development, water quality basins and water detention sites. Each option provides a varying range of benefit to meet water quality and quantity goals and the desire to be good stewards of the environment.

It is the mission of the Partnership to address issues related to surface water quality and stormwater quantity in the Watershed by establishing goals and standards common to the region for development within the Watershed through 2040.

Q4: Will the Partnership attempt to use eminent domain to build any water quality or flood prevention improvements?

A4: The Partnership is a cooperative working group of representatives from 11 independent governmental jurisdictions within the Papillion Creek Watershed. The Partnership has no governmental authority to buy land, issue construction bonds or build anything. Each jurisdiction must work within its own authority to address water quality, land use and flood prevention needs within its boundaries.

There are many examples throughout the watershed of low impact development, water quality basins and water detention sites being created without the use of eminent domain. It would be inappropriate for the Partnership to speculate if or when eminent domain would be considered by a jurisdiction.

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Q5: How will the new West Papillion Creek floodplain maps presented by FEMA affect my community?

A5: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recently released the first major draft update for the Omaha-area flood maps in decades.

The immediate effects of these maps are as follows:

- Hundreds of additional properties along the West Papillion Creek are shown to be at risk of flooding. The properties include homes, businesses, office buildings and industrial facilities.
- Approximately 900 properties within Douglas and Sarpy County may be required to buy federal flood insurance as a result of these FEMA maps.

Q6: Why haven't all the governmental jurisdictions that are part of the Partnership adopted the Partnership's policies?

The Partnership is committed to finding the best solutions for our watershed. With participation from 11 governmental jurisdictions, the Partnership determines best solutions for water quality improvement and flood prevention based on consensus among representatives from all 11 partners. All partners have agreed to this approach. While the Partnership creates proposed policies and plans for recommended adoption by area governments, each jurisdiction is autonomous and decides whether to adopt the common policies as its own.

Q7. Why isn't Washington County part of the Partnership since it is in the watershed?

Washington County, the northern part of the watershed, has chosen to not participate in the Partnership. The Partnership welcomes all governments in the watershed to participate.

Washington County is currently not heavily urbanized and not mandated by EPA to have stormwater NPDES permits at this time.

