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“City plants trees to protect wellfield”



City of Norfolk Water Plant staff member Jim Wichman checks the condition of a tree seedling in a newly planted forest on a well field southwest of Norfolk.

City of Norfolk Water Division staff members are usually kept busy checking pipes, monitoring wells and maintaining water plant equipment. This summer another water quality task has been added to their duties - taking care of new trees.

About 275 seedlings were planted on well field property southwest of the West Water Treatment plant this spring. The Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District paid for 75 per cent of the cost of the trees through a grant given to the City last fall. In April, native grasses were planted on 25 acres of

the land. Various species of seedlings were then planted in May including Black Hills Spruce, Black Walnut, Bur Oak, Sycamore, Hackberry, Kentucky Coffee Tree, White Oak, Ponderosa Pine and Jack Pine.

Dr. G. Tom Surber, chair of the City of Norfolk Tree Advisory Board that applied for the grant, said the purpose of planting the trees on the wellfield was to help protect groundwater supplies.

“Trees absorb excess nutrients out of the soil. They filter out pollutants from the surface sources before they reach the water table. The trees planted here will also prevent erosion and promote wildlife,” Surber said.

After the trees were planted, Water Division staff placed a five gallon plastic bucket near each tree to keep it watered. A piece of bent rebar stuck into the bottom of the bucket keeps it from blowing away and also makes a large enough hole so it takes a couple of days for a full bucket of water to drain into the soil and slowly water the tree.

The buckets can be seen from the Cowboy Trail looking south just west of 37th Street.