

# Petitioners fight for better groundwater quality

By Linda Hartmann  
Staff Reporter

The issues of groundwater quality will not be put on the back burner, at least not if supporters of the Clean Water Campaign have their way.

Since October of 1985, more than 12,000 Nebraskans have signed a petition being circulated statewide. The campaign's organizers hope to gather enough signatures by July 1 to put a groundwater protection amendment to the state constitution on the November election ballot. More than 55,000 more signatures are needed.

Bill Wise, campaign organizer, said the petition was filed because many

Nebraskans feel the Legislature is dragging its feet in dealing with nitrates and in situ uranium mining, which could lead to problems in Nebraska's underground water supplies.

The petition would prevent certain kinds of uranium mining and allow the Department of Environmental Control to set and enforce regulatory standards for water control.

The Sierra Club, Wildlife Federation, Nebraska Water Conservation Council and other groups are supporting and carrying out the campaign. Wise said registered voters in several Nebraska counties also are circulating the petition and educating others on groundwater problems.

The problems are many. But Clean Water Campaign has narrowed its focus to a few. For example, campaigners are concerned that inadequate regulation of nitrate and pesticide use is hurting many underground wells, Wise said.

They also are worried about problems that certain types of uranium mining could cause. When mining for uranium with the in situ method, miners inject chemicals into the ground to "free up" the uranium and pump it out. The problem with this, Wise said, is that the chemicals and other contaminants freed up with the uranium can pollute the underground water supplies (aquifer) around the site.

Another problem with restoration,

Wise said, is that mining companies can negotiate with the Department of Environmental Control on the level of quality they need to bring water back to after mining. Under this policy, he said, the water may never be restored to its original quality.

The mining issue is becoming more important in Nebraska, Wise said, because a portion of land near Crawford, Neb., has been exempted from drinking water use so that the Wyoming Fuel Co. can mine uranium in northwest Nebraska.

Some state senators oppose the amendment because it strips them of power to regulate water quality in the state.

Sen. Tom Vickers of Farnam is among the opponents.

Vickers said the amendment, if enacted, could be interpreted to include more water issues than the campaign originally intended.

Vickers is co-sponsor of LB894, a bill to provide for control of contaminants in groundwater. Vickers said he hopes passage of the bill would eliminate the need for the constitutional amendment.

Wise said he likes the intent of the bill, but hopes it can be amended to give the DEC more power and make the legislation more protective of groundwater. Until then, he said, they will continue their campaign.

## Conflict, peace programs today

By Julie Jordan Hendricks  
Staff Reporter

Peace and conflict studies programs are among the fastest growing programs in the country, said Mark Randall, a campus minister at Cornerstone, United Ministries in Higher Education, 640 N. 16th St.

Today through Saturday, educators, administrators and clergy from 11 states will attend a conference at UNL about "Peace and Conflict Studies in the Curriculum."

The conference includes workshops, resource-sharing sessions and guest speakers. There is a fee for the conference but, Randall said, some featured events are free to the public.

The keynote speaker, Peter Dale Scott, is co-founder of the Peace Studies program and professor of English at the University of California-Berkeley. He will speak about the role of the humanities in peace and conflict studies, today at 7:30 p.m. in the Nebraska Union.

Gene Sharp from the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University and UNL philosophy professors Nelson Potter and Edward Becker will speak Thursday at St. Mark's on the Campus.

A conflict studies program such as those being discussed at the conference has been developed for UNL, said Leo Sartori, chairman of the UNL Committee on Societal Conflict and Conflict Resolution and professor of physics and political science.

Pending NU Board of Regents approval, UNL students can receive a major or minor in "Societal Conflict and Conflict Resolution," Sartori said. The interdisciplinary program includes existing courses in history, political science, psychology, physics, philosophy, anthropology, English and life sciences. A core course and senior seminar also is included.

Professors from a variety of departments will help development and teach the core course and seminar. Sartori said the core course is expected to be offered in the spring of 1987.

For more information about the "Peace and Conflict Studies in the Curriculum" conference contact Mark Randall at 472-3214.

## Contras receive amnesty policy

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The government also is providing an amnesty policy for the Contras. This states that any Contra who surrenders his weapons will be pardoned, given land and allowed to live for political office, Vargas said. Nicaragua "cannot be labeled a communist or a socialist state, Vargas said, because 60 percent of its production is owned by the private sector. Only 18 percent is government controlled, he said.

Vargas went on to say the 17 cases of human rights abuses that civil rights groups say still exist have been resolved and the officers involved are serving 30 years, the maximum sentence for their crimes.

"That pales in front of the daily atrocities, rapes and tortures committed by the Contras," he said.

In Somoza's regime, which the U.S. supported, no civil rights groups were allowed in Nicaragua until the very last part of the regime reign, Vargas said.

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