

TRI-BASIN TOPICS

Spring 2004

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“Dedicated to the Conservation of our Natural Resources”

New NRD Groundwater Rules Proposed

Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties contain some of the most productive farmland in the world. We are blessed with rich, deep soils and plentiful groundwater supplies for irrigation. Groundwater supplies have been supplemented by surface water diverted from the Platte River by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID). This combination of groundwater and surface water supplies has sustained the productivity of our land during several droughts.

Now we face a combination of drought, increasing development of marginal land for irrigated crop production, uncertainty about whether CNPPID will be able to supply irrigation water to its customers after 2004, and interstate agreements that require Nebraska to limit water use in the Platte and Republican River Basins. This combination of circumstances led the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors to propose rules to regulate water use and limit development of irrigated land to protect groundwater and surface water supplies.

The proposed rules have two components: groundwater quantity rules to sustain groundwater supplies and integrated management rules to protect rivers and streams from depletion related to additional development of groundwater irrigated cropland.

Here is a summary of the proposed rules:

Groundwater Quantity Management (three stages or phases)

Phase I rules are intended to protect existing groundwater supplies. They will apply to all landowners within Tri-Basin NRD.

- The NRD will certify all irrigated acres listed on property tax rolls within the district. Land irrigated for the first time in 2004 will also be certified, as long as landowners can provide independent confirmation, such as FSA certification, indicating that a crop was irrigated dur-



ing the 2004 growing season.

- Flowmeters will be required on all new wells. Landowners will need to report water use from new wells annually to the NRD.
- New high capacity wells (1000 gallons per minute or larger) can be drilled only if they are more than ¼ mile from all existing wells.
- Landowners will need to get permits from the NRD before they drill new wells, drill replacement wells or pump groundwater off overlying land.

Phase II rules will apply only to areas where a three-year rolling average of groundwater levels is lower than average groundwater levels in 1981-85.

- No additional irrigated acres can be developed after a phase II area is designated unless an equal number of certified (existing) irrigated acres are converted to a non-irrigated land use.
- Flowmeters will be required on all wells in Phase II areas.

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<http://www.tribasinprd.org>

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- Board approval will be required for all well permits in Phase II areas that involve re-locating certified irrigated acres.
- Landowners must operate wells in Phase II areas at least once every five years, or they will need to be decommissioned or registered as inactive with the NE Department of Natural Resources.

Phase III rules would go into effect in any area where Phase II rules have not led to recovery of groundwater supplies after five years.

- All non-domestic water uses in Phase III areas will be allocated no more than 48" per acre over three years.

Integrated Management

Integrated Management rules are intended to protect streams and rivers from depletion due to additional groundwater consumption. These rules will initially be applied in the Republican Basin and in the Platte Basin west of Highway 183.

- No additional irrigated acres can be developed after the 2004 growing season unless an equal number of certified (existing) irrigated acres are converted to a non-irrigated land use.

These proposed rules will affect landowners across the district. Citizens need to understand the proposals, ask questions and make comments on them. Copies of the proposed rules are available on the NRD website,

www.tribasinrd.org, at the NRD office, and at NRCS offices in Minden, Holdrege and Elwood. The NRD will also mail copies to anyone who requests them. Residents outside the Holdrege area can call toll-free (877) 995-6688. Two series of meetings will also be held to give the public information and an opportunity to ask questions and suggest changes to the proposed rules. The meeting schedule is as follows:

- April 22- Axtell Community Center, 7 PM
- May 12- NRD Office, Phelps County Ag Center, Holdrege, 2 PM
- May 12- Wilcox City Auditorium, 7 PM
- May 20- Bertrand Community Room, 10 AM
- May 20- Elwood Civic Center, 1:30 PM
- June 17- Kearney County 4-H Building, Minden, 10 AM
- June 30- NRD Office, Phelps County Ag Center, Holdrege, 2 PM

A final, official public hearing will be held at the NRD office on July 13 at 1:30 PM, during the monthly NRD board meeting.



RAINFALL RECORDERS AND REPORTERS REQUESTED

Tri-Basin NRD is looking for volunteers to record rain gauge readings at their home, farm, or place of business. Tri-Basin NRD has joined 12 other NRDs across the state to develop a rain gauge data collection network.

The NRD hopes to recruit at least one volunteer from each of Tri-Basin's 48 townships to record and transmit rainfall data. The information provided by each volunteer will be used for local, state, and national weather forecasts and climate modeling.

Selected volunteers will receive



Mounted rain gauge and hail pad

a free rain gauge furnished by Tri-Basin NRD. These gauges are quality instruments approved by the National Weather Service. If you are interested in participating in the volunteer rain gauge reader program, please contact Shannon Helms, Information and Education Assistant, Tri-Basin NRD at 995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688. Volunteers will be notified in early May if they have been selected to represent their township, and when training will take place.

Director Profile



Ray Winz, Tri-Basin NRD Director

Ray Winz represents subdistrict #3 on the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors. Ray attend grade school in Huntley, and graduated from Ragan High School. Ray and his wife, Nadine, as well as two of their three children work together raising irrigated corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and dryland wheat. They also have had a purebred Charolais cattle operation for 40 years. Ray is a member of the Ragan United Methodist Church, the Governor's Republican River Basin Council, the Harlan County Farm Bureau, the Nebraska Charolais Association, and Jachin Lodge #146. He also is Past President of Midland Coop. Ray's hobbies include farm sales, dancing, and traveling.

New Employee



Esther Smith

By now most people calling in to the Tri-Basin office recognize the friendly voice answering the phone as that of Esther Smith. Esther started working at Tri-Basin NRD in November 2003 as Office Assistant.

Although she was born in Wray, Colorado, Esther grew up in Hastings, Nebraska. She received her undergraduate degree from Hastings College and her Master's in Library Science from Emporia State University.

Esther lives in Holdrege with her husband, Rick, and their black lab/German Shepherd cross, Nipper. In her spare time she enjoys reading, gardening, and sewing. Welcome, Esther!

Recognizing and Managing Pine Wilt

Symptoms of pine wilt usually appear from August to December and can affect any species of pine tree. The pine needles turn pale green or yellow, and finally brown while remaining attached to the tree. These symptoms progress through the entire tree very quickly—turning yellow and then wilting. Trees infected with the parasite usually die within three months.

The pinewood parasite reproduces very quickly, and eventually clogs the imperative tissues of the tree, causing it to wilt and die. The pinewood parasite is transmitted to susceptible trees by the pine

sawyer beetle.

In order to manage pine wilt, infected trees should be removed and burned in the fall or very early spring, before the pine sawyer beetles can emerge. Wood from infested trees should not be used as firewood.

Scotch pine, in particular, should not be planted in an area where there has been a history of pine wilt. By properly maintaining trees through watering, mulching, and fertilizing, the vigorous healthy trees should not be susceptible to the pinewood parasite.



Check out these web sites:

<http://www.cocorahs.com>
<http://dnrdata.dnr.state.ne.us/NeRAIN>
<http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html>
<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/>
<http://www.treesaregood.com/>
<http://www.h2ouse.org/>

- CO Rain and Hail Study
- NE Rain and Hail Study
- U.S. Drought Monitor
- Water Data for the Nation
- Tree Planting Information
- Home Water Efficiency



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(All meetings are at NRD office in Phelps County Ag Center unless otherwise noted.)

April

- April 13 - NRD Board Meeting at 1:30 p.m.*
- April 14 - Rainwater Basin Conservation Day
- April 28-29 - Water Jamboree

May

- May 11 - NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*
- May 31 - Memorial Day (office closed)

June

- June 8 - NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*

* Times are tentative

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TRI-BASIN NRD STAFF

John Thorburn General Manager
Richard Holloway Assistant Manager
Charles Brooks Land Resources Coordinator
Carie Lynch Administrative Secretary
Roger David Conservation Technician
Tammy Fahrenbruch Inf. & Education Coordinator/Office Asst.
Esther Smith Office Clerk
Shannon Helms Information Assistant
Marlene Shearer Minden Office Secretary
Mary Stauffer Elwood Office Secretary
Patty Abrahamson Holdrege Office Secretary

A mailing list is maintained and requests to be placed on the list should be sent to the above address. Comments and suggestions may be addressed to the General Manager.

TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Lundeen, Chairman Wilcox, NE	Gary Lindstrom Wilcox, NE
Phyllis Johnson, Vice Chairman Bertrand, NE	Ed Harris Loomis, NE
Todd Garrelts, Treasurer Holdrege, NE	David Nickel Kearney, NE
David Olson, Secretary Minden, NE	David Raffety Kearney, NE
David Nelson Upland, NE	Larry Reynolds Lexington, NE
Harold D. Erickson Holdrege, NE	Ray Winz Holdrege, NE
Dick Helms Arapahoe, NE	

WATER CONSERVATION TIP

- Keep drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the faucet run until the water cools down.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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Natural Resources District



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