

Summer 2015
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Tri-Basin Topics

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Platte Floodwater Diverted to Benefit Groundwater Supplies

The pioneers referred to the Platte as a mile wide and an inch deep. That description of the river is accurate most of the time, but the Platte watershed covers over 84,000 square miles, so widespread rains can accumulate and cause flooding.

The Platte River has flooded regularly throughout history, but Tri-Basin and other Platte basin NRDs are now working with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and irrigation districts to try to reduce the impacts of floods by diverting floodwater into irrigation canals and using it to recharge groundwater supplies.

Recent rainfall in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties has been about average, but areas around us have been getting much more rain than usual. The Front Range and eastern Colorado endured a series of downpours, which led to the high flows we are currently seeing on the South Platte. Greeley, Colorado had its wettest May on record, with 7.26", far above their average May rainfall of 2.64".

Eastern Nebraska has also been unusually wet. For instance, Lincoln also had their wettest May on record, with 10.90", beating the prior record of 10.72", set in 1903.

The water in the river in May and June mostly originated from the South Platte River in Colorado, but the North Platte River has flooded as well. Exceptional rain and snow in the Laramie Basin of Wyoming was a big contributor to high flows in the North Platte River. Lake McConaughy is expected to completely fill by late June.

Last spring, no one realized the full magnitude of the floodwater now in the Platte, but by late April, Nebraska water agencies did recognize that high flows were coming. Based on our experience mitigating damage from other recent Platte floods, we knew what needed to be done. For the seventh time in the past five years, Tri-Basin worked with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) to enable diversion of as much as 5000



Platte River floodplain on June 5, 2015, looking west from T Road.

acre-feet of additional water into Elwood Reservoir, E-65 Canal and Cottonwood WPA wetland east of Bertrand to recharge groundwater supplies. NDNR also agreed to pay half of the bill for more than \$200,000 that CNPPID charged for diverting the floodwater. In addition to diversions in our area, South Platte, North Platte, Twin Platte and Central Platte NRDs are working with local irrigation districts to divert water in their NRDs.

Making arrangements for high flow diversions on short notice right before the irrigation season required close coordination and cooperation between state and local government, as well as between groundwater and surface water users. This sort of inter-agency cooperation to manage water resources is uncommon in most parts of the nation, but its typical of the way that Tri-Basin and all of Nebraska's natural resources districts work together to protect lives, property and the future for all Nebraskans.

"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

<http://www.tribasinrd.org>

Community Garden to Provide Knowledge as Well as Food

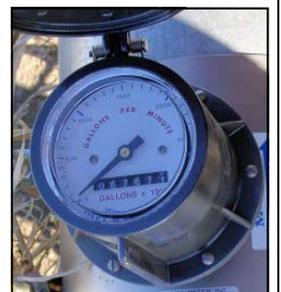


Tri-Basin NRD is partnering with the YMCA of the Prairie, Holdrege High School FFA, and University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Phelps County to establish a Community Garden at the YMCA. Children involved in the YMCA after-school program, along with volunteers from the community and partnering organizations, have worked to prepare the garden site, plant seeds, and transfer seedlings to the garden site. The produce grown in the garden will provide learning opportunities for children involved in YMCA programming and will be used in YMCA programs and shared with the community. Tri-Basin NRD staff used the district's tractor to break ground for the garden site (top left photo). In mid-April, Holdrege FFA members helped kids in the YMCA after-school program start seeds for the garden (bottom left and center photos). On May 26, Holdrege FFA members, along with volunteers from the community and Tri-Basin NRD, returned to help the children transfer seedlings to the garden plot (right photo).

Periodic Flowmeter Checks Suggested

Check flowmeters on your wells periodically throughout the irrigation season. Making sure that your flowmeters are working properly benefits both Tri-Basin NRD and you, as an irrigator, so that you can keep accurate irrigation records. It is the responsibility of producers to make sure flowmeters function properly during the irrigation season.

It has also come to our attention that producers who have Senninger brand flowmeters may want to make sure the batteries they are using are the correct size. These meters take lithium 3.6 volt batteries instead of standard 1.5 volt AA batteries. Using standard AA batteries will cause these flowmeters to not work properly.



Tri-Basin NRD Interns Gain Natural Resources Experience



Dakota Fulk, Brittney Saner, and Dalton Refior are working as interns at Tri-Basin NRD for the summer.

The Tri-Basin NRD Summer Internship Program gives college students an opportunity to gain natural resources management experience. Interns collect and test groundwater quality samples, monitor wildlife habitat, test irrigation system efficiency, and help maintain drainage improvement project areas, or IPAs. The interns also work with staff from Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Phelps County Weed Control Authority. TBNRD currently has three interns.

Brittney Saner is from Kearney. She attends the University of Nebraska-Kearney, studying wildlife biology. She is a

member of the Wildlife Society and is interested in dog training, reading, and learning how to hunt.

Dalton Refior, from Loomis, attends the University of Wyoming, where he is studying rangeland ecology and watershed management, and environmental natural resources. Dalton coaches 5th & 6th grade baseball, is a camp counselor at Camp Joy Church Camp, and is a vacation Bible school leader. His hobbies include hunting and fishing.

Dakota Fulk is from Atlanta. He is studying ag business at the University of Nebraska-Kearney. His interests include hunting, fishing, farming, and sports.

Tri-Basin NRD Helps Homeowners Protect Water Quality After Floods

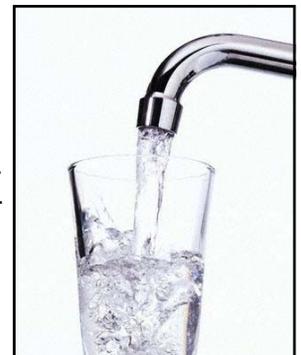
Flooding caused by this spring's heavy rains can contaminate privately-owned household wells. Tri-Basin NRD is encouraging private well owners to test their drinking water for pollutants.

State and federal laws require municipal water systems and other public water suppliers to test their water regularly to insure that their water is free from contaminants. Tri-Basin NRD wants rural residents in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties to have confidence that their household drinking water is as safe as public water supplies. Tri-Basin NRD offers rural residents free household drinking water tests for nitrates and coliform bacteria.

Any district resident who uses a household water well can pick up a free water testing kit from the Tri-Basin NRD of-

fice in Holdrege. The kits are also available at the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service offices in Elwood, Minden and Holdrege. Kits include instructions for obtaining water samples. Test results are sent to the Tri-Basin NRD office, where they are recorded in a water quality database. The results are forwarded to homeowners, along with information about protecting water quality.

For more information on this program, please contact Tri-Basin NRD at 1-877-995-6688.





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Permit No. 220

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nebraska's NRDs: Protecting Lives, Protecting Property, Protecting the Future

CALENDAR

July 3NRD Closed for Independence Day

July 14NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*

August 11NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*

September 7NRD Closed for Labor Day

September 8NRD Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.*

September 15-17 Husker Harvest Days

September 17 RBJV Conservation Day
At Sacramento-Wilcox Wildlife Management Area

* Times are tentative. All meetings are at TBNRD office in Holdrege unless otherwise noted.

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