

Winter 2015

Volume 29, Issue 1

# Tri-Basin Topics

*A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District*

## Holdrege Water Conference to Focus on Republican River Issues, Farm Bill

Updates on the Republican River Compact and the new Farm Bill will be the focus of the 2015 Holdrege Water Conference. The annual event will be held Tuesday, February 3 at the Phelps County Ag Center. Registration will be at 10 a.m. and sessions will start at 10:30. A free lunch will be provided for those attending. The program should conclude around 3 p.m.

The conference is sponsored by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, UNL Extension and Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce. It is a joint effort to increase the understanding of water-related issues that affect agricultural producers in central Nebraska. The conference schedule is still being finalized, but sessions on the Republican River, the new Farm Bill, and an update on local groundwater and surface water supplies are currently planned.

For a complete schedule of Water Conference speakers, check Tri-Basin NRD's website, [www.tribasinrd.org](http://www.tribasinrd.org), a few

weeks prior to the event.

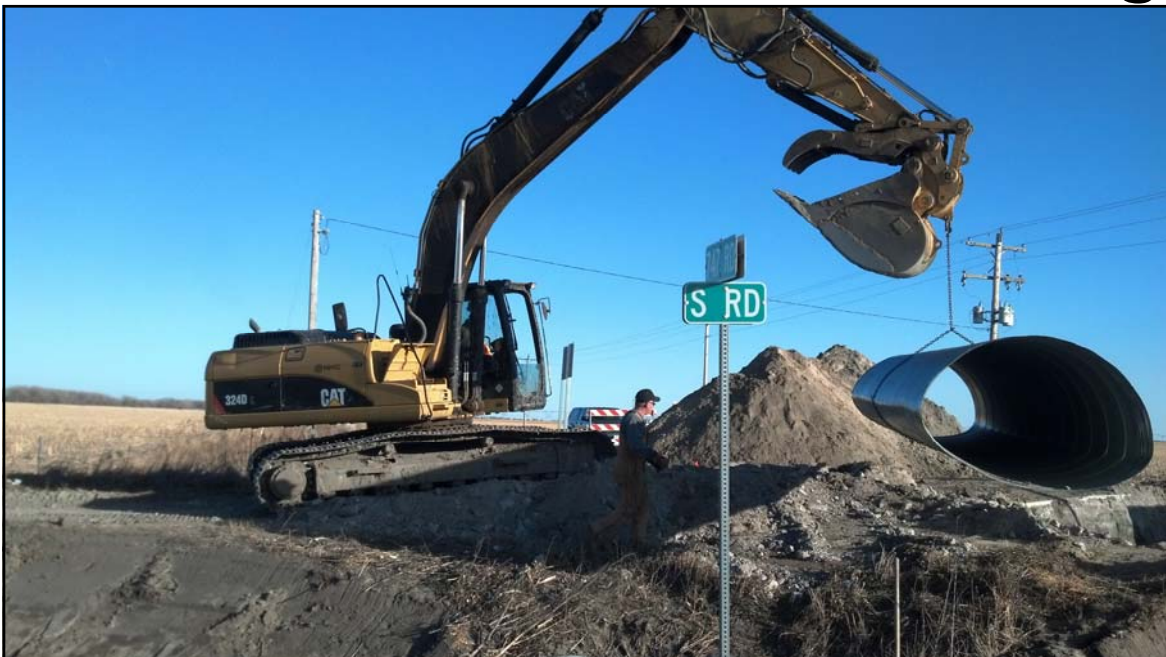
Area agribusinesses will display their products and services at the water conference and will have representatives on hand to visit with conference participants.

Producers in Tri-Basin NRD's Phase 2 or Phase 3 Groundwater Quality Management Areas will receive nitrogen management recertification credit for attending the conference.



Holdrege  
Water  
Conference

## Odessa IPA to Alleviate Drainage Issues



Work on the Odessa Improvement Project Area (IPA) in northern Phelps County is progressing. Ostgren Construction is installing culverts under 747 Road and S Road which will allow rainfall runoff in the project area to drain toward the Platte River. The ditch and culverts will also help stabilize high groundwater levels. This cooperative project between Tri-Basin NRD and landowners will protect farmland in the area.

*"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"*

<http://www.tribasinrd.org>



## Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

In 2004, the Nebraska Unicameral passed LB 962, a bill sponsored by Senator Ed Schrock, which specified that the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) in the Platte and Republican River basins needed to develop

plans to jointly manage integrated groundwater and surface water resources. The purpose of these plans is to insure that groundwater pumping doesn't reduce availability of surface water for existing water right holders, and vice versa.

Recognizing that development of these plans would take a considerable amount of time, the Tri-Basin NRD board of directors, along with other districts in both river basins, decided that we needed to take immediate action to stabilize the situation. For that reason the board imposed a moratorium to prevent development of any additional irrigated cropland in the district. That decision was very controversial when it was made, but it bought us time to plan and enabled us to avoid drastic corrective action later on.

Five years ago, Tri-Basin NRD and the Nebraska DNR reached agreement on terms of a plan in the Platte basin portion of this NRD. Two years ago, we worked out details of a similar plan for the Republican basin portion of the district. In our joint integrated management plans, Tri-Basin and the state have set objectives for "offsetting" (making up for) depletions to streamflows resulting from irrigation, industrial and municipal groundwater use. In the Platte Basin, we need to reduce impacts to streamflows by about 3500 acre-feet per year. We also need to reduce impacts to Republican River tributaries by 2000 acre-feet per year. The state agreed that we need flexibility to reduce impacts to streams in one of two ways: reduce water consumption or add water to streams.

We analyzed both options and their impacts on local irrigators and our regional economy. Reducing water consumption

means limiting the amount of water that farmers can pump for irrigation, reducing irrigated acres, or both. Such action would cost farmers millions of dollars in lost revenue due to lower crop yields in dry years. For this reason, our district has focused on augmenting streamflows rather than reducing water consumption.

There are a couple ways to augment streamflows. We can't make new water, but we can "re-time" it. We all know that Nebraska's weather swings between extremes. Most of the time our weather is either too wet or too dry. We rarely experience that happy medium, average condition. We have learned over the past few years, however, to divert water out of the Platte during times of high flows and floods into Elwood Reservoir and other parts of the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) canal system. Over the last five years, Tri-Basin and DNR have paid CNPPID over \$1.5 million to divert more than 35,000 acre-feet of water that would have otherwise flowed out of Nebraska into the Gulf of Mexico. We then let that water soak into the lakebed and canal banks. The water slowly percolates into the ground, recharging groundwater aquifers and seeping into streams like Plum Creek.

We are now taking another step toward controlling the water we store underground by drilling wells and pumping it back out of the ground into streams when the Platte or Republican Rivers are running low. We have already drilled two streamflow augmentation wells along North Dry Creek in the Platte basin, and we're planning to drill two more wells along Turkey Creek, a Republican River tributary in Gosper County.

Re-timing excess flows allows us to take water that would, at best, have been wasted or at worst would have contributed to floods and put it to beneficial use in a way that protects irrigated agriculture, which is the foundation of central Nebraska's economy. Such a "win-win" result is only achievable because of visionary long-term planning and consistent cooperation between partners at the state and local level. This is just one example of how Nebraska's locally-led approach to water resources management protects lives, property and the future for all Nebraskans.

## Nebraska Natives

### Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)

Hackberry is a native tree found throughout Nebraska. It has a medium to long life span. Hackberry leaves are elm shaped; the grayish bark has a warty appearance. Once established, a moderate rate of growth and tolerance to adverse weather can be expected. Hackberry can be used in single row windbreaks to slow summer winds and increase snow fetch over fields during the winter.

Witches broom on branches and nipple-galls on lower leaf surfaces can be unsightly, but have little adverse effect on their health.

The average height of a hackberry tree at maturity is 45 to 55 feet.



<http://www.tribasinprd.org>

# Tri-Basin NRD Chemigation Fees to Increase



TBNRD Water Resources Manager Nolan Little inspects a chemigation system.

At their December board meeting, Tri-Basin NRD Directors held a public hearing on proposed changes to the district's chemigation rules. Following the hearing, directors approved the rules, which have been sent to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for review and approval. Under the new rules, chemigation permit fees will increase to \$50 for a new permit, \$15 for a renewal permit, and \$250 for an emergency permit.

Once DEQ approves the rules, we will send out renewal chemigation forms to producers who had permits last year (this will probably occur later than the usual January timeframe). Those producers whose chemigation certification has expired will receive notification from our office and will need to attend one of the chemigation training sessions held in February and March. Some of the training sessions have been scheduled and details can be found online at <http://deq.ne.gov/NDEQProg.nsf/OnWeb/Chemtra>. For more information about the training schedule, call your local UNL Extension office. Producers who need to add new chemigation permits for the 2015 season should contact the Tri-Basin NRD office.

By working with the district's agricultural producers to permit and inspect center pivot irrigation systems that are used to apply agricultural chemicals and fertilizers to crops, Tri-Basin NRD is protecting the quality of our groundwater supplies.

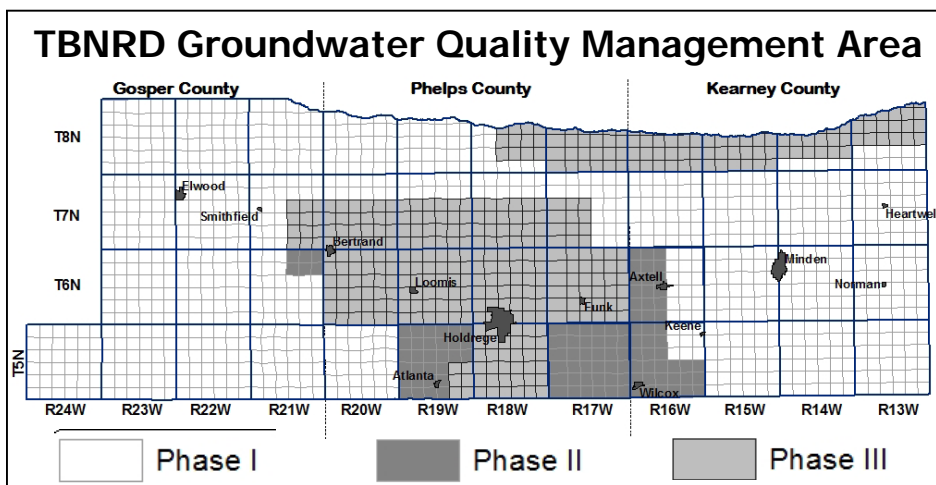
## Tri-Basin NRD Offers Trees to Honor District Newborns

Tri-Basin NRD wants to help parents celebrate newborns in the district with the gift of a seedling tree. These trees are available to the family of any child born in Gosper, Phelps or Kearney County since the previous tree season (April 2014). You can reserve a baby tree for your newest family member by calling our office at (308) 995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688 or by emailing the baby's name, birthdate, parents' names, address and phone number to [esmith@tribasinprd.org](mailto:esmith@tribasinprd.org). We will send you a postcard in April letting you know when and where to pick up your tree. If you have any questions, please call our office and ask for Esther.

## Nitrogen Management Certification Classes Offered

The Groundwater Quality Management Areas established by Tri-Basin NRD have allowed district staff to work cooperatively with farmers and agronomists for more than 20 years to help improve the timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of fertilizer application. These efforts have resulted in stable or declining nitrate-nitrogen levels in groundwater supplies throughout the district, thus safeguarding the quality of our groundwater.

Producers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 areas of the Groundwater Quality Management Area need to have current Nitrogen Management certification. For a current class schedule check our website at [www.tribasinprd.org](http://www.tribasinprd.org) or call us at 1-877-995-6688. Attendance at the Holdrege Water Conference on February 3 also qualifies for Nitrogen Management Certification (be sure to sign in for credit).



## Nitrogen Reports Due

Nitrogen Management Reports for the 2014 crop year were due December 31, 2014 for producers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Tri-Basin Groundwater Quality Management Area. If you have fields in the Phase 2 or Phase 3 areas and have not turned in your reports yet, please do so as soon as possible. If you need reporting forms or help filling them out, please contact the Tri-Basin NRD office.



Winter 2015

# Tri-Basin Topics

Non-Profit Permit  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Holdrege, NE 68949  
Permit No. 220

**Tri-Basin Natural Resources District**  
1723 Burlington St. Holdrege, NE 68949  
(308) 995-6688  
email: [tribasin@tribasinprd.org](mailto:tribasin@tribasinprd.org)  
[www.tribasinprd.org](http://www.tribasinprd.org)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

# CALENDAR

January 13.....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.\*

January 19... NRD Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February 3 ..... Holdrege Water Conference

February 10 .....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.\*

February 16 .....NRD Closed for Presidents' Day

March 10.....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.\*

April 14.....NRD Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.\*

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

### TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

David Nickel, Chairman .....	Kearney, NE
David Olsen, Vice Chairman .....	Minden, NE
Todd Garrelts, Treasurer .....	Holdrege, NE
Bradley Lundeen, Secretary .....	Wilcox, NE
Brian Bergstrom .....	Axtell, NE
Joe Bilka .....	Holdrege, NE
Mike Cavanaugh.....	Minden, NE
Ed Harris.....	Loomis, NE
Phyllis Johnson.....	Bertrand, NE
Joe Larson .....	Loomis, NE
David Raffety .....	Kearney, NE
Larry Reynolds .....	Lexington, NE
Ray Winz .....	Holdrege, NE

### TRI-BASIN NRD STAFF

Charles Brooks .....	Land Resources Coordinator
Tammy Fahrenbruch .....	Office Manager
Lori Hagan .....	Elwood Office Secretary
Nolan Little.....	Water Resources Manager
Carie Lynch.....	Administrative Secretary
Ruth Nielsen .....	Minden Office Secretary
Patrick Nott .....	Water Resources Technician
Tami Reese .....	Holdrege Office Secretary
Nicole Salisbury .....	Information Coordinator/Asst. Office Manager
Esther Smith .....	Office Clerk
Destinee Steinke .....	Educational Event Coordinator
John Thorburn .....	General Manager
Jeff VanEperen.....	Seasonal Field Technician

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.

***Get Tri-Basin Topics in your inbox instead of your mailbox!***

To request an electronic version of this newsletter, send an email [nsalisbury@tribasinprd.org](mailto:nsalisbury@tribasinprd.org).

# TRI-BASIN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT 2015 HAND PLANT ORDER FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ORDERS MUST BE IN MULTIPLES OF 25.

## Tree Order Deadline is April 1, 2015.

QUANTITY	SPECIES
	<b>CONIFERS</b>
	AUSTRIAN PINE
	REDCEDAR (EASTERN)
	COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE
	PONDEROSA PINE
	<b>BROADLEAFS</b>
	BLACK WALNUT
	BUR OAK
	HACKBERRY
	RED OAK
	SWAMP WHITE OAK
	<b>SHRUBS</b>
	AMERICAN PLUM
	COTONEASTER
	CHOKECHERRY
	GOLDEN CURRANT
	LILAC
	SAND CHERRY
	SKUNKBUSH SUMAC
	<b>Total # of Trees</b>
	<b>Multiply total # of trees x .75</b>
	<b>Mulch x .35/foot</b>
	<b>Staples x .15</b>
	<b>Subtotal</b>
	<b>Tax (Holdrege 7%, Elwood 6%, Minden 6.5%)</b>
	<b>TOTAL AMOUNT DUE/PAID</b>

Tree Pickup will be at: \_\_\_\_\_ Tri-Basin NRD \_\_\_\_\_ Minden NRCS \_\_\_\_\_ Elwood NRCS

**Comments:**

# WHY PLANT A WINDBREAK?

Windbreaks and shelterbelts provide many benefits. Windbreaks planted along field boundaries reduce soil erosion by reducing wind velocity. Shelterbelts planted around farmsteads reduce heating costs in homes and shop buildings. Shelterbelts can protect livestock from blizzards and serve as "living snow fences." Trees and shrubs also provide food, shelter and nesting habitat for many species of birds and mammals.

## NRD TREE & SHRUB PLANTINGS

Contact the NRD Office or your county NRCS for help with determining the type and number of trees and shrubs you need. The technician will make arrangements for the tree order and planting service. The NRD will plant the trees according to the plan.

Trees are planted in the spring as soon as conditions are suitable. The NRD tree planting crew will notify landowners of the approximate date and time of planting.

## SITE PREPARATION

Good site preparation is a key to rapid tree growth and survival. The best site preparation begins the year before the trees are planted. On heavier soils, working the ground to kill competing vegetation is an excellent method of preparing the site. The technician assisting in planning a windbreak or habitat plot can advise you about the type of site preparation needed. The technician can also help you determine if herbicide carryover will be a problem.

## WEED CONTROL

Weed control in the form of plastic mulch is available through the district. This woven material is installed over the trees after planting. Slots are then cut for the trees. Plastic mulch not only eliminates weeds but also helps to preserve soil moisture.

## PRICES

Trees & Shrubs..... 75¢ each/multiples of 25

## PLANTING SERVICE

Tree planting (no mulch) ..... 50¢/ft

Trees, tree planting, mulch and mulch laying..... \$ 1.50/ft

Drip tape ..... 35¢/ft

Site Prep..... 20¢/ft

Pull-in Charge..... \$20

Drip Tape Set-Up..... Minimum \$35

Renovations\* ..... \$200

Shrub thickets\* ..... \$200

Minimum plan charge \$350 per planting

Plastic Mulch (Material Only)..... 35¢ per ft

Stakes..... 15¢ each

Seedling Tubes..... \$1.10 each

**Prices are subject to change.**

\*Contact Tri-Basin NRD for site review.

## PLANTING YOUR OWN TREES

You can order trees and shrubs at the NRD or your local NRCS Office. Orders must be in multiples of 25 per species. We will send you a postcard when your trees arrive. We also have tree spades available to rent.

## DRIP TAPE

Tri-Basin has subsurface "drip tape" available for watering trees planted by the District. The water source could be a portable tank or a hydrant. Check with the TBNRD Land Resource Coordinator for more information.

## COST-SHARE

Tri-Basin NRD offers cost-share funds for tree plantings and plastic mulch installation. You should apply at your county NRCS office before March 1.

All sites must be properly prepared before planting to qualify for cost-share. Reimbursement is made only after full payment is received. The minimum total cost of plantings eligible for cost-share is \$500.

Cost-share may also be available from your county USDA office. Pheasants Forever and Nebraska Game & Parks Commission also offer programs for wildlife habitat improvement. NRCS staff can help you determine which programs have funds available and best suit your needs.

## BILLING ON NRD PLANTINGS

Tri-Basin NRD bills for trees/tree planting service after completion. Full payment is due upon receipt of the billing. Cost-share payments will not be made until payment is received at the Tri-Basin or NRCS office.