

TRI-BASIN TOPICS

Fall 2004

Volume 18, Issue 3

“Dedicated to the Conservation of our Natural Resources”

How Should We Manage Our Water?

The Tri-Basin Natural Resources District Board of Directors must make a series of important decisions over the next few months about how we should manage and protect our water resources. The Board of Directors will need to decide how to comply with requirements of the Republican River Compact, the Platte River Cooperative Agreement and state water law, as revised by LB 962. The ongoing drought makes these issues more difficult to resolve, because farmers pump more irrigation water when rainfall is inadequate.

The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District decided to reduce canal water deliveries in 2005 due to dwindling water supplies in Lake McConaughy. Reduced surface water deliveries complicate the NRD board's efforts to develop a strategy to protect our groundwater supplies. Groundwater supplies in this area are recharged by water that leaks out of Central's canals and by canal water used to irrigate crops. Many Central water users also own groundwater wells, so when Central reduces surface water deliveries, many Central customers will make up for that shortage by using more groundwater. The result is less groundwater recharge and more groundwater use at a time when groundwater supplies are already being used at a greater than average rate, due to the drought.

Tri-Basin NRD intends to manage groundwater supplies so that they can be sustained for future generations. To achieve this goal, we may need to put limits on current groundwater users.

The NRD Board wants your advice about how to protect our groundwater, yet minimize the impact of any regulations on current groundwater users. There are a variety of ways for you to let us know what you think. The best way is to attend NRD Board meetings, which are held at the Phelps County Ag Center on the second Tuesday of every month. You are also welcome to contact NRD staff or directors (listed on the back of this newsletter) by telephone. The Tri-Basin NRD toll-free phone number is (877) 995-6688. Letters and e-mails to tribasinnrdd@tribasinnrdd.org are also encouraged. Another way to let us know what you think is to fill out the water user survey in this newsletter.

Instructions for returning completed surveys are at the bottom of the survey page. **Please return completed surveys by November 9, 2004. Your assistance is appreciated!**

**Tri-Basin NRD
Water User Survey**

Introduction: The Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors want to find out how you feel about how we should protect groundwater supplies. Please answer the following survey to the best of your ability by circling or writing in your response (responses are shown in **BOLD**) to the questions below. You are **not** required to write your name on the survey form. Thank you for helping us serve you!

1. Which county do you live in? _____

2. Which of the following categories best describes your situation? (You may circle more than one response)
 - A. **Landowner directly involved in a farming operation**
 - B. **Landowner NOT directly involved in a farming operation**
 - C. **Tenant/lessee**
 - D. **Agribusiness (banker, crop consultant, land manager, etc.)**
 - E. **Other (please specify)_____**

3. Do you irrigate or supervise irrigation using **groundwater**?
 - A. **YES**
 - B. **NO**

4. Do you irrigate or supervise irrigation using **surface water (canal water)**?
 - A. **YES**
 - B. **NO**

5. If you answered YES to both questions 3 and 4, what is your percentage of **groundwater** irrigated land? (example, 40%) _____

6. Should Tri-Basin NRD limit groundwater irrigation to insure that our existing groundwater supplies are preserved for future generations?
 - A. **YES**
 - B. **NO**

7. What is the **average annual** amount of water (inches per acre) that you use in irrigated crop production?
_____ **acre-inches per acre per year**

8. If Tri-Basin NRD needs to limit groundwater irrigation to sustain existing groundwater supplies, which method would you prefer that we use to allocate (divide) available supplies?
 - A. **“First in time, first in right” (older wells get more water than newer wells)**
 - B. **“Share and share alike” (all wells get equal amounts of water)**
 - C. **Other_____**

Completed surveys can be returned in any of the following ways:

1. **Return completed survey by mail or in person to the Tri-Basin NRD office (1308 2nd St., Holdrege NE 68949)**
2. **Fax completed surveys to the NRD at (308) 995-6992**
3. **Return surveys in person to USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service offices in Minden, Holdrege and Elwood.**
4. **Complete the survey on-line by visiting our website: www.tribasinnrd.org**

Please return completed surveys by November 9, 2004. Thank you for your assistance!

Changes to Certified Irrigated Acres

If you changed your assessed irrigated acres when you certified with TRI-BASIN NRD, then you need to visit with the County Assessor regarding additional irrigated acres prior to January 1, 2005.

Crop Reports Due

Crop reports for the 2004 crop year are due by **December 31, 2004** for farmers in Phase II of the Tri-Basin Groundwater Quality Management Area. These reports need to have correct ID numbers on them, along with the results of water and soil samples taken before the crop was planted.

Remember to take your soil samples either this fall or in early spring for your 2005 crop reports.

Ltd Irrigation Demo sign

2004 NRD Board of Directors Tour

The 2004 NRD Board of Directors tour took place on August 10th. Participants toured Todd Garrelts tree plantings, an Ltd irrigation demo, Sac Creek improvements, the Arapahoe well field, some observation wells, and saw an ultra sonic demo on the Helms property. Lunch was followed by the August Board Meeting at the Elwood Civic Center.

Ltd Irrigation Demo

Check out these web sites:

<http://www.nws.noaa.gov>

<http://dnrdata.dnr.state.ne.us/NeRAIN>

http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/dnrnews/news2004/summer2004_sm.pdf

<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/>

http://net.unl.edu/swi/pers/water_worries.html

<http://www.h2ouse.org/>

-National Weather Service

-NE Rain and Hail Study

-LB 962

-Water Data for the Nation

-Nebraska Reservoirs

-Home Water Efficiency



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

November

- November 9 - NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*
- November 11 - Veteran's Day (office closed)
- November 25,26—Thanksgiving (office closed)

December

- December 14 - NRD Board Meeting at 1:30 p.m.*
- December 24 - Office closed in observance of Christmas
- December 31 - Office closed in observance of New Year's Day

January

- January 11 - NRD Board Meeting at 1:30 p.m.*
- January 17 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day (office closed)

* Times are tentative

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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.

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WATER CONSERVATION TIP

- Operate dishwashers only when they are fully loaded. Pre-rinsing dishes prior to loading a dishwasher is unnecessary.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**1308 Second Street
Holdrege, NE 68949**

Natural Resources District



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