



2010

In Review

Annual Report

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District is the local government agency which is responsible for protection of natural resources in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties in South Central Nebraska. Tri-Basin NRD is unique among Nebraska's 23 NRDs because it includes portions of three different river basins: the Republican, the Platte, and the Little Blue Basin. There are 13 members of TBNRD's Board of Directors, 12 of which are elected from geographical districts and one at-large member. The vision of Tri-Basin NRD, as set forth by these directors, is to work cooperatively with District residents and others to promote good stewardship of land and water resources.

Tri-Basin NRD operates a district-wide Groundwater Management Area to protect groundwater quality and quantity. The NRD has regulated fertilizer application to protect groundwater quality since 1989. These efforts have resulted in stable or declining nitrate-nitrogen levels in groundwater supplies throughout the district.

Tri-Basin NRD is also committed to sustaining groundwater supplies at levels equal to or greater than average groundwater levels in the period 1981-85. This commitment is also the objective of the Joint Action Plan for the Republican Basin portion of the district agreed to by the NRD and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources in July 2004. This commitment to protect existing groundwater supplies also protects Nebraska's credit for "imported water" in the Republican River Basin.

The NRD operates 25 miles of drainage ditches and associated works. The NRD cooperates with local irrigation and drainage districts to maintain an additional 12 miles of drainageways.

District personnel also serve our constituents in other ways. NRD personnel and our USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service colleagues survey and design terraces, dams and other conservation practices for local farmers. We monitor and map groundwater and surface water quality and quantity. We create and present informational and educational programs about natural resources for adults and schoolchildren. Tri-Basin NRD also employs three college students as interns every summer. These students learn "hands on" about natural resources management.



Protecting Our Groundwater

Tri-Basin NRD completed the process of certifying, or verifying, irrigated acres in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties in 2006. Certifying irrigated land is part of the NRD's policy for managing limited irrigated land resources.

In September 2009, Tri-Basin NRD directors changed the

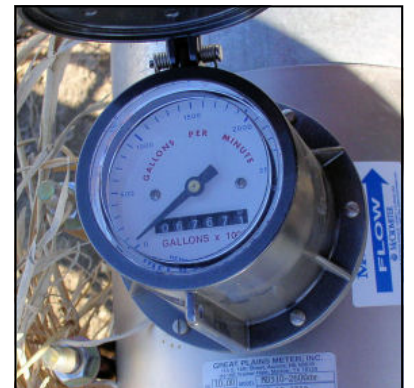


district's Rules and Regulations in order to comply with Tri-Basin NRD's Platte Basin Integrated Management Plan and requirements of state law LB 477. Changes were made to the process used for transferring certified irrigated acres from one location to another. LB 477 requires a limited title search on properties involved in irrigated acre transfers before an application to transfer acres may be made.

Tri-Basin NRD included this requirement in the district's Rules and Regulations and implemented a \$100 filing fee for irrigated acre transfers.

The district continually monitors groundwater quantity throughout the three counties by measuring water levels in irrigation wells and dedicated observation wells. Thanks to a grant from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, TBNRD now has at least one dedicated observation well in each township in the district. Dataloggers in these wells automatically measure water levels at regular intervals. Regularly measuring our aquifers helps Tri-Basin NRD directors to make better informed decisions about our groundwater supplies and to discern trends in the water levels.

Based on data from these wells, the Tri-Basin NRD board decided to enforce groundwater pumping limits in Union Township in Gosper County in 2009. Declines in groundwater levels in Union Township necessitated a pumping limit of



27 inches over three years to protect groundwater supplies from depletion.

Staff at Tri-Basin NRD also monitor the quality of groundwater in the district annually. In 2010, TBNRD staff took 242 samples from irrigation wells, which were tested for nitrates and pesticides. Through this program, Tri-Basin NRD has limited nitrogen-based fertilizer application in order to protect the quality of our district's groundwater.

Chemigation, the process of applying chemicals through irrigation systems, is permitted and overseen by Tri-Basin NRD staff to assure proper application of the chemicals. 183 new chemigation permits and 1184 renewals were issued by TBNRD in 2010.

Rural residents in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties need to know whether they have safe drinking water. The district offers a program that allows rural residents to have their household drinking water tested for nitrates and bacteria free of charge once a year.

Conservation Cost-Share Assistance

Tri-Basin NRD provides or administers cost-share funds for well decommissioning, soil moisture sensors, irrigation well flowmeters, conservation tree plantings and conversion of irrigated cropland to dryland cropland and grassland. In fiscal year 2009-2010, Tri-Basin NRD approved \$19,899.37 in funding for conservation tree planting cost-share and \$62,789.03 in NSWCP cost-share funds.



Managing Financial Resources Wisely

TBNRD's total operating expense budget for July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011 is \$2,672,203 with the levy set at 0.03842 per \$100 valuation. An owner of a house valued at \$100,000 will pay just \$38.42 in 2010 to protect this area's natural resources.

Planting Trees for Future Generations

Each year, Tri-Basin NRD offers conservation trees and shrubs for sale for windbreak and habitat plantings. In 2010, 3,800 trees and shrubs were planted and 3,750 trees and shrubs were sold for hand-planting. Tri-Basin NRD also provides free tree seedlings for several educational events and for local Arbor Day celebrations. The district distributed nearly 1000 free trees to district residents in 2010. Tri-Basin staff also help landowners diagnose tree diseases and fungal blights and decide on treatment methods.

Educating and Informing Local Residents

Tri-Basin NRD sponsors several educational events, for both youth and adults. Each February, Tri-Basin NRD joins Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District, Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce and UNL Extension to host the Holdrege Water Conference. At this event, agricultural producers and agri-business professionals gather to discuss current water issues relevant to the TBNRD area.



Other adult information and education programs include Nitrogen Management classes for agricultural producers and the weekly Natural Resources Report on KRVN 880 radio station.

In September, Tri-Basin NRD holds the Rainwater Basin Conservation Day for eighth grade students at Sacramento-Wilcox Wildlife Management Area. About 200 students attend this event each year to learn about geology, wetlands, soils, trees and wildlife. Tri-Basin also helps sponsor the Water Jamboree for area fifth grade students held every April at Harlan County Reservoir. All aspects of water conservation are presented in hands-on sessions to the approximately 600 students who attend this event.

Tri-Basin NRD Special Projects

Tri-Basin NRD has several special projects in 2010:

Hazard Mitigation Plan – Work on the All-Hazard Mitigation Plan began in 2009. This district-wide plan outlines options to minimize damage and loss of life resulting from natural disasters. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requires local governments to have Hazard Mitigation Plans in place before it will provide federal disaster relief funding.

NeRAIN Program – Tri-Basin NRD, along with the other NRDs in the state, coordinates area volunteers for the Nebraska Rainfall Assessment and Information Network (NeRAIN) program. Volunteers throughout the district record rain and snow fall in order to track precipitation and document the size, intensity, duration and preferred tracks of storms.

Johnson Lake Trail Expansion – Phase 2 of the Johnson Lake Hike & Bike Trail is complete. The Paul Mattson Trail begins at the inlet and runs along the CNPPID canal. The next phase of the trail will extend to Sandy Point. Tri-Basin NRD assisted in the development of the Paul Mattson trail by seeding grass and planting shrubs along the trail.

2009 Active Irrigation Wells

County	Total Number of Irrigation Wells	Certified Irrigated Acres
Kearney County	2,100	61,743.34
Phelps County	2,153	101,351.03
Gosper County	740	56,455.74
Total	4,993	577,756.64
Basin	Total Number of Irrigation Wells	Certified Irrigated Acres
Republican Basin	1,595	189,424.73
Platte Basin	2,573	297,712.04
Little Blue Basin	825	90,619.87
Total	4,993	577,756.64

Republican Basin Water Use*

Irrigation System	2007	2008	2009
Pivots	6.03	6.88	7.11
Gravity	9.56	11.79	12.42
Pivot/Gravity	7.07	8.06	7.79
Overall Average	7.13	8.26	8.36

*All Republican Basin irrigation wells are metered. Metered water use is also reported from 359 wells in the Platte and Little Blue Basins. Data updated February 24, 2010.

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District



Tri-Basin NRD Staff

John Thorburn General Manager
 Richard Holloway.....Assistant Manager
 Charles Brooks..... Land Resources Coordinator
 Carie Lynch Administrative Secretary
 Nolan Little..... Water Resources Technician
 Alex Hasenauer.....Land Resources Technician
 Tammy Fahrenbruch Office Manager
 Esther Smith Office Clerk
 Nicole Salisbury..... Information & Education Coordinator
 Patty Abrahamson..... Office Assistant
 Ruth NielsenMinden Office Secretary
 Lori HaganElwood Office Secretary
 Tami ReeseHoldrege Office Secretary

Vital Statistics

Counties: Gosper, Phelps, Kearney

Elevation Above Mean Sea Level

High = 2,741 (Gosper County)
 Low = 1,985 (Kearney County)

River Basins

Little Blue (25% of land area)
 Platte (35% of land area)
 Republican (40% of land area)

Population: 18,546 (2000 census)

Property Valuation: \$2,471,407,839.00
 (2010 property tax assessment)

Land Area: 1920 square miles (1,228,800 acres)

Vision Statement

The vision (overall goal) for Tri-Basin NRD is to “**work cooperatively with District residents and others to promote good stewardship of land and water resources.**”

Mission Statement

Tri-Basin NRD’s mission is to “**manage, conserve and protect the District’s land and water resources.**” This mission will be accomplished by protecting the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater, reducing potential for soil erosion and flooding, promoting agricultural best management practices, forestry and wildlife habitat preservation. These tasks can only be accomplished by working cooperatively with local residents and agencies of local, state and federal government.

Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors

Todd Garrelts-Chairman..... Subdistrict #4
 11769 732 Road, Holdrege, NE 68949
David Nickel-Vice Chairman Subdistrict #6
 2019 27 Road, Kearney, NE 68847
Larry Reynolds-Secretary Subdistrict #1
 74898 Road 435, Lexington, NE 68850
Ed Harris-Treasurer Subdistrict #2
 10872 738 Road, Loomis, NE 68958
Brian Bergstrom..... Subdistrict #3
 73163 20 Rd, Axtell, NE 68924
Dick Helms Subdistrict #1
 42041 Drive 728, Arapahoe, NE 68922
Phyllis Johnson..... Subdistrict #2
 10369 Road 733, Bertrand, NE 68927
Joe Larson Subdistrict #4
 73853 H Road, Loomis, NE 68958
Bradley Lundeen Subdistrict #5
 524 D Road, Wilcox, NE 68983
David Nelson Subdistrict #5
 1757 B Road, Upland, NE 68981
David Olsen Subdistrict at Large
 942 M Road, Minden, NE 68959
David Raffety Subdistrict #6
 966 V Road, Kearney, NE 68847
Ray Winz Subdistrict #3
 11646 727 Road, Holdrege, NE 68949

Frequently Asked Questions...

Who regulates groundwater and surface water use?

NRDs manage groundwater and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulates surface water. The two agencies are working together to develop regulations that maintain compliance with the Republican River Compact and the Platte River Recovery Program.

What is an IMP?

An Integrated Management Plan (IMP) is jointly developed and agreed to by a Natural Resources District (NRD) and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the purpose of preventing depletion of water supplies of current surface water and groundwater users by new groundwater and surface water users. Tri-Basin NRD has completed an IMP for the Platte Basin portion of the District and is developing an IMP for the Republican Basin portion of the District. Goals of the IMPs include: maintaining a sufficient water supply for use by present and future generations; maintaining and protecting the region's agricultural economy and the viability of cities and villages; and promoting the economic growth while seeking to avoid adverse impacts on the environment.

Where can I get a copy of the IMP or Tri-Basin NRD's Rules and Regulations?

You can stop by our office at 1723 N Burlington in Holdrege and pick up a copy of the Platte Basin IMP or the current Rules and Regulations. You can also access them on our website at www.tribasinnrd.org.

I need my drinking well water tested. How much does it cost?

Tri-Basin NRD provides domestic well testing to rural district residents free of charge. Kits for testing drinking water for nitrates and bacteria are available at the TBNRD office and at the Minden, Holdrege and Elwood Natural Resources Conservation Service offices. Ward Laboratories of Kearney analyzes the water samples.

Why did Tri-Basin NRD need a new office?

In July 2009, Tri-Basin NRD headquarters moved from the Phelps County Ag Center to a renovated building at 1723 N Burlington in Holdrege. The new location includes offices for staff, a board meeting room large enough to accommodate public meetings and a basement for the storage of district records. The district's workload has increased over the years and TBNRD staff and record-keeping needs have also increased, making additional office space necessary.

How can I voice my opinion on an NRD policy or program?

We welcome your comments! There are a number of ways you can let us know what you're thinking. You can call our office toll-free at 1-877-995-6688 and speak with NRD General Manager John Thorburn about any NRD matter. You can visit with one of our board members, who are listed in this publication or on our website at www.tribasinnrd.org. You can send us an email about an NRD matter at tribasin@tribasinnrd.org. Or you can attend one of our monthly board meetings. At each meeting, there is a time set aside for the public to speak on topics not included on the meeting's agenda.

When do the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors meet?

Our board meets on the second Tuesday of each month at our office at 1723 Burlington Street in Holdrege. During January, February, March, July, August and December, meetings are held at 1:30 p.m. In April, May, June, September, October and November, meetings are held at 7:30 p.m.

What types of cost-share does Tri-Basin NRD offer?

- Tri-Basin NRD works with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP). We offer cost-share for a variety of soil and water conservation practices. Contact your local NRCS office to see if the practice in which you are interested is eligible for cost-share.
- We have a cost-share program in place for decommissioning (filling in) water wells that are no longer used. Contact our office for more information about this program.
- The NRD works with Nebraska Pheasants Forever with the Corners for Wildlife Program. We also work with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture and private landowners to improve and enhance wildlife habitat.

What is an IPA?

Tri-Basin NRD has six IPAs in operation. These IPAs were created at the request of landowners who asked the NRD to take on what state law calls a "project of special benefit." Through the creation of these IPAs, Tri-Basin NRD collects assessments from landowners in the area to perform project construction such as culverts and project maintenance such as channel cleaning. In this way, Tri-Basin NRD can assist landowners in controlling surface and groundwater drainage problems.