

Tri-Basin Topics

Spring 2010

"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

Volume 24, Issue 2

Tri-Basin NRD Receives 2009 NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award

Tri-Basin NRD won the 2009 National NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award for sharing their summer interns' time and talents with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other partners. The award was presented at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting on Tuesday, February 2. Dave White, Chief of NRCS presented the award, which was accepted on Tri-Basin NRD's behalf by Mary Ann Wortmann, President of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts.

Each summer, Tri-Basin NRD hires college students who are interested in the field of natural resources. The interns help TBNRD staff with irrigation well sampling, chemigation inspections and summer maintenance projects. While working at the NRD, the interns are introduced to all aspects of the agency's conservation work, from field work to office projects. Many of the interns return to work additional summers with Tri-Basin NRD.

The interns also work part of the time with Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and NRCS on their irrigation projects. At the Holdrege NRCS office, the interns work closely with Curtis Scheele, Irrigation Water Management Specialist, on projects such as EQIP field checks, equipment installation for irrigation demonstration sites and collection of quality assurance data for Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) surveying.

"Year in and year out, the interns have been very good

Mary Ann Wortmann, President of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Board of Directors, accepts the 2009 NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award from Dave White, Chief of NRCS on behalf of Tri-Basin NRD.



Curtis Scheele, Irrigation Water Management Specialist (far left) oversees interns Erik Anderjaska and Zachary Starks while they install a soil moisture sensor for TBNRD producer Jeff Driscoll (far right). (Photo courtesy NRCS)

employees," said Scheele, who wrote and submitted the application for the Earth Team Award. "The interns provide tremendous help which allows me the time to work on the Tri-Basin Irrigator newsletter and address producer requests during the irrigation season."

"The students provide us with invaluable service," said Kevin Breece, NRCS District Conservationist from Holdrege. "They take care of many of the time taking tasks that must be done in our field offices."

But according to Breece, the agencies involved with the internship program are not the only ones who benefit from it. Some of the interns use the knowledge of natural resources conservation that they learn through the program to pursue careers in the field.

"The most rewarding thing to me is when I attend a state function or meeting and see how many of these young people are now employed by an NRD or the NRCS," said Breece. "We sparked their interest in conservation and showed them what we do and what we are about."



Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

Tri-Basin NRD has monitored groundwater levels in Kearney County for more than 30 years. Over the past decade we have watched water levels decline as much as 10 feet in portions of Grant and May Townships in southeastern Kearney County. While groundwater

levels have started rising again over the last couple years, we are concerned that current levels of groundwater use in these townships may be unsustainable over the long term.

One way to address this problem would be to enhance groundwater recharge in this area. This can be accomplished by building one or more reservoirs on Sand Creek to hold back streamflows and allow water to soak into the ground. These reservoirs could range in size from 60 to 600 acres.

We have identified three possible reservoir sites. These sites were selected based on topography that would be suitable for dam construction and proximity to the groundwater decline area. A single larger reservoir would be more cost effective, but two or more smaller reservoirs could distribute recharge benefits over a broader area.

Reservoirs could also provide recreational benefits to area residents. Fishing and boating, picnicking and hiking could all be accommodated at a public reservoir. A local water recreation destination would boost the economy of Kearney County.

I must emphasize that the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors have **NOT** yet decided to build any reservoirs. We are simply exploring the feasibility and desirability of this option. Our first step in this investigation was to discuss this option with the landown-

ers who would be directly affected by reservoir construction. We did this at a well-attended meeting in Minden on March 16.

If the NRD board decides to continue to investigate reservoir construction, the next step would be to study the geology at the reservoir sites in greater detail. If geology proves suitable for dam construction and groundwater recharge, we would hire an engineering firm to develop some reservoir designs. Once designs are completed, we would again seek public comment before proceeding. No land purchase or easement negotiations would occur until after a reservoir site and final design are selected.

The Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors want to know what you think about this proposal. If you have questions or comments, feel free to call me at Tri-Basin NRD. Our toll-free number is (877) 995-6688. My email address is ithorburn@tribasinnrd.org.



Nebraska Natives



Purple coneflower (*Echinacea angustifolia*)

Purple coneflower is a perennial plant in the sunflower family that grows up to 20 inches tall. Its pink flowers bloom in June and July, with ray petals that point downward. This is an important plant medicinally for many ailments. In Nebraska, it can be found in the central mixed grass prairie, Ponderosa pine forest of the north and the tallgrass prairie in the center of the state.

Chemigation permit renewals due June 1

Chemigation renewal forms have been sent to producers and are due, along with payment, in the Tri-Basin NRD office by June 1, 2010. Anyone needing to apply for a new chemigation permit for the 2010 season should contact the Tri-Basin NRD office at 308-995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688. All newly permitted chemigation systems must be inspected before use.

Starting this year, producers need to apply for a special Conditional Chemigation Permit if they want to apply fertilizer through center pivots that cross over CNPPID canals or laterals. Only fertilizer may be applied through these systems; no pesticides, herbicides, insecticides or other chemicals may be used. The amount of nitrogen fertilizer that may be applied across the canal system must be calculated by Tri-Basin NRD staff, the system must be inspected and a Chemigation Permit Limitation Agreement must be completed before these systems can be used to apply nitrogen. Therefore, producers who need these special chemigation permits should allow extra time for the application process to be completed. Producers applying for special permits need to be aware that the approval process could take several days.

Staff will be doing routine inspections on chemigation systems from June until August. Routine inspections are required every three years. If your system is due for an inspection, you will receive a postcard this summer. Routine inspections must be completed for the permits to be renewed for the following year.



Larson Fills Vacant TBNRD Board Seat

Joe Larson of rural Loomis has been appointed to fill the Sub-District #4 seat that became vacant when Harold D Erickson resigned from the board in January. Larson will serve the remainder of Erickson's term, until January 2011.

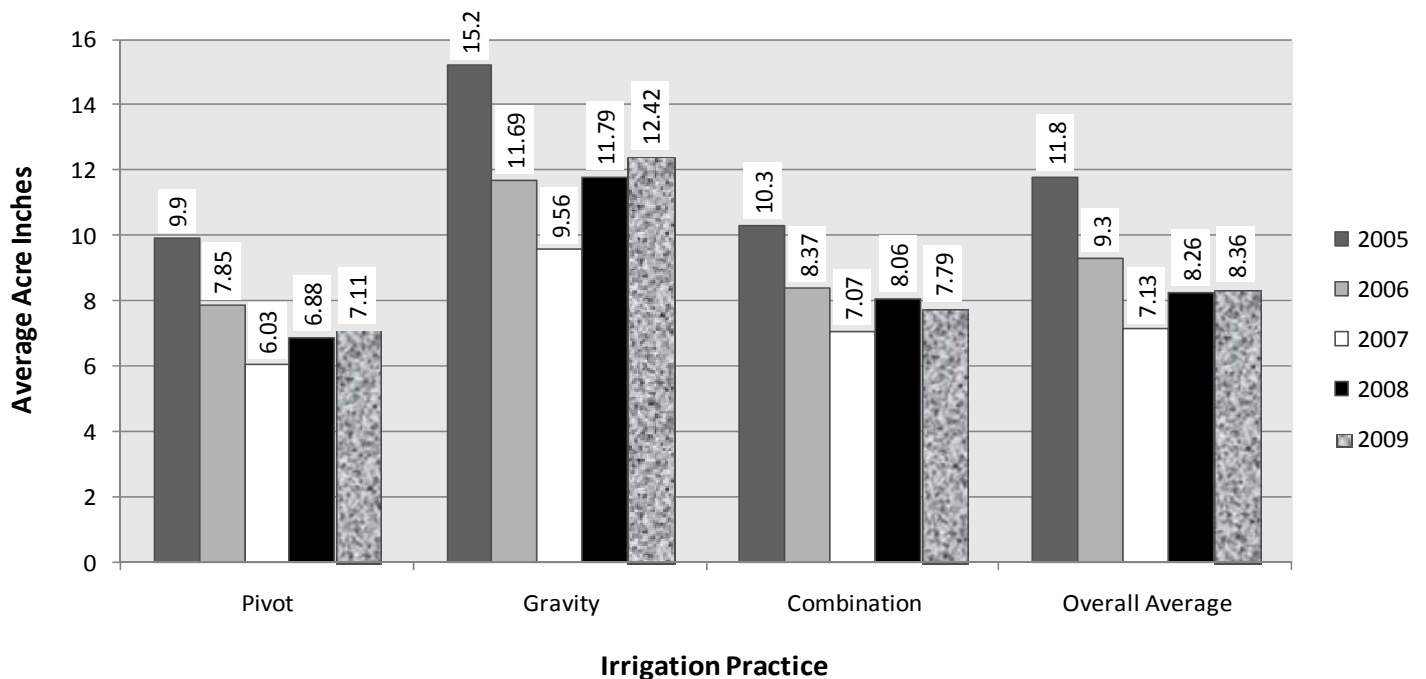
Joe is a Loomis area native who graduated from Loomis High School and received his bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Agricultural Economics. He is a member of the Phelps-Gosper Livestock Growers Association and the Loomis Evangelical Free Church. Joe and his wife, Amber, have three children: Emma, Adeline and Luke.

Electronic Version of Tri-Basin Topics is Available



If you would like to receive a PDF version of Tri-Basin Topics by email, send an email with your request to nsalisbury@tribasinprd.org. We'll take you off the mailing list and send the newsletter to your inbox each quarter. If saving trees isn't enough incentive, consider this: the electronic version of the newsletter is full-color!

Tri-Basin Republican Basin Water Use



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(All meetings are at NRD office in Holdrege unless otherwise noted.)

April

- April 7Rainwater Basin Conservation Day
for area 8th grade students
- April 13NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*
- April 21 & 22.....Water Jamboree at Harlan Co. Reservoir
for area 5th grade students
- April 30Arbor Day

May

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

June

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

* Times are tentative

CONSERVATION TIP

Raise your mower blade. Adjust your lawn mower to the 3-inch setting. Taller grass holds moisture longer, requiring less water.



TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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- 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 Assistant Office Clerk
- Ruth Nielsen Minden Office Secretary
- Lori Hagan Elwood Office Secretary
- Tami Reese 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.

- ◆ Larson Appointed New Director
- ◆ Chemigation Renewals are Due
- ◆ Tri-Basin NRD's Earth Team Award

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Natural Resources District
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