

Winter 2014

Volume 28, Issue 2

Tri-Basin Topics

A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

Holdrege Water Conference to Focus on Platte River, 2013 Flooding

The Platte River and 2013 flooding along the river will be the focus of the 2014 Holdrege Water Conference. The annual event will be held Tuesday, February 4 at 10:30 a.m. at the Phelps County Ag Center. 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.

Sessions at the conference will focus on water-related issues that affect agricultural producers in central Nebraska. The schedule is still being finalized, but one of the focal points of the conference will be the Platte River and the 2013 flooding.

For a complete schedule of Water Conference speakers, check Tri-Basin NRD's website, www.tribasinnrd.org, a few

weeks prior to the event.

Area agri-businesses 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 recertification credit for attending the conference.



Holdrege
Water
Conference

TBNRD Directors Set Future Allocation for Gosper County's Union Township



Tri-Basin NRD directors reviewed groundwater pumping limits for irrigation wells in Union Township (5N-22W) in Gosper County at their November board meeting. They voted to keep the current three year allocation in place and set the 2015-2017 allocation at 27 inches per acre.

Landowners may borrow from the next allocation period, but will be charged an additional inch of water for every inch they borrow from their future allocation. They may not borrow from the 2018-2021 allocation period. A maximum of nine acre-inches may be carried over into the next allocation period. Landowners who exceed their allocated amounts before the end of an allocation period will be issued cease-and-desist orders.

To encourage irrigation efficiency, landowners in Union Township will be offered additional cost-share funds for soil moisture sensors. Landowners in an allocated area are eligible for soil moisture sensor cost-share at 50 percent, up to \$300 per parcel (maximum of \$3500 per landowner, per year). For more information about soil moisture sensor cost-share, contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office.

"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

<http://www.tribasinnrd.org>



Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

Feast or Famine

Dr. J. E. Weaver, a pioneering botanist of the Nebraska Plains, described the climate of central Nebraska this way: "It is commonly called semi-arid, but in some years it is humid and in others desert-like. It is not a permanently es-

tablished climate, but a dynamic one." Anyone who has lived in this area for at least a few years recognizes truth in that statement. Such climatic variability makes life on the Plains interesting, but it also makes it challenging to effectively manage our all-important water resources.

The last four years are a great illustration of this variability. We started this decade with two very wet years (2010 and 2011), during which we saw long periods of high flows and even some flooding on the Platte. Those two years were also cooler than average. Then we entered 2012, which was one of the hottest and driest years on record.



This year the drought continued but, thankfully, we didn't have to deal with such extreme and persistent heat as we had in 2012.

Contrary to popular belief, irrigation is intended to supplement rainfall, not replace it. The limitations of irrigation, some natural and some imposed by government, become apparent during drought. Farmers in the Republican Basin have had to live with limits on their irrigation pumping for nearly a decade now as part of Nebraska's efforts to insure that our state continues to comply with the Republican River Compact with Kansas and Colorado. Until the last couple very dry years, farmers who irrigated conservatively and applied best management practices were able to raise good crops and live with those limitations. In 2012 and 2013 how-

ever, field crops, especially corn, needed more water than the allocations allowed, so crop yields and profits were significantly affected. On the Platte side, farmers were able to pump more water but many still complained that their wells couldn't always satisfy their crops' water demands.

Heavy irrigation pumping the last couple years has drawn down our aquifers by several feet from the unusually high levels that they attained in 2011. Such declines highlighted the need for supplemental groundwater recharge. This is usually accomplished by running water down canals and into reservoirs, then allowing it to soak away. In this way, the aquifer serves as an underground reservoir. Unfortunately, with the Platte dry, there wasn't any extra water available to deposit into our underground "water bank" this past spring.

In spite of occasional spotty rains, the drought persisted in central Nebraska through late summer and early fall, so news reports of record monsoon rains and flooding in the South Platte watershed in Colorado took us by surprise. It took a few days for local water managers to get a clear picture of the magnitude of the rainfall and implications for our area, hundreds of miles downstream of the disaster zone.

The flood wasn't exactly a wall of water, but it was a steadily advancing surge that progressed day by day across the plains.

There is nothing good about flooding, but it soon became clear that this flood would be an unusual opportunity to divert water for beneficial use and to reduce flood potential. Timing is everything. If the flood had occurred in July or August, irrigation canals would already have been full, delivering water to farmers, so there wouldn't have been any room to divert floodwater. Had the water come down in December or January, it would have caused ice jams that would have interfered with the operation of diversion dams.

During this flood, Tri-Basin NRD, Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, and Nebraska Department of Natural Resources paid

Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District to divert more than 24,000 acre-feet into their canals and into Elwood Reservoir.

This fall's South Platte flooding was an extreme event and several levels of government had to work cooperatively and quickly to take advantage of the opportunity it afforded us to augment our drought-depleted groundwater supplies. Irrigators and wildlife alike will benefit from this stored water for many years to come.

Managing water in this "dynamic climate" is difficult, but sometimes it creates opportunities. Our challenge is to recognize those opportunities when they come along and be ready to take advantage of them, even when we don't have much time to plan for them.

Trees for 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 2013). 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. 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.



New TBNRD Well Permit Application Form Available

Tri-Basin NRD has a new well permit application form available. Previously, there were several different well permit application forms, each for a specific pumping capacity. The new form combines all previous forms and simply asks you to designate the pumping capacity. The forms are available at local well drilling companies, our office, or can be printed from our website, www.tribasinprd.org.

Chemigation and Nitrogen Management Recertification

Tri-Basin NRD will be sending out renewal forms during the first part of January to producers who had chemigation permits last year. 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. Training sessions have not yet been scheduled. For more information about the training schedule, check the Department of Environmental Quality's website at www.deq.state.ne.us or call your local UNL Extension office. Producers who need to add new chemigation permits for the 2013 season should contact the Tri-Basin NRD office.

Producers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 areas of the Groundwater Quality Management Area also need to have current Nitrogen Management training. If your certification has expired, you should receive notification from our office. Currently, Nitrogen Management Trainings are scheduled in conjunction with Private Pesticide Applicator Trainings on the following days:

- January 27 at 1:30 p.m. - Minden Fairgrounds
- February 5 at 1 p.m. - Elwood Legion Hall
- February 11 at 9:30 a.m. - Holdrege Ag Center
- February 19 at 9 a.m. - Minden Fairgrounds
- March 6 at 1 p.m. - Holdrege Ag Center
- March 25 at 1:30 p.m. - Minden Fairgrounds
- April 3 at 6 p.m. - Holdrege Ag Center

Attendance at the Holdrege Water Conference on February 4 or the No-Till Conference in Holdrege on February 13 also qualifies for Nitrogen Management Certification (be sure to sign in for credit). Class times are subject to change. For a current schedule, check our website at www.tribasinprd.org or call us at 1-877-995-6688.

Tri-Basin Directors Approve Changes to Certified Irrigated Acre Correction Process

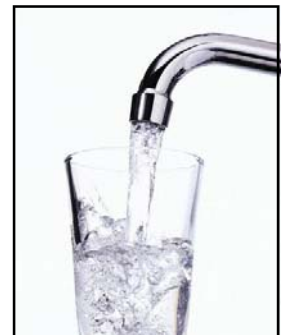
At the November Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors meeting, directors voted to change a policy regarding irrigation history required to correct certified irrigated acres. Landowners wanting to correct certified irrigated acres must now be able to provide third-party proof of irrigation (such as Farm Service Agency records, aerial photos, etc.) during three out of the past five years in order to have the board consider the correction. This requirement is in addition to the long-standing policy which requires landowners to show proof of irrigation history at some time between 1997 and 2004 in order to correct certified irrigated acres. All corrections must also be approved by TBNRD's board of directors. For more information about the certified irrigated acre correction process, contact our office at 1-877-995-6688.

Nitrogen Reports Due

Nitrogen Management Reports for the 2013 crop year were due December 31, 2013 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.

Did you know?

Tri-Basin NRD provides nitrate and bacteria test kits for rural homeowners free of charge once a year. Call or stop by the Tri-Basin NRD office for more details.





Winter 2014

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
www.tribasinprd.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

CALENDAR

January 14.....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
 January 20... NRD Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 February 4 Holdrege Water Conference
 February 11NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
 February 17NRD Closed for Presidents' Day
 March 11.....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
 April 8.....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
Ed Harris	Loomis, NE
Phyllis Johnson	Bertrand, NE
Joe Larson	Loomis, NE
David Nelson	Upland, NE
David Raffety	Kearney, NE
Larry Reynolds	Lexington, NE
Ray Winz	Holdrege, NE

TRI-BASIN NRD STAFF

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

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.

TRI-BASIN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT 2014 HAND PLANT ORDER FORM

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____

ORDERS MUST BE IN MULTIPLES OF 25.

Tree Order Deadline is April 1, 2014.

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

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

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 Installation..... \$20
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.

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.

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 forms will not be finalized until payment is received at the Tri-Basin or NRCS office.