New NRD Groundwater Rules Proposed

Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties contain some of the most productive farmland in the world. We are blessed with rich, deep soils and plentiful groundwater supplies for irrigation. Groundwater supplies have been supplemented by surface water diverted from the Platte River by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID). This combination of groundwater and surface water supplies has sustained the productivity of our land during several droughts.

Now we face a combination of drought, increasing development of marginal land for irrigated crop production, uncertainty about whether CNPPID will be able to supply irrigation water to its customers after 2004, and interstate agreements that require Nebraska to limit water use in the Platte and Republican River Basins. This combination of circumstances led the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors to propose rules to regulate water use and limit development of irrigated land to protect groundwater and surface water supplies.

The proposed rules have two components: groundwater quantity rules to sustain groundwater supplies and integrated management rules to protect rivers and streams from depletion related to additional development of groundwater irrigated cropland.

Here is a summary of the proposed rules:

**Groundwater Quantity Management (three stages or phases)**

Phase I rules are intended to protect existing groundwater supplies. They will apply to all landowners within Tri-Basin NRD.

- The NRD will certify all irrigated acres listed on property tax rolls within the district. Land irrigated for the first time in 2004 will also be certified, as long as landowners can provide independent confirmation, such as FSA certification, indicating that a crop was irrigated during the 2004 growing season.
- Flowmeters will be required on all new wells. Landowners will need to report water use from new wells annually to the NRD.
- New high capacity wells (1000 gallons per minute or larger) can be drilled only if they are more than ¼ mile from all existing wells.
- Landowners will need to get permits from the NRD before they drill new wells, drill replacement wells or pump groundwater off overlying land.

Phase II rules will apply only to areas where a three-year rolling average of groundwater levels is lower than average groundwater levels in 1981-85.

- No additional irrigated acres can be developed after a phase II area is designated unless an equal number of certified (existing) irrigated acres are converted to a non-irrigated land use.
- Flowmeters will be required on all wells in Phase II areas.

Continued on page 2………
Tri-Basin NRD is looking for volunteers to record rain gauge readings at their home, farm, or place of business. Tri-Basin NRD has joined 12 other NRDs across the state to develop a rain gauge data collection network.

The NRD hopes to recruit at least one volunteer from each of Tri-Basin’s 48 townships to record and transmit rainfall data. The information provided by each volunteer will be used for local, state, and national weather forecasts and climate modeling.

Selected volunteers will receive a free rain gauge furnished by Tri-Basin NRD. These gauges are quality instruments approved by the National Weather Service. If you are interested in participating in the volunteer rain gauge reader program, please contact Shennon Helms, Information and Education Assistant, Tri-Basin NRD at 995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688. Volunteers will be notified in early May if they have been selected to represent their township, and when training will take place.
**Director Profile**

Ray Winz represents subdistrict #3 on the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors. Ray attend grade school in Huntley, and graduated from Ragan High School. Ray and his wife, Nadine, as well as two of their three children work together raising irrigated corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and dryland wheat. They also have had a purebred Charolais cattle operation for 40 years. Ray is a member of the Ragan United Methodist Church, the Governor’s Republican River Basin Council, the Harlan County Farm Bureau, the Nebraska Charolais Association, and Jachin Lodge #146. He also is Past President of Midland Coop. Ray’s hobbies include farm sales, dancing, and traveling.

**New Employee**

By now most people calling in to the Tri-Basin office recognize the friendly voice answering the phone as that of Esther Smith. Esther started working at Tri-Basin NRD in November 2003 as Office Assistant. Although she was born in Wray, Colorado, Esther grew up in Hastings, Nebraska. She received her undergraduate degree from Hastings College and her Master’s in Library Science from Emporia State University.

Esther lives in Holdrege with her husband, Rick, and their black lab/German Shepherd cross, Nipper. In her spare time she enjoys reading, gardening, and sewing. Welcome, Esther!

**Recognizing and Managing Pine Wilt**

Symptoms of pine wilt usually appear from August to December and can affect any species of pine tree. The pine needles turn pale green or yellow, and finally brown while remaining attached to the tree. These symptoms progress through the entire tree very quickly—turning yellow and then wilting. Trees infected with the parasite usually die within three months.

The pinewood parasite reproduces very quickly, and eventually clogs the imperative tissues of the tree, causing it to wilt and die. The pinewood parasite is transmitted to susceptible trees by the pine sawyer beetle.

In order to manage pine wilt, infected trees should be removed and burned in the fall or very early spring, before the pine sawyer beetles can emerge. Wood from infested trees should not be used as firewood.

Scotch pine, in particular, should not be planted in an area where there has been a history of pine wilt. By properly maintaining trees through watering, mulching, and fertilizing, the vigorous healthy trees should not be susceptible to the pinewood parasite.

**Check out these web sites:**

- http://www.cocorahs.com
- http://drrdata.dnr.state.ne.us/NeRAIN
- http://www.drought.unl.edu/dm/monitor.html
- http://www.treesaregood.com/
- http://www.h2ouse.org/

- CO Rain and Hail Study
- NE Rain and Hail Study
- U.S. Drought Monitor
- Water Data for the Nation
- Tree Planting Information
- Home Water Efficiency
**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

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

**April**
- April 13 - NRD Board Meeting at 1:30 p.m.*
- April 14 - Rainwater Basin Conservation Day
- April 28-29 - Water Jamboree

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

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

* Times are tentative

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**WATER CONSERVATION TIP**

- Keep drinking water in the refrigerator. Don't let the faucet run until the water cools down.

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**TRI-BASIN TOPICS** is a publication of the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, 1308 Second Street, Holdrege, NE 68949 (308) 995-6688 Toll Free 877-995-6688 E-mail tribasin@tribasinnrd.org

**TRI-BASIN NRD STAFF**

John Thorburn...........................................General Manager
Richard Holloway........................................Assistant Manager
Phyllis Johnson, Vice Chairman..................Land Resources Coordinator
Carie Lynch..................................................Executive Secretary
Charles Brooks..............................................Administrative Secretary
David Olson..................................................Secretary
Heldrege, NE

Roger David..................................................Conservation Technician
Tammy Fahrenbruch.....................................Int. & Education Coordinator/Office Asst.
Esther Smith.................................................Office Clerk
Shannon Helms.............................................Information Assistant
Mary Stauffer...............................................Elwood Office Secretary
Mary Nelson..................................................Minden Office Secretary
Heldrege, NE

David Nickel............................................Loomis, NE
Ed Harris..................................................Kearney, NE
David Rafferty............................................Kearney, NE
Ray Reynolds.............................................Lexington, NE
Larry Reynolds.............................................Lexington, NE

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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**TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Brad Lundeen, Chairman Wilcox, NE
Gary Lindstrom Wilcox, NE
Phyllis Johnson, Vice Chairman Bertrand, NE Ed Harris Loomis, NE
Charles Brooks................................. Land Resources Coordinator
David Olson, Secretary Minden, NE
David Nelson...........................................Upland, NE
David Erickson.........................................Holdrege, NE
Dick Helms.............................................Arapahoe, NE

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IN THIS ISSUE:

- Rain Gauge Readers
- New Groundwater Management Proposals
- Pine Wilt Management
- Conservation Program Need

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

1308 Second Street
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