Landowners are prohibited from developing additional irrigated land in some portions of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District. Additional irrigated land development is restricted in the Republican River Basin in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties and that portion of the Platte Basin west of US highway 183 (Gosper and northwest Phelps counties).

Tri-Basin NRD had to restrict development in the Republican Basin because the Republican River Compact, an agreement between Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado and the federal government, limits the amount of water Nebraskans can consume in that river basin. Data collected by the State of Nebraska indicates that the current amount of irrigated land in that basin is about equal to Nebraska's consumption limit. Additional irrigated land can't be developed, because that could result in Nebraska violating the compact agreement.

Last September, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Roger Patterson declared the Platte Basin west of Highway 183 "overappropriated" (more water is being used than the river system can sustainably supply). As in the Republican Basin, no additional irrigated cropland can be developed, because it would worsen the problem of overuse of water resources. DNR Director Patterson has indicated that he will declare the Platte Basin east of Highway 183 (northeastern Phelps and Kearney counties) as fully appropriated in January, 2006. After that declaration is made, no additional irrigated land can be developed in that part of the district.

Tri-Basin NRD is in the process of certifying (counting) irrigated land in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties. Certification entitles a landowner to use groundwater to irrigate existing cropland, hayland and pasture, regardless whether the land was previously irrigated with a well or canal water. The NRD has completed certification in the Republican River basin portion of the district. The district is now finalizing certification of irrigated land in the overappropriated portion of the Platte River Basin (west of US Highway 183). Irrigated cropland in the Platte Basin east of Highway 183

Continued on page 3....
Managers Message
By: John Thorburn
Phragmites on the March
The arrival of Sandhill Cranes is an annual indicator of spring in south-central Nebraska. Tourists come from all over the world to see these majestic birds as they roost on the Platte River and feed in neighboring crop fields.

Careful observers will note that this spring the cranes will have less elbow room when they wade the Platte. That’s because an invasive plant is smothering islands and choking river channels from North Platte to Grand Island. This invasive plant is called *Phragmites*, also known as common reed. *Phragmites* is a tall grass. A really, really tall grass. It typically grows 10 to 12 feet tall, but can get as high as 20 feet. It also grows very densely, crowding out native plants and covering open sandbars essential for cranes as roosting habitat.

*Phragmites* is native to Australia. The introduced *Phragmites* is very similar to a native reed, but it can be distinguished from native plants by its rough straight stems and aggressive growth habit (native reed is not widespread in Nebraska outside the Sandhills). It spreads rapidly by both seed and rhizomes (runners), roots that spread along the ground surface and sprout new plants at regular intervals.

*Phragmites* was originally introduced as an ornamental grass. Often mistakenly referred to as “pampas grass”, it is favored landscaping because it has frondy seed heads at the top of the tall stems. It is still widely featured in home and commercial landscaping which, in my opinion, is equivalent to using musk thistle or poison ivy to beautify your property.

*Phragmites* is spreading rapidly in the Platte River. As it takes hold, it outcompetes native plants, destroys wildlife habitat and obstructs streamflows. *Phragmites* spreads so rapidly because it has no natural control in the Great Plains. Fire by itself is not an effective control method. The grass is not very palatable to cattle, although Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (“Central”) has had some success getting goats to feed on it.

Some herbicides have proven effective at controlling *phragmites*, but it is difficult to effectively apply herbicides on this plant because of its tall, dense growth habit. Helicopters have proven effective as a delivery system for applying herbicides on these plants because they can spray with great precision and the downdraft from their rotors pushes the spray down into the interior of *phragmites* clumps. Unfortunately, using helicopters to spray weeds is very expensive. When Central used helicopters to spray *phragmites* on their Jeffrey Island property, they spent about $200 per acre for the treatment. Treating the Platte river channel from Lexington to Grand Island using this method could cost as much as $10 million per year.

This invasive plant presents new challenges that require new ideas and approaches to effective land and wildlife habitat management. County weed control superintendents are working together with UN-K researchers, environmental groups and state and federal agencies to develop a strategy to control *phragmites* and other invasive plants in the Platte River. I hope that this effort succeeds. If it doesn’t, someday the Platte will be filled with “ornamental grass”, but sandbars and cranes will be just a memory.

http://www.tribasinnrnd.org
Flowmeters must be installed on all irrigation wells in the Republican River Basin in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties by December 31, 2005.

If you have an approved Republican Basin Flowmeter Cost-Share Agreement – Your flowmeters must be installed no later than September 30, 2005 to qualify for 50% cost-share. If eligible, your cost-share application can be extended to September 30, 2005.

Call Tri-Basin NRD Toll Free (1-877-995-6688) for questions.

Note: You must receive cost-share approval

Landowners in Tri-Basin NRD With Irrigated Land in the Republican River Basin

- Flowmeters must be installed on all irrigation wells in the Republican River Basin in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties by December 31, 2005.

- If you have an approved Republican Basin Flowmeter Cost-Share Agreement – Your flowmeters must be installed no later than September 30, 2005 to qualify for 50% cost-share. If eligible, your cost-share application can be extended to September 30, 2005.

Check out these web sites:

http://www.agwaterbudget.com
http://www.nws.noaa.gov
http://dnrdatal.dnr.state.ne.us/NeRAIN
http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/
http://net.unl.edu/swi/pers/water_worries.html

- Water Allocation to Economic Recovery
- National Weather Service
- NE Rain and Hail Study
- LB 962
- Water Data for the Nation
- Nebraska Reservoirs

Todd Garrelts

Todd Garrelts and his wife, Nancy live on the outskirts of Holdrege with their daughter, Paige, and their son, Blake. Todd represents subdistrict 4 and serves as treasurer for the Tri-Basin Board of Directors. After graduating from Elm Creek High School, Todd attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. He currently attends Bethel Lutheran Church, and is a member of Phelps-Gosper Livestock Feeders Association, Nebraska Cattlemen, and Nebraska Corn Growers. In his free time Todd enjoys spending time at the lake and taking flying lessons.
CALENDAR OF EVENTS
(All meetings are at NRD office in Phelps County Ag Center unless otherwise noted.)

May
May 10  - NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*
May 30  - Memorial Day (office closed)

June
June 8-9   - Republican River Compact Admin.
            Meeting in Wray, CO
June 14   - NRD Board Meeting at 1:30 p.m.*

July
July 4    - Independence Day (office closed)
July 7    - NE Natural Resources Commission
            Meeting 8:30 a.m.*, Super 8 Motel,
            Holdrege
July 12   - NRD Board Meeting at 1:30 p.m.*
July 16-21 - Kearney County Fair
July 23-28 - Phelps County Fair

* Times are tentative

NOTICE
- Landowners and operators who wish to renew chemigation permits must submit renewal permit
  applications by May 31, 2005!

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
Bertrand, NE
Charles Brooks ..................................................... Land Resources Coordinator
Carie Lynch .......................................................... Administrative Secretary
Roger David .......................................................... Conservation Technician
Steve Nelson ........................................................ Land Resource Technician
Tammy Fahrenbruch ............................................... Office Manager
Esther Smith ............................................................ Office Clerk
Shannon Helms ...................................................... Int. & Education Assistant
Nicole Salisbury .................................................. Office Assistant
Marlene Shearer .................................................. Minden Office Secretary
Mary Stauffer ...................................................... Elwood Office Secretary
Patty Abrahamson ............................................... 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.

TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Brad Lundeen, Chairman
Wilcox, NE
Phyllis Johnson, Vice Chairman
Bertrand, NE
Todd Garretts, Treasurer
Holdrege, NE
David Olsen, Secretary
Minden, NE
David Nelson
Upland, NE
Harold D. Erickson
Holdrege, NE
Dick Helms
Arapahoe, NE
Gary Lindstrom
Wilcox, NE
Ed Harris
Loomis, NE
David Nickel
Kearney, NE
David Raffety
Kearney, NE
Larry Reynolds
Lexington, NE
Ray Wiroz
Holdrege, NE

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED
1308 Second Street
Holdrege, NE 68949
P.O. Box 220
Non-Postage Paid
U.S. Postage
Paid
Holdrege, NE 68949

In This Issue
- Phragmites Update
- Irrigated Land Development
- Information
- Republican Basin Promoter

Phragmites Information