

Spring 2019

Volume 33, Issue 2

Tri-Basin Topics

A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

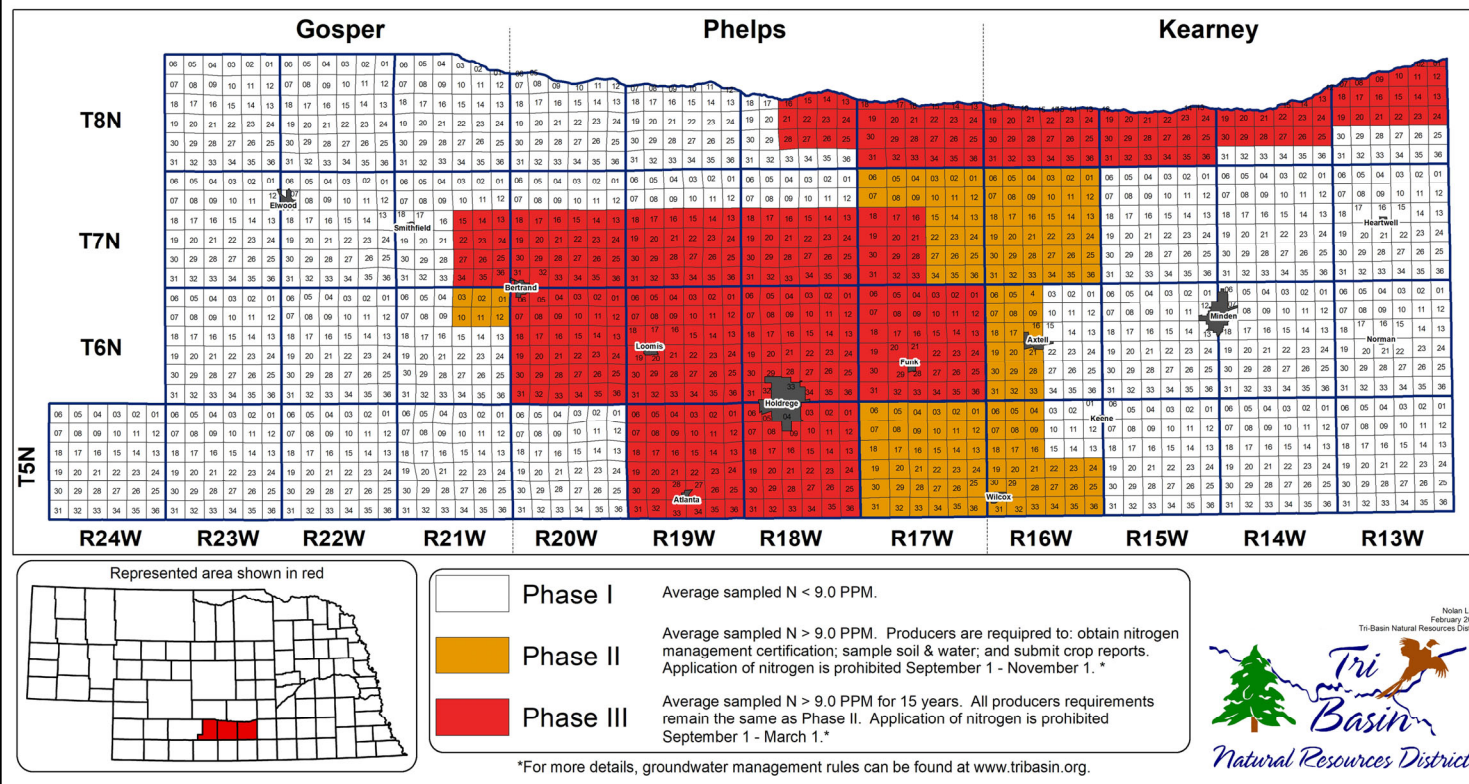
TBNRD Designates Anderson Township Phase 2 for Groundwater Quality

A portion of Anderson Township in Phelps County (7N-17W) is now in Phase 2 of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District's (NRD) Groundwater Quality Management Area. The district's directors approved the Phase 2 designation following a review of groundwater quality data from the past few years and a public hearing. Tri-Basin NRD's most recent data shows that nitrate levels in Anderson Township is 17.5 parts per million. The Environmental Protection Agency's nitrate threshold for safe drinking water is ten parts per million; TBNRD's trigger point for moving an area from Phase 1 to Phase 2 according to district rules is nine parts per million. The remainder of the township is designated Phase 3 for groundwater quality.

The district's Groundwater Management Area Rules are the primary way in which district staff and directors protect the groundwater supply in Phelps, Gosper, and Kearney Counties. Through these rules, TBNRD has regulated fertilizer application to protect groundwater quality since 1989. District staff work cooperatively with farmers and agronomists to help improve the timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of fertilizer application. Staff also test nitrate levels in irrigation wells across the district annually. Overall, this has resulted in stable or declining nitrate-nitrogen levels in groundwater supplies throughout the district. According to Tri-Basin NRD Manager John Thorburn, the overall lower nitrate levels in the district are "a credit to our producers and their efficiency in irrigation and application of fertilizer."

Farmers in Phase 2 areas of the GQMA are required to sample irrigation water and soil for nitrate levels each year, submit Nitrogen Management forms to Tri-Basin NRD in the fall, and attend a Nitrogen Management Certification class every three years.

TBNRD Groundwater Quality Management Areas



"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

<http://www.tribasinnrd.org>



Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

Nebraska's State Trees

Typically, late May and early June are notable for "cotton" seed pods floating through the air from our state tree, *Populus Deltoides*, the Eastern Cottonwood. The cold spring weather of the past several weeks has put many trees and other plants behind schedule as they emerge from winter dormancy and "Cotton season" might be delayed a week or so as well.

One of Nebraska's nicknames is the "Tree Planter State", which was the state's official nickname from 1895 until it was changed to the "Cornhusker State" in 1945. Calling Nebraskans tree planters was, of course, a nod to our history as the home of Arbor Day. It was also promoted as a more positive alternative to the most common nickname for Nebraskans in the 1890s, "bugeaters".

Nebraska pioneers valued trees because they were so rare on the High Plains. Planting trees was usually one of the first things that homesteaders did after they constructed their "soddies". One of the most durable, survivable trees available for them to plant was the native cottonwood.

Cottonwood trees prefer well-drained soils, like sandy riverbanks, but they are able to grow in a variety of situations. They are a fast-growing tree, with growth rates approaching three feet per year. Unfortunately, that high growth rate results in weak limbs and a short lifespan for most cottonwood trees. Cottonwoods typically live 60-80 years, but they can live much longer in favorable conditions. They can also grow to monstrous proportions. It is fitting that, since the cottonwood is our state tree, the National Champion largest cottonwood grows in southeast Nebraska, near Beatrice. This multi-trunked giant is more than 36 feet in circumference, with a crown spread of 108 feet.

The cottonwood is closely associated with pioneer settlement, but it wasn't named Nebraska's state tree until 1972. Prior to that, our state tree was another native tree, the American Elm. The elm is a majestic tree, with a broad crown. It, too, was popular with pioneers. It was widely planted in windbreaks and "tree claims" across the state. Unfortunately, it has been largely wiped out in Nebraska as a result of the spread of Dutch Elm Blight, an invasive, fatal fungal disease. In fact, it was the devastation of American Elm that led the Unicameral to change the state tree to cottonwood.

The American Elm wasn't our state's original arboreal mascot, either, however. The Elm was designated the first "legislatively mandated" state tree by the first Unicameral in 1937, but the state Horticultural Society had promoted it since 1917. Before the American Elm, our state tree was the Green Ash. Green Ash are also native to Nebraska, well adapted to our soils and climate, and vigorous in its growth. Ironically, Green Ash may ultimately suffer the same fate as the tree that replaced it. Green Ash is threatened by an invasive insect of Chinese origin called the Emerald Ash Borer. Emerald Ash Borers first appeared in Michigan just 15 years ago, but they have since spread to 25 states, including eastern Nebraska.



Even the Green Ash was not the first species designated as our state tree. That honor belongs to the Bur Oak, Nebraska's strongest and most majestic native tree. Bur Oaks are beautiful, tough and, so far anyway, free from serious disease problems. They are native to most of our state, except the southern panhandle. Their acorns provide food for squirrels, deer and other wildlife. In my opinion, it is a very desirable tree for planting in town or country. It does have a slower growth rate than its symbolic successors, but that slower growth results in stronger, longer-lived trees.

Tree planting season is upon us. If you have room, plant one or more of our state trees and you will have earned your Nebraskan nickname.

Tri-Basin to Host Arbor Day Celebration

Tri-Basin NRD will host the Holdrege Chamber of Commerce's Coffee Connection from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. on Arbor Day, Friday, April 26. Holdrege area residents are invited to stop in the Tri-Basin NRD office during Coffee Connection to receive a free tree seedling.

Tri-Basin NRD will also provide free tree seedlings in other communities throughout the district on Arbor Day. Watch for details on community Arbor Day celebrations in local media outlets, the Tri-Basin NRD website (www.tribasinnr.org), or Tri-Basin NRD's Facebook page.



Celebrate Arbor Day!

Plant a tree



Tri-Basin NRD Offers ACE Scholarships

Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) is a natural resources camp sponsored by Nebraska's natural resources districts for students who have completed sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. It will be held at the State 4-H Youth Camp at Halsey June 16-19. Cost of camp is \$215.

Tri-Basin NRD is offering up to six scholarships that cover the full cost of registration for students from Gosper, Phelps, and Kearney Counties who want to attend this camp. The deadline to apply for TBNRD scholarships is April 29, 2019. More information about the camp and applying for the scholarships can be found on Tri-Basin NRD's website, www.tribasinprd.org, or by calling Nicole Salisbury at Tri-Basin NRD toll-free at 1-877-995-6688.

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, 2019. Anyone who wants to apply fertilizer or ag chemicals through their irrigation system needs to apply for a chemigation permit for the 2019 season. Landowners and operators should contact Tri-Basin NRD toll-free at 1-877-995-6688 regarding chemigation permits. All newly permitted chemigation systems must be inspected before use. A person who is certified as a chemigation applicator must supervise injection of fertilizer and ag chemicals in irrigation water.

NRD staff do 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 permits to be eligible for renewal the following year. Renewal permits are \$15 and new permits are \$50.

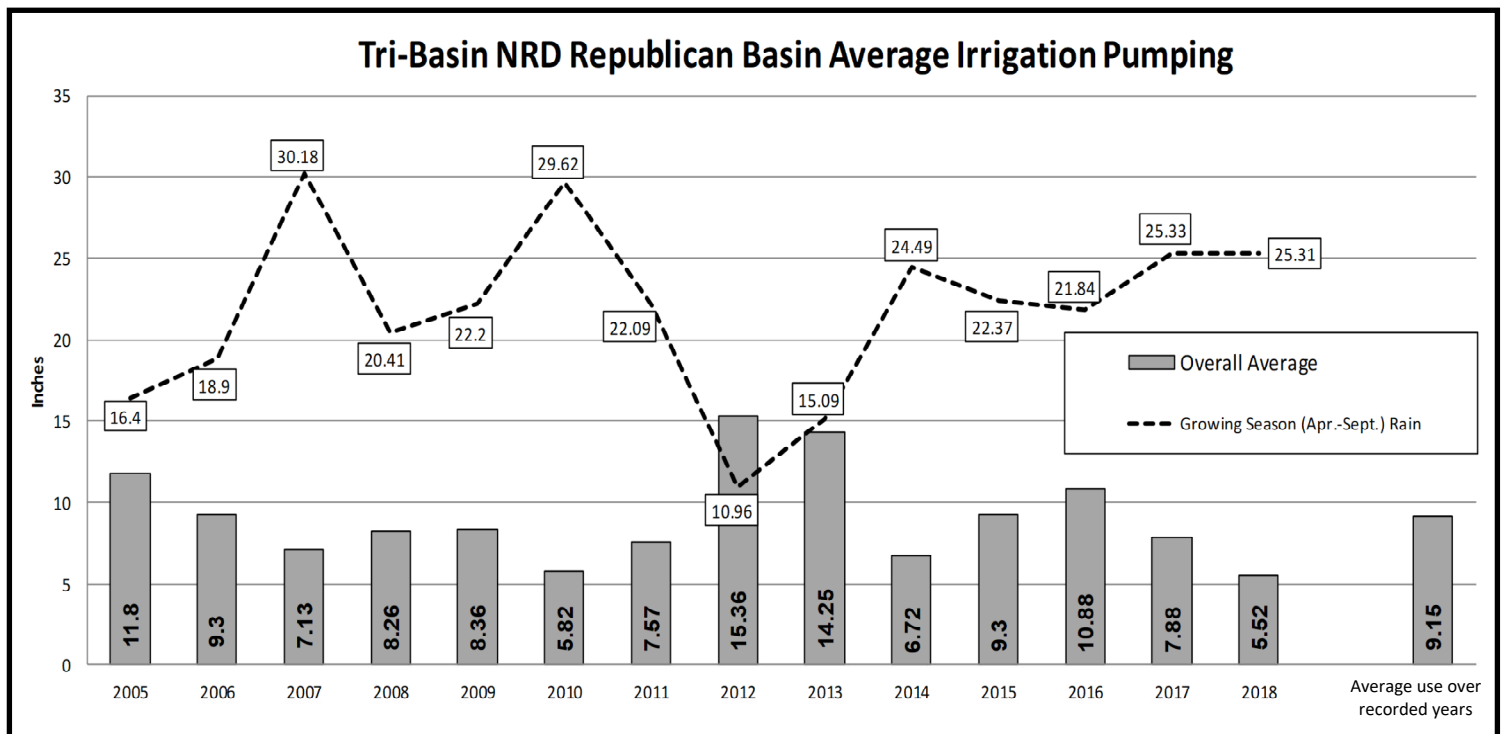
DID YOU KNOW?

Nebraska is fortunate to have aquifers below it. If poured over the surface of the state, the water in those aquifers would have a depth of 37.9 feet (11.6 meters).

Source: Nebraska Department of Agriculture 2019 Agriculture Fact Card.

Check Meter Readings Before Starting Irrigation

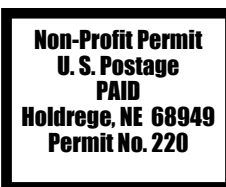
As you are getting equipment ready for irrigation season this spring, we'd like to remind you to record the meter readings on your irrigation flowmeters before you begin irrigating crops. We have your ending readings from 2018 in our records, and will use those as the beginning readings for 2019 on our Irrigation Water Management (Water Use) Forms. However, in the event of a discrepancy in readings or a broken meter, your recorded beginning reading can be extremely helpful in tracking down a problem or estimating water use!





Spring 2019

Tri-Basin Topics



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www.tribasinncrd.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

CALENDAR

April 9.....NRD Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.*

April 24 & 25 Water Jamboree at Harlan Co Reservoir

April 26..... Arbor Day
Coffee Connection/Tree Giveaway at TBNRD, 9:30 a.m.

May 14NRD Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.*

May 27NRD Closed for Memorial Day

June 11NRD Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.*

July 4NRD Closed for Independence Day

July 9 NRD Board meeting, 1:30 p.m.

* Times are tentative. All meetings are at TBNRD office in Holdrege unless otherwise noted.

TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bradley Lundeen, Chairman	Wilcox
Todd Garrelts, Vice Chairman	Holdrege
Robin Hinrichs, Treasurer	Axtell
Joe Bilka, Secretary	Holdrege
Brian Bergstrom	Axtell
Mike Cavanaugh	Minden
Ed Harris	Loomis
Phyllis Johnson	Bertrand
Greg Jorgensen	Minden
Joe Larson	Loomis
David Olsen	Minden
David Raffety	Kearney
Larry Reynolds	Lexington

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Amy Dutton	Minden Office Secretary
Tammy Fahrenbruch	Water Programs Coordinator
Lori Hagan	Elwood Office Secretary
Nolan Little	Water Resources Manager
Carie Lynch	Administrative Secretary
Nate Munter	Land Resources Coordinator
Patrick Nott	Water Resources Technician
Tami Reese	Holdrege Office Secretary
Dalton Refior	Land Resources Technician
Nicole Salisbury	Information & Education Coordinator
Esther Smith	Office Assistant
John Thorburn	General Manager
Jeff VanEperen	Field Technician

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@tribasinncrd.org.