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Tri-Basin Topics

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Proposed IPAs for Lost Creek and Lower North Dry Creek Rejected by Landowners

The Tri-Basin NRD (TBNRD) Board of Directors, received petitions from landowners in the Lost Creek and Lower North Dry Creek watersheds in September 2019. Landowners requested that the district develop Improvement Project Areas (IPAs) to improve drainage in these watersheds. During their February 11 board meeting, after a public hearing, the NRD board approved boundaries and set Units of Benefit (UOB) for the proposed IPAs.

Before an IPA can be developed, state law (SS 2-3254 (4)) requires that landowners must have an opportunity to object to a project. Objections must be in writing. If a majority of proposed UOB object to a project, it cannot proceed. On February 27, we sent letters to landowners outlining the purpose of the proposed IPAs, listing UOB for each affected parcel, and providing cost estimates for the projects. The letters explained that, if they didn't support the proposed projects, landowners needed to object to the proposed project by mailing or returning postcards by March 31. There were a total of 20,534 UOB in the pro-

posed Lost Creek IPA. Of that total, 11,317 UOB (56%) objected to the project. There were a total of 51,135 UOB in the proposed Lower North Dry Creek IPA. Of that total, 36,890 UOB (67%) objected to the project. For that reason, the proposed Lost Creek and Lower North Dry Creek IPAs will not proceed.

Tri-Basin NRD is exploring other opportunities to help landowners in the Lost creek and Lower North Dry Creek watersheds. We applied for a grant through the USDA Regional Conservation Partnership Program, seeking cost-share funds to help landowners find ways to slow or reduce runoff and improve drainage. Unfortunately, that application wasn't approved. We will revise and resubmit that grant application and continue to seek other opportunities to work with our constituents to protect our soil and water resources. If you have questions or comments, please contact NRD Manager John Thorburn at (308) 995-6688.



**STAY HOME
STAY HEALTHY
STAY CONNECTED**



Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

TBNRD Approved Little Blue Basin IMP

During their regular meeting on March 10, 2020, the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors approved an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) in conjunction with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) for the Little Blue Basin portion of the district. This plan was developed over the course of more than four years of meetings between NDNR, the NRD and our constituents. We organized a stakeholder group that consisted primarily of farmers, but also included representatives from the City of Minden, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District.

During the IMP development process, Tri-Basin staff and directors and our stakeholders also met with staff, stakeholders and directors from neighboring Little Blue NRD. Little Blue NRD also worked with NDNR to develop an IMP for their portion of the Little Blue basin. When the planning process began, it was the intent of both NRDs to follow parallel paths and develop very similar plans. In the end, the two NRDs and NDNR developed similar, but not identical, plans.

These are joint plans because regulatory authority for water resources is divided between the state, which regulates surface water (rivers, streams and lakes) and NRDs, which regulate groundwater resources. Authority for managing the basin's groundwater resources is further divided between Tri-Basin and Little Blue NRDs.

Because of this division of authority, groundwater management regulations vary significantly between Tri-Basin and Little Blue NRDs. Of course, these IMPs are just one part of

the whole water management picture for the basin.

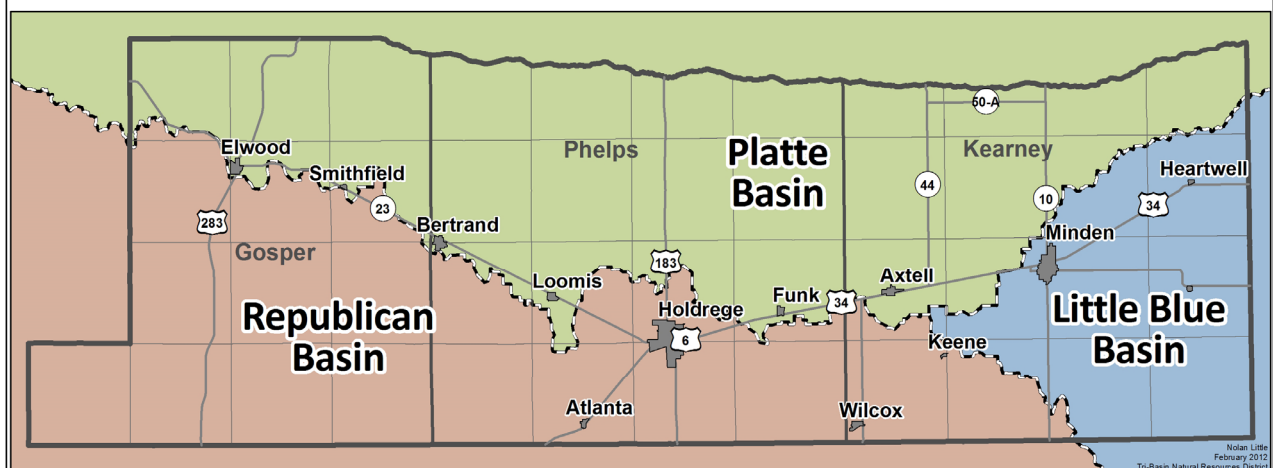
While significant differences exist in groundwater regulations between Tri-Basin and Little Blue NRDs, there are also opportunities for the two NRDs to work more closely together. Both NRDs are currently cooperating with the University of Nebraska Conservation and Survey division on a study examining the geology of the groundwater aquifer in Kearney and Adams counties. This study will not only improve our understanding of geologic structure of the aquifer, it will provide data that will help us understand how quickly water moves from the land surface to the groundwater table and how quickly groundwater moves laterally underground. Such knowledge is crucial to making good management decisions.

We also continue to discuss groundwater management with Little Blue NRD directors and staff. It is our hope that we can find ways to work more closely together and integrate our two districts' groundwater management rules and regulations.

Little Blue NRD has installed several small groundwater recharge structures on Sand Creek. Tri-Basin NRD is currently seeking a contractor to construct our first groundwater recharge structure. It will be built on a tributary of Sand Creek, south of the village of Norman.

Finally, the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors tabled a decision last year about whether to place Eaton Township (Heartwell area) into Phase two groundwater quantity management and whether to advance May Township (Norman area) into Phase three groundwater quantity management. The decision was delayed because of the extraordinarily wet weather in 2019, which is expected to raise groundwater levels substantially. Groundwater levels in irrigation wells will be measured in April. A decision on regulation for these townships is likely in September 2020.

Basin Boundaries



Arbor Day Tree Give-Away



John Thorburn, TBNRD Manager, handing out shrubs to district resident, Karen Stute. The tree give-away looked a little different this year with social distancing, wearing masks and some doing a drive-up window delivery. Tri-Basin gave out over 1500 trees across the district between seven Arbor Day locations and six district schools during the first annual Nebraska Tree-A-Thon.

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, 2020. Anyone who wants to apply fertilizer or ag chemicals through their irrigation system needs to apply for a chemigation permit for the 2020 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.

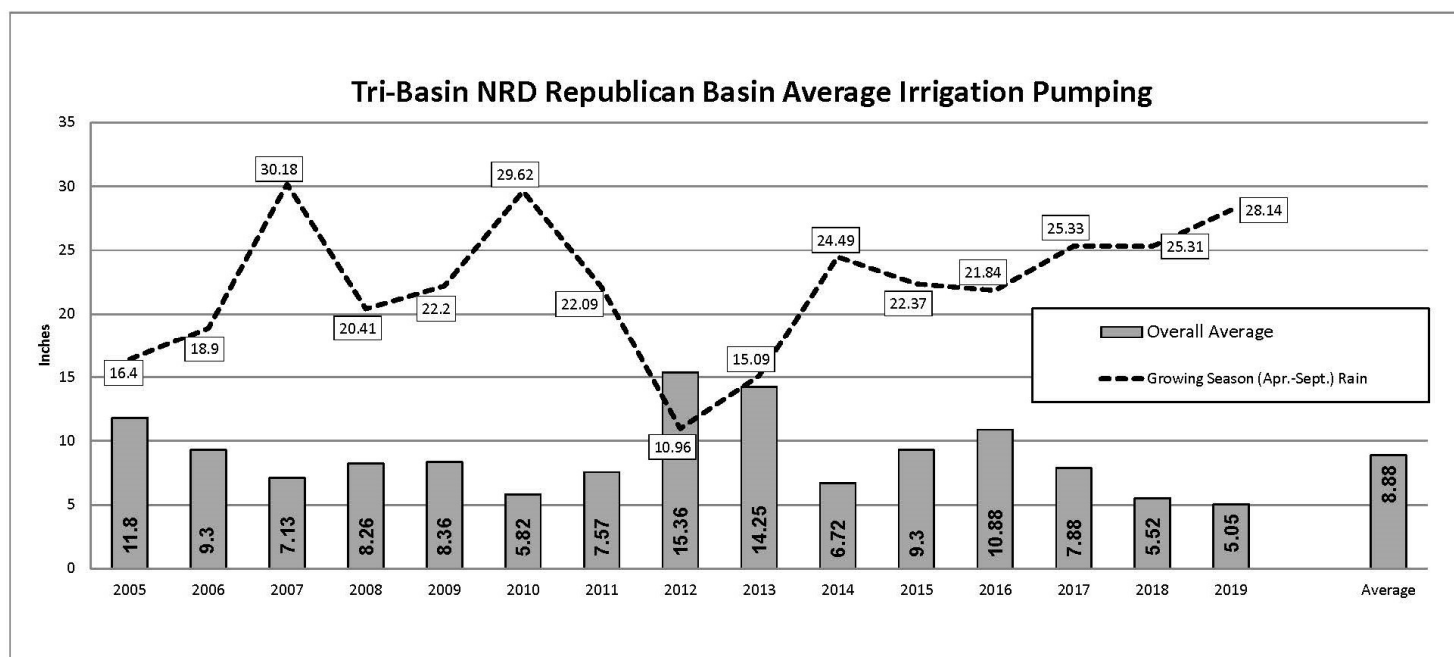
NRD staff do routine inspections on chemigation systems from June until August. Routine inspections are required every three years. If your system is due for an inspection, you will receive a postcard this summer. Routine inspections must be completed for permits to be eligible for renewal the following year. Renewal permits are \$15 and new permits are \$50.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nebraska's surface water resources are surprisingly extensive, including approximately 18,000 miles of continuously flowing rivers and streams and about 430 square miles of lakes.

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 2019 in our records and will use those as the beginning readings for 2020 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!





Tri-Basin Topics

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

CALENDAR

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

Brad Lundeen, Chairman	Wilcox
Todd Garrelts, Vice Chairman	Holdrege
Rob 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 Raffety	Kearney
Larry Reynolds	Lexington
Jeff Ryan	Heartwell

Amy Dutton	Minden Office Secretary
Tammy Fahrenbruch	Water Programs Coordinator
Lori Hagan	Office Clerk
Sasha Hahn	Information & Education Coordinator
Nolan Little	Water Resources Manager
Carie Lynch	Administrative Secretary
Nate Munter	Land Resources Coordinator
Patrick Nott	Water Resources Technician
Nancy Pemberton	Elwood Office Secretary
Tami Reese	Holdrege Office Secretary
Dalton Refior	Land Resources Technician
Esther Smith	Office Assistant
John Thorburn	General Manager
Jeff VanEperen	Water Resources 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 shahn@tribasinprd.org.