



Winter 2012

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Tri-Basin Topics

A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

Climate, Irrigation Topics at February 2 Confab

Holdrege Water Conference

The annual Holdrege Water Conference will be held Thursday, February 2, 2012 at the Phelps County Ag Center. Registration is at 10 a.m. 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 several speakers have already been confirmed.

With the threat of drought conditions in Texas stretching northward in the coming months, UNL's State Climatologist Al Dutcher will be the keynote speaker during lunch. Dutcher specializes in climate data analysis, soil moisture analysis, weather forecasting, crop/weather relationships, and drought monitoring.

Ron Bishop, General Manager of Central Platte Natural Resources District will discuss his district's plans to rehabilitate three privately-owned canals (Cozad, 30-Mile and Orchard-Alfalfa) in Dawson County. The project will allow water to be delivered more efficiently, resulting in water savings that can be added to instream flows to offset depletions to the Platte River.

Andy Bishop, coordinator for the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture will explain some of his organization's activities. He will also talk about how wetland management can co-exist with production agriculture.

Suat Irmak, Associate Professor of Soil and Water Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will report on his research involving water use and tillage practices.

Marcia Trompke, Conservation Director for Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District will discuss her work with sub-surface drip irrigation systems. She will also talk about irrigation scheduling.

Roric Paulman is Vice-President of the Nebraska Water Balance Alliance and owner of Paulman Farms in southwest Nebraska. He will talk about using technology to improve precision and efficiency of irrigated agriculture.

Area agri-businesses will display their products and services at the water conference and have representatives on hand to visit with those who attend the water conference. Producers in Tri-Basin NRD's Phase 2 or Phase 3 areas of the Groundwater Quality Management Area will receive recertification credit for attending the conference.

For a complete schedule of Water Conference speakers, check Tri-Basin NRD's website, www.tribasinprd.org, a few weeks prior to the event.



2011 Holdrege Water Conference

"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

<http://www.tribasinprd.org>



Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

The Winter of '49

Snow. A deceptively simple four letter word. The word conjures up a variety of different images and meanings in our minds. Some people fondly recall "winter wonderlands," hushed land-

scapes, trees hanging heavy with white flocking. For schoolchildren snowstorms are holidays. For others snow means hard work. Aching backs and wobbly arms are the reward for scooping out sidewalks and driveways. For some folks snow is money in the bank. It lines the pockets of those who clean off parking lots. A heavy, wet spring snow boosts wheat and alfalfa yields, and revives pastures.

Snow is a four letter word of a different sort for cattlemen. Snow, and the inevitable mud that follows it, makes chores more difficult. Blizzards send cattle wandering in all directions, looking for shelter. A wet spring snow can be fatal to newborn calves.

We have had some bad snowstorms in south-central Nebraska in the past few years (January, 1996, February, 1994 and March, 1987 come to mind) but it has been quite a while since we faced a long, hard winter. Certainly NO winter in living memory was longer or harder than the winter of 1948-49.

Statistics from that disaster fifty years ago are mind-boggling. Seventy six people died. More than 100,000 cattle and 30,000 sheep perished from exposure and starvation. Eighteen significant snowstorms swept through the region over a 27 day period. Chadron received 41 inches of snow in 48 hours from one storm. As many as 8000 rail passengers and countless motorists were stranded. The National Guard, the Air Force, even the US Fifth Army were called on to help with relief efforts. Whole counties were cut-off from the outside world for weeks at a time.



Photo courtesy of Shirley Jipp

When you read stories about that terrible winter, three common themes emerge. One is the awesome power of nature and its ability to overwhelm the works of men. Another is the enduring power of the human spirit, drawing people together to cooperate in the face of adversity. A third theme is the importance of trees as shelters from wind and storms. Many cattle were saved by shelterbelts. Farmsteads surrounded by windbreaks were oases in a white desert. Many ranchers lost in blinding blizzards used hedgerows and treelines to guide them safely home.

Windbreak and shelterbelt plantings increased substantially the following spring. Many who previously considered planting trees as hard work with little reward were sold on the value of windbreaks that winter. The Nebraska Department of Roads began a program to plant "living snow fences" of trees and shrubs. Unfortunately, those efforts lost momentum as memories of that long, hard winter faded. Many shelterbelts planted in the 1940s and '50s have been torn out in recent years, as farm equipment grows in size and center-pivot irrigation systems sweep vast circles. Statewide, numbers of conservation trees planted annually have declined since the 1960s.

Will it take another paralyzing winter like that of 1948-49 to re-sell farmers and ranchers on the value of windbreaks and shelterbelts? I hope not. When the winter winds howl and the snow flies, it's too late to plant a new

windbreak.

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District in Holdrege and other NRDs across the state are taking orders for conservation tree plantings now. We have a wide variety of inexpensive trees and shrubs. We have cost-share funds to make planting trees affordable for even the smallest farm or ranch operation. We will even design your windbreak and plant your trees for a nominal fee. Call our toll-free number at (877) 995-6688 and we will take your order.

Conservation trees are small when planted. A good windbreak or shelterbelt needs time and care to grow strong. That's all the more reason to plant your trees this spring, so that they will be ready to protect you from the next "Winter of '49."

Nebraska Natives



Rocky Mountain Juniper (*Juniperus scopulorum*)

Rocky Mountain juniper is similar in appearance to eastern redcedar, but has a more pyramidal shape. It is drought resistant, prefers slightly alkaline soils, and retains a bluish-green color throughout winter. It is best used on the north and west outside rows in windbreaks.



Two foliage diseases, Cercospora blight and Phomopsis blight, can cause substantial defoliation and kill Rocky Mountain juniper if not controlled. A third foliage disease, Kabatina blight, can kill branch tips but is not a serious concern. Spider mites occasionally cause damage, and young trees may require protection. Rocky Mountain juniper is not recommended for planting in the eastern half of Nebraska.

<http://www.tribasinrd.org>

Johnsons Receive Master Conservationist Award



Bunker Hill Farms, owned by Bill Johnson, Blake Johnson, and Brian Johnson, won the southwest district Master Conservationist Award for production agriculture, sponsored by the Omaha World-Herald. The award was presented at the Nebraska Association of Natural Resources Districts annual conference in Kearney in late September.

The Johnsons were recognized for their extensive use of no-till farming and other conservation techniques in their farming operation. Pictured are (left to right): Joel Long (Omaha World-Herald), Senator Galen Hadley, Julie Johnson, Brian Johnson, Blake Johnson, Holly Johnson, Ruth Johnson, and Bill Johnson.

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. Currently, there are two chemigation trainings scheduled in the TBNRD area: February 14 at 9 a.m. at the Elwood Legion Hall and February 16 at 1 p.m. at the Phelps County Ag Center in Holdrege. More training sessions will be held, but have not yet been scheduled. A complete list of training sessions will be available on the Department of Environmental Quality's website at www.deq.state.ne.us or on our website at www.tribasinprd.org as soon as it is available. Producers who need to add new chemigation permits for the 2012 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. Some Nitrogen Management training meetings are held in conjunction with UNL Extension's Pesticide Applicator Training sessions. Dates for those trainings are:

January 19, 1 p.m., Phelps County Ag Center, Holdrege

February 14, 1 p.m., Elwood Legion Hall

February 16, 1 p.m., Kearney County Fairgrounds, Minden

March 6, 6 p.m., Phelps County Ag Center, Holdrege

For more information about either of these programs, contact Tri-Basin NRD toll-free at 1-877-995-6688. Check our website at www.tribasinprd.org for the most up-to-date lists of training dates.



Trees for Newborns

Each year Tri-Basin NRD honors 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). 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.

Tri-Basin NRD Launches New Website

Tri-Basin NRD's redesigned website is up and running! The new site features easier navigation, archives of publications and meeting minutes, and a TBNRD calendar page; eventually it will also have a section for staff resources. The website address is the same: www.tribasinprd.org.





1723 Burlington St. Holdrege, NE 68949
 (308) 995-6688
 email: tribasin@tribasinprd.org
www.tribasinprd.org

Non-Profit Permit
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 Holdrege, NE 68949
 Permit No. 220

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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- Destinee Steinke..... Data Entry Clerk
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- 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.

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

Nitrogen Reports Due

Nitrogen Management Reports for the 2011 crop year were due December 31, 2011 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, please contact the Tri-Basin NRD office.

CALENDAR

- Jan. 2 NRD closed for New Year's
- Jan. 10NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
- Jan. 16 NRD closed
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Feb. 2..... Holdrege Water Conference
- Feb. 14....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
- Feb. 20.....NRD closed, Presidents' Day
- Feb. 23.....No-Till Conference in Holdrege
- March 13.. NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.

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

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 2012 HAND PLANT ORDER FORM

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____

ORDERS MUST BE IN MULTIPLES OF 25 at \$15.00 per bundle.

QUANTITY	SPECIES
	CONIFERS
	AUSTRIAN PINE
	REDCEDAR (EASTERN)
	COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE
	PONDEROSA PINE
	BROADLEAFS
	BLACK WALNUT
	BUR OAK
	HACKBERRY
	RED OAK
	SWAMP WHITE OAK
	SHRUBS
	AMERICAN PLUM
	BUFFALO BERRY
	COTTONEASTER
	CHOKECHERRY
	LILAC
	SAND CHERRY
	SKUNKBUSH SUMAC
	GOLDEN CURRANT
	Total # of Trees
	Multiply total # of trees x .60
	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 60¢ each/multiples of 25

PLANTING SERVICE

Tree planting (no mulch) 50¢/ft

Trees, tree planting, mulch and mulch laying \$ 1.15/ft

Drip tape 35¢/ft

Pull-in Charge \$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.