

Assistant Manager's Report

March 31, 2026

My previous report, dated March 9, started out mentioning my concern about the dry spring weather and the fire danger related to the poor winter precipitation. Now, just three weeks later, we've seen some of the largest wildfires in state history as we deal with the lack of winter. The Weather Service is forecasting chances of rain for the rest of this week, hopefully mother nature is merciful to us and provides some much-needed relief. Unfortunately, it's not just Nebraska that is suffering, much of the country west of the Mississippi River is seeing major drought issues (as well as the south). Last week an editorial column in the Denver Post said "Everyone on the Front Range should be ready for brown grass in July." Colorado and Wyoming are dealing with some of the lowest snowpack on record and their fire season usually begins in mid-summer, I suspect fire fighters across the Rocky Mountains are going to be well beyond exhausted by mid-summer at the rate things are currently going. Any moisture would be a welcome respite.

With the ongoing drought in mind, we will start measuring static water in the first week of April. I'm hopeful to see some recovery over the winter months, as the '25 summer growing season turned wet for several months, alleviating some groundwater pumping. However, I have seen many pivots already making several rotations, so we will likely see the impact of that pumping reflected in our measurements. I am concerned about spring measurements being impacted by pumping, especially considering some of the declines we are seeing in portions of Kearney County. The baseline averages will be calculated from these measurements, so we will do our best to get an accurate and representative result.

Speaking of impacts from pumping, I attempted to run a scenario with our new Net Recharge Tool that shows a new large water user within the district. As I mentioned with my presentation during the board work session, the tool isn't designed for site-specific instances, but I was able to calculate the equivalent of the new pumping throughout the township and produce some results from that. I'll give a brief presentation on this scenario at the board meeting.

Finally, I wanted to say thanks and wish a happy retirement to Tami Reese. Tami has been an important part of our staff in the Holdrege NRCS office and the NRCS staff has many good things to say about her. I hope Tami finds some nice days to get outside and tend to her gardens soon!

I have a quick report, since we have such a quick break between meetings. See you on April 7 at 1:30.