



Spring 2025

Volume 39, Issue 2

# Tri-Basin Topics

*A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District*

## Prescribed Fire in Gosper County

Tri-Basin NRD, along with the Central Platte Range Land Alliance, other organizations and local ranchers, conducted a prescribed fire on Sunday, April 6th, west of Smithfield in Gosper County. The Platte Republican Diversion (PRD) pasture and surrounding properties totaling almost 1400 acres of grassland were treated.



The purpose of the fire was to reduce the number of Eastern Redcedar in rangeland, clear grass thatch so native prairie grasses can rejuvenate, and to consume fuel to help prevent the spread of wildfires. They also help support the health of existing plants and add nutrients to the soil.



Only with experienced professionals, trained volunteers and specialized equipment can a prescribed fire be safely executed. Weather conditions must be watched before and during the fire. A burn permit will not be granted by the local fire chief if the wind or conditions are not right.



John Thorburn, Tri-Basin NRD General Manager said, "This prescribed burn was a big effort for Tri-Basin and our partners. This burn was five times larger than any burn Tri-Basin has done in the past. I want to extend thanks to our neighbors, the Central Platte Range Land Alliance and many volunteers from other agencies, organizations, and neighbors (over 60 people) who helped with the burn."

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<http://www.tribasinnrd.org>

# Could Nebraska begin to experience more late-winter fires?

By: Dana Christensen, TBNRD

Dangerous weather conditions are one of the threats of living in the state of Nebraska. A lack of precipitation is detrimental to our landscape and livelihood as Nebraskans. Whether your yearly income is tied to raising crops or grazing or even if you simply own a rural home, the risks posed by an increase in wildfires should be at the forefront of our thinking.

Historical data from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in [Table A](#) shows a declining trend in snowfall received in late winter [December – March] over the past four years (2021-2022 to 2024-2025). The average snowfall from the last four years was **11.08"**. Four years prior to that, the average snowfall was **29.9"** from 2017-2018 to 2020-2021. This is a decrease of **37 percent**.

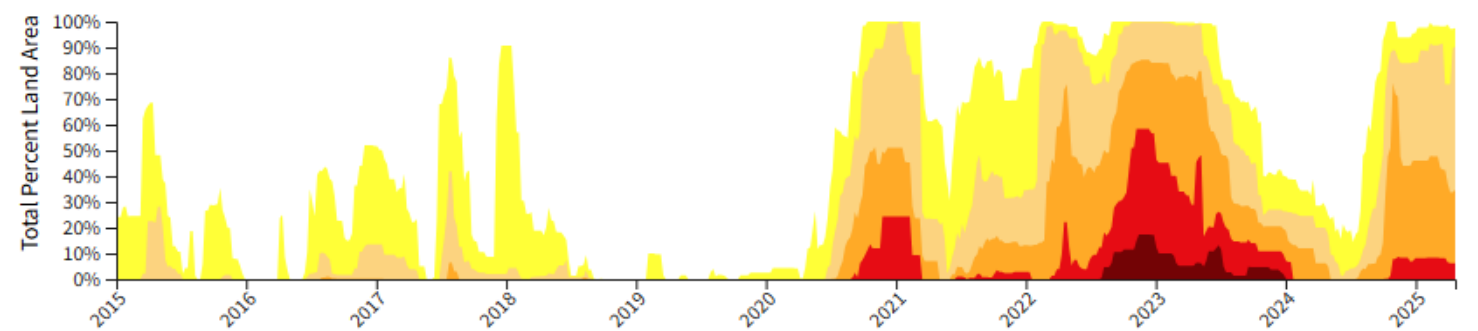
[Table B](#) shows an increase in the overall drought levels seen across the state. Beginning in 2021, Nebraska began to experience 'Severe' and 'Extreme' drought conditions. In 2023 the state entered 'Exceptional' drought conditions. Prior to the data provided, conditions like these haven't been present in the state since 2013.

Decreased precipitation and increased drought conditions are a recipe for wildfires. As stewards of the land, there isn't anything we can do to control the weather. What does lie in our hands is the ability to prevent wildfires across the state.

Table A: NE Monthly Snowfall Totals (in)					
Season	December	January	February	March	Total
2024-2025	Trace	1.0	5.2	3.4	9.6
2023-2024	3.9	11.4	Trace	Trace	15.3
2022-2023	1.6	2.0	9.5	1.2	14.3
2021-2022	0.8	2.9	0.1	1.3	5.1
2020-2021	11.0	18.9	16.6	0.0	46.5
2019-2020	1.8	5.5	1.6	1.5	10.4
2018-2019	5.6	9.7	23.2	6.3	44.8
2017-2018	4.3	3.4	10.0	0.7	18.4

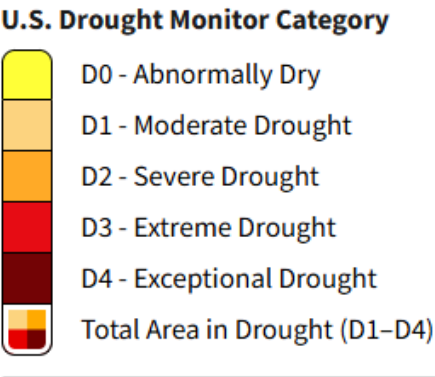
<https://lincolnweather.unl.edu/monthly-snowfall-totals-inches-listed-snowfall-season/>

Graph A: NE Drought Monitor



Steps that can be taken to stop the spread of wildland fires include:

- Pay attention to weather conditions. Never burn during a Red Flag Warning. Red Flag Warnings are characterized by warm temperatures, very low humidities, and strong winds.
- Avoid any mechanized travel through areas with dry vegetation. It is advised to only park on bare soil or pavement to prevent spontaneous combustion.
- If conducting a controlled burn, be sure to obtain a burn permit from your local fire chief and ensure proper conditions are present before burning.
- Keep areas around homes and important structures free from debris and flammable materials.
- Always have a plan. In the event of any emergency, it is beneficial for everyone in your home or at work to know what the protocol is.



## Sources:

Erixson, J., & Marcum, D. (2017, 04 09). *Nebraska Forest Service*. Retrieved from Red Flag Warning: [www.nfs.unl.edu](http://www.nfs.unl.edu)  
Lincoln, U. U. (n.d.). Monthly Snowfall Totals (in inches) - Listed by Snowfall Season.  
NOAA, U. N. (2025, April 29). Drought.gov.



## Before Irrigating Check Your Flow Meter

In preparation for irrigation season, make sure your irrigation system flow meter is working properly for accurate annual water use reporting. Irrigation water meters are susceptible to damage due to the harsh environments they operate in. Additionally, protection and maintenance of the flow meter can help avoid costly repairs in the future. Here is a checklist:

- Record the beginning meter reading before watering your crops.
- Check the meter frequently when in use and record the reading after each irrigation. The readings can be used to determine if the meter is not working.
- Keep the meter register covered and make sure the canopy lid is closed and not damaged. For added protection, insulated register canopy covers can be purchased for some meters.
- Check the meter register for water damage. Water inside the register canopy, including water droplets or fogging on the inside of the lens is a sure sign of a problem and should be repaired immediately to prevent further damage.
- Never try to service or repair your water meter yourself. Cutting or removing the register seal by an unauthorized person is a violation of metering regulations. Only qualified persons or businesses can service and repair water meters.
- Service meters regularly. Many water meters need to be serviced every year or two. Additionally, many water meters have electronic registers and the batteries should be checked and replaced when needed by a qualified technician.



### Notice to Irrigators

NRD staff will be collecting water samples from irrigation wells during the irrigation season. This is part of our ongoing commitment to protecting and preserving the quality and quantity of groundwater across the district.

### Chemigation: Apply Fertilizer When It Is Needed

Chemigation renewals and payments are due in the Tri-Basin NRD office by June 1, 2025. Anyone who plans to apply fertilizer or ag chemicals through an irrigation system must apply for a chemigation permit for the 2025 season. All New permits must have the chemigation systems inspected before use. A person who is certified as a chemigation applicator must supervise injection of fertilizer and ag chemicals in irrigation water. Renewal permits are \$15 and new permits are \$50. Contact Tri-Basin NRD at 308-995-6688 regarding chemigation permits.

Routine inspections are required on chemigation systems every three years. NRD staff will be June until August. Inspections are required every three years. If your system is due for inspection, we will contact you to schedule it. Routine inspections must be completed for permits to be eligible for renewal the following year.

### Arbor Day Give-Away

Tri-Basin NRD and the Holdrege Tree Board hosted an open house and tree give-away to celebrate Arbor Day on Friday, April 25th.

Holdrege Tree Board recognizes trees planted in memory of loved ones. The following individuals received trees planted in their memory:

Alek Love, Dan Christensen, Jacob Kimberly, Keith Ehrenberg, Mary Jo Breece, Mary Kay Nelson, Paula Titus, Richard Gustafson, Sheyenne Grace Strand, and the Holdrege Veteran Memorial Park.

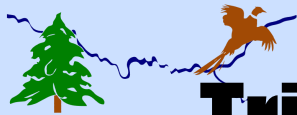


## Dalton Refior Promoted to Land Resources Manager



Dalton Refior of Loomis started his career as an intern at Tri-Basin NRD in 2015 when he was a student and returned again the following two summers. After graduating from University of Wyoming with degrees in rangeland ecology and watershed management and environmental and natural sciences he was hired as the Land Resources Technician in 2018 where he was able to further develop his skill set alongside the previous Land Resources Manager, Nate Munter. When Nate took another job, Dalton was the clear choice to fill this important role. His years of experience and first-hand knowledge have prepared him well for this position.

Contact Dalton for any tree, tree planting, or land resources questions.



Spring 2025

# Tri-Basin Topics

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

## Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

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# CALENDAR

May 8-9	Fort Kearny Expo, Kearney NE
May 21	NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
May 26	NRD Closed for Memorial Day
June 1	Chemigation Renewal Permits Due
June 18	NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
July 4	NRD Closed for Independence Day
July 16	NRD Board meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
August 20	NRD Board tour and meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
Aug 22-Sept 1	NE State Fair, Grand Island NE
September 1	NRD Closed for Labor Day
September 17	NRD Board meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
September 18	Rainwater Basin Conservation Day

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

## TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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@tribasinnrd.org](mailto:shahn@tribasinnrd.org).