



Spring 2026

Volume 31, Issue 2

Tri-Basin Topics

A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

Water Jamboree Inspires the Next Generation

For over three decades, the Water Jamboree has played a vital role in educating young people about the importance of protecting our water resources. Each year, this hands-on educational event brings students from south central Nebraska and north central Kansas to Harlan County Reservoir for an unforgettable learning experience focused on water quality, quantity, and conservation.

Nearly 500 students from 18 schools are expected to attend this year's two-day event. Since its beginning in 1992, the Water Jamboree has reached thousands of students, creating a lasting impact that spans generations. Many participants now share

that their parents once attended the same event, and even some committee members and volunteers first experienced the Water Jamboree as students.



engaging activities explore a wide range of topics, including the water cycle, water physics, agriculture, soil health, wastewater, water safety, unpurified water, and the role water plays for wildlife and ecosystems. Students gain a deeper understanding of how water connects to their daily lives and future careers by learning through hands-on experiences.

The success of the Water Jamboree is made possible by nearly 100 dedicated volunteers who help with setup, instruction, organization, and guiding students throughout the event. The program is also supported by a strong partnership among local agencies, including Tri-Basin NRD, Lower Republican NRD, USDA–Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nebraska Extension, Kansas Extension, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Their continued collaboration demonstrates a shared commitment to educating youth about the value of water and natural resources.

Generous donations from local businesses and individuals help ensure the Water Jamboree remains accessible and impactful for future generations. These contributions reflect a community-wide understanding that investing in youth education today leads to better stewardship of our natural resources tomorrow.

Together, educators, volunteers, agencies, and donors are helping shape informed, responsible citizens who recognize the importance of water in our world. To learn more about the Water Jamboree, visit tribasinnr.org/water-jamboree.



During their visit, students take part in eight in depth, interactive learning sessions led by water and natural resources professionals from 17 local, state, federal agencies, private conservation organizations and businesses. These

“Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources”

<http://www.tribasinnr.org>

Drought Conditions Intensify Across the Tri-Basin NRD

Tri-Basin NRD is urging residents, producers, and community leaders to use water conservation best practices as drought conditions intensify across the district. As of April 7, the entire NRD is experiencing **severe to extreme drought**, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, placing increased strain on the groundwater and surface water resources that sustain Nebraska's communities and economy. Most Nebraskans depend on groundwater wells that are replenished by seasonal rainfall and river flows—both of which are significantly reduced during prolonged dry periods.

Lower river flows mean less water is available to naturally recharge aquifers over time, potentially affecting municipal supplies and agricultural operations alike. Drought conditions may lead to delayed planting, increased irrigation demands earlier in the growing season and added stress on crops and pastureland. Extended drought can also contribute to declining crop yields, diminished soil moisture, and livestock challenges.

According to the Climate Prediction Center's Seasonal Drought Outlook, drought conditions are expected to **persist through at least June**, underscoring the importance of proactive water conservation now. Every action—large or small—helps protect our shared water resources and supports the long-term resilience of the region.

For current information on drought conditions, the public is encouraged to monitor the following resources:

- The US Drought Monitor for weekly updates on drought conditions: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>
- Reservoir/River Data from Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District: <https://cnppid.com/lake-river-data>
- USGS National Water Dashboard gives current river flow data: <https://dashboard.waterdata.usgs.gov/app/nwd/en/>. Type in the river you would like to see data on. This is a good location for Republican and Little Blue River flow data.

John Thorburn, TBNRD Manager, said “This potentially long-term drought makes careful and efficient irrigation water management a must. I am confident that Tri-Basin water users are up to the challenge.”

The public is also encouraged to submit drought-related conditions using the Condition Monitoring Observer Reports (CMOR) system: <https://droughtimpacts.unl.edu/Tools/ConditionMonitoringObservations.aspx>. Public reports help inform authors of the US Drought Monitor in the development of the weekly Drought Monitor map.

Tri-Basin NRD remains committed to monitoring drought conditions and sharing updates with the public as conditions evolve throughout the season.

April 7, 2026

(Released Thursday, Apr. 9, 2026)

Valid 8 a.m. EDT

Drought Conditions (Percent Area)

	None	D0-D4	D1-D4	D2-D4	D3-D4	D4
Current	0.00	100.00	95.08	81.60	35.91	0.00
Last Week <i>03-31-2026</i>	0.00	100.00	97.98	85.99	42.93	0.00
3 Months Ago <i>01-06-2026</i>	2.38	97.62	42.11	10.91	0.00	0.00
Start of Calendar Year <i>01-06-2026</i>	2.38	97.62	42.11	10.91	0.00	0.00
Start of Water Year <i>09-30-2025</i>	65.62	34.38	9.08	0.00	0.00	0.00
One Year Ago <i>04-08-2025</i>	2.75	97.25	75.62	33.62	6.09	0.00

Intensity:

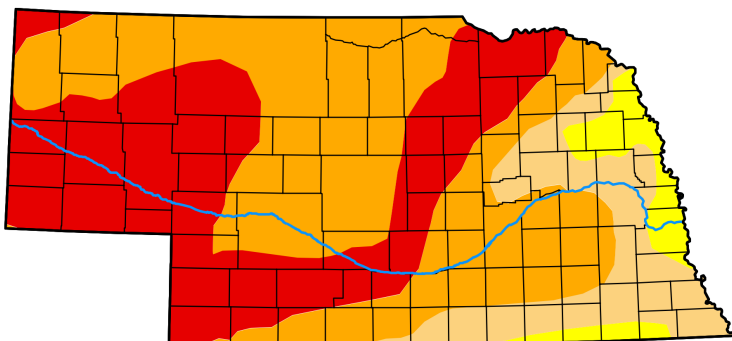
- None
- D0 Abnormally Dry
- D1 Moderate Drought
- D2 Severe Drought
- D3 Extreme Drought
- D4 Exceptional Drought

The Drought Monitor focuses on broad-scale conditions. Local conditions may vary. For more information on the Drought Monitor, go to <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/About.aspx>

Author:

David Simeral
Western Regional Climate Center

U.S. Drought Monitor Nebraska



droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Is Your Irrigation Flow Meter Ready for the Season?

Before irrigation season begins, take time to make sure your irrigation flow meter is working properly. A functioning meter is essential for accurate annual water-use reporting, efficient irrigation management, and avoiding costly repairs during peak season. Flow meters operate in harsh conditions and are vulnerable to weather, dirt, and moisture. Regular checks and simple maintenance can extend meter life and prevent unexpected problems.

Quick tips for the season:

- Record the starting meter reading before irrigating.
- Check and record readings regularly to confirm the meter is working.
- Keep the register covered and the canopy lid closed and undamaged.
- Watch for water inside the register canopy—fogging or droplets signal trouble.
- Never attempt repairs yourself; only qualified professionals may service meters.
- Schedule regular maintenance and address last year’s issues before the season starts.



A few proactive steps now can save time, money, and frustration later. Proper meter care keeps you compliant, efficient, and ready when water starts flowing. Ensure any meter issues from last season are repaired before irrigation begins. Cost-share is available for replacement meters. Contact our office at 877-995-6688 if you have any questions about flowmeters.

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.

Arbor Day Give-Away

Tri-Basin NRD and the Holdrege Tree Board will host coffee and convos with the Phelps County Ambassadors on April 24th at 9:30 AM at Tri-Basin NRD.

The NRD will be doing a tree giveaway to celebrate Arbor Day, and Holdrege Tree Board will recognize trees planted in memory or honor of someone. There will be coffee, treats, and door prizes.

Other locations for Arbor Day giveaways are:

- Axtell Community Building9:00 AM
- Tri-Basin NRD, Holdrege.....9:30 AM
- First State Bank, Bertrand10:00 AM
- Loomis Village Office.....10:00 AM
- Elwood NRCS.....10:00 AM
- Jaycee Park, Minden3:00 PM

Chemigation Permits Due June 1

Chemigation renewals and payments are due in the Tri-Basin NRD office by June 1, 2026. Anyone who plans to apply fertilizer or ag chemicals through an irrigation system must apply for a chemigation permit for the 2026 season. 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.

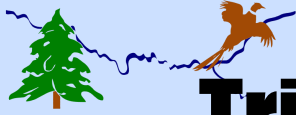
Routine inspections are required on chemigation systems every three years. NRD staff will be inspecting from now until August. Please note if your system is due for inspection this year when you receive your renewed list. You can reach out to us, or we’ll contact you to schedule your inspections. Routine inspections must be completed for permits to be eligible for renewal the following year.



Welcome to the Team, LeeAnn!

Please welcome LeeAnn Flint, who joined the NRD team in March. LeeAnn is a longtime resident of Elwood, Nebraska, where she has lived for more than 30 years. She grew up in Kearney and enjoys keeping up with her grandchildren’s sports activities.

LeeAnn brings valuable experience from her previous role at Tyson Foods and is excited to begin this new chapter. When she’s not at work, she focuses on finding a healthy balance between supporting her family and caring for herself. We’re glad to have LeeAnn on board and look forward to working with her!



Spring 2026

Tri-Basin Topics

Non-Profit Permit
U. S. Postage
PAID
Holdrege, NE 68949
Permit No. 220

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

CALENDAR

- April 24 Arbor Day Tree Giveaways
- April 28-29 Water Jamboree, Republican City, NE
- May 6-7 Fort Kearny Expo, Kearney, NE
- May 20 NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
- May 25 NRD Closed for Memorial Day
- June 1 Chemigation Renewal Permits Due
- June 17 NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
- July 3 NRD Closed for Independence Day
- July 15 NRD Board meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
- August 19 NRD Board meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
- Aug 28-Sept 7 NE State Fair, Grand Island, NE

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

TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Todd Garrelts, Chairman..... Holdrege
- Joe Bilka, Vice Chairman..... Holdrege
- Robin Hinrichs, Secretary..... Axtell
- Jeff Ryan, Treasurer..... Heartwell
- Brian Bergstrom..... Axtell
- Joel Grams..... Minden
- David Grimes..... Minden
- Ed Harris..... Loomis
- Joe Larson..... Loomis
- Bradley Lundeen..... Wilcox
- G. Reed Phillips..... Bertrand
- Larry Reynolds..... Lexington
- Andrew Stade..... Minden

TRI-BASIN NRD STAFF

- Dana Christensen..... Water Resources Technician
- Tammy Fahrenbruch..... Water Programs Coordinator
- LeeAnn Flint..... Elwood Office Secretary
- Sasha Hahn..... Information & Education Coordinator
- Nolan Little..... Assistant Manager
- Amanda Mackin..... Office Clerk
- Patrick Nott..... Water Resources Technician
- Carrie Putnam..... Integrated Water Programs Specialist
- Vacant..... Holdrege Office Secretary
- Dalton Refior..... Land Resources Coordinator
- Lisa Schroeder..... Minden Office Secretary
- Nicole Simeon..... Administrative Secretary
- 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.