



Tri-Basin Topics



A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

Winter 2026

Volume 40, Issue 1



Save the Date: February 5th South-Central Water Conference

Come for a day of insight and innovation at the 2026 South-Central Water Conference! Join us on Thursday, February 5th, at the Phelps County Ag Center for an engaging look into the future of Nebraska's most vital resource. We will kick things off at 9:30 a.m. with fresh coffee, donuts, and great conversation. Connect with local agri-business leaders about their newest products and services and get your questions answered one-on-one. There will be a delicious hot lunch for all attendees!

Gain a front-row seat for the latest water-related issues and solutions impacting our state today. Check out the full speaker lineup and schedule at www.tribasinnrd.org.

Location: Phelps County Ag Center

Time: 9:30 AM – 2:30 PM CST

Admission: Free

Keynote: Matt Manning, State Water Officer, Nebraska Department of Water, Environment, and Energy



➤ Producers in Tri-Basin NRD Phase II or III areas can earn **nitrogen management recertification credit** by attending. Please remember to sign in at the entrance to receive credit.

We've packed a wealth of knowledge into a dynamic program, making it the perfect way to spend your Thursday. Brought to you by the Tri-Basin NRD, Lower Republican NRD, Central Nebraska Public Power and

Irrigation District, and UNL Extension. **Ready to see what's in store?** We can't wait to see you there!

Order Conservation Trees and Shrubs Today!

(See enclosed information)

Contact Tri-Basin NRD or your local NRCS office for information about planting a windbreak or shelterbelt.



Nitrogen Reports

Nitrogen Management Reports for the 2025 crop year were due December 31, 2025. If you have fields in the Phase II or Phase III areas of the Groundwater Quality Management Area and have not turned in your reports, please do so as soon as possible. If you need forms or help filling them out, contact the TBNRD office.

Chemigation Renewals

Renewal forms will go out in early March to producers who had active chemigation permits in 2025. Producers whose chemigation certification has expired will need to attend one of the chemigation training sessions held in February and March or complete the online course. For dates and locations for classes go to www.tribasinnrd.org.

Chemigation renewal permits are due in the Tri-Basin NRD office before **June 1, 2026**.

NSWCP Cost-Share Funding Available

Tri-Basin has cost-share funding available through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program for projects and improvements to land. **Cost-share assistance is available at 50% to 60% of the average or actual project cost, whichever is lower, with an annual cap of \$5,000 per landowner. Applications are accepted year-round, and projects must be completed within six months.**

The program covers three primary categories: **range management, erosion, and water.** Each category includes approved conservation practices, and all projects must be designed by your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office. Eligible practices include range seeding, critical area planting, planned grazing systems, irrigation water management, terraces, grade stabilization structures, diversions, grassed waterways, and water and sediment control basins. For details or to apply, contact your local NRCS office.



Manager's Message

Ice Watch -

The old pioneer cliché about the Platte River being “a mile wide and an inch deep” paints a mental picture of a harmless, shallow stream. That is accurate-most of the time. The Platte Basin has a big watershed, however, that drains nearly 85,000 square miles, spanning portions of three states. Heavy rain or melting snow in upper portions of the basin can cascade downstream, overfilling reservoirs and causing damaging, even deadly floods.

Central Nebraskans have seen the Platte run full to overflowing several times in the past decade, with flooding in 2011, 2013 and 2015. Historic floods in 1921, 1935 and 1965 were even more widespread and devastating. As terrible as these floods can be, they generally build over several days, giving residents a chance to prepare for the worst. This time of year, however, riverside landowners and residents must be prepared for flooding that occurs much more suddenly and unpredictably-ice jam floods.

River ice has several forms. As flowing water cools, ice first forms needles. As those needles stick to each other, slushy frazzle ice is formed. Continued cold weather causes these frazzle chunks to congeal and coalesce into ice pans and, sometimes ice discs. Eventually the pans start to attach to vegetation along the shoreline, forming ice shelves.

Precisely because the Platte is shallow, when ice forms, flowing water underneath can be blocked more easily. This problem is compounded by Nebraska's highly variable winter weather. Cold weather is followed by a few nice days, then another cold snap. Under these conditions ice forms, breaks up, floats downstream until it gets caught up by narrow channels or downed trees, then re-freezes, forming ice dams. Such ice dams can form in just a few hours, often overnight, backing up water for miles.



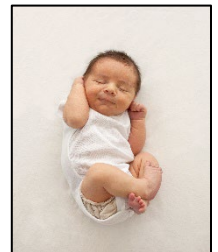
Frazzle, pan and shelf ice are all visible in this photo of the Platte River as seen from the Odessa Bridge.

Very little can be done to prevent ice jam flooding, so providing early warnings is key. Tri-Basin NRD, Central Platte NRD, the National Weather Service and county emergency managers work together through the winter to keep an eye on the Platte and local ice conditions. We hold conference calls weekly to compare notes about observed conditions and to hear the weather service's forecast for ice jam potential. If ice jams are observed, we contact the weather service immediately so they can issue flood warnings for potentially affected areas. Of course, we aren't everywhere all the time, so if you see an ice jam, don't assume that we already know about it. Please report it immediately to local law enforcement.

This coordinated, multi-agency effort is one of many ways that NRDs and local, state and federal agencies work together to help protect the lives and property of our constituents. Even the mighty Platte is no match for the combined efforts of government agencies and vigilant citizens.

Trees Honor District Newborns

Tri-Basin NRD offers parents of newborns in the district the gift of a seedling tree. These trees are available to the family of any newborn residing in Gosper, Phelps or Kearney Counties born March 2025 or later. Reserve a baby tree by calling Tri-Basin NRD at 308-995-6688 or email drefior@tribasinncrd.org with your request with the **baby's name and birthdate and the parents' names, address, and phone number.** We will contact you in April to let you know when and where to pick up your tree. If you have any questions, please call Tri- Basin and ask for Dalton.



Stade Joins Tri-Basin NRD Board Representing Sub-District 6

Tri-Basin NRD is pleased to announce the appointment of Andrew Stade of Minden to the Board of Directors, where he will serve the constituents of Sub-District 6.

A graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Andrew holds a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. He brings valuable experience in local water management to the board, currently serving as the Secretary for the North Dry Creek Drainage District.

Andrew lives in Minden with his wife, Leah, and their two children. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family, is an avid reader, and a dedicated fan of Cornhusker sports. He also enjoys making the most of Nebraska's natural beauty by boating and spending time on the state's lakes and reservoirs.



Welcome Our New Data Assistant: Amanda Mackin

Tri-Basin NRD is excited to welcome back Amanda (Cline) Mackin, who interned with us in 2023. She graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a double major in Fisheries and Wildlife and Environmental Science, along with a minor in Water Science. Her academic background and passion for Nebraska's natural resources make her a perfect fit for the NRD.

Amanda currently resides in Kearney with her husband, Joseph. She is an active member of the local community. Outside of the office, she is a sports enthusiast—whether she's playing or watching from the stands. She also treasures time spent with family and friends and is a regular at local community events, from parades and craft shows to game nights.

We are thrilled to have Amanda in the office. Please join us in giving her a warm welcome!



Irrigator Incentives

CNPPID Customers who also have groundwater wells could benefit from the Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP). Tri-Basin will reimburse the cost of your CNPPID bill if you:

- Use surface water and don't pump more than one inch from your groundwater well per year. You're not limited to pumping one inch of groundwater, but if you pump more than an inch, your reimbursement will be reduced.

The purpose of WCIP is to reduce groundwater pumping and increase groundwater recharge. Priority is given to fields East of Hwy 183. Contact us to find out if you qualify for this program. Call 308-995-6688 or go to our website www.tribasinnr.org.



Nitrogen Management Certification Reminders

The Groundwater Quality Management Areas established by Tri-Basin NRD have allowed district staff to work cooperatively with farmers and agronomists for over 35 years. Management area rules are intended to help improve the timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of fertilizer application. These efforts have resulted in stable or declining nitrate/nitrogen levels in ground-water supplies in much of the district, safeguarding the quality of our groundwater. Producers in Phase II and Phase III areas of the Groundwater Quality Management Area must take soil samples this winter and water samples in Summer 2026. Current Nitrogen Management Certification is required.

Producers whose certification has expired will receive notification in January by mail. Training dates have been set and are listed on Tri-Basin's website at www.tribasinnr.org. Expiration dates are also listed on the website. Attendance at the South-Central Water Conference on February 5th also qualifies for Nitrogen Management Certification. (However, you must sign-in to receive credit.)

Winter 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@tribasinncrd.org

www.tribasinncrd.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Calendar

January 19 NRD Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

January 21 NRD Board Meeting, 2:30 p.m.*

February 5 South Central Water Conference, Holdrege

February 16.....NRD Closed for Presidents' Day

February 18..... NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*

March 18 NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*

April 15 NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*

April 24 Arbor Day Tree Give Aways, District-wide

April 28-29 Water Jamboree, Republican City

* 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
Sasha Hahn.....	Information & Education Coordinator
Nolan Little.....	Assistant Manager
Amanda Mackin.....	Data Assistant
Patrick Nott.....	Water Resources Technician
Carrie Putnam.....	Integrated Water Programs Specialist
Tami Reese.....	Holdrege Office Secretary
Dalton Refior.....	Land Resources Coordinator
Carolyn Schaaf	Elwood Office Secretary
Lisa Schroeder.....	Minden Office Secretary
Nicole Simeon.....	Administrative Secretary
Esther Smith.....	Office Assistant
John Thorburn.....	General Manager
Jeff VanEperen	Water Resources Technician

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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@tribasinncrd.org.

TRI-BASIN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT 2026

HAND PLANT ORDER FORM

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____

ORDERS MUST BE IN MULTIPLES OF 25.

QUANTITY	SPECIES
	CONIFERS
	AUSTRIAN PINE
	COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE
	PONDEROSA PINE
	RED CEDAR (Eastern)
	NORWAY SPRUCE
	BROADLEAFS
	BLACK WALNUT
	BUR OAK
	HACKBERRY
	RED OAK
	SWAMP WHITE OAK
	SHRUBS
	AMERICAN PLUM
	COTONEASTER
	CHOKECHERRY
	ELDERBERRY
	RED OSIER DOGWOOD
	LILAC
	SAND CHERRY
	SKUNKBUSH SUMAC
	Total # of Trees
	Multiply total # of trees x 1.00
	Mulch x .45/foot
	Staples x .15
	Subtotal
	Tax (Holdrege 7%, Minden 7.5%, Elwood 6.5%)
	TOTAL AMOUNT DUE/PAID

Tree Order Deadline is April 1, 2026.

TREES IMPROVE WATER QUALITY

- Reduce soil erosion
- Stabilize stream banks
- Filter pollutants

TREES IMPROVE PROPERTY

- Reduce heating/cooling costs
- Increase property value
- Reduce noise and dust

TREES IMPROVE COMMUNITY

- Lower stress & increase wellbeing
- Improve air and water quality
- Stimulate economic development

TREES PROTECT WILDLIFE

- Provide habitat and food
- Shelter from bad weather
- Cover from predators

TREES PROTECT LIVESTOCK

- Increase calf survival by 12%
- Minimize winter stress
- Increase feed efficiency

TREES PROTECT CROPS

- Can increase yields
- Conserve plant moisture
- Reduce wind damage

WHY PLANT A WINDBREAK?

Windbreaks and shelter belts provide many benefits. Windbreaks planted along field boundaries reduce soil erosion by reducing wind velocity. A shelter belt planted around a farmstead can 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 cut for the trees to come through. Plastic mulch not only eliminates weeds but also helps to preserve soil moisture.

PRICES

Trees & Shrubs.....	\$1.00 each/multiples of 25
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PLANTING SERVICE

Tree planting (no mulch).....	\$0.55/ft
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Trees, tree planting, mulch and mulch installation	\$2.25/ft
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Drip tape	\$0.30/ft
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Drip tape set-up	Minimum \$35.00
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Pull-in Charge	\$55.00
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Renovation*.....	\$275.00
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Shrub thicket*	\$330.00
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Minimum 850 foot per planting

Plastic Mulch (Material Only)	\$0.45 per ft
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Stakes	\$0.15 each
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Seedling Tubes.....	\$1.50 each
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Prices are subject to change.

*Contact Tri-Basin NRD for site review.

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. We also have tree spades available to rent.

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. Plantings must be a minimum of 850 feet. 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 payments will not be made until payment is received at the Tri-Basin or NRCS office.