

# UPPER ELKHORN The Oracle

“Making Wise Decisions Concerning Our Natural Resources”

<http://www.uenrd.org>

## Upper Elkhorn NRD to Update Chemigation Program Rules and Regulations Which Will Include Fee Changes

A public hearing will be held on November 27, 2023 at 12:30 PM at the NRD office, 301 North Harrison Street, in O'Neill to receive testimony regarding the proposed changes to the District's Chemigation Rules & Regulations. These changes are due in part to the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy updates to the state's Chemigation Rules & Regulations which were completed in 2020. These updates will also include restructuring the Chemigation Fees to help cover the ongoing administrative costs for the Upper Elkhorn NRD program. Here are the links to the: Public Notice and the proposed UENRD Chemigation Rules & Regulations.

A summary of the proposed amendments to the rules and regulations is as follows:

- The proposed amendments apply to the overall Rules & Regulations.
- The proposed amendments authorize a general restructuring of the number identification system of the Rules & Regulations.
- The proposed amendments authorize updated enforcement rules and regulations to better conform to state statutes.
- Rule 11.1.1.1 The proposed amendments authorize a new application fee of \$100.00 (not to exceed \$150) for each new permit shall be paid to the District, of which \$5.00 shall be paid to the Department of Environment and Energy
- Rule 11.1.1.2 The proposed amendments authorize a special permit application fee of \$30.00 (not to exceed \$150) shall be paid to the District, of which \$5.00 shall be paid to the Department of Environment and Energy
- Rule 11.1.1.3 The proposed amendments authorize the annual renewal fee of \$30.00 (not to exceed \$100) shall be paid to the District, of which \$2.00 shall be paid to the Department of Environment and Energy
- Rule 11.1.1.4 The proposed amendments authorize an emergency permit application fee of \$250.00 (not to exceed \$500) shall be paid to the District, of which \$10.00 shall be paid to the Department of Environment and Energy.

Copies of the full text of the proposed amendments to the rules may be obtained at [www.uenrd.org](http://www.uenrd.org) or by contacting, the Upper Elkhorn NRD, 301 North Harrison Street, O'Neill, Nebraska 68763, 402-336-3867.

### 2024 Chemigation Season

The Upper Elkhorn NRD will once again be mailing out Renewal Chemigation Forms for the 2024 Growing Season. Cooperators with Chemigation sites which were permitted last year will receive their preprinted renewal forms in January. Forms will need to be completed with last year's fertilizer/pesticide use, signed and returned by the June 1 deadline!

## Groundwater Irrigated Acres Not Certified May Lose Irrigation Rights!

The Upper Elkhorn NRD has been in the process of certifying groundwater irrigated acres since 2011. If a landowner does not want to lose the ability to irrigate their acres, they need to be certified once with the Upper Elkhorn NRD. It is the best interest of the landowner to certify those groundwater irrigated acres to protect their investment. Multiple attempts have been made to contact landowners believed to have groundwater irrigated acres based on county assessor tax records but not all landowners have responded to our requests to certify their irrigated acres. Ultimately it is the landowners responsibility to make sure their acres are certified and available for future use. Again, anyone with Groundwater irrigated acres within the Upper Elkhorn NRD is only required to certify those acres once with the district to ensure the future use. For more information you can visit our website at [www.uenrd.org/programs-projects/water](http://www.uenrd.org/programs-projects/water) and review the Acre Certification Factsheet and Certification process or contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD office.

## 2024 UENRD Board of Director Elections

Are concerned for Nebraska's natural resources? Would you like to have a voice in maintaining and protecting them at the local level? Consider running for your local NRD Board of Directors! The 2024 Election year is fast approaching and if you are interested in developing that local policy for our natural resources consider running for the UENRD Board of Directors. The Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors are elected by sub-district every two years to a four year term. The filing deadline for incumbents (current office holders) is February 15, 2024 and the deadline to file for non-incumbents is March 1, 2024. For further information you can contact the UENRD or your local county clerk for filing instructions.

Natural  
Resources  
District

Fall/Winter 2023

## UENRD Senior Scholarship Program

Each year, the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District offers three \$500 scholarships to graduating High School Seniors from the District. These scholarships are available for students who are planning to further their education in a field related to natural resources or agriculture. Seniors who are interested should contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD or visit the website at [www.uenrd.org/education.html](http://www.uenrd.org/education.html) for further information, eligibility requirements and applications. The deadline for all scholarship applications is April 5, 2024.

  
Upper Elkhorn  
Natural Resources District

# Order Trees Now For Spring Planting! Deadline March 1, 2024

The Upper Elkhorn NRD will be taking orders from now until March 1, 2024 for conservation tree seedlings. Trees are available on a first come first serve basis and are available in a variety of species consisting of conifers, broadleaves and shrubs. Handplant trees should be ordered in bundles of 25 while machine plant orders will be based on the windbreak design. The NRD can also provide technical assistance to cooperators who would like help designing a new windbreak or renovating an old one. The technician will suggest the type of trees best suited for your soil type and design a layout beneficial to your needs.

The NRD also offers

two practices to help increase the survival rate of new seedlings, drip irrigation and conservation weed mulch. Drip irrigation is available for cooperator installation and is used when there is a water source at the site. Conservation weed mulch is installed over the seedlings to help control weeds and retain moisture. Both practices can be very beneficial to young windbreaks and should be considered when placing your order.

Remember, the Upper Elkhorn NRD is your one-stop shop to order trees and weed mulch. The NRD can plant and install the trees and fabric as we have for the past 40+ years. Trees and mulch purchased from the Upper Elkhorn NRD could be eligible for local

or state funds. For further information or to place an order contact your local NRCS office or the Upper Elkhorn NRD at 301 N. Harrison Street, O'Neill or (402) 336-3867.

There are several incentive programs to help offset the cost of installing a new windbreak on the federal, state and local level. Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service or your local NRD to find out what programs are available.



## Available Tree Species

<b>Conifers</b>		
Eastern Red Cedar	Rocky Mountain Juniper	Colorado Blue Spruce
Norway Spruce	Jack Pine	Ponderosa Pine
<b>Broadleaves</b>		
Native Cottonwood	Swamp White Oak	Bur Oak
Black Walnut	American Elm	Silver Maple
Hackberry	Honeylocust	Black Cherry
Catalpa	Hybrid Poplar	Amur Maple
Red Oak		
<b>Shrubs</b>		
Caragana	Sumac	Chokecherry
Serviceberry	Woods Rose	Elderberry
Dogwood	Golden Current	Cotoneaster
Lilac	American Plum	Buffaloberry
Chokeberry	Sandcherry	

## Cost of Trees & Materials

Handplant Trees	\$ 1.40/Tree plus tax
Machine Plant Trees	\$ 245.00/100 plus tax
Weed Mulch (Installed)	\$ .85/foot plus tax
Weed Mulch	\$ 250.00/500 Foot Roll
Weed Mulch Squares	\$ 2.85 Each plus tax

**Prices Subject to Change**

The Oracle is the official publication of the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District. It is produced for the purpose of educating the public regarding natural resources issues. Any comments or questions should be sent to Beth Walsh, Upper Elkhorn NRD, 301 N. Harrison Street, O'Neill, NE 68763 or e-mailed to [bwalsh@uenrd.org](mailto:bwalsh@uenrd.org).

## Executive Travel Charts Course for Carbon-Free Travel

LINCOLN, Nebraska – In a groundbreaking effort to promote sustainability within the travel industry, Lincoln-based Executive Travel has taken the initiative to offset its carbon emissions by planting trees throughout the state.

In July 2021, Executive Travel announced its ETGreen initiative with a goal of planting 1 million trees to help reduce the industry's impact on the planet. Pledging to plant a tree for each plane ticket sold, Executive Travel partnered with Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) to source and plant trees throughout the state.

The partnership between Executive Travel and Nebraska's NRDs has resulted in a significant environmental impact. In 2022 alone, 48,862 trees were planted across various communities in Nebraska. Building on this success, the initiative reached new heights in 2023 with 62,370 trees planted, further enhancing the natural beauty and sustainability of Nebraska's landscapes. As a result, the combined efforts of Executive Travel and the Natural Resources Districts have led to the planting of 111,232 trees during the span of two years.

Nebraska's NRDs work with a network of local landowners who plant trees annually through the NRD Conservation Tree Program, which means the trees are cared for after the initial planting. The collaboration between Executive Travel and Nebraska's NRDs showcases the power of public-private partnerships in addressing environmen-

tal challenges and fostering a sustainable future.

Each year, the NRD Conservation Tree Program provides hundreds of thousands of low-cost, bulk trees for planting across the state. Districts collect orders for trees between November and March, then trees are distributed in April in time for spring planting. A majority of NRD conservation trees are sourced from the U.S. Forest Service's Bessey Nursery in Halsey, Nebraska.

In 2023, Nebraska's NRDs planted more than 598,000 trees with over 62,000 funded by Executive Travel. Executive Travel's cost-share funding allowed Nebraska's NRDs to plant thousands of additional trees in a variety of ways around the state.

Executive Travel has committed to third year of tree planting with Nebraska's NRDs and hope to plant an additional 75,000 trees during the 2024 planting season next spring.

Since their inception in 1972, Nebraska's NRDs have been planting conservation trees and shrubs for windbreaks, erosion control, wildlife habitat and other conservation purposes. NRDs planted have planted more than 100 million trees – that's approximately 50 trees for each Nebraskan.

Each NRD program varies, but possible tree program services include planting, weed barrier installation, and drip irrigation. For more information on cost share availability, designing a plan or ordering trees, contact your local NRD or visit [www.nrdtrees.org](http://www.nrdtrees.org).

# Funding available for Private Well Reverse Osmosis Rebate Program

Funds are still available for the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy's (NDEE) Private Well Reverse Osmosis Rebate Program.

The initial application period opened January 1, 2023, and remains open until the end of June 2024. Installations must be completed by September 2024 to remain eligible for the rebate.

To date, NDEE has received nearly 160 applications, obligated over \$245,000, and disbursed over \$131,000 through this rebate program.

Applications are accepted and reviewed for consideration on a month-to-month basis. Submitted applications will be given equal consideration as long as funding for the program remains available in the month in which the application is submitted. Participation in the

rebate program requires pre-approval from NDEE. The installation of any reverse osmosis small water treatment system cannot begin until a rebate agreement is signed between the private well owner and NDEE.

Private well reverse osmosis system rebates are available to property owners of private wells with drinking water test levels above 10 parts per million (ppm) of nitrate. Applicants will be eligible for up to \$4,000 in rebates per small treatment installation that is effective in the removal of nitrate to a level below 10 ppm. Testing costs, purchase price of the system, and installation costs are eligible expenses that can be included in a rebate application.

This rebate program is being funded through \$1.2 million in American

Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, which is part of a larger \$4 million ARPA initiative administered by NDEE as authorized by the 2022 Legislature.

Applicants will need to ensure that their well is registered with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. A water well registration document can be downloaded from the Department of Natural Resources website at this address: <https://nednr.nebraska.gov/dynamic/Wells/Wells>

Applicants will be required to submit water quality data from the State laboratory with testing results dated no earlier than January 1, 2022. Testing is available to any private citizen in the state at <https://www.nebraska.gov/dhhs/water-test-kits/private.html>.

Applications from property owners will also

be required to contain a cost estimate for the installation of a reverse osmosis treatment device certified by the American National Standards Institute. That cost estimate must come from a licensed plumber or an entity that has performed at least five successful Private Well Reverse Osmosis Small Water Treatment installations.

NDEE will disperse approved rebates following successful installation and demonstration of effective removal of nitrate to a level below 10 ppm. Follow-up testing will need to be submitted to

the department to demonstrate successful removal of nitrate to a level below 10 ppm. Installations and follow-up testing need to be completed by September 30, 2024.

All requirements for the Reverse Osmosis Rebate Program, including the application forms and an instructional video, can be found on NDEE's website at <http://dee.ne.gov/Publications/pages/22-051>. Inquiries can also be made to NDEE State Revolving Fund Section Supervisor Steve McNulty at [steve.mculty@nebraska.gov](mailto:steve.mculty@nebraska.gov) or 402-471-4200.



## Central Valley Ag Partners to Improve Fertilizer Efficiency, Water Quality

LINCOLN, Nebraska (NARD) – Central Valley Ag, a leading agricultural cooperative, partners with Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) on the development of the Producer Connect app. Producer Connect is a groundbreaking web and mobile application suite designed to empower agricultural producers with the tools they need to optimize inputs, enhance agricultural profitability, improve water quality, and increase irrigation efficiency.

"Central Valley Ag wants to assist our growers in the proper use of nitrogen fertilizers to maximize crop uptake and minimize loss to the environment," said Tim Mundorf, Central Valley Ag director of soil man-

agement. "Producer Connect app is a tool for our growers to track nitrogen application, improve management of nitrogen credits, and maximize nitrogen-use efficiency."

Additional partners on the project include the Nebraska Corn Board, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 17 of Nebraska's 23 NRDs, the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) and the NARD Foundation.

"We are pleased Central Valley Ag is joining us to move Producer Connect forward," said Dr. Orval Gigstad, NARD president. "The development of Producer Connect is a joint effort that underscores the commitment of key stakeholders to foster a thriving agricultural

industry while protecting Nebraska's water quality and quantity."

Producer Connect will be free to producers and offer a wide range of features designed to simplify nitrogen and water management, including:

- Producer-specific data
- Protected data
- Customizable nitrogen recommendations
- Irrigation efficiency
- Historical data analysis
- Economic analysis of nitrogen applications
- Information exchange

Producer Connect is currently in its initial stages of development and is expected to launch in June 2024. The initial roll-out will focus on Phase 2 and Phase 3 Groundwater Quality Management Areas and areas with irrigation allocations.

## Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors Set Property Tax Asking for FY 23-24

The Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors in September approved the 2023-2024 fiscal year budget, mill-levy and property tax asking. The FY 23-24 budget request is only 1.95 cents per \$100 of valuation for a total of \$989,524 in property tax asking. This reflects an increase from last years property tax asking

due to inflation. The Upper Elkhorn NRD continues to maintain a responsible budget to lessen the property tax burdens of its friends and neighbors. This has been accomplished by obtaining additional funding through the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Department of Environmental Quality 319 Grants.

## UENRD 2023 Crop Water Use Report for Phase II Reporting

O'Neill	Total Inches	Emergence	Maturity
Corn Total ET	22.23	5/10/23	9/28/23
Soybean Total ET	22.63	5/17/23	9/26/23
Potato Total ET	22.55	5/15/23	9/30/23
Precipitation from 5/1/2023 to 9/30/2023	14.72		

## UENRD Offers Limited Water Testing Services at NRD Office in O'Neill

The Upper Elkhorn NRD can test private drinking water wells for nitrate-nitrogen content and bacteria at the office in O'Neill. Nitrate-Nitrogen sampling is available for \$7.50 per sample and bacteria sampling is available for \$16.06 per sample. The bacteria test takes 24 hours to complete and can detect coliform and e-coli. Bacteria samples must be collected in approved containers from the NRD office and delivered within 4 hours of collecting the sample. We also have kits available at no charge which can be sent off to test for a variety of other components. The UENRD is not a certified lab so for more formal sampling results, a certified lab should be contacted.



**Notice:**  
Anyone Applying for an Application for a Permit to Construct a New or Replacement Irrigation Well within the Upper Elkhorn NRD MUST have their groundwater irrigated acres certified and be in compliance with all other UENRD programs prior to receiving approval!

## Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District Board of Directors

Roy Stewart	Subdistrict 1 ~ Newport	(402) 244-5360
Trevor Gotschall	Subdistrict 1 ~ Stuart	(402) 340-0686
Curtis Gotschall	Subdistrict 2 ~ Stuart	(402) 925-2504
John Vogel	Subdistrict 2 ~ Atkinson	(402) 925-5312
Gene Kelly	Subdistrict 3 ~ O'Neill	(402) 336-3681
Marv Fritz	Subdistrict 3 ~ O'Neill	(402) 340-0747
Gary Bartak	Subdistrict 4 ~ Ewing	(402) 485-2662
Tony Sanderson	Subdistrict 4 ~ Chambers	(402) 340-2501
Cody Frank	Subdistrict 5 ~ Brunswick	(402) 660-7147
Kevin Blair	Subdistrict 5 ~ Brunswick	(402) 358-5430
Art Tanderup	Subdistrict 6 ~ Neligh	(402) 887-1396
Aaron Rice	Subdistrict 6 ~ Neligh	(402) 929-0470
Keith Heithoff	Subdistrict 7 ~ Elgin	(402) 843-6499
Matt Beckman	Subdistrict 7 ~ Elgin	(402) 843-6045
Chris Dierks	At-Large ~ Ewing	(402) 485-2618

**UENRD Board Meetings are held the 4th Monday of every month.**

**April through October at 7:00 P.M. and November through March at 2:30 P.M.**

### UENRD Staff

Dennis Schueth	General Manager e-mail: dschueth@uenrd.org
Joslynn VanDerslice	Water Resources Manager e-mail: jvanderslice@uenrd.org
Kayla Vondracek	Natural Resources Technician e-mail: kvondracek@uenrd.org
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Jeff Langan	Administrative Secretary e-mail: jlangan@uenrd.org
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Brett Sholes	Agronomy Resource Technician e-mail: bsholes@uenrd.org
Lisa Lauver	Bazile Management Project Coordinator e-mail: llauver@lenrd.org
Vacant	NRCS Clerk, Neligh
Mary Zakrzewski	NRCS Clerk, O'Neill

## Phase II Annual Reports Due December 31 for Growers in Both Phase II and Phase III Areas

The deadline for the 2023 Phase II Annual Reports is December 31, 2023. If you farm in a Phase II or Phase III area you are required to submit a Phase II report for every field larger than 40 acres. Where more than 50 pounds per acre of actual nitrogen fertilizer, commercial or organic, is applied (for example: corn) a full report is required. A mandatory two foot deep soil sampling analysis is required for the Phase II report. The soil sample used on the 2023 annual report should have been taken in Fall 2022 or Spring 2023. If less than 50 pounds per acre is applied, a report must be submitted stating the crop planted. If a report is not completed for a field it is considered noncompliant.

and returned to the UENRD office. Both versions of the Phase II form are available on the UENRD website. In addition to the continuation of the Phase I and II requirements, Phase III includes a ran-

dom soil sampling conducted by the UENRD. Those selected for soil sampling for Fall 2023 have already been selected and notified. Soil sampling is underway.

For more information on Phase II Annual Reports or Nitrogen Certification visit the UENRD website at <https://www.uenrd.org/> or contact the UENRD office at 402-336-3867. Phase II reports can be filled out online; or, filled out, printed

**Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts**  
Protecting Lives  
Protecting Property &  
Protecting the Future Since 1972

