

# UPPER ELKHORN The Oracle

“Making Wise Decisions Concerning Our Natural Resources”

<http://www.uenrd.org>

**N**atural  
**R**esources  
**D**istrict  
Fall/Winter 2025

## The Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Program in the UENRD Application Deadline December 15!

Producers will be paid for reducing their nitrogen application by the lesser of 40lbs or by 15%. You can find the application and guidance document online.

For this program, the state is divided up into three priority areas (A, B, and C). Priority area A is areas in the state with a NRD determined phase II or higher or have a well-head protection area. This area has an incentive payment of \$15 per acre. Priority B areas are areas not in priority A but are certified to irrigate. Priority B areas have an incentive payment of \$12

per acre. The last priority area is C, which is the rest of the state and has an incentive payment of \$10 per acre. Producers should contact their local Natural Resources Districts (NRD) to determine which priority they are in.

To show the reduction in baseline nitrogen applications, each priority area has determined data required by the NRD. Producers should work with local NRD on data requirements. The program limits eligible crops to corn, sugar beets, and potatoes.

The incentives are intended to be flexible

in that they can be combined with other offers by NRCS, TNC, or other entities. Producers will need to confirm with those other programs. Producers are also given the flexibility to determine how they will reduce their nitrogen application but will work with their local NRD on the implementation.

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## Upper Elkhorn NRD Expanding Safe Drinking Water Program

The Upper Elkhorn NRD added \$200,000 to the budget in the fiscal year 25-26 to expand its safe drinking water program. The Board of Directors and staff are in the process of developing the criteria for the plan and hope to announce the cost share program after the first of the year. If your drinking water exceeds the federal health standard of 10 parts per million, landowners would be eligible for cost share on a water treatment system to remove the nitrates from the drinking water. The basics of

the program include 90% cost share up to \$2,000 per household for a reverse osmosis system or other approved means of removing nitrates from the drinking water. The program is districtwide and requires a sample to be taken by NRD staff to qualify and you must be pre-approved before any work is to be completed.

Reminder that it is important to remember to test your private drinking water wells each year. Private wells are not monitored by the state.

**Upper Elkhorn**  
Natural Resources District

## Second Annual Northeast Nebraska Ag Conference December 16th

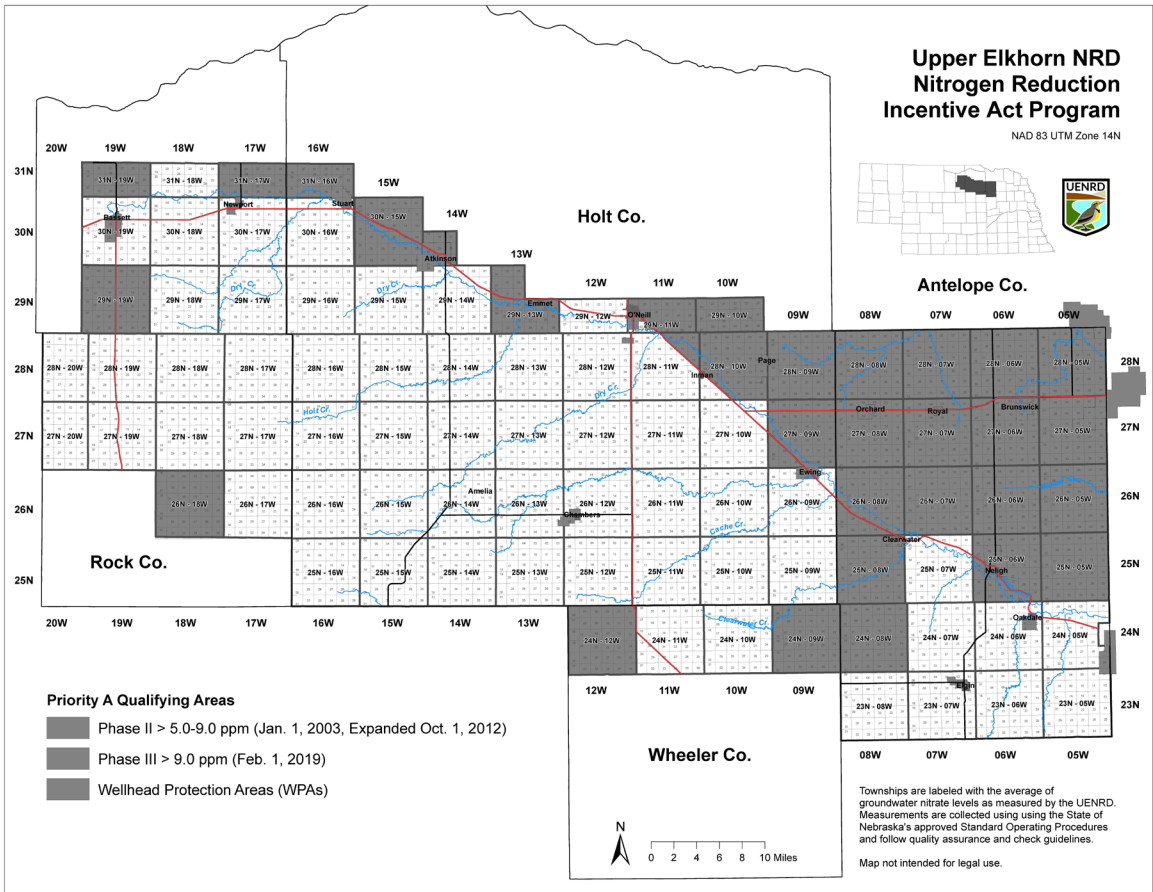
The second annual Northeast Nebraska Ag Conference (NNAC) will be held Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at Northeast Community College in Norfolk. The all-day conference will begin with registration at 8:00 a.m. and closing comments and door prizes wrapping up the event around 4:00 p.m. The NNAC is co-hosted by the Bazile Groundwater Management Area Project (BGMA) and Bow Creek Watershed Project.

All producers are invited to join in this dynamic event which was created for the purpose of exchanging practical farm and ranch ideas that

will not only help protect water quality but also improve the bottom line. Learn from others who are increasing their operations financial stability and environmental stewardship.

This conference has something for everyone whether you are interested in new management practices or an innovative farmer who has already been implementing them. Concurrent breakout sessions allow each attendee to choose the sessions that best meet their needs. Industry leading speakers, paired with experienced producers,

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# Groundwater Irrigated Acre Transfer Period

## November 1, 2025 to March 1, 2026

The Upper Elkhorn NRD will be taking applications for the transfer of groundwater irrigated acres from November 1, 2025 through March 1, 2026. Due to changes in the UENRD GWMP Rules and Regulations, we recommend reviewing the application criteria on the website before scheduling an appointment

to apply for a transfer. The Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors have adopted changes to the Transfer program over the last couple of years pertaining to the Transfer Agreement and added an application fee of \$50. The Transfer Agreement, transfer procedures and support information can be found on the UENRD

website at [www.uenrd.org](http://www.uenrd.org). We are encouraging anyone interested in signing up for a Transfer to go through the information on the website first before making an appointment. If you have questions, please feel free to contact the office at 402-336-3867.

# Continued from page 1..... Northeast Nebraska Ag Conference

will discuss hot ag topics from theory to practical application and technology integration. Don't miss out on this exciting event!

Hear from Keynote Speaker John Kempf – Founder of Advancing Eco Agriculture and host of the Regenerative Agriculture Podcast – about advancements in managing nitrates, exciting new discoveries on how plants get nutrition, and what that means for producers. The 'Making it Work Here' producer panel features local producers sharing how they are implementing these ideas on the farm.

Registration for the event is now open! Early Bird Registration tickets can be purchased until December 9th for \$20. Late registrations and

walk-ins will be \$50. A hot lunch will be provided. Nitrogen Certification and CEUs are also available for attendees. Register now at: <https://bit.ly/NNAC2025>.

Gold Level Sponsors for the 2025 Northeast Nebraska Ag Conference include: Papio-Missouri River NRD, Green Cover, Advancing Eco Ag, Ward Lab Inc., J-Tech Construction and Solar, and Corteva.

The Northeast Nebraska Ag Conference is produced by the Lewis & Clark NRD, Lower Elkhorn NRD, Lower Niobrara NRD, Upper Elkhorn NRD, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, and Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment (DWEE).

**Reminder! Expansion & Transfer Acres Must Be Re-Certified**  
Cooperators who have Expanded or Transferred groundwater irrigated acres must re-certify those locations once they are watered. Documentation should be in the form of a FSA form 578 or county assessor tax records and will be based off of the first irrigation season following the approval of the expansion or transfer. Please contact the NRD office if you have any questions.

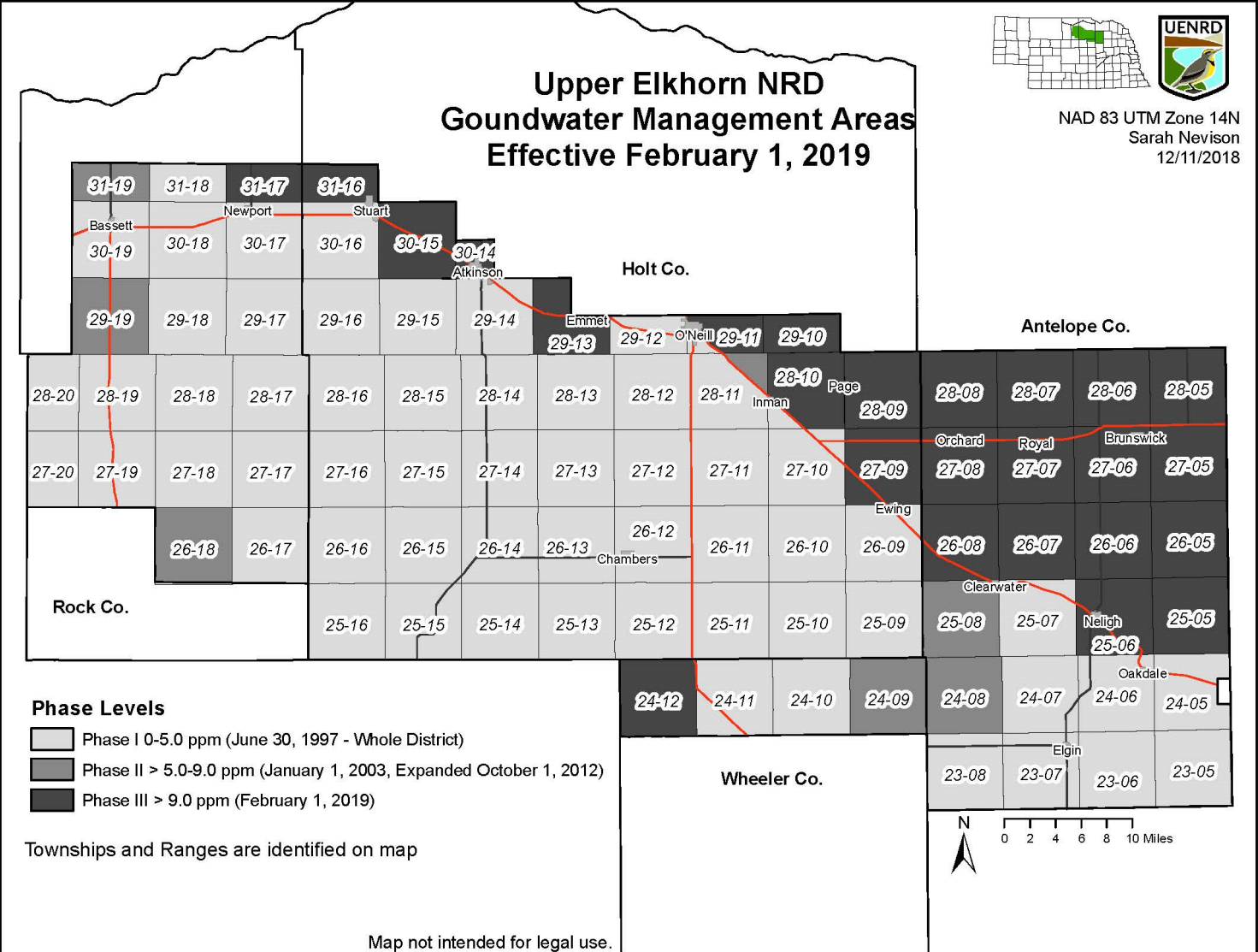
# Phase II Annual Reports Due December 31 for Growers in Both Phase II and Phase III Areas

The deadline for the 2025 Phase II Annual Reports is December 31, 2025. 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 2025 annual report should have been taken in Fall 2024 or Spring 2025. 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.

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 are to be filled out using the new Producer

Connect portal, The link for the portal is available on the UENRD website. Paper copies will not be accepted. In addition to the continuation of the Phase I and II requirements, Phase III includes

a random soil sampling conducted by the UENRD. Those selected for soil sampling for Fall 2025 have already been selected and notified. Soil sampling is underway.





# Order Trees Now For Spring Planting!

## Deadline March 1, 2026

The Upper Elkhorn NRD will be taking orders from now until March 1, 2026 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. This service is also offered through your local NRCS Office.

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

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

### Cost of Trees & Materials

Handplant Trees	\$ 1.58/Tree plus tax
Machine Plant Trees	\$ 263.00/100 plus tax
Weed Mulch (Installed)	\$ .95/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).

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### NiRIA Program in the UENRD

Each NRD will rank and score applications that best suit their local interests and available funding. Applications will be submitted to local NRDs either by email or online and are due before December 15th, 2025. Producers have until January 15th, 2027, to document and show the reduction in their nitrogen application to be eligible for payments.

Applications will be submitted to local NRD either by email or online. Contact your local NRD for more information on the application process.

For general questions about the program please contact your local NRD or Alexa Davis at the Department of Water, Energy and Environment (NeDWEE) (402)-471-3948 or [alexa.davis@nebraska.gov](mailto:alexa.davis@nebraska.gov).

### Additional Guidance for NRIA Applications in the UENRD

- Applications will be accepted from now until December 15, 2025.
- Applications will be awarded on a first come first serve basis.
- Each applicant is only allowed to submit applications on 2 fields for a maximum combined total of 280 certified irrigated acres.
- Applicants are required to meet compliance requirements established by UENRD's Rules and Regulations.
- UENRD will give priority to applicants who meet the criteria for Priority A Areas from the Nitrogen

Reduction Incentive Act Guidance Document. Priority A Areas in the UENRD include irrigated fields in Phase II and Phase III Areas and Wellhead Protection Areas. Applicants in these areas are required to be able to demonstrate a reduction in nitrogen fertilizer application rates of the lesser of 40 lbs./acre or 15% from baseline application rates. Baseline application rates will be established from the most recently submitted corn crop Phase II Annual Report.

### UENRD 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 3, 2026.

**Nitrogen Certification Classes for 2026 will be held during the month of February in O'Neill and Neligh. Dates and times will be announced at a later date.**  
**Landowners/Operators needing to re-certify in Nitrogen Management will be notified by mail.**

Grant Mathis Joins UENRD Staff



Grant has knowledge in agriculture, surveying and soil & water conservation through positions

he has held at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District and the Jackson County (MO) Soil & Water Conservation District. Grant has a passion for soil and water conservation, as he has spent most of his career working in the field. Please join us in welcoming Grant to the UENRD staff.

**Notice:**  
Anyone Applying for an Application for a Permit to Construct a New or Replacement Irrigation Well or signing up for Acre Expansion, Transfer or costshare within the Upper Elkhorn NRD MUST be in compliance with all other UENRD programs prior to receiving approval!

### Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District Board of Directors

Cameron Smith	Subdistrict 1 ~ Bassett	(402) 853-4679
Trevor Gotschall	Subdistrict 1 ~ Stuart	(402) 340-0686
Curtis Gotschall	Subdistrict 2 ~ Atkinson	(402) 340-5621
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
Allen Schueth	Subdistrict 4 ~ Ewing	(402) 394-8257
Tony Sanderson	Subdistrict 4 ~ Chambers	(402) 340-2501
Cody Frank	Subdistrict 5 ~ Creighton	(605) 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
Bruce Anderson	Subdistrict 7 ~ Elgin	(402) 843-5651
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**

### UENRD Staff

Dennis Schueth	General Manager e-mail: dschueth@uenrd.org
Joslynn VanDerslice	Water Resources Manager e-mail: jvanderslice@uenrd.org
Cole Jesse	Natural Resources Technician e-mail: cjesse@uenrd.org
Grant Mathis	Water Resources Technician e-mail: gmathis@uenrd.org
Wayne Frederick	Water Resources Technician e-mail: wffrederick@uenrd.org
Jeff Langan	Administrative Secretary e-mail: jlangan@uenrd.org
Beth Walsh	Information & Education/Chemigation Coordinator e-mail: bwalsh@uenrd.org
Brett Sholes	Agronomy Resource Technician e-mail: bsholes@uenrd.org
Vacant	Bazile Management Project Coordinator e-mail:
Denise Napier	NRCS Clerk, Neligh
Mary Zakrzewski	NRCS Clerk, O'Neill

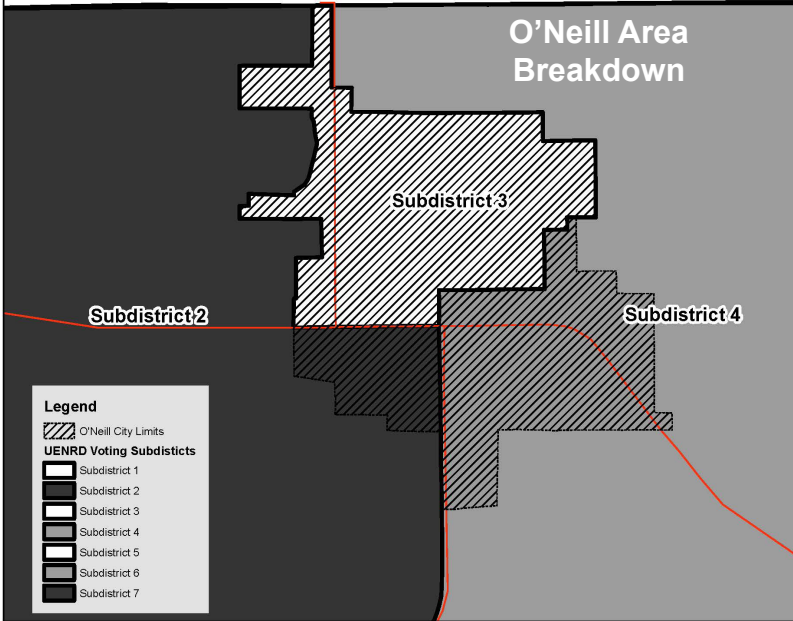
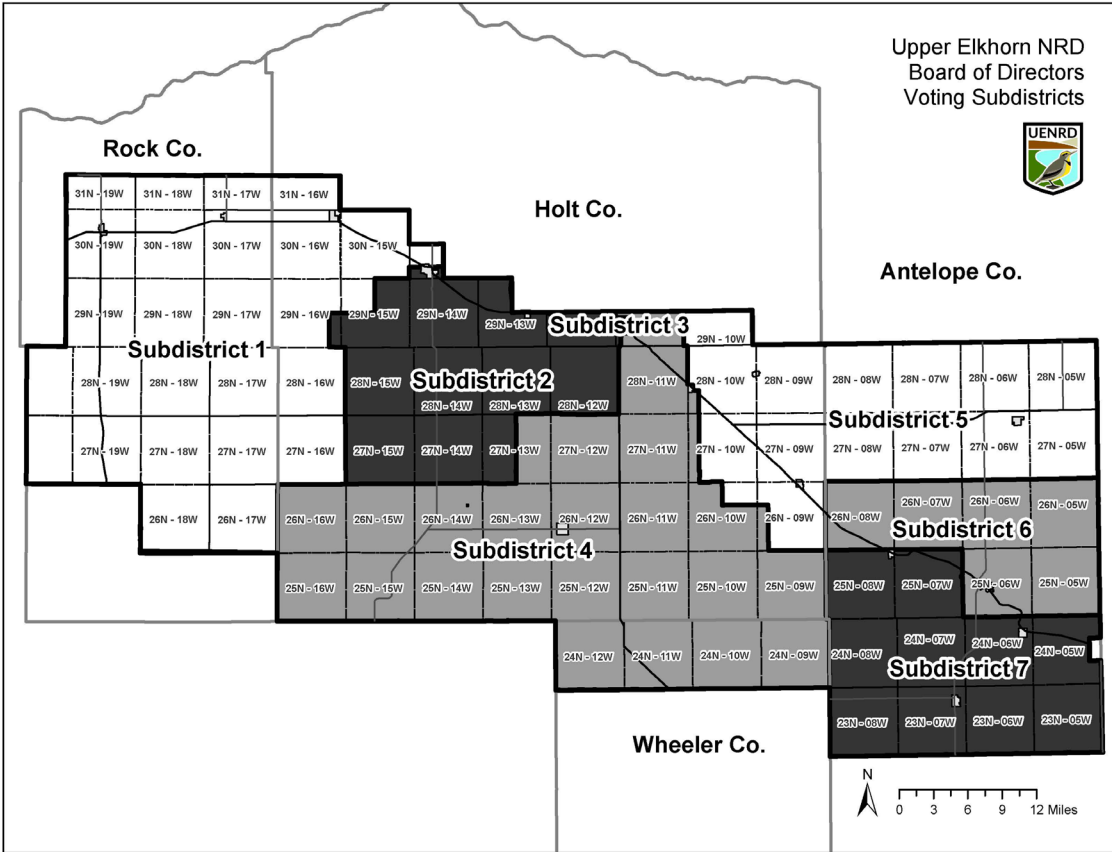
Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts  
Protecting Lives  
Protecting Property &  
Protecting the Future Since 1972

UENRD Staff Updating Monitoring Wells with Telemetry

Upper Elkhorn NRD staff district once all the units are installed and run- work to update the districts ning though a link on the UENRD website.



Upper Elkhorn NRD Sub-districts for Board of Directors  
Based on 2020 Census Information



- Current Representatives Up for Election:**  
Sub-district 1 Representative: Trevor Gotschall-  
Sub-district 2 Representative: John Vogel  
Sub-district 3 Representative: Marv Fritz  
Sub-district 4 Representative: Tony Sanderson  
Sub-district 5 Representative: Kevin Blair  
Sub-district 6 Representative: Aaron Rice  
Sub-district 7 Representative: Matt Beckman  
At-Large Representative: Chris Dierks

The filing deadline for Incumbents is February 17, 2026 at 5:00 PM & Non-Incumbents is March 2, 2026 at 5:00 PM. Candidate Filing Information is available at: <https://sos.nebraska.gov/elections/information-candidates>.