

Office and Education Center Construction 40% Complete

In 2020, the Central Platte NRD Board of Directors set a clear vision: to develop a facility that highlights the important role of Nebraska’s NRDs in advancing conservation, education and community engagement. That vision is now becoming a reality.

Construction of CPNRD’s new office and education center began in August 2024 and is currently 40 percent complete. The 20,000-square-foot facility is located six miles west of Grand Island on 13<sup>th</sup> Street and scheduled to be finished by February 2026.

The building will include 24 offices, a large boardroom that will also function as a classroom and meeting space, and a central corridor featuring interactive educational exhibits and space for community events.

“This facility is more than just an office building,” said Jim Bendfeldt, former CPNRD Board Member. “It’s a long-term investment in education, outreach, and the continued stewardship of Nebraska’s natural resources.”

The education center will offer both indoor and outdoor learning experiences focused on water, forests, grasslands and soil. Future outdoor areas will include wetlands, walking trails, windbreaks, pollinator habitats, irrigation and crop demonstrations and other conservation projects.

**YOUR CPNRD CONTACT** Jesse Mintken (308) 395-7567 or mintken@cpnrd.org



CPNRD’s office and education center is 40% complete, with construction on track for completion in February 2026.

Farmers See Big Water Savings with Subsurface Drip Irrigation

Farmers across central Nebraska are seeing significant water savings by switching to high-efficiency subsurface drip irrigation (SDI) systems. Also known as micro-irrigation, SDI delivers water directly to plant roots, reducing runoff and evaporation. This targeted approach helps conserve water while maintaining or even improving crop yields.

Local Producer Sees Results

David Spencer, Buffalo County producer, converted 40 acres from flood irrigation to SDI in 2020. “It was difficult getting even coverage and we had to pump constantly,” Spencer said. Since the switch, his irrigation costs dropped from \$50 per acre using 27” of water to just \$18 per acre using 5” - equaling an 80% reduction in water applied. Spencer said he’s seen more uniform crop growth thanks to consistent water delivery and encourages other producers to consider SDI to reduce water use, labor, and electricity costs.

Financial Assistance Available

Planning and financial support for SDI systems is available through the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Many producers who convert from flood or gravity irrigation to SDI report water application savings of 50-70%, especially when combined with good irrigation water management techniques. *Note: Cost-share is not available for converting center pivot systems to SDI.*

Spencer pointed out that dry spring conditions can pose a challenge and recommends researching filtration options before installing a system. CPNRD staff also advises that installers contact the NRD to ensure the proper chemigation equipment is included. Despite the challenges, Spencer said the benefits of subsurface drip irrigation far outweigh the drawbacks, and he’s glad he made the switch.

**For more information, contact your local NRCS office (Extension 3):**  
**Buffalo** 308-237-3118    **Dawson** 308-324-6314    **Hall** 308-395-8586    **Merrick** 308-946-3035



Subsurface drip irrigation (SDI) tape cut to reveal the green emitter inside.

Students from 18 Counties Experience Interactive Activities at Groundwater Festival

In May, Central Platte NRD hosted the 37<sup>th</sup> annual Nebraska Children’s Groundwater Festival at Central Community College and College Park in Grand Island. Nearly 900 fifth-grade students from 32 schools and 18 counties attended the event, which featured hands-on activities focused on groundwater and environmental stewardship. Students rotated through six interactive, classroom-style sessions and a stage show.

CPNRD staff led four educational sessions:

- *Preserving Grasslands & Prescribed Fire Equipment* Bill Hiatt introduced students to Nebraska’s grasslands and habitat challenges. Shell Creek students noted this was their favorite session because they “got to try the fire hoses and get wet.”
- *GIS/GPS: Mapping Groundwater* Luke Zakrzewski demonstrated how GPS technology is used to monitor groundwater levels and guide water management.
- *Rock & Roll: Geology & My Water* Brandi Flyr used candy bars to simulate soil samples, helping students understand the impact of past geological events on water supply.
- *Test the Waters: A Water Quality Check* David Carr demonstrated how nitrate strips and secchi disks are used to assess water clarity and contamination.

Six other NRDs shared their expertise:

- Little Blue NRD** – H2O Olympics demonstrated water’s cohesive and adhesive properties through experiments.
- Lower Loup NRD** – Students developed a \$5 million riverfront project, encouraging thoughtful land use planning.
- Lower Platte South NRD** – Built an outdoor watershed to explore how precipitation affects water flow.
- Lewis & Clark and Lower Niobrara** – Led an aquifer activity showing groundwater flow and pollution impacts.
- Upper Big Blue NRD** – Presented Wetlands Bingo to teach about wetland ecosystems.

Additional presenters included:

- CCC Environmental Sustainability Office • Clean Community System • Crane Trust • EA Engineering • Ensign Beverage
- Fax Gilbert Entertainment • Grand Island Groundwater Guardian Team • Grand Island Izaak Walton League
- Grand Island Utilities and Kearney Stormwater Departments • Hastings Museum • JEO Consulting Group
- Meridian Enrichment Program • Natural Resources Conservation Service • Nebraska Extension
- Nebraska Department of Natural Resources • Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy
- Nebraska Farm Bureau • Nebraska Water Environment Association • Nebraska Public Power District
- Nebraska State Historical Society • Prairie Loft Center • Raptor Conservation Alliance • Smart Soil
- Shane’s Pump and Windmill Service • Stuhr Museum • U.S. Geological Survey

Generous Sponsors and Volunteers

The Festival is made possible each year thanks to the generous support of sponsors. Special thanks to Central Community College and College Park for providing their facilities at no cost.

Volunteers Make It Possible

More than 100 volunteers helped guide students, assist presenters, oversee registration and serve in the lunch tent. Volunteers included individuals from across the state and students from Grand Island and Giltner high schools and Barr Middle School.

CPNRD extends sincere appreciation to all the organizations, businesses and individuals who donate time, funding and materials. To view a list of sponsors and learn more about the festival visit [www.cpnrd.org/education](http://www.cpnrd.org/education)

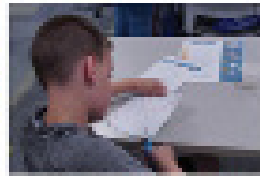
**Your CPNRD Contacts** Marcia Lee | [lee@cpnrd.org](mailto:lee@cpnrd.org) and Brody Vorderstrasse | [brody@cpnrd.org](mailto:brody@cpnrd.org)



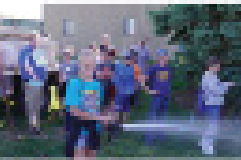
Our World: Soil & Water - Nebraska Farm Bureau



Water Snippets - Grand Island Groundwater Guardian Team



Wetlands & Water in the 1800s: Nebraska State Historical Society



Preserving Grasslands/Gr Fire - Central Platte NRD



Groundwater: It's in Your Back - JEO Consulting Group



Wetlands & Water in the 1800s: Nebraska State Historical Society



IN PERSPECTIVE

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215 Kaufman Ave    Grand Island NE    (308) 385-6282    [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org)

CPNRD Signs Perkins Project Landmark Agreement

In March, representatives from Central Platte NRD, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District, and Nebraska Public Power District signed a landmark agreement with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to lay the foundation for conserving and utilizing water secured by the Perkins County Canal Project (Perkins Project). Together, the partnering agencies manage water supplies serving over 1 million irrigated acres across central Nebraska.

The agreement outlines how water from the Perkins Project will be protected, allocated and distributed. The project will enhance water supply reliability for Nebraska’s producers and provide benefits for municipal wellfields, threatened and endangered species, hydropower, power plant cooling, recreation and other critical uses.

“Nebraska will finally be able to secure and use the water it’s legally entitled to,” said Lyndon Vogt, CPNRD General Manager. “Colorado’s threats are real, but fortunately we have a tool to use in response, and that’s the Perkins Project.” CPNRD counts on South Platte flows to help provide the surface water that recharges Grand Island’s municipal well field, and partnerships with canals within CPNRD also rely on both North Platte and South Platte River flows.

Seasonal flows of the South Platte River into Nebraska have been declining in recent years. Increased water development in Colorado including more than 500 diversion structures, rising municipal demands, irrigation well pumping, and population growth in the Denver and Front Range areas, has diverted tens of thousands of acre-feet annually that would otherwise reach Nebraska.

Once operational, the Perkins County Canal Project will help secure Nebraska’s legal allocation of South Platte River water and prevent additional upstream diversions that may infringe on the state’s water rights.

The Nebraska Legislature passed the Perkins County Canal Project Act in 2022, finding that it is essential to the environmental health of the entire Platte River Basin to protect Nebraska’s full entitlement to the flows of the South Platte River. As a result, the NeDNR is authorized with funding allocations of \$628-million to develop, construct, manage and operate the Perkins County Canal and associated water storage facilities, with the primary purpose of fully protecting Nebraska’s non-irrigation season annual flows and improve utilization of surplus flows during the irrigation season.

The project is expected to be completed around 2032, with design, permitting, and land acquisition efforts already underway. Additional agreements are anticipated as the project progresses.

To learn more visit [dnr.nebraska.gov/perkins-county-canal](http://dnr.nebraska.gov/perkins-county-canal)

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CENTRAL PLATTE NRD  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board Member	Subdistrict
Keith Ostermeler, Grand Island	At-Large
Jay Richeson, Gothenburg	1
Brian Kelsner, Gothenburg	1
Dwayne Margritz, Lexington	2
Tom Downey, Lexington	2
Marvion Reichert, Elm Creek	3
Vacant	3
Lon Bohn, Gibbon	4
Ryan Kegley, Kearney	4
Deb VanMatre, Gibbon	5
Mike Wilkens, Gibbon	5
Jerry Milner, Grand Island	6
Mick Reynolds, Wood River	6
John Stoltenberg, Calro	7
Ed Stoltenberg, Calro	7
Todd Arends, Grand Island	8
Kevin Werner, Grand Island	8
Amy Kyes, Central City	9
Doug Reeves, Archer	9
Chuck Maser, Grand Island	10
Barry Obermiller, Grand Island	10
Board Officers	
Chairman	Deb VanMatre
Vice Chairman	Tom Downey
Secretary	Keith Ostermeler
Treasurer	Marvion Reichert

Staff Member	Position
Lyndon Vogt	General Manager
Jesse Mintken	Assistant Manager
Tom Backer	Projects Assistant
David Carr	Range Management
Kelly Cole	Administrative Assistant
Darren Cudaback	Precision Conservation
Tricia Dudley	Water Quality Specialist
Brandi Flyr	Hydrologist
Korey Gerken	Cozad Ditch Rider
Jim Harris	TMID Manager
Bill Hiatt	Resources Conservationist
Devin Hingst	Resources Conservationist
Dean Krull	UNL/CPNRD Project Coord.
Marcia Lee	Information/Education
Shane Max	Resources Conservationist
Courtney Olson	Office Assistant
Marci Ostergard	TMID Office Assistant
Mike Ostergard	TMID Technician
Collin Quandt	Agronomist
Michael Schmeackle	Cozad Ditch Manager
Brody Vorderstrasse	Communications Assistant
Angela Warner	GIS Coordinator
Courtney Widup	Water Resources Technician
Nelson Winkel	Prescribed Fire Specialist
Luke Zakrzewski	GIS Image Analyst

NRD/NRCS Field Office Assistant	County
Lexie Zubia	Hall
Kyla Friedrichsen	Merrick
Lisa Kennicutt	Dawson
Shelly Lippincott	Buffalo

Want to receive the latest updates straight to your inbox? Sign up for the *In Perspective Newsletter* today! Send your email address to [lee@cpnrd.org](mailto:lee@cpnrd.org)

## Amy Kyes Appointed to NRD Board

Central Platte NRD is pleased to welcome Amy Kyes of Central City as the new director for Subdistrict 9. Her appointment was made during the Board's March meeting and will extend through December 2026.

Amy fills the seat previously held by Ed Kyes, who served on the Board for 25 years. Three candidates were interviewed for the position.

Amy and her husband, Steve, are grain farmers in Merrick County, where they grow corn, soybeans, and seed corn. They have 6 children and 10 grandchildren.

Amy said she is excited to serve as a board member and is looking forward to learning from and working with fellow board and staff members to support the District's mission.

CPNRD's Board has 21 members, with two from each of the District's 10 subdistricts and one at-large representative. Board members serve four-year terms.



## Outreach Updates

Explore NRD Rec Areas to Win Prizes!



Individuals and families are invited to take part in the **NRD Recreation Exploration Program**—a fun way to enjoy the outdoors, experience the state's natural beauty, and enter to win Scheels gift cards. It's a win-win-win!

**March 1 - September 19**

Visit and explore over 80 NRD rec areas, from the rolling Sandhills to the peaceful banks of the Platte River. Bike the trails, fish the lakes, or simply enjoy nature - each offers a chance to connect with nature and win.

**How to Participate:**

1. Visit NRD recreation areas across Nebraska
2. Take a photo during your visit
3. Upload photo: [www.nrdnet.org/recreation](http://www.nrdnet.org/recreation)

Each photo submission enters you for prizes, including the grand prize of \$1,500 in Scheel's gift cards. Get outside, explore, and experience Nebraska's diverse landscapes!



Lois Paprock, Columbus, visited CPNRD's Richard Plautz Crane Viewing Site and entered to win Scheels gift cards.

Submit Your Photos for the NRD Statewide Calendar!

Each year, Nebraska's NRDs create a statewide calendar featuring photos of producers in the field, NRD staff at work, conservation projects, Nebraska landscapes, wildlife, and more.

Do you have a photo that captures what Nebraskans love? Whether it's a farmer in action, seasonal scenery, wildlife, trees, flowers—or anything that showcases Nebraska's natural beauty—we'd love to see it! Please include a brief caption and the location where the photo was taken.

Selected photos may also be featured in the slideshow in our office lobby. Show us your view of Nebraska!

Send your photos to: Marcia Lee | (308) 385-7751 | [lee@cpnrd.org](mailto:lee@cpnrd.org)

## Protecting Our Water: Chemigation Inspections Required

Nebraska's NRDs help keep our water safe by inspecting chemigation systems to ensure required safety devices, including check valves, vacuum relief valves and low-pressure drains, are in place and working.

Each inspection includes a full startup and shutdown of your system. All components must be maintained and repaired as needed to comply with Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE) regulations.

### Renewal Inspections

Existing systems are inspected every three years. Systems not inspected by September 15<sup>th</sup> will have their permits suspended and will not be renewed. Be sure to schedule your inspection before shutting down your wells.

### New Systems

New chemigation systems must be inspected **before use** and by **September 15<sup>th</sup>** to meet state and district rules. If not inspected this growing season, the permit/fee won't carry over to next year.

### Schedule Your Inspection

Call Central Platte NRD at (308) 385-6282

We'll do our best to provide next-day service.

### Chemigation Inspection Checklist

#### Mainline Check Valve

Installed on the main irrigation pipeline to prevent chemical backflow into the well.

#### Vacuum Relief Valve

Prevents suction that could draw chemicals back into the well.

#### Inspection Port

Allows for visual inspection of low-pressure drain to ensure it's operating correctly.

#### Low-Pressure Drain

Located behind the check valve; helps prevent backflow and allows for safe system drainage.

#### Chemical Injection Valve

Prevents backflow of chemicals from injection line into water supply.

#### Simultaneous Interlock Device (Plug-In)

Ensures the irrigation and chemical injection pumps shut off at the same time. Interlock devices must be properly installed/operational to ensure safe system shutdown and prevent contamination.

#### Hose (20', ¾" diameter)

Carries water and chemicals safely away from the well through the low- pressure drain.

## What Certifications Do I Need?

If you apply chemicals through irrigation or use restricted-use pesticides in Nebraska, certification is required.

### Chemigation Certification

Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE) supplies the Chemigation Applicator Certification forms to UNL Cooperative Extension Service.

**Who Needs It:** Anyone applying fertilizers or pesticides through irrigation.

**Certification:** Applicants are required to attend a UNL training and pass the test. A chemigation applicator certification card is issued to successful applicants.

**Renewal:** Certification expires on January 1 of the fourth year following the date of issuance.

**Also Required:** A chemigation permit from Central Platte NRD for each site. CPNRD will inspect the safety equipment that must be installed on the irrigation system. (See above requirements)

Your CPNRD Contact: Courtney Olson | (308) 385-6282 | [olson@cpnrd.org](mailto:olson@cpnrd.org)



### Private Pesticide Certification & Licensing

Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is responsible for certification and licensing of pesticide applicators. Currently, the NDA certifies and licenses approximately 22,250 private and 9,250 commercial pesticide applicators.

**Who Needs It:** Anyone applying restricted-use pesticides (RUPs) in the production of an ag commodity on their own property. Anyone using restricted-use pesticides. A RUP is a pesticide product that the EPA has determined may pose an increased risk to human health or the environment, if not used with added restrictions.

**Certification:** Attend a private applicator training program or complete the self-study materials in coordination with your local county extension office, or successfully complete a private applicator exam administered by the NDA. Recertification is required every 3 years.

**License:** To become licensed, a private applicator must be certified and remit a \$25 fee to NDA for a 3-year license.

To learn more about pesticide applicator certification call the **NDA at (402) 471-2351**.

## Controlled vs. Prescribed Burns: What's the Difference?

For years, the terms **controlled** and **prescribed** have been mistakenly interchanged when referring to burning practices. While both require a permit under Nebraska Revised Statute 81-520, they serve very different purposes and follow distinct procedures.

### Controlled Burn

A controlled burn is a small, contained fire typically used for disposing of trash, debris or woody materials. Common examples include burn barrels, burn pits, tree pile burns and dumpster fires.



### Prescribed Burn

A prescribed burn is a carefully planned fire set intentionally to meet specific land management objectives—such as improving habitat, reducing invasive species or managing grasslands. These burns require detailed planning and oversight including:

- A written burn plan submitted with the permit application
- Clear burn objectives
- Maps and firebreak details
- Safety and containment procedures
- Equipment and staffing plans
- Weather and smoke considerations
- Emergency contacts and contingency plans

Most prescribed burn plans go well beyond the legal minimum, with preparation often taking six months to several years in advance. Understanding the difference between these two types of burns is essential for legal compliance, safety and successful land management.

Your CPNRD Contact Bill Hiatt (308) 395-7365 | [hiatt@cpnrd.org](mailto:hiatt@cpnrd.org)



## Nebraska Grazing Exchange - Find or Offer Grazing Land

Nebraska Grazing Exchange is a free online tool designed to help livestock producers connect with landowners who have available cropland, pasture, or forage for grazing. The website features an interactive map to easily identify available grazing land across the state and provides helpful resources to support grazing partnerships.

Integrating livestock into crop systems and implementing proper grassland management are proven methods to enhance soil health, reduce input costs and improve land productivity. Whether you're looking for additional forage for your herd or have land that could benefit from managed grazing, the Grazing Exchange can help you make those connections.

Visit [www.nebraskagrazingexchange.com](http://www.nebraskagrazingexchange.com) to explore listings or to create your own listing.

## Tree Program Nears 4 Million Trees Sold

Since 1972, Nebraska's NRDs have partnered with landowners to plant more than 100 million trees statewide for windbreaks, wildlife habitat, erosion control and more. Central Platte NRD's Conservation Tree Program has played a role in that success.



In 2025, CPNRD sold 28,350 trees and shrubs, bringing the district's total to 3,950,612 since the program began in 1973. This puts CPNRD on track to reach the 4-million mark soon. The program offers 35 varieties of tree and shrub seedlings in bundles of 25 for just \$31.25, with most stock grown at Nebraska's Halsey National Forest. Orders are accepted annually from November 1 through April 1.

### Fabric Weed Barrier Program

To help ensure planting success, CPNRD also offers a Fabric Weed Barrier Program. Since 1991, the program has sold 634 miles of weed barrier to landowners. Made of black polypropylene and priced at \$0.50 per linear foot, the tightly woven fabric allows water and nutrients to penetrate while suppressing weed growth. With a minimum service life of five years, the barrier offers a low-maintenance solution for weed control. **To learn more visit [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org).**