

KNOW YOUR NRD

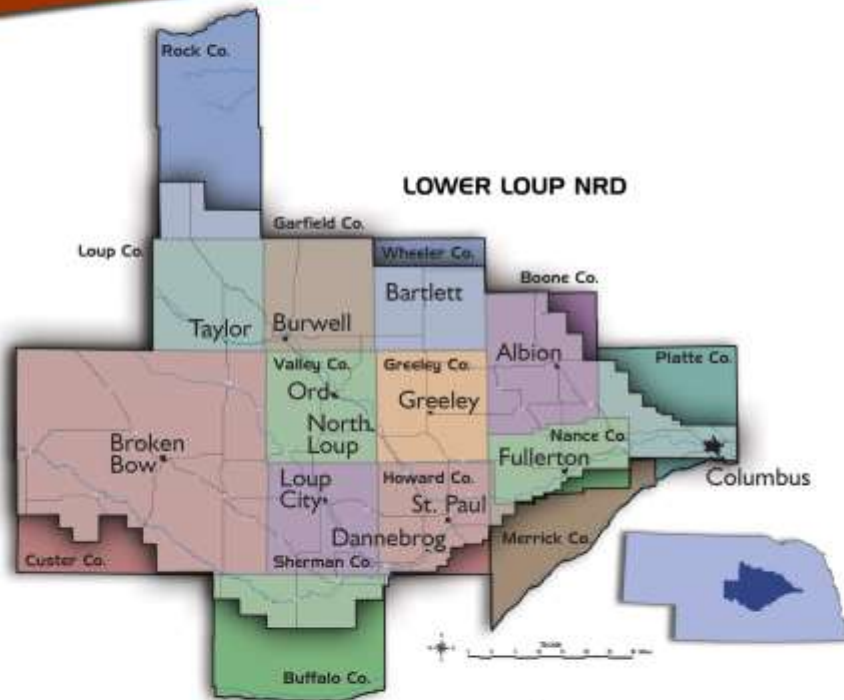


Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts
Making the Good Life Better Since 1972

Summer/Fall 2013

LLNRD QUICK FACTS:

- District Population: 68,746 (2010 Census)
- District Size in Acres: 5,070,720
- Encompasses 514 miles of rivers
- 11,113 Registered Irrigation Wells
- 1,216,692 Certified Irrigated Acres
- Planted nearly 12 million trees since 1972
- Distributed \$7.66 million in cost-share funding to landowners
- 2006 - Self-imposed moratorium on new high capacity irrigation wells
- 2008 - Self-imposed moratorium on expansion of irrigated acres
- 2009 - Lower Platte River Basin fully-appropriated designation reversed
- 2009 - Additional groundwater rules approved to allow limited irrigation development under LB-483



Protecting Lives

High Nitrates Remain Issue

Nitrate levels above the federally designated maximum continue to plague an area of concern south of the Loup River in Merrick, Nance and Platte Counties.

Designated as Water Quality Area 28 by the NRD, the area continues to see high nitrate levels in groundwater. A study commissioned by the NRD showed several factors affecting nitrate levels.

Those factors include a shallow water table, sandy soils, high groundwater recharge rates, and individual management practices regarding nitrogen fertilizer application.

The NRD continues to work with producers to decrease groundwater nitrate levels. If levels continue to rise, more stringent regulation will be required.

Protecting Property

Stay Placed on Transfers

Concern with transfers of irrigated acres resulting in irrigation on highly erodible land and poor soil types are among factors that lead to a temporary stay on the approval of new irrigated acres transfer requests.

The number of transfer requests in the NRD has risen steadily, growing from 30 requests in 2010 to over 225 requests so far this year.

The LLNRD staff will evaluate the District's current transfer regulations and draft new criteria for the Board of Directors to consider.

The stay on irrigated acres transfers has no sunset date and will remain in place until new transfer rules have been considered by the Lower Loup NRD Board.

Protecting the Future

No New Irrigated Acres

There will be no applications for new irrigated acres in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District this year. The Lower Loup NRD Board of Directors has voted to monitor groundwater levels following the drought of 2012 and reconsider new irrigation in 2014.

The Lower Loup granted 10,000 acres of new irrigation over four years under LB-483, a bill passed by the Nebraska Legislature. Those new irrigated acres were granted from 2009 to 2012.

Groundwater levels in the NRD fell an average of three and a half feet from the previous year. Due to a one year lag in effects on the aquifer from groundwater pumping, better data on the drought's effect on levels will be available in the spring.

NRD Flow Meter Program Is A Success

A Lower Loup NRD program providing cost-share for flow meters has been labeled a success. Funded in part by the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the cost-share was offered to irrigators in the Lower Loup Natural Resources District as part of the "Irrigation Monitoring Program."



Data gathered through the program will increase the understanding of groundwater irrigation occurring in the District. A flow meter provides the producer and the NRD with information on the amount of groundwater utilized for irrigation. The NRD utilized grant funds to purchase pressure transducers and data loggers for deployment in some sites. This equipment will help determine the impact of pumping on groundwater levels. The program has provided data for the Elkhorn-Loup Modeling (ELM) Study and for additional irrigation research.

Natural Resources Education

The Lower Loup Natural Resources District supports a variety of educational opportunities for students of all ages. The NRD hosts the annual North Central Envirothon contest in Columbus, as well as Land Judging and Range Judging contests across the District. The Lower Loup NRD joins other agencies to present an annual Environmental Festival for elementary students and makes annual presentations at the Children's Groundwater Festival at Grand Island. The District also provides a number of scholarships to camps and contests for students and teachers.



NRD Begins Pibel Lake/ Clear Creek Project



The Lower Loup Natural Resources District has initiated a water quality project for Pibel Lake and the Clear Creek Watershed in southeast Wheeler County. Water quality issues include excessive nutrients and chlorophyll.

The NRD has acquired grant funding through the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and retained JEO Consulting Group to assist with the project. Input from local stakeholders, including landowners and the general public will be part of the project planning process.

Grazing Program Receives Additional Funding

Livestock producers in the Lower Loup NRD are benefitting from an additional \$200,000 in cost-share funding. Approved by the NRD Board of Directors, the funding was needed to handle an increase in requests fuelled by the drought of 2012.

The funding helped alleviate a back-log of requests waiting for funding from the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP). The NSWCP provides state financial assistance to the state's landowners for the installation of approved soil and water conservation measures that improve water quality, conserve water, and help control erosion and sedimentation.

- Lower Loup and 6 other NRDs are coalition participants
- Coalition members represent the NRDs in the Platte, Elkhorn and Loup Rivers and Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
- Coalition created to discuss and make recommendations on water management in the basin

The coalition receives input from two committees, one managerial and the other technical. The management committee is responsible for the administrative and financial affairs of the committee and the technical committee handles the scientific and technical components.

The coalition will look at groundwater inventories, surveys, studies, modeling, goals and objectives of groundwater management in the basin.

Find out more about Nebraska's NRDs at www.llnrd.org or www.nrdnet.org

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