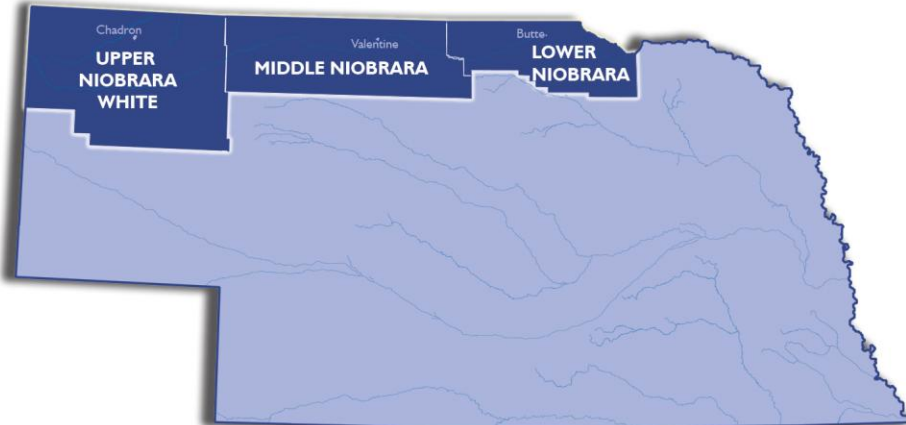


# YOUR NRD BASIN

# NIOBRARA RIVER

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



NIOBRARA RIVER BASIN

## BASIN FACTS:

The Niobrara River is the longest river in Nebraska, stretching 486 miles across the state, and has over 90 waterfalls.

- 2,957 Chemigation permits issued in 2012
- 1680 Chemigation inspections in 2012
- 362 Monitoring wells
- 1,533 Nitrate samples collected in 2012
- More than 10 Million trees sold since 1985

## Your Local Leaders in Ground Water Management

### Protecting the Future

The Niobrara River begins in eastern Wyoming and empties into the Missouri River in Nebraska 535 miles later. The three Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) in the Niobrara Basin, which include the Upper Niobrara White NRD (UNWNRD), the Middle Niobrara NRD (MNNRD) and the Lower Niobrara NRD (LNNRD), strive to protect both the quality and quantity of the basin's water supply.

The Niobrara River plays a role in agriculture, recreation and hydroelectric power. The NRDs, along with their partners, make every effort to maintain the balance between the supply and demand of water.

In 2003 the UNWNRD's Board of Directors voted in favor of a district-wide moratorium on new high capacity wells to prevent over-development in their entire district. In 2004 the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) determined the Upper Niobrara Basin fully appropriated.

Fully Appropriated means the balance between water supply and demand has been reached. Since

ground water and surface water are connected, no new high capacity wells or surface water rights are allowed in this area. Also, no new irrigated acres can be added.

In 2008, the Lower Niobrara River Basin between the Mirage Flats diversion dam in Dawes County and Nebraska Public Power District's Spencer Hydropower facility near Spencer was declared fully appropriated.

After the June 2011 Nebraska Supreme Court reversal of the Lower Niobrara Basin Fully Appropriated Status, the Niobrara NRDs continue to monitor and may allow limited expansion of irrigated acres under provisions authorized by Legislative Bill 483.

Enforcing management decisions protects not only the scenic Niobrara River, but also the valuable ground water that Nebraskans will continue to rely on for future generations.



### Protecting Lives

The NRDs in the Niobrara Basin closely monitor both the quality and quantity of the ground water in their districts. Both MNNRD and LNNRD implemented a district-wide Ground Water Management Area (GWMA) in 1996. The UNWNRD did the same in 1998 and has since implemented water metering and allocations for the most heavily irrigated sub-areas.

The NRDs' efforts ensure an abundance of safe drinking water for the future. NRDs conduct ground water studies and sample the water for contaminants such as nitrates.

To help protect public water supplies, the Niobrara Basin NRDs often work in conjunction with cities and other agencies. Wellhead protection, rural water systems and surface water sampling are examples of NRD partnership projects.

Monitoring the water quality in a GWMA means your health, safety and family are protected.

# Projects and Programs

## Protecting Property

### Tree Plantings

To encourage tree planting, the UNWNRD, MNNRD and LNNRD make low-cost tree and shrub seedlings available to district residents. More than 203,000 trees were planted in conjunction with the Niobrara Basin NRDs' 2013 Conservation Tree Programs. Trees are planted for livestock and homestead protection, soil erosion prevention, wildlife habitat, as a "living snow fence" and for aesthetic value. Please check with your local NRD for pricing and available species of trees and shrubs.



### Conservation Education



To help educate our youth about natural resources issues, staff members from the NRDs participate in many local events such as Range Judging, Land Judging, the Envirothon and local conservation festivals. Teaching youth how to be excellent stewards of the land is an important goal of the NRD system.

The NRDs in the Niobrara Basin also sponsor and co-sponsor workshops and low cost or free educational opportunities for landowners and other district residents. Natural resource education workshops, no-till field days and nitrogen certification are only a few of the opportunities that residents are invited to attend.

### Recreation on the Niobrara River

Recreation and tourism have a large impact on the NRDs in the Niobrara River Basin. The Niobrara River valley is a popular vacation area and provides families with the opportunity to canoe, tube or raft. The UNWNRD, MNNRD and LNNRD strive to protect both the recreational quality of the rivers and streams in the basin as well as the livelihood of the producers by implementation of ground water management plans.



In May of 1991, a 76-mile stretch of the river was added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve its unique biological features. From Valentine to 30 miles east, you will encounter more than 90 waterfalls along the south bank, including the state's highest, Smith Falls, which plunges more than 70 feet. Look for elk, bison and deer, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, mink, trout, catfish and over 200 species of birds that rely on the Niobrara.

The river is truly a natural treasure for the state of Nebraska, and the Niobrara Basin NRDs work together to preserve it for generations to come.

## Your NRD

- Uses taxpayer dollars efficiently
- Protects lives through water testing
- Protects property through soil conservation

Find out more about the Niobrara Basin NRDs:

Upper Niobrara  
White NRD

[www.unwnrd.org](http://www.unwnrd.org)

Middle Niobrara NRD

[www.mnnrd.org](http://www.mnnrd.org)

Lower Niobrara NRD

[www.lnnrd.org](http://www.lnnrd.org)

The Natural Resources District system is unique to the State of Nebraska. In 1972, NRDs were developed according to watershed basins, instead of by political boundaries. This system provided a more efficient management strategy because it solved the issues of overlapping authorities and lack of funds.

Each District is governed by a locally elected Board of Directors, which ensures that local issues and concerns are addressed.

Find out more about  
Nebraska's NRDs at  
[www.nrdnet.org](http://www.nrdnet.org)