

Alberts Receives Outstanding Grassland Conservation Award

Congratulations to Mark Alberts, Gothenburg, for receiving the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts' (NARD) Outstanding Grassland Conservation Award from the at their annual conference in September. Alberts was recognized for his success using fire to improve and maintain pastures with farmers and ranchers in the Loess hills of Dawson County. Alberts has made significant improvements to grasslands in central Nebraska.

As coordinator, burn boss and volunteer of the Central Platte Rangeland Alliance (CPRA), Alberts facilitates prescribed burns that have proven to be up to 100% effective in killing cedars and promoting native warm season grasses. He has worked tirelessly to advocate for prescribed burning and strengthening the CPRA's fight against the spread of the Eastern Red Cedar for nearly two decades.

Over the last 10 years, the CPRA has conducted up to 14 prescribed burns each spring and burned nearly 50,000 acres. With Alberts leadership, more than 75 burns have been completed and membership in the CPRA has grown to over 180 participants and supporters. As the Burn Boss, Alberts helps landowners prepare for their burns to ensure a high success rate. He writes the burn plans that include maps, soil types, job duties/equipment involved, what the landowner hopes to accomplish, and weather conditions.

"I truly enjoy the comradery involved with prescribed burns," Alberts said. He sees the CPRA as a building block for the community, saying it's a very "unique, midwestern" fellowship. When asked, Mark emphasized that he enjoys helping others and said he'll continue to do his part to keep it going.



Mark Alberts, of Gothenburg, accepting the Outstanding Grassland Conservation Award at the NARD Annual Conference in Kearney.

New Monitoring Well to Enhance Groundwater Education

The Grand Island Groundwater Guardian Team's Outdoor Learning Area at the Nebraska State Fairgrounds has taken a significant step towards expanding its educational and environmental impact with the installation of a new monitoring well, generously provided by the Nebraska Well Drillers Association. This exciting development, made possible through the collaboration of the Grand Island Groundwater Guardian Team and the Central Platte NRD, promises to bring year-round groundwater awareness to the community.

"I'd like to thank the Nebraska Well Drillers for selecting this site for a monitoring well," said CPNRD Chairman Mick Reynolds. "Central Platte NRD is committed to safeguarding this valuable educational tool for the community, reinforcing our dedication to environmental conservation and public awareness."

The monitoring well installation on October 3rd was a celebration of community and environmental stewardship. Downey Drilling showcased the cutting-edge Versa-V-140X drill rig capabilities, enlightening attendees about the meticulous practices and procedures involved in constructing a water well. The demonstration was held as part of a training session for well drillers.

CPNRD plans to equip the well with a monitoring system to enable the public to view groundwater levels year-round, fostering a deeper understanding of this critical resource. The well will be added to the Groundwater Management Program, which includes 116 active monitoring wells from Gothenburg to Columbus and over 500 irrigation wells that are measured annually. It will also be sampled for nitrates, furthering water quality education and contributing to environmental protection efforts.



Ribbon Cutting Dedication on October 3rd, with attendees from the GI Groundwater Guardian Team, CPNRD, Nebraska Well Drillers, Downey Drilling, GI Chamber of Commerce & the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. (Front from left) Tricia Dudley, Kelly Cole, Marcia Lee, Tom Downey, Lee Orton, Julie Frandsen, Patsy Steenson, Dustin Wilcox (Back row) Dan Clement, Cindy Johnson, Courtney Widup, Brandi Flyr, Lyndon Vogt, Shane Max, Brody Vorderstrasse, Nelson Winkel, Mick Reynolds.

Important Dates

* January 1	Nitrogen Certification test due
* March 1	Deadline: Transfer applications for irrigated acres
* March 31	Crop Report & samples due for Groundwater Management Program
* April 1	Deadline: Last day to order Conservation Tree Seedlings
* April 15	CPNRD-Ron Bishop Memorial College Scholarship applications due
* June 1	Chemigation renewal permits due
* July 27 - 1:45 p.m.	Budget Hearing for 2024 FY Budget - CPNRD Office
* September 1 - March 1	Transfer applications for irrigated acres accepted
* September 15	Chemigation reinspections must be completed
* November 1 - April 1	Tree and shrub seedling orders accepted
* December 25 - January 1	Office Closed

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Projects Assistant: Tom Backer	Water Resources Specialist: Dan Clement
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IN PERSPECTIVE

Central Platte NRD Newsletter

Volume 28 No. 1
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215 Kaufman Ave Grand Island NE (308) 385-6282 cpnrd.org

November 16th - Public Hearing on Rules & Regulations

With updates to the water quantity and water quality portions of the Central Platte NRD's Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) that took effect on July 1st, the NRD's Rules and Regulations will be updated to replicate the Plan.

Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held prior to the Board of Directors meeting in November. The Board will consider approval of the proposed changes at their meeting. The purpose of the hearing is to receive testimony on the proposed *Rules & Regulations for the Enforcement of the Nebraska Groundwater Management and Protection Act*.

Date: Thursday, November 16 | **Time:** 1:45 p.m. | **Location:** CPNRD office, 215 Kaufman Ave, Grand Island

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

SECTION A: The following definitions were removed: Crop Conversion Factor, Predicted Stable Rotation Percentage, Rainfall Adjustment Factor, Rotation, Rotation Percentage, Sub-Irrigated, Weather Adjusted decline, Illegal Well

SECTION B: Established an avenue for municipal and industrial growth users to obtain a well permit from the district.

- Removed sentence on Sub-Irrigated offset plants. The plant list is no longer used for accounting within the GMP.
- Removed sentence on CRP contracts being in the same name for 2 years prior to a water transfer. Added that fees will be determined by the CPNRD Board.
- Removed transfer rate to reflect the change to Lidar imagery and small acre exemption.
- Variance Request was changed to Transfer Request.
- Removed calculations for credits to streams and creeks west of Kearney to an allowed use.
- Removed water bank that offsets can be purchased from and Groundwater Exchange pilot project.

SECTION C: Groundwater Quality Management Controls rewritten

SECTION D: Groundwater Quantity Management Controls Section rewritten to replicate GMP that imposes potential use of flow meters and allocations to stabilize declining groundwater management areas within the district.

In This Edition

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SECTION E: Rewritten to create consistency in the enforcement process and procedures between the Groundwater Quality and Quantity programs. Major changes: A written request for a hearing now has 7 business days, used to be 3. Moved hearing notification, from 3 days of being notified to within 10 to 45 days. In the event of multiple or repeat violations, the District may hold a separate hearing to determine whether to impose additional penalties.

A full-text copy of the Rules & Regulations is available at cpnrd.org or may be requested by calling (308) 385-6282.

Producer Connect App to be Released in January

The Nebraska Corn Board, Nebraska Association of Resources Districts and 17 of Nebraska's 23 NRDs announced the development of a nitrogen dashboard in partnership with Longitude 103, a leading provider of agricultural technology solutions. Producer Connect, a web and mobile application suite, allows producers to access their crop reporting data and includes a fertilizer recommendation based on yield goals. This collaborative effort aims to empower agriculture producers to optimize inputs, which will enhance agricultural profitability, water quality and irrigation efficiency.

In the last 10 years, Nebraska has made gains in nitrogen management through split-fertilizer application and irrigation efficiency, but there are opportunities for improvement. Nebraska's agriculture economy depends on groundwater and fertilizer; however, the overuse of fertilizer can come at a cost by contaminating groundwater, which most Nebraskans depend on for drinking water.

Central Platte NRD General Manager, Lyndon Vogt, said the program will support CPNRD's efforts to bring awareness and education in high nitrate management areas of the District. "Producers who use this program will receive a personalized nitrogen recommendation based on their yield goals and a cost analysis of the recommended nitrogen application versus the typical fertilizer application."

"With the growing concern of increased nitrate in groundwater, it's essential for NRDs and ag producers to work together to address the problem," said "By developing a tool beneficial for resources, it's a win-win situation."

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

Producers will log in to view their crops grown, actual yield, fertilizer grown, expected yield, soil/water test dashboard will also include the ability to **Producer Decision Making** The platform impact of their nitrogen usage, aid-and demonstrating a commitment to

Protected Data All data will be held by the NRD and individual producer data will not be shared. Aggregate data may be used by the NRD for educational activities, certified applicator training and producer meetings.

By analyzing past nitrogen usage and crop performance, producers can identify trends in water use, fertilizer application and crop yield. The dashboard allows communication between the producer and the NRD. Producers will be able to view current research results to improve profitability.

Producer Connect is currently in its initial stages of development and is expected to launch in January 2024. The initial roll out will be in Phase 2 and 3 Groundwater Quality Management Areas and areas that have irrigation allocations.

Dr. Orval Gigstad, NARD president. both ag producers and our natural

reported data such as previous applied, water usage, crops to be results, legume/manure credits. The track water-use data.

will assist farmers in quantifying the ing in compliance with regulations sustainable practices.

Discount on Tree Orders through December 31st

Did you hear we're taking tree orders for spring planting? CPNRD has sold 3.8 million trees since 1972. This year we're offering 15 species of shrubs, 11 deciduous trees and 7 conifers.

COST \$1.25 per tree, sold in bundles of 25 | \$31.25 for 25 trees or \$125/100 trees
50% cost-share is available for 200+ trees and for weed barrier.

Small Acreage Packages If you like to plant a variety of trees, we have small-acre packages available: Eastern Nebraska, Western Nebraska, Wildlife and Flowering. Each package includes 50 seedlings (10 of each tree specie) for \$65.

Place your order by December 31st to receive a 10% discount on trees, weed barrier and tree planting services. Visit cpnrd.org for a listing of trees available, tree descriptions, view tree photos and download order forms.

Your CPNRD Contact: Kelly Cole (308) 395-7134 | cole@cpnrd.org



November 17th Deadline for RCPP Cost Share through NRCS

Visit your local USDA-NRCS office by Friday, November 17th to sign up for NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Programs (RCPP):

Ogallala Aquifer & Platte River Recovery

PURPOSE: Over \$2 million is available to reduce water consumption by converting irrigated land to non-irrigated on a permanent or temporary basis. Focus areas: 1) over-appropriated areas of the District from Gothenburg to Elm Creek, 2) Areas where groundwater levels are in a declining status and 3) Areas where nitrate levels are above the recommended 10 ppm drinking water standard.

Nebraska Soil Carbon Project

PURPOSE: Adopt cover crops, no-till and diverse crop rotations that store carbon in the soil. Producers partner with private companies including Cargill, Target and McDonald's, to decrease their carbon footprint.

Increasing cropland soil carbon has many benefits including more stable yields, improved nutrient availability and water holding capacity, and climate stabilization.

To reduce producers' risk, payments that producers receive are tied to the practices implemented on the acres, not the carbon outcomes. The goal of this pilot project is to provide participating farmers with the opportunity to evaluate the potential to leverage these programs on their operation. To learn more contact your local NRCS office or visit cpnrd.org/land-management/soil-health.

Your NRCS Offices: Grand Island (308)-395-8586 Ext. 3 Central City (308)-946-3035 Ext. 3
Kearney (308)-237-3118 Ext. 3 Lexington (308)-324-6314 Ext. 3



2024 Budget & Levy

The District's 2024 property tax request is \$4,826,226.75. The assessed value of property is \$20,642,169,013. In August, the Board approved the required levy of 0.02338. This compares to last year's value of property of \$18,752,221,861 and levy of 0.0234.

The total operating budget of \$34,955,785.23 is up 22.87% from the 2023 budget of \$28,448,376.11.

A home valued at \$100,000 can expect to pay \$23.38 in property taxes next year to support conservation benefits provided by the Central Platte NRD including flood reduction, water quality management, water use management, range and grasslands, cost-share for conservation practices, tree programs, recreation and natural resources education.

Central Platte NRD receives property taxes from all of Dawson County and parts of Custer, Buffalo, Hall, Howard, Nance, Merrick, Hamilton, Platte, Polk and Frontier counties.



Interested in learning more about our Board of Directors?

CPNRD's Board meetings are open to the public. The Board meets at 2:00 p.m. on the third or fourth Thursday of each month (depending on holidays). All meetings are held at the CPNRD office - 215 Kaufman Avenue in Grand Island.

Area Range Judging Students Headed to Oklahoma

Congratulations to the following teams that will be invited to represent Nebraska at the National Range Judging competition in Oklahoma City. The top four highest scoring teams at each state contest are eligible to attend.

1ST PLACE: West Holt

Lily Vogel, Carter Gotschall, Sidney Burkinshaw, Mason Crumrine

2ND PLACE: Burwell

Colter Wright, Dillon Simpson, Cale Buss, Cody Burson

3RD PLACE: St. Paul

Abby Hirschman, Isaac Hagen, Gracie Ackles, Jack Thede

4TH PLACE: Sargent

Keaton Dowse, Grant Ottun, Tallin Schauda, Melissa Slagle

This year, Nebraska reached a new record high of 1,450 students who competed at the six area contests.



Over 300 students competed in the Area IV Range Judging Contest held at Prairie Plains Resources Institute in Hamilton County. The contest was cohosted by CPNRD, NRCS & UNL Extension.



It's been nearly 10 years since the formation of the Nebraska Prescribed Fire Council. The 2023 Prescribed Fire Conference's theme "Vision 2034" represents discussions that will take place regarding what can or will need to be accomplished within the next decade of prescribed fire in Nebraska.

Plan to attend on December 5th in Kearney. This year's conference will have a new structure with several focused discussions, in addition to formal presentations.

Watch for conference updates & registration information on the Events page at: www.cpnrd.org and follow Central Platte NRD's Facebook and Twitter pages.

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



\$40,000 Recreation/Trails Funding Available for Communities in CPNRD

Is your community considering implementing a recreation area or trail? CPNRD has funding available through our Urban Conservation Program. The Program was initiated in 2017 to assist cities, villages and counties establish and/or improve public recreation areas, trails, lake dredging, etc.

The cost share rate is 50% of eligible project costs up to \$40,000. These funds have assisted the communities of Gothenburg, Grand Island, Lexington and Cairo. To learn more visit cpnrd.org/cost-share.

Your CPNRD Contact: Jess Mintken (308) 395-7567 | mintken@cpnrd.org