

SOUTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

PIPELINE
NEWSLETTER

Photo by Tyler Sanders

GROUND WATER IN THE SPNRD

Throughout Nebraska, ground water provides approximately 85% of the water used for human consumption. Managing and protecting ground water, Nebraska's most precious natural resource, is a key responsibility of the Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) as mandated by state law. In 2002, the South Platte NRD (SPNRD) approved the Districtwide Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations which have been amended several times. The goal is to facilitate the proper management of ground water for quantity, quality, and integrated management. Ground water is important to everyone and, as we are all aware, is a significant source for irrigation which supports food production worldwide.

In the SPNRD, water wells that pump over 50 gallons per minute, which mainly include irrigation, municipal (cities and villages), and industrial wells, are required to track water usage.

SPNRD's Water Quantity management requirements for wells pumping greater than 50 gallons per minute include flow meters and a water allocation system for irrigated acres. Water allocation for irrigators in the District ranges from 13"/acre up to 16"/acre depending on the management sub area. Municipalities and industries have a "base line" which varies per user.

Water Quality management responsibilities of the District include overseeing the Nebraska Chemigation Act to ensure safety equipment is installed and properly functioning on center pivots to prevent fertilizer and chemicals from draining back into the well. The District's Ground Water Quality Management Subareas are areas designated within the NRD where nitrate levels in the ground water are of concern. The District annually collects ground water samples from within their water quality sampling network, to determine nitrate contamination trends. A phase system utilizes trigger levels to signify regulatory protection efforts for areas with higher nitrates. The Environmental Protection Agency has set the safe drinking water standard for nitrate at 10 ppm (parts per million). SPNRD phases for composite average nitrate-nitrogen levels are Phase I: 6.5 ppm; Phase II: 8.0 ppm; Phase III: 9.5 ppm.

2025 is the beginning of a new districtwide ground water allocation period for irrigators. Travis Glanz, Water Resources Specialist at SPNRD, reported 2024 year-end data recorded the highest usage of carry forward. "Producers are allowed to carry forward a maximum of ten inches (10") per acre of their unused water allocation into the next allocation period. Twenty percent of producers do not have full carryforward and three percent do not have any carry forward."

As a reminder, if water allocations are exceeded, an overuse penalty is assessed. "We encourage landowners and producers to stay aware of pumping, as penalties can be severe. It is also necessary to review water usage reports," said Glanz. The yearly reports are mailed in December.

District staff and landowners/operators continue to collaborate to protect ground water. We acknowledge and appreciate everyone's dedication to conservation efforts.

BOARD MEETINGS

Board of Director Meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at the South Platte NRD Office located at 551 Parkland Drive, Sidney, NE.

BOARD MEETING DATES

May 13, 2025

June 10, 2025

July 8, 2025

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

SPNRD SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

We are pleased to announce our annual scholarship program and encourage ALL students to apply!

Applicants must be a resident within our District: Kimball, Cheyenne, or Deuel counties. Application deadline is **5:00 p.m. May 1, 2025**.



SCAN FOR MORE INFO
& APPLICATIONS

\$500 Conservation Scholarship (one)

Applicants must be a high school senior enrolling full-time at an accredited school in the State of Nebraska, and majoring in a natural resources, environmental, or agricultural field of study.

Camp Scholarships (up to six, cover registration fee)

Every year we sponsor two summer camps: Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) and Nebraska Youth Range Camp. Both camps offer students an opportunity to enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities while learning more about plants, animals, and conservation.

ACE CAMP

(Youths who have completed 6th or 7th grade SY 2024-2025,
or the equivalent for home schooled individuals)

JUNE 22-24, 2025

KAMP KALEO - BURWELL, NE

RANGE CAMP

(Youths 14-18 years of age)

JUNE 9-12, 2025

CHADRON STATE COLLEGE - CHADRON, NE

If you have any questions, please contact Yolanda Hruska at (308) 254-2377, ext 11 or yhruska@spnrd.org.

SIDNEY TO COMPETE AT THE NEBRASKA STATE ENVIROTHON AT CHALCO HILLS RECREATION AREA IN OMAHA



From left, Taylor Sprenger, Jenessa Bruner, Madison Gurr, Sara Allard, Emily Bashtovoi

A total of six teams competed at the Western Region Envirothon February 5 in Gordon, Nebraska. Team Sidney had the high score and was represented by Taylor Sprenger, Jenessa Bruner, Madison Gurr, Sara Allard, and Emily Bashtovoi. The team's coach is Chrissy Befus, the new Ag teacher at Sidney High School.

Sidney will go on to compete at the Nebraska State Envirothon at Chalco Hills Recreation Area in Omaha on April 30, 2025.

The schools that competed at Western Regionals were: Hay Springs, Mitchell, Sidney and Gordon-Rushville with three teams.

Envirothon is an environmental education program for high school students that combines classroom learning and outdoor activities. During the competition, five-member teams are tested on their knowledge of aquatics, forestry, policy, range, soils, wildlife, and a current environmental issue. Some of the immersive test questions require students to identify live snakes, measure trees, distinguish range grasses and test water quality.

The winning teams from each Envirothon region as well as eight wildcards – selected based on their competition scores – qualify to compete at state. During the state competition, teams compete in hands-on environmental testing stations as well as prepare and deliver an oral problem-solving presentation focusing on “Roots & Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change.”

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Foundation awards cash prizes to the top three teams at the state competition:

- First Place: \$1,500
- Second Place: \$1,000
- Third Place: \$500

Envirothon was started in Pennsylvania in 1979. Nebraska has been participating since 1992. Since 1979, hundreds of thousands of students have participated in the Envirothon. Learn more about the History of Envirothon: <https://envirothon.org/about-us/history/>.

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION SPECIALIST

NRDs AND NRCS WELCOME PAUL SAFFORD



The South Platte Natural Resources District (NRD) is pleased to announce Paul Safford as the new Source Water Protection Specialist. This three-year funded position is shared with the North Platte NRD and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices in the region.

Paul holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Business from the University of Wyoming and brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the role. His 27 year career at Simplot Grower Solutions began as an applicator, progressed to a crop advisor and agronomist for a decade, and culminated in a five-year tenure as a supervisor in the Bayard and Scottsbluff areas.

Paul will provide technical assistance, keep producers and landowners informed about upcoming workshops and demonstrations, and offer support with financial program information and applications.

"We are excited to have Paul on board with the SPNRD, NPNRD, and NRCS teams," said Galen Wittrock, Manager at South Platte NRD. Paul may be contacted at psafford@nprnd.org, (308) 637-1284, or 100547 Airport Road, PO Box 280 Scottsbluff, NE.

OLIVER RESERVOIR RECREATION AREA



Camping is open March 1 through October 31 - A great opportunity to disconnect to reconnect!

Joe Rydell, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, provided the following fishing outlook for Oliver.

"Walleye, catfish, and crappie were surveyed in 2024 with gillnets in the fall (walleye and catfish) and frame nets during the spring (crappie). Walleye catch was excellent at Oliver in 2024 with a gillnet catch rate of 34 walleye per gillnet but only 12% were over 15 inches. Catfish abundance was lower in 2024 to one fish per gillnet compared to previous years, but I expect there are still good numbers in Oliver and they just were not detected in the survey due to full nets of walleye. White crappie abundance was still low at only 2.5 fish per frame net, but quality looks great.

Common carp population was reduced following a massive carp die off a couple years ago, but recruitment is building back fast. To help maintain a reduced carp density, Tiger Muskies were stocked in 2024. These fish should provide some additional angling opportunities to the reservoir in the near future.

Walleye and Catfish were also stocked in Oliver in 2024 to maintain those populations and those stockings will continue in 2025. White crappie will get a supplemental stocking in 2025 to give the population a boost in abundance. Crappie grow well and are a popular sportfish in Oliver but abundance has not increased after the population declined during periods of low water."

Please note that registration is required upon arrival for camping. Campsites are available on a first-come, first-served basis at no charge; however, donations are appreciated.

NRD RECREATION EXPLORATION

Get outdoors and explore Nebraska's 80+ NRD recreation areas.



Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) offer numerous opportunities to enjoy and appreciate our natural world. Many of the NRDs build and operate public recreation areas available to all who wish to view wildlife, fish and hunt, take nature walks, use bike trails or participate in other outdoor activities. The NRD Recreation Exploration invites participants to **visit** as many NRD recreation areas as they can between March 1, 2025 and Sept. 19, 2025. **Submit a photo** (with the rec sign or landmark) for a chance to win prizes!

NRD Recreation Exploration Program is supported by the Nebraska Association of Resources District's Foundation and Scheels, a leading sporting goods retailer.

For more information about the NRD Recreation Exploration program, including a list of recreation areas and the prize structure, visit www.nrdnet.org/recreation or scan the QR Code. **Join the fun!**



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This is an official publication
of the South Platte Natural
Resources District.

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Save the Date!

**Sidney Women in
Agriculture Conference**
August 1, 2025
8:30am - 4:00pm

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