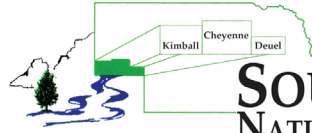


KNOW YOUR NRD

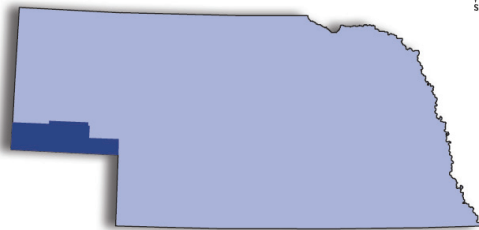


SOUTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

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

Summer 2013

SOUTH PLATTE NRD



Protecting Lives, Property and the Future of Natural Resources in the Southern Panhandle

We're on facebook! Check in to see the most up to date news... and don't forget to go to www.spnrd.org for complete information on managing our local natural resources.

Did you know?

District Assistant Manager Galen Wittrock is a certified arborist.

Arborists are professionals who care for trees, shrubs or other woody plants as individual trees, as opposed to forest management. They focus on management options for single tree health and management more than foresters, whose management tends more toward tree groups of hundreds or thousands.

Protecting Lives

Hazard Mitigation In Effect

Local entities will be able to apply for federal emergency funds to mitigate potential affects from natural disasters thanks to the completion of a plan designed to identify potential risks.

The Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, coordinated by the District, covers participating jurisdictions across the southern Panhandle.

Plan components include pre-disaster planning and providing proactive steps toward reducing disaster damage, as well as opening up funding for recovery and clean up following disasters.

The Plan is updated every 5 years to maintain its usefulness as communities change.

Protecting Property

Project Protects Development

The SPNRD and the City of Sidney have teamed up to form a plan to protect properties at the lower end of the east Sidney drainage.

Running from the east Sidney interchange northwest toward town, the drainage funnels rain over several hundred acres toward homes and businesses from east of the WNCC college campus to neighborhoods to the west.

Officials have been working with engineers on possible ways to catch, slow or divert flows, reducing potential damage from runoff resulting from torrential rains.

By forming this plan, the area, which is key to future development and growth of Sidney, can be safer for use.

Protecting The Future

Ground Water Use Reduction

Allocations of ground water used for irrigation changed in some areas beginning in the 2013 growing season following a change in the South Platte Natural Resources District's (SPNRD) rules and regulations.

After reviewing aquifer data and hearing from ground water users, allocations for much of the District was set at 14 acre-inches per year for the next three years.

Continuing low ground water levels in portions of the SPNRD, particularly the tablelands of Kimball and Cheyenne Counties, remained among the top concerns throughout the process.

Lower Nitrate Levels Result In Management Changes

As a result of changes in nitrate levels in recent years, the board this spring changed the management requirements in one Ground Water Quality Management Area and is evaluating another.

In 2012, the composite average of the South Platte Valley Ground Water Quality Management Subarea was under 8 ppm (parts per million) for the third straight year in 2012. As a result, the Area has been changed to Phase I Management requirements.

“Not that long ago, that area had average nitrate levels over 20 ppm,” said Natural Resources Coordinator Chris Kaiser “The producers in the area have initiated and followed best management practices such as converting flood irrigation to center pivot and made big changes in their approach. Their actions have resulted in greatly improved nitrate levels.”

Conversely, 2012 marked the second straight year the East Lodgepole Valley Ground Water Quality Management Subarea nitrate levels averaged above 8 ppm. If levels remain above that level, the East Lodgepole Valley could be required to go to Phase II management.

Phase II, begins when levels of a certain contaminant reach 80 percent of the Environmental Protection Agency’s designated Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 10 ppm for three consecutive years. Phase II management practices are more stringent, requiring annual three-foot deep soil sampling; collection of ground water samples from irrigation wells to be analyzed for nitrate-nitrogen; operators using manure as fertilizer must submit a sample to a credited laboratory to have analyzed for nitrogen content; and annual reports reflecting the above information must be filed with the SPNRD.

Irrigation Management More Important Than Ever

District water resources staff have been very busy since last summer providing extra assistance to irrigators, who are facing a doubly challenging year managing their allocations.

Inordinately dry conditions, dryer even than those faced during the dust



bowl era of the 30s, had producers scrambling to keep enough water on irrigated crops, most of which are more valuable than ever. On top of that, the greater water need came at the end of the District’s allocation period. As a result, many producers sought help double checking the amount of water they have remaining on their allocations, as well as making sure of their water use.

Through the winter months, staff assisted operators who are seeking additional management options, such as pooling and transfers, allowed under the Districtwide Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations.

New Best Management Practices Target Urban Sector

The District has developed a new cost share program aimed at assisting urban landowners. The goal is to aid efforts undertaken by conservation minded municipal residents.

Rain barrels capture storm water from rooftops for homeowner use in gardens and landscapes, reducing runoff that could result in contaminants being carried down streets and gutters to streams.

Property protection is also offered by Rain Gardens, designed to capture storm water to reduced uncontrolled runoff, which may adversely affect downstream landowners.

Also included is a perennial favorite program that allows landowner to replace cool season lawns with buffalo grass, which requires less fertilizer and water through the growing season.

Nebraska’s NRDs:

In 1972 the Nebraska Legislature enacted laws to combine 154 special purpose entities into 23 NRDs. Unique to Nebraska, the districts are local government entities with responsibility to protect natural resources. Major Nebraska river basins form the boundaries, enabling districts to respond best to local needs.

Some NRD responsibilities:

- erosion prevention and control
- prevention of damages from flood water and sediment
- flood prevention and control
- soil conservation
- development, management, utilization, and conservation of groundwater and surface water
- drainage improvement and channel rectification
- development and management of fish and wildlife habitat
- development and management of recreational & park facilities
- forestry and range management

Learn more at www.nrdnet.org

The South Platte NRD

Seven locally elected directors govern southern Panhandle Natural Resources on your behalf. Their actions help ensure public safety, a strong local economy and a bright outlook for future generations.

Talk About Value!

The South Platte NRD’s property tax share is only about 2.5 percent of your total tax bill, but is used to protect natural resources for all residents across three counties.

Wise use of grants such as those from the Nebraska Environmental Trust, allows the SPNRD to budget more than \$1 million to carry out projects and programs directly for your benefit!