

SOUTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

PIPELINE

NEWSLETTER

Monitoring Water Quality and Quantity

The South Platte NRD has completed its 37th year of monitoring nitrates across the district. Of the 166 network wells, 149 were sampled at least once this year, providing valuable data to guide water quality management.

The district currently has four Ground Water Quality Management Subareas (GWQMSA). Producers in the Sidney and South Platte Valley subareas are required to follow the District’s Nitrogen Reporting Program to help protect groundwater resources. Composite averages, parts per million (ppm), for the past three years are shown in the table.

| Groundwater Nitrate-Nitrogen Composite Averages - ppm | | | | |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| GWQMSA | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | PHASE |
| Sidney | 11.35 | 11.92 | 11.31 | THREE |
| East Lodgepole Valley | 6.82 | 7.85 | 7.34 | ONE |
| South Platte Valley | 8.88 | 8.90 | 8.32 | TWO |
| Lodgepole Valley-Deuel Co. | 5.37 | 5.62 | 5.70 | ONE |

Nitrate levels along Lodgepole Creek—from Pine Bluffs, WY to Bushnell, NE—appear to be stabilizing after a steady rise since 2015. At this time, Kimball County does not have designated groundwater quality management areas.

Fall Water Level Monitoring

SPNRD is one of the few NRDs that collect fall water level data. While fall readings don’t provide a fully reliable interpretation of aquifer trends—due to factors like irrigation season pumping, crop rotation, and other variables—they still offer important insights. This year’s levels have been collected and the report is available on our website.

Want to learn more? Check out the Water Quality Report and Fall Water Level Report under the Reports menu, and find the Districtwide Rules & Regulations on the home page at spnrd.org.

Plant Today, Protect Tomorrow!



Looking for a simple way to improve your property and protect it from Nebraska’s winter winds? Our Conservation Tree Program and Community Forestry Program offer:

- Windbreaks to reduce snow drifts and protect your home
- Wildlife habitat for a healthier ecosystem
- Erosion control to preserve your land
- Affordable options to enhance your property

Why act now? Planning ahead ensures availability and success; tree sales are underway through March 2026. Call us: (308) 254-2377, visit us: [551 Parkland Drive, Sidney](http://551ParklandDrive,Sidney), learn more: spnrd.org/forestry. Don’t miss this opportunity to make a lasting impact on your property and the environment!

Board Meetings

The Board of Directors meets on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:00 p.m. at the South Platte NRD office, 551 Parkland Drive, Sidney, NE. Community members are encouraged to attend and stay informed about local conservation efforts.

Board Meeting Dates

- March 10, 2026
- April 14, 2026
- May 12, 2026

Buffer Strips: Protecting Our Land & Water

The Nebraska Buffer Strip Program helps farmers protect waterways by paying landowners to install buffer strips—narrow bands of grass or riparian forest buffers (trees and grass)—along streams, wetlands, and ponds. These strips act as natural filters reducing sediment and agrichemicals like fertilizers and pesticides from field runoff.

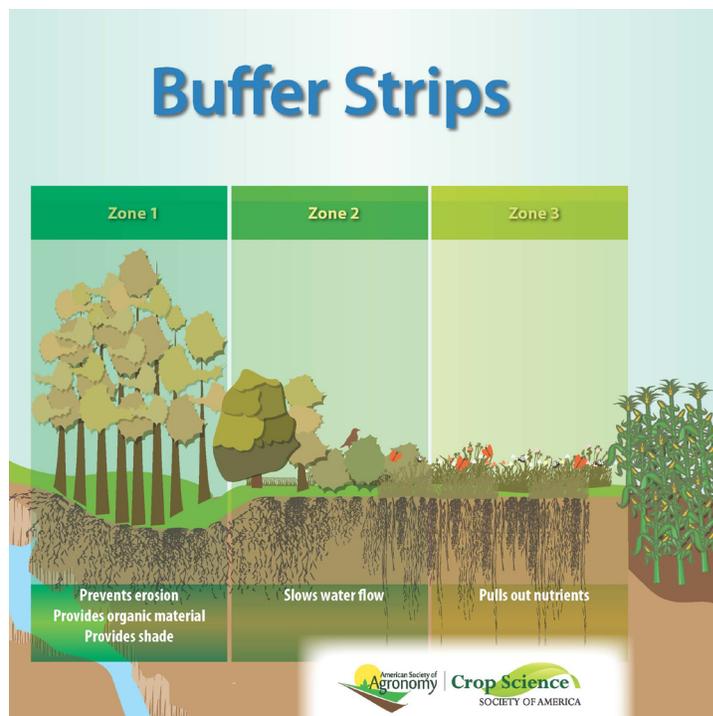
Why Buffer Strips Matter:

- Protect Water Quality – Filters out harmful chemicals before they reach streams and ponds.
- Prevent Soil Loss – Stabilizes banks and reduces erosion.
- Support Wildlife – Creates habitat for birds and other species.

Apply anytime through your local NRD. Approved applications go to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) for review. Funding depends on pesticide registration fees collected each year. If funds aren't available applications are held until the next review period.

Each January NDA reviews available funds and either approves pending applications or announces a new sign-up period.

Kimball, Cheyenne, and Deuel county landowners—contact the SPNRD office at (308) 254-2377 to learn more and take the next step toward healthier soil and cleaner water.



Nominate a Local Conservation Champion!

Do you know someone who goes above and beyond to care for our land, trees, or environment? Now's your chance to celebrate their efforts! We're accepting nominations for the 2026 SPNRD Conservation Awards and we'd love your help in recognizing those who make a difference in our district.

Award Categories:

- Conservation Farm – For farms using full conservation plans and best management practices
- Tree Planter/Caretaker – Recognizes purposeful tree planting and ongoing care
- Grassland Manager – Honors responsible grazing and healthy range management
- Environmental Educator – For anyone teaching environmental awareness
- Community Environmental Impact – Recognizes programs by groups or individuals that improve urban environments

Winners will be honored at the SPNRD Awards Banquet in 2026. Nominate today! Find the form at spnrd.org/news or call us at (308) 254-2377 for details. Let's shine a spotlight on the people who keep our natural resources thriving!

Celebrating a Decade of Dedication

At the December 9, 2025, Board of Directors meeting, the South Platte NRD proudly recognized Kathy Narjes, Donald Davis, and Michelle McMillen for ten years of outstanding service.

Kathy Narjes, Director for Subdistrict 6, has served as Board Chair for the past three years and contributes her expertise on the District Operations Committee. The Board expressed sincere appreciation for her leadership and commitment to the district.

Donald Davis, Administrative Manager, keeps operations running smoothly by managing accounts payable, payroll, human resources, and preparing minutes for board and committee meetings.

Michelle McMillen, Field Office Secretary for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in Sidney, is the welcoming face of the office. She handles daily administrative tasks, clerical duties, and ensures records and reports are properly documented and managed.

The SPNRD Board and staff extend heartfelt thanks to Kathy, Donald, and Michelle for their dedication to conserving natural resources in the Southern Panhandle. Their hard work and devotion to the district and its residents are truly appreciated.

News & Updates

We Want Your Input on the Future of Oliver Reservoir!



Oliver Reservoir Recreation Area is one of our region's most treasured outdoor destinations—a place where families camp, anglers cast a line, boaters hit the water, and visitors of all ages come to relax along the water's edge. To help us continue improving and protecting this important recreation area the South Platte Natural Resources District is seeking public input through a brief community survey.

We're inviting residents, visitors, travelers, and anyone who enjoys Oliver Reservoir to share their thoughts online. Your feedback will help guide maintenance priorities, future enhancements, and overall visitor experience. Whether you're a frequent camper, a weekend paddler, or someone who simply enjoys a quiet walk by the water, your perspective matters.



The survey only takes a few minutes to complete—and every response helps us better understand what people value most—and what improvements or ideas you'd like to see in the years ahead.

Scan the QR code or take the survey at spnrd.org.

Thank you for helping us care for Oliver Reservoir and ensure it remains a safe, welcoming, and enjoyable place for everyone.

Student Opportunities: Invest in Your Future!

We're excited to announce the 2025-2026 Scholarship Program—and it's never too early to start planning!

Conservation Scholarship

One \$500 scholarship will be awarded to a graduating high school senior pursuing a degree or certification in Natural Resources, Environmental Science, or Agriculture.

Camp Scholarships

Up to six scholarships are available for students eager to explore, learn, and grow through summer camps focused on conservation, wildlife, and land stewardship. Camp options include:

- Adventure Camp about the Environment (6th and 7th graders)
- Nebraska Youth Range Camp (ages 14-18)

Eligibility & Details

Applicants must reside in Kimball, Cheyenne, or Deuel counties.

Find eligibility requirements, scholarship details, and applications at spnrd.org under the Education menu.

Deadline to apply: May 1, 2026.

Take the first step toward an exciting future in conservation—apply today!

Chemigation - Protecting Groundwater and Surface Water

Nebraska NRDs, the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment, and UNL Extension partner with producers who use chemigation—applying fertilizers or pesticides through irrigation systems.

Chemigation offers even chemical distribution and timely application which can improve crop performance and reduce costs. To ensure safety and compliance three things are required: applicator certification, an annual permit, and approved equipment installed on the irrigation system.

The district inspects systems to confirm they are properly maintained and functioning. New permits must be inspected before chemigation begins. On average, we process about 450 permit applications each year.

Producers in the SPNRD (Kimball, Cheyenne, and Deuel counties) please renew your permit by June 1. Thank you for helping protect our water and soil for future generations! Questions or need help? Contact Travis Glanz at (308) 254-2377 or tglanz@spnrd.org.



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SOUTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT
PIPELINE
 NEWSLETTER

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

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| Timothy Maas | |
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Thank You for Reading

Your South Platte NRD Board and staff appreciate your continued interest in local natural resources management. We look forward to working with you to keep our soil, water, and communities healthy for future generations.

SPNRD STAFF

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Galen Wittrock | General Manager |
| Ryan Reisdorff | Assistant Manager |
| Don Davis | Administrative Manager |
| NaManet Keller | District Secretary/Bookkeeper |
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