

Crop Reporting Forms Due March 1

Producers in the Phase II and Phase III areas of the NRD's Groundwater Quality Management Forms have been "doing a great job filling out the new online form," said Sandy Noecker, data compliance officer. Producers should have received their User ID and log-in information to the website- <http://cpnrd.gisworkshop.com> to fill out the Crop Reporting Form for the Nitrate Reporting System.

The online form must be filled out and submitted by Tuesday, March 1, 2016. If you have any questions or have not received your User ID and log-in information, **contact Sandy or Tricia at (308) 385-6282.**

\$150 Million Invested to Improve Working Lands

Applications for new and to expiring contracts due March 31, 2016.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that \$150 million in funding is available for agricultural producers through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), that helps producers voluntarily improve the health and productivity of private and Tribal working lands. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to add an estimated 10 million acres to the rolls of CSP during fiscal 2016.

"The Conservation Stewardship Program is one of our most popular programs with producers because it results in real change on the ground by boosting soil and air quality, conserving clean water and enhancing wildlife habitat," Vilsack said. "With this investment, we'll be able to build on the already record number of acres enrolled in USDA's conservation programs, enabling producers to achieve higher levels of conservation and adopt new and emerging conservation technologies on farms, ranches and forests."

NRCS accepts applications for CSP throughout the year, but producers should submit applications by March 31 to USDA service centers to ensure they are considered for enrollment in 2016. Participants with existing CSP contracts that will expire on Dec. 31, 2016, have the option to renew their contracts for an additional five years if they agree to adopt additional activities to achieve higher levels of conservation on their lands. Applications to renew are also due by March 31.

According to Craig Derickson, NRCS state conservationist,

"CSP has been a very successful program for Nebraska's farmers and ranchers. Over 2,500 CSP contracts occur in all 93 counties and cover nearly 5 million acres in Nebraska."

Funding is available for more than 100 kinds of enhancements nationwide to help participants:

- Improve soil quality through use of cover crops, conservation crop rotations and other activities that increase soil productivity.
- Use water wisely and improve water quality through enhancements such as more efficient irrigation systems and weather monitoring.
- Restore habitat for wildlife and pollinators such as the greater sage-grouse, lesser prairie-chicken and monarch butterfly through the use of better grazing systems and improved plant management.

A CSP self-screening checklist is available to help producers determine if the program is compatible with their operation. As part of the application process, applicants will work with NRCS field personnel to complete a resource inventory of their land to determine the conservation performance for existing and new conservation activities. The applicant's conservation performance will be used to determine eligibility, ranking & payments.

Through CSP, USDA has provided more than \$4 billion since 2009 in assistance to farmers, ranchers and forest managers to enhance conservation on more than 70 million acres. For more on technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, **visit your local NRCS office or www.ne.nrcs.usda.gov.**



Summer Adventure Camp for Middle School Students

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts will host ACE- Adventure Camp About the Environment at the State 4-H Camp in Halsey, Nebraska. This camp is for youth who have completed 6th-8th graders.

Campers will enjoy learning about forestry, water, energy, wetlands, soils, range and wildlife. And while they are learning about natural resources, campers will experience some of the great wonders of camp at Halsey including: archery, zipline, tanking, tubing, a River Stomp...and NRD Olympics!

Camp Dates: Sunday, June 12 - Wednesday, June 15

The Central Platte Natural Resources District will provide a \$100 scholarship towards registration for any student in the District who attends the ACE camp; bringing the cost of the camp down to \$90.00. There is transportation available from the Grand Island area to the camp in Halsey. Call (308) 533-2224.

Contact: Marcia Lee at (308) 385-6282 or lee@cpnrd.org to receive an application or scholarship. Applications are also available at: **www.cpnrd.org** and must be received by May 27th.

If you'd like to receive the *In Perspective* via email or direct mail, please send your address to: lee@cpnrd.org.

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Nebraska's NRDs: *Protecting Lives* • *Protecting Property* • *Protecting the Future*



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In Perspective



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Groundwater Exchange Program

The Central Platte NRD board of directors will vote on whether to approve the proposed Rules and Regulations for the new Groundwater Exchange Program on February 25th. If approved, the CPNRD would be breaking new ground by launching the

debut of the Groundwater Exchange pilot program this March.

The Groundwater Exchange Program will allow producers to buy or sell water on a temporary leasing basis for the upcoming irrigation season. A seller can be anyone with a certified groundwater use on irrigated acres such as pivot corners, irregularly-shaped fields or even full sections. A buyer could be anyone looking to improve or add to their currently certified groundwater use or looking to increase streamflow.

For purposes of the Groundwater Exchange, a 'water right' is the certified groundwater use on irrigated acres. CPNRD has approved permanent water transfers of groundwater for over 10 years. The Groundwater Exchange Program would allow producers to transfer water rights that they do not need in a particular year, rather than permanently transferring them.

You may register to find out more information about the program at: **www.market4water.com**. **Be sure to check this website for updated details.** It contains more information, documents and links for the Exchange Program; which is managed by NERA Economic Consulting ("NERA") on behalf of the CPNRD.

Both buyers and sellers will need to be pre-approved by making an appointment with Central Platte NRD staff. During the pre-approval visit, staff will verify the water rights to be sold or bought and provide the buyers and sellers an identification number to be used during the bidding process.

Since this is a pilot program, the board will also consider whether to limit the number of participants to the first 50 buyers and first 50 sellers who have been pre-approved. That decision will be made after the printing of this newsletter.

Anticipated Schedule for Groundwater Exchange	
Meet with CPNRD staff for Pre-Approval	February 29 - March 11, 2016
Bid Window Opens	March 21
Bid Window Closes	March 25
Board to Consider Program Results	March 31
Successful Bidders Notified	April 1
Payments Due from Buyers	April 15

Contact CPNRD immediately at (308) 385-6282 to set up an appointment for pre-approval.

Phase II Quality Area Changes Approved

The board of directors approved the proposal to move southern Hall and northern Hamilton counties (south of the Platte River) from a Phase I to a Phase II Groundwater Management Area in January.

Nitrate levels have continued to rise in those areas over the last few years. The CPNRD's Groundwater Quality Rules & Regulations require areas with nitrate level concentrations of 7.6 to 15 parts per million (ppm) to be placed in a Phase II area.

Because the Program phases are by area, individual wells in a Phase Area may be higher or lower than the designated range of nitrate concentrations. Other factors, including proximity to a municipal water supply and vadose zone nitrates are also used in determining the Phase Areas. *Vadose zone is the area between the root zone and the water table.*

Producers have been instrumental in the success of the program by implementing best management practices and newer, more efficient technologies as they are developed. Maps of the areas are available on CPNRD's website at: www.cpnrd.org and at the Central Platte NRD office.

Visit Our New Website

Have you seen our updated website? Visit: www.cpnrd.org. The site has a cleaner look, making navigating the site straightforward and simple. The site is organized in the following categories:

Who We Are	News and Media	Outdoor Recreation	CPNRD Projects
About CPNRD	In the News	Crane Viewing Sites	Flood Control
Board of Directors	In Perspective	Outdoor Learning Area @Fair	Ice Jams
CPNRD Staff	Visual Media	Walking Trails Nature Links	Re-Operation of Canals
Education	Water Management	Land Management	Forms and Permits
Groundwater Festival	Groundwater Quality	Cost Share Programs	Forms and Regulations
Student Teacher Resources	Groundwater Quantity	Conservation Tree Program	
High School Contests	Conjunctive Management	Prescribed Fire Program	

New features include search and contact forms and links to our Facebook and Twitter pages, so that you may find updates on NRD happenings quickly. Another new feature is the photo slideshow on the front page. The slideshow will provide links to timely information- just click on the photo and it will take you to the information.

Association's New Website

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, trade association for Nebraska's 23 Natural Resources Districts, has also updated their website. Visit: www.nrdnet.org to find information on all 23 NRDs.

For quick updates on CPNRD happenings

Follow Central Platte NRD:



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NRDs to be Featured on NETV

Have you wondered how Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts were established? How NRDs differ across the state? The NRDs will be featured in an hour-long program to be aired on Nebraska Educational Television (NET). The program will take viewers back to even before the NRDs were created and the struggle that Nebraska faced as soil and nutrients were swept away by the wind.

The program explains what legislators and key water leaders of that time had to overcome to develop the NRDs, how they were formed, and how far they have come to give the public the protection that they deserve. It dives into many different things the NRDs do from groundwater usage, water quality, chemigation, education. It also explains how flood control duels as recreation sites, recycling support for the public, the importance of our Conservation Tree program and much more.

The video ends as the NRDs develop integrated management systems and prepare for what mother nature will bring us in the future. We have a unique system in place - ready for anything. Nebraska is miles ahead of many other states when it comes to our conservation efforts of our natural resources and we work hard to stay that way. The Natural Resources Districts' mission is to protect lives, protect property and protect the future for years to come. Please join us in watching *Keeping Nebraska Local: A Unique Approach to Resource Management*.

The program will air on the following dates:

March 10 at 7:00 pm March 13 at 2:00 pm March 24 at 8:00 pm March 27 at 1:30 pm

Do Cover Crops Pay?

Cover Crop Field Day & Information Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, March 2, 2016 **TIME: 9 AM to 4:30PM**
LOCATION: District 22 Catering 75905 RD 431, Lexington (coffee & rolls)

Presentations by Dean Krull, UNL/CPNRD and Dr. Mary Drewnoski, Beef Systems Specialist-UNL. Cover crop field visits will follow. At noon, we'll return to District 22 for lunch sponsored by O'Hanlon Seed Inc & Arrow Seed. Presentations by Dustin O'Hanlon & Kelly Gydesen of O'Hanlon Seed Inc.; Rich Russell, Arrow Seed; and Lisa Berkeypile, NRCS.

Following lunch and presentations, we'll continue with the field visits considering several cover crop objectives. Transportation will be available. This field day will focus on the economics and financial gains with cover crops.

No Cost. Please RSVP with Teri Edeal (308) 325-1056 to reserve your meal.



Last Chance to Order Seedlings for Spring Planting

TREE COST: 25 seedlings for \$17.50/ sold in bundles of 25.

*Order forms available at: www.cpnrd.org

50% cost share is available on trees and weed barrier, with a minimum order of 200 trees.

TO ORDER: Call or order in person at the Central Platte NRD and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices. **Central Platte NRD:** (308) 385-6282

NRCS Offices Lexington: (308) 324-6318
Kearney: (308) 237-3118

Grand Island: (308) 382-0814
Central City: (308) 946-2251

Early Grasses and Weeds in Pastures

With the onset of slightly warmer temperatures and rain, spring slowly makes its presence in pastures. Dormant perennial plants begin to emerge from their winter time slumber. New fast-growing annual weeds begin to grow as well. Below is some helpful information about grass and weed types and how to deal with them:

Grasses: There are several basic types of pasture grasses. They can be divided into classifications based on season of growth (warm or cool) or by life cycle (annual or perennial). Cool season grasses germinate and grow at soil temperatures between 45 to 55 degrees. Warm season grasses need higher soil temperatures for germination and growth and so they emerge about 30 days later.

Common cool season grasses are: Kentucky Bluegrass, Smooth Bromegrass, Western Wheatgrass (Native), Intermediate Wheatgrass, Prairie June Grass (Native), Needle and Thread (Native), Canada Wildrye (Native)

Some of these non-native cool season grasses are sod forming and form mono-cultures. That is they exclude warm season grasses other beneficial plants. This can be a bad thing in times of summer extreme drought. Cool season dominated pastures usually grow early, short forage. As early as August these pastures stop growing forage if there is extreme drought. This dramatically increases feed cost. Conversion of a cool season pasture toward a more diverse pasture involves spring burning followed by grazing in the early season when it is trying to grow and reproduce, followed by mid-late season rest and possibly overseeding. Overseeding should include a mix of native warm season, cool season, and broadleaf plants for best pasture health. Success of overseeding of pastures can vary due to timing of application, and weather.

Early Weeds: Canada Thistle, Plumeless Thistle, Musk Thistle

Thistle control must begin as soon as the plants can be identified. Preferred control methods include chemical application with broadleaf selective herbicide (example Dow Milestone®). Chemical control should not be applied to an entire pasture every year. Only the patches of noxious weeds should be sprayed, not the whole pasture. Spraying of whole pastures kills many beneficial broadleaf plants, and results in less diversity in the pasture, with the loss of pollinator habitat. Thistles can also be dug out by the root by inserting and prying on a sharp spade. Treating the plant before it seeds out is helpful. After seed heads of Musk thistles are developed these can be hand picked, bagged and destroyed so that the plant does not seed out.



Nebraska Noxious Weeds: Sericia Lespedeza, Leafy Spurge, Purple Loosestrife, Japanese & Giant Knotweed, Saltcedar, Spotted and Diffuse Knapweed, Phragmites, Musk Thistle, Plumeless Thistle, Canadian Thistle.

Non-Noxious Weeds: Other non-noxious weeds may be present. These include many beneficial plants such as native flowers. If the pasture has a problem with a weed (such as Ragweed, Maretail or Vervain) that is not on the Nebraska noxious weed list, over-grazing or environmental stress such as drought cycles are possible causes. Resting the pasture during the grazing season will not only help get rid of the weeds, but it will increase grass health as well.

Summary: To decrease non-native cool season grass growth, early season burning and grazing rotations can be utilized. Early weed infestations of noxious thistles can be addressed with herbicide or by hand. Other weeds on the Nebraska Noxious weed list must be treated by herbicide possibly in combination with burying. If the pasture has excessive weeds which are not on the noxious weed list, overgrazing should be stopped and the pasture needs rest for a growing season to improve the condition of the native grasses.

Questions? Contact David Carr, range management specialist, (308) 385-6282 carr@cpnrd.org

Sources:

Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture Noxious Weed Program: www.nda.nebraska.gov/plant/noxious_weeds/index.html
Guide to Native Grassland Management in Nebraska, Tim R. Tunnell, ©2004 The Nature Conservancy