

Winter 2016

Volume 30, Issue 1

Tri-Basin Topics

A quarterly publication of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

Water Conference and No-Till Conferences Set for February

The 2016 Holdrege Water Conference will be held Tuesday, February 2 at the Phelps County Ag Center. Registration will be at 10 a.m. and sessions will start at 10:30. There is no charge for admission to the conference and a free lunch will be provided for those attending. The program should conclude around 3 p.m.

The conference is sponsored by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, UNL Extension and Holdrege Area Chamber of Commerce. It is a joint effort to increase the understanding of water-related issues that affect agricultural producers in central Nebraska.

Morning sessions will focus primarily on irrigation efficiency, including sessions on Irrigation Telemetry: The E-67 Canal Project and the Upper Big Blue NRD Irrigation Demonstration Farm. Afternoon topics will center on current water issues, including the Water Sustainability Fund and Groundwater Levels in Tri-Basin NRD. Al Dutcher, Nebraska Extension Climatologist, will give a 2016 Weather Outlook presentation. For a complete schedule of Water Conference speakers, check Tri-Basin NRD's website, www.tribasinrd.org, a few weeks prior to the event.

Area agribusinesses will display their products and services at the water conference and will have representatives on hand to visit with conference participants.

The UNL Extension No-Till Conference will be held on Tuesday, February 23 at the Phelps County Ag Center from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Some of the topics that will be covered include soil health, cover crops, and protecting soil from erosion because of intense rainfall events. More information on the No-Till Conference will be posted on UNL's Crop Watch website at www.cropwatch.unl.edu.

Producers in Tri-Basin NRD's Phase 2 or Phase 3 Groundwater Quality Management Areas will receive nitrogen management recertification credit for attending either conference.



Attendees listen to a presentation at the 2015 Holdrege Water Conference

"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

<http://www.tribasinrd.org>



Manager's Message

by John Thorburn

Republican Basin Update

The Republican River Basin in Nebraska was the focus of legal disputes between Nebraska and Kansas for nearly twenty years. Nebraska's NRDs and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) had to make a long series of difficult decisions over the past decade to ensure that Nebraska would be able to maintain compliance with the Republican River Compact. Republican Basin NRDs required flowmeters on all irrigation wells, they severely limited groundwater pumping and had to spend millions of tax dollars on streamflow augmentation projects. NDNR had to limit water use by surface water irrigation districts, because Kansas' water needs have to be met before Nebraska's during times of shortage.

Landowners in the Republican Basin were rightly concerned about how these requirements would affect the profitability of their farming operations. An irrigation well flowmeter typically costs \$1000 or so, depending on pipe size. Proper installation can sometimes require expensive re-plumbing of the water delivery system, costing another \$1000 or more. Pumping limits can result in farmers applying less water than their crops require in a dry year, reducing yields and profits. Augmentation projects like NCORPE in Lincoln County cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars.

None of these decisions were easy or popular, but the State and NRDs took these actions to protect their constituents from even more severe penalties that could have resulted if Kansas had been able to convince the U.S. Supreme Court that Nebraska wasn't making adequate efforts to limit water use. Kansas wanted at least \$80 million in

damages, a complete shutdown of irrigation on more than 300,000 acres in the Republican Valley and a court-appointed "River Master" who would decide how to restrict Nebraska water users, without any obligation to listen to local landowners.

Groundwater irrigators in the Republican Basin in Nebraska are more heavily regulated than irrigators anywhere else in the Nation. While that could be seen as a negative result of the lawsuits, our irrigators have turned that liability into an asset. In order to adapt to pumping limits, farmers spent millions of dollars making their irrigation systems more efficient. They have met the challenge of regulation by becoming some of the most efficient irrigators in the World.

Thankfully, it appears that interstate conflicts are now a thing of the past in the Republican Basin. Since the most recent Supreme Court decree was issued last February, relations with Kansas have improved considerably. The states are working together to manage water supplies in Harlan County Lake for the benefit of both parties.

Meeting the requirements of legal compacts and court decrees doesn't guarantee that our water resources will be sustainably managed. Fortunately, Nebraska has a series of state laws whose purpose is to safeguard groundwater and surface water resources. Every NRD in the Republican Basin has plans in place and rules that are designed to protect the quantity and quality of groundwater resources. All four Republican Basin NRDs also partner with NDNR to implement integrated water resources management plans (IMPs), whose primary goal is to guarantee that the basin's water supply will be protected from new depletions. Now all four NRDs and NDNR are working with a large group of stakeholders to develop a basinwide IMP.

Achieving sustainability takes time. Republican Basin NRDs and NDNR are up to that challenge, just as we have met all the challenges that have been laid before us in the past.

Nebraska Natives

Skunkbush sumac (*Rhus trilobata*)

Skunkbush sumac is a hardy western native shrub that can tolerate alkaline and extreme drought conditions. In fact, it is intolerant of flooding and high water tables.

It bears clusters of berry-like fruit that turn a deep red in late summer, providing good fall color. It is an excellent wildlife species, supplying food for birds throughout the winter. It also forms dense thickets, which give small birds and mammals shelter.

Skunkbush sumac is useful on either the inside or outside rows of wind-breaks. Its strong root development is also useful in erosion control. This shrub is commonly used as an ornamental and has been widely planted at recreation sites, rest areas, and roadsides.



<http://www.tribasinprd.org>

Tri-Basin NRD Offers Trees to Honor District Newborns

Tri-Basin NRD wants to help parents celebrate newborns in the district with the gift of a seedling tree. These trees are available to the family of any child born in Gosper, Phelps or Kearney County since the previous tree season (April 2015). You can reserve a baby tree for your newest family member by calling our office at (308) 995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688 or by emailing the baby's name, birthdate, parents' names, address and phone number to esmith@tribasinrd.org. We will send you a postcard in April letting you know when and where to pick up your tree. If you have any questions, please call our office and ask for Esther.



Munter Joins TBNRD Staff

Nathan Munter of Holdrege is the new Land Resources Technician for Tri-Basin NRD. In this position, Munter is responsible for helping maintain the district's Improvement Project Areas (IPAs), as well as assisting with the district's conservation tree program.



He has a bachelor's degree in natural resources from the University of Nebraska-Kearney. Munter is an avid outdoorsman, and enjoys fishing and hunting deer, pheasant, and turkey. He also enjoys spending time with family and friends.

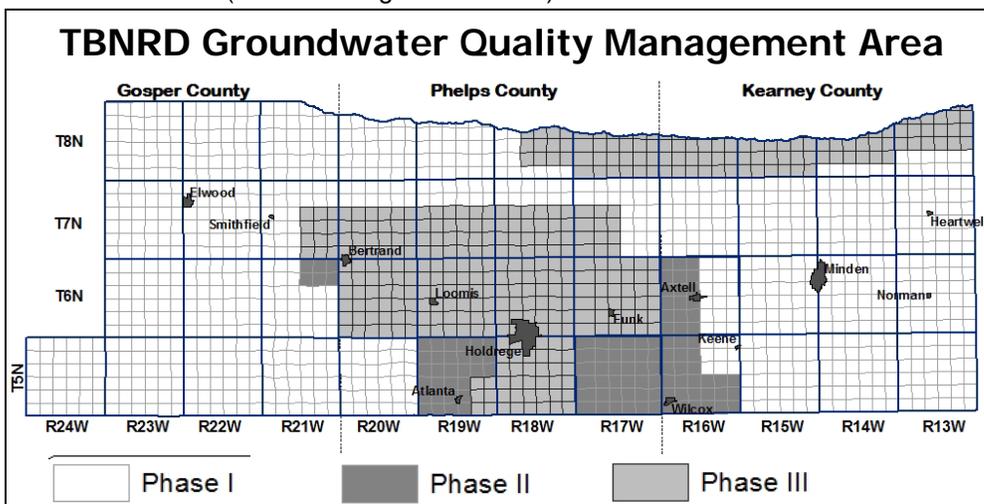
Nitrogen Reports Due

Nitrogen Management Reports for the 2015 crop year were due December 31, 2015 for producers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the Tri-Basin Groundwater Quality Management Area. If you have fields in the Phase 2 or Phase 3 areas and have not turned in your reports yet, please do so as soon as possible. If you need reporting forms or help filling them out, please contact the Tri-Basin NRD office.

Nitrogen Management Certification Classes Offered

The Groundwater Quality Management Areas established by Tri-Basin NRD have allowed district staff to work cooperatively with farmers and agronomists for more than 25 years to help improve the timeliness, efficiency and effectiveness of fertilizer application. These efforts have resulted in stable or declining nitrate-nitrogen levels in groundwater supplies throughout the district, thus safeguarding the quality of our groundwater.

Producers in Phase 2 and Phase 3 areas of the Groundwater Quality Management Area need to have current Nitrogen Management certification. The current schedule is listed below, but class times and dates are subject to change. For a current class schedule check our website at www.tribasinrd.org or call us at 1-877-995-6688. Attendance at the Holdrege Water Conference on February 2 or the UNL Extension No-Till Conference on February 23 also qualifies for Nitrogen Management Certification (be sure to sign in for credit).



2016 TBNRD Nitrogen Management Trainings

Holdrege

Phelps Co. Ag Center
 January 20 at 9:30 a.m.
 January 20 at 1:30 p.m.
 February 17 at 9:30 a.m.
 February 25 at 6 p.m.

Minden

Kearney Co. Fairgrounds
 January 26 at 8:30 a.m.

Elwood

Gosper Co. Legion Hall
 February 9 at 1:30 p.m.



Winter 2016

Tri-Basin Topics

Non-Profit Permit
U. S. Postage
PAID
Holdrege, NE 68949
Permit No. 220

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District
1723 Burlington St. Holdrege, NE 68949
(308) 995-6688
email: tribasin@tribasinprd.org
www.tribasinprd.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Nebraska's NRDs: Protecting Lives, Protecting Property, Protecting the Future

CALENDAR

January 12.....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
 January 18... NRD Closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 February 2 Holdrege Water Conference
 February 9NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
 February 15NRD Closed for Presidents' Day
 February 23 UNL Extension No-Till Conference
 March 8.....NRD Board Meeting, 1:30 p.m.*
 April 12.....NRD Board Meeting, 7:30 p.m.*

* Times are tentative. All meetings are at TBNRD office in Holdrege unless otherwise noted.

TRI-BASIN NRD BOARD OF DIRECTORS

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| David Olsen, Chairman | Minden, NE |
| Bradley Lundeen, Vice Chairman | Wilcox, NE |
| Joe Bilka, Treasurer | Holdrege, NE |
| Todd Garrelts, Secretary | Holdrege, NE |
| Brian Bergstrom..... | Axtell, NE |
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| Larry Reynolds | Lexington, NE |
| Jeff Ryan..... | Heartwell, NE |
| Ray Winz | Holdrege, NE |

TRI-BASIN NRD STAFF

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Charles Brooks..... | Land Resources Coordinator |
| Tammy Fahrenbruch | Water Programs Coordinator |
| Lori Hagan..... | Elwood Office Secretary |
| Nolan Little..... | Water Resources Manager |
| Carie Lynch..... | Administrative Secretary |
| Nate Munter..... | Land Resources Technician |
| Ruth Nielsen | Minden Office Secretary |
| Patrick Nott | Water Resources Technician |
| Tami Reese | Holdrege Office Secretary |
| Nicole Salisbury | Information & Education Coordinator |
| Esther Smith | Office Assistant |
| John Thorburn | General Manager |
| Jeff VanEperen..... | Seasonal Field Technician |

A mailing list is maintained and requests to be placed on the list should be sent to the above address. Comments and suggestions may be addressed to the General Manager.

Get Tri-Basin Topics in your inbox instead of your mailbox!

To request an electronic version of this newsletter, send an email nsalisbury@tribasinprd.org.

TRI-BASIN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT 2016 HAND PLANT ORDER FORM

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____ PHONE: _____

ORDERS MUST BE IN MULTIPLES OF 25.

Tree Order Deadline is April 1, 2016.

| QUANTITY | SPECIES |
|----------|--|
| | CONIFERS |
| | AUSTRIAN PINE |
| | REDCEDAR (EASTERN) |
| | COLORADO BLUE SPRUCE |
| | PONDEROSA PINE |
| | BROADLEAFS |
| | BLACK WALNUT |
| | BUR OAK |
| | CATALPA |
| | HACKBERRY |
| | KENTUCKY COFFEE TREE |
| | RED OAK |
| | SWAMP WHITE OAK |
| | SHRUBS |
| | AMERICAN PLUM |
| | COTONEASTER |
| | CHOKECHERRY |
| | ELDERBERRY |
| | GOLDEN CURRANT |
| | LILAC |
| | RED OSIER DOGWOOD |
| | RUSSIAN ALMOND |
| | SAND CHERRY |
| | SKUNKBUSH SUMAC |
| | Total # of Trees |
| | Multiply total # of trees x .75 |
| | Mulch x .35/foot |
| | Staples x .15 |
| | Subtotal |
| | Tax (Holdrege 7%, Elwood 6%, Minden 6.5%) |
| | TOTAL AMOUNT DUE/PAID |

Tree Pickup will be at: _____ Tri-Basin NRD _____ Minden NRCS _____ Elwood NRCS

WHY PLANT A WINDBREAK?

Windbreaks and shelterbelts provide many benefits. Windbreaks planted along field boundaries reduce soil erosion by reducing wind velocity. Shelterbelts planted around farmsteads reduce heating costs in homes and shop buildings. Shelterbelts can protect livestock from blizzards and serve as "living snow fences." Trees and shrubs also provide food, shelter and nesting habitat for many species of birds and mammals.

NRD TREE & SHRUB PLANTINGS

Contact the NRD Office or your county NRCS for help with determining the type and number of trees and shrubs you need. The technician will make arrangements for the tree order and planting service. The NRD will plant the trees according to the plan.

Trees are planted in the spring as soon as conditions are suitable. The NRD tree planting crew will notify landowners of the approximate date and time of planting.

SITE PREPARATION

Good site preparation is a key to rapid tree growth and survival. The best site preparation begins the year before the trees are planted. On heavier soils, working the ground to kill competing vegetation is an excellent method of preparing the site. The technician assisting in planning a windbreak or habitat plot can advise you about the type of site preparation needed. The technician can also help you determine if herbicide carryover will be a problem.

WEED CONTROL

Weed control in the form of plastic mulch is available through the district. This woven material is installed over the trees after planting. Slots are then cut for the trees. Plastic mulch not only eliminates weeds but also helps to preserve soil moisture.

PRICES

Trees & Shrubs..... 75¢ each/multiples of 25

PLANTING SERVICE

Tree planting (no mulch) 50¢/ft

Trees, tree planting, mulch and mulch laying..... \$ 1.50/ft

Drip tape 35¢/ft

Site Prep..... 20¢/ft

Pull-in Charge..... \$20

Drip Tape Set-Up..... Minimum \$35

Renovations* \$200

Shrub thickets* \$200

Minimum plan charge \$350 per planting

Plastic Mulch (Material Only)..... 35¢ per ft

Stakes..... 15¢ each

Seedling Tubes..... \$1.10 each

Prices are subject to change.

*Contact Tri-Basin NRD for site review.

PLANTING YOUR OWN TREES

You can order trees and shrubs at the NRD or your local NRCS Office. Orders must be in multiples of 25 per species. We will send you a postcard when your trees arrive. We also have tree spades available to rent.

DRIP TAPE

Tri-Basin has subsurface "drip tape" available for watering trees planted by the District. The water source could be a portable tank or a hydrant. Check with the TBNRD Land Resource Coordinator for more information.

COST-SHARE

Tri-Basin NRD offers cost-share funds for tree plantings and plastic mulch installation. You should apply at your county NRCS office before March 1.

All sites must be properly prepared before planting to qualify for cost-share. Reimbursement is made only after full payment is received. The minimum total cost of plantings eligible for cost-share is \$500.

Cost-share may also be available from your county USDA office. Pheasants Forever and Nebraska Game & Parks Commission also offer programs for wildlife habitat improvement. NRCS staff can help you determine which programs have funds available and best suit your needs.

BILLING ON NRD PLANTINGS

Tri-Basin NRD bills for trees/tree planting service after completion. Full payment is due upon receipt of the billing. Cost-share payments will not be made until payment is received at the Tri-Basin or NRCS office.