
Tri-Basin NRD
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Natural Resources District

NEWS RELEASE

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May Township in Kearney County Will Move to Phase 2 Designation

May Township (6N-13W) in eastern Kearney County will move into Phase 2 of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District's (NRD) Groundwater Quantity Management Area rules following a decision made by the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors at their January meeting. Tri-Basin NRD rules state that a township in the Little Blue Basin will be moved into Phase 2 designation once average groundwater levels in that township have dropped more than five feet below the 1981-1985 baseline levels. Prior to the decision, NRD directors reviewed fall groundwater level data from irrigation wells and the district's dedicated observation wells. They also heard testimony from producers in May Township regarding the designation.

Tri-Basin NRD directors have been working with directors from Little Blue NRD to coordinate groundwater conservation and regulation efforts between the two districts, since both districts contain a portion of the Little Blue Basin. Under Phase 2 rules, flowmeters must be installed on all irrigation wells in the township over the next three years and water usage must be reported to the NRD annually. Certified irrigated acres may not be transferred into Phase 2 areas. Following the vote, Tri-Basin NRD directors emphasized their commitment to continue working with Little Blue NRD to develop a voluntary Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the Little Blue Basin and address groundwater declines in the basin. TBNRD directors will also continue to meet with landowners and producers from the Little Blue portion of the district to address groundwater concerns. The primary goal of Tri-Basin NRD's directors is to protect the district's groundwater resources and to assure that the aquifer will be sustained infinitely.

"I look forward to working alongside you guys to address this issue. We're in this for the long haul," said Terry Sorensen of Minden, who farms ground in May Township.

In other business, Curtis Scheele, Irrigation Water Management Specialist for Tri-Basin Natural Resources District gave a presentation on his work over the past year. He highlighted his work with the Nebraska Ag Water Management Network (NAWMN) in Tri-Basin NRD.

“This information is used by area producers to determine their crop water use. It’s another tool for them to do that,” explained Scheele. He went on to say that the program was started by Suat Irmak, Ph.D., Professor of Biological Systems Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), and is sponsored by Tri-Basin NRD, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID), and UNL Extension. Although it is a statewide program, Scheele said it has been taken to another level in Tri-Basin NRD, because data is collected on a more consistent basis throughout the entire irrigation season in this area. Scheele also reviewed statistics for Conservation Reserve Program (CSP) and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding in Tri-Basin NRD. During the years of 2002-2015, the EQIP Program alone helped landowners install 370 center irrigation pivots in Tri-Basin NRD, with a total funding of \$11,536,005 over those years.

Directors voted to have David Raffety of Kearney represent the district as a delegate to the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Legislative Conference, which will be held in Lincoln later in January. Larry Reynolds of Lexington will serve as the alternate to for the conference.

Tri-Basin NRD’s board also:

- Approved four certified irrigated acre transfers, one request to adjust certified irrigated acres, and one request to modify an irrigation well.
- Approved three applications for well decommissioning cost-share funds totaling \$1,500 and six applications for Tri-Basin NRD and NSCWP cost-share funds totaling \$12,715.

Tri-Basin NRD’s next Board of Directors meeting will be Tuesday, February 9 at 1:30 p.m. at Tri-Basin NRD, 1723 Burlington in Holdrege, Nebraska.

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