

# Resources

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## NPNRD Reminders...

### NPNRD Meetings

Regular NPNRD board meetings are open to the public and held the second Thursday of each month at the NRD conference room, 100547 Airport Road, Scottsbluff unless otherwise announced. Our next meeting will be **Jan. 11 at 2:00 p.m.** New directors Jim Hass and Dave Ostdiek will join the board. Visit our website [www.npnrd.org](http://www.npnrd.org) for the agenda and minutes of previous meetings.

### Win FREE Conservation Trees

NPNRD tree program coordinators Roy Lyles and Craig Uhrig will be at the annual Bean Day Expo on Jan. 9 in Mitchell and the Farm and Ranch Day expo at the Oshkosh auditorium Jan. 24. They will be available to answer all of your conservation tree planting questions, and will be raffling trees.

### Be a Weather Watcher in 2007

Become a weather watcher in 2007. Residents of Banner, Garden, Morrill, Scotts Bluff and southern Sioux counties are invited to become volunteer weather watchers. The Nebraska Rainfall Assessment and Information Network (NeRain) is in search of volunteers to check backyard rain gauges and report rainfall on a daily basis. Learn more at [www.dnrdata.dnr.state.ne.us/NeRAIN/index.asp](http://www.dnrdata.dnr.state.ne.us/NeRAIN/index.asp) or call Resources Coordinator Greg Jackson at 308-632-2749.

### LOL crop reports due Jan. 10

The deadline is quickly approaching for the Lisco-Oshkosh-Lewellen groundwater management sub-area season end crop reports. The reports are due **January 10, 2006**.

Reports must include results of soil and irrigation water tests for residual nitrates; crops grown and yield goal used as basis for determining nitrogen needs; recommended fertilizer rate based on University of Nebraska-Lincoln formula; amounts of fertilizer applied and date of application; estimated tons of manure applied per acre; amount of irrigation water applied, actual yield of the present year's crop; and planned crop rotation for the following year.

Producers do not need to fill out forms if they  
*See LOL reports, page 2*

## No-Till management key to conservation

Water shortages. Lower commodity prices. Higher fuel prices. Lack of a good hired man. These are some of the major reasons given by producers who have made or who are willing to make the change to no-tillage farming. It's a concept, says researchers and specialists, whose time has come.

NRCS soils specialist Kathy Buttle recognizes that more information, support, and encouragement are needed to help producers make and maintain the switch from conventional disk, plow and plant methods. NRCS, along with the North Platte and South Platte NRDs, and the University of Nebraska Extension hosted a series of No-Till workshops in December to offer more learning opportunities for area producers.

An expert slate of speakers, including Dr. Gary Hergert, Bud Davis, Dr. Ray Ward, Dr. Jim Krall, Paul Jasa, Charlie Fenster and a producers' panel provided their insight into the methods and theories behind no-tillage farming.

"It's not just deciding to not work up the ground," Buttle said. "No-Till is an entire method of farming that requires time and a long term commitment to make it work properly."

The success of the workshops indicates a high interest. A No-Till field day or landowner tour may be organized later this year. Future plans will be announced.



*Bud Davis, NRCS State Agronomist for Kansas, displays a sample of soil sediment during a demonstration at the Panhandle Winter No-Till Conference held Dec. 6 in Gering. NPNRD was a co-sponsor of the event.*

## Flow Meters required by May 1, 2008

At the Nov. 9 regular board meeting, the North Platte Natural Resources District board of directors voted unanimously to require the installation and use of flow meters on all regulated wells within the overappropriated area of the district. The deadline for flow meter installation is May 1, 2008.

The overappropriated area includes the boundary lines established by the Department of Natural Resources (see map on page 2).

The move toward metering came after months of work by the board's water resources subcommittee to come up with ways of dealing with drought-related water shortage issues and allegations by down stream water users of over-pumping in the North Platte NRD. Subcommittee members agree that the best way to substantiate ground water use is through metering.

During an Oct. 30 meeting, subcommittee members Gary Damall, Dave Deines, Jerry Dillman and Myron

*See METERS, page 3*

### Approved Meter Brands

The North Platte Natural Resources District has designated four brands of flow meters as being acceptable for use in the overappropriated area:

**Geyser -- McCrometer  
SeaMetrics -- Sparling**

All owners of regulated wells (this does not include domestic or range livestock wells) located in the overappropriated areas of the district are required to install and use flow meters by May 1, 2008. The district is currently offering up to \$350 per meter cost share on flow meters (only the above mentioned brands). We encourage well owners to contact their dealers and make arrangements for purchasing, delivery and installation of flow meters as soon as possible, as we understand the demand will be high.

## Pumpkin Creek incentive program open

Sign-ups for an incentive program aimed at permanently retiring irrigated acres in the Pumpkin Creek Basin Groundwater Management Sub-area will be accepted until Jan. 31, 2007.

According to Dallas Johannsen of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Scottsbluff, the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) Special Initiative for Pumpkin Creek Basin is available to help Pumpkin Creek Basin landowners permanently take acres out of irrigated production.

Last year approximately 2,400 acres of irrigated ground was permanently retired. The program has been made available this year with funds from the NRCS and North Platte Natural Resources District in hopes of retiring another 2,500 acres.

Landowners can qualify for up to \$450 per acre and have four options of retiring acres: the establishment of native grass, the establishment of tame pasture or hay, the conversion to dryland crops or the establishment of wildlife habitat. Johannsen said there will be additional cost-share funds available for seeding of grass and developing livestock water systems.

**PCB EQIP Incentive Sign-up Deadline is Jan. 31, 2007**

Each offered area must be 15 contiguous acres or larger. Offered fields must also have been irrigated two of the previous five years, be located in the Pumpkin Creek Basin Groundwater Management Sub-Area and must be North Platte NRD certified irrigated acres.

Applicants will be reviewed on a ranking system to determine acceptance. Ranking criteria including the retirement of entire fields, establishing dryland use to declining habitat, and taking acres out that are located closest to the stream. Full details will be available upon sign-up.

Johannsen said the purpose of the incentive program is to decrease the number of irrigated acres in the overappropriated area and to help groundwater recharge and increase stream flow into the North Platte River. The initiative is aimed at reducing the consumptive use of groundwater in cooperation with the North Platte NRD and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

"The program will be a step in satisfying the requirement under the new depletions plan and LB962," Johannsen said.

For more information or to sign up, contact the NRCS offices in Scottsbluff, Harrisburg or Bridgeport, or the North Platte NRD in Scottsbluff at 632-2749.

## LOL reports: Due Jan. 10, 2007

*Continued from page 1*

have not fertilized in the past year or are not currently fertilizing.

According to Oshkosh NRCS clerk Marilyn Howerter, only a few producers have contacted the office to ask questions or get started on their reports.

"Most of them put it off until after Christmas," Howerter said.

However, producers do need to start contacting the office to avoid the last-minute rush. Howerter expects approximately 60 producers will need to submit forms.

For more information or to set up an appointment with NPNRD Resources Coordinator Greg Jackson, contact Marilyn at the Oshkosh office at (308) 772-3953, Ext. 3, or Jackson at the Gering NRD office at (308) 632-2749.

The district would like to thank all the producers in the LOL area for their continued cooperation in the sub-basin's program. Recent readings show that some progress has been made in the reduction of nitrate levels in the area.

"The cooperation of landowners has been excellent," said General Manager Ron Cacek.

## New directors Hass and Ostdiek to join board in January

Two new faces will appear on the North Platte NRD board of directors in January. Dave Ostdiek of Scottsbluff will replace Ted Cannon as sub-district 2 director and Jim Hass of Bridgeport will replace Myron Lembke as sub-district 4 director. Pete Lapaseotes, Jr. of Bridgeport, Gerald Dillman of Mitchell and Gary Darnall of Harrisburg all retained their seats.

Ostdiek is currently the communications specialist at the University of Nebraska Panhandle Research and Extension Center. He has a good understanding of western Nebraska's natural resources, including its groundwater issues, and the workings of the NRD after serving for 12 year's as the district's information/education coordinator. He is a North Platte Valley native and hopes to play an active role in helping the board keep communications open with downstream water users to develop a well balanced integrated management plan. He said he also wants to focus on offering service and education opportunities.

Hass is both a surface and groundwater user and has

farmed near the mouth of Pumpkin Creek for over 50 years. He is familiar with the challenges that sub-area is facing. Hass said one of the most pressing issues facing the district is the shortage of water and the liability to provide water for the Endangered Species Act. He would like to see conservation retirement of land continued and unwanted trees and brush removed along the district's main streams and rivers.

The district would like to thank outgoing board members Cannon and Lembke for their years of dedicated service. Cannon was elected to the board in 2003, was appointed board treasurer and served on the district's executive and budget/personnel subcommittees.

Lembke has served on the board since 1999 and in that time sat on several district subcommittees, including the operations and water resource subcommittees. This past year Lembke has played an instrumental part in negotiations held between the district and downstream water users. He has also served on the basinwide overappropriated stakeholder's group and on the Nebraska Rural Resource Commission.

## Make appointment to complete your GW certification

Landowners are reminded that the District now requires the certification of all ground water uses within the district. The North Platte NRD staff is currently taking appointments and meeting with landowners to help them complete the certification process. Deadline for certification of ground water uses in Garden and southern Sioux County was Jan. 1, 2007; May 1, 2007 for all of Morrill and Banner Counties; and Jan. 1, 2008 for all of Scotts Bluff County. Producers are welcome to complete their certification at any time prior to these deadlines.

According to NPNRD General Manager Ron Cacek, certification of ground water uses is required to satisfy the Integrated Management Planning process outlined by Nebraska's 2004 water law LB962 for the entire fully-appropriated area. Rules for the Certification of Ground Water Uses in the North Platte NRD went into effect Oct. 12.

Certification of ground water uses includes irrigation, public water supplies, industrial and other uses including golf courses and ground water sources for recreation areas. Domestic and range livestock wells are exempt from certification.

Landowners can begin the certification process by calling the district office in Scottsbluff at 632-2749 for their appointments. Information that will be required to complete certification include aerial photographs or maps of irrigated tracts of land, registration numbers of wells historically used to irrigate each tract, sources of irrigation water other than groundwater, USDA-FSA records and FSA Form 578 for Program Year 2004.

The complete text of rules for Certification of Ground Water Uses is posted at [www.npnrd.org](http://www.npnrd.org).

### 2006 Election Results:

**Banner Co.** - Dillman 178, Kister 92; Cannon 103, Ostdiek 187; Darnall 145, Hoehn 162; Lembke 130, Hass 134; Lapaseotes 237.

**Garden Co.** - Dillman 429, Kister 203; Cannon 372, Ostdiek 285; Darnall 438, Hoehn 184; Lembke 300, Hass 342; Lapaseotes 646.

**Morrill Co.** - Dillman 838, Kister 517; Cannon 459, Ostdiek 1105; Darnall 1087, Hoehn 502; Lembke 601, Hass 1060; Lapaseotes 1439.

**Sioux Co.** - Dillman 25, Kister 12; Cannon 19, Ostdiek 15; Darnall 122, Hoehn 21; Lembke 16, Hass 17; Lapaseotes 33.

**Scotts Bluff Co.** - Dillman 5395, Kister 3779; Cannon 4641, Ostdiek 4957; Darnall 6119, Hoehn 2885; Lembke 3209, Hass 5109; Lapaseotes 8158.

**Total** - Dillman 6865, Kister 4603; Cannon 5594, Ostdiek 6549; Darnall 7810, Hoehn 3747; Lembke 4256, Hass 6662; Lapaseotes 10,513.

## FLOW METERS:

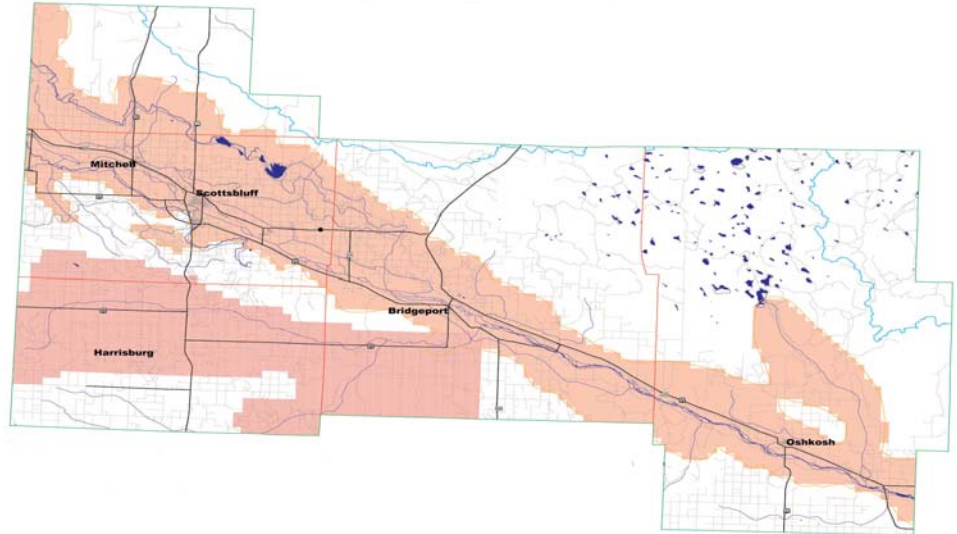
Continued from page 1

Lembke met with Pathfinder Irrigation District manager Dennis Strauch and Tom Hayden of the Department of Natural Resources to discuss ways of dealing equitably with water shortages. The group at that time came to the consensus that *accurate quantifying of ground water pumping was necessary.*

The subcommittee made a recommendation to the board of directors to require flow meters in the overappropriated areas of the district for the purpose of establishing a baseline of use. Director Jerry Dillman said metering is a first step toward responsibly protecting ground water supplies within the district. There are approximately 3,000 irrigation wells in the district.

With the board's action, the district joins South Platte NRD of Sidney and the Upper Niobrara-White NRD of Chadron, who have passed similar requirements for the metering of irrigation wells.

Rules and regulations are now being developed related to the installation and use of meters in the overappropriated area. A full adoption process for the rules will be held. A draft of rules and regulations for the installation and use of flow meters has been sent to the state for review.



This map produced by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources in 2004 shows the overappropriated area of the North Platte NRD in light pink. The North Platte NRD will require the metering of all regulated wells in this area by May 1, 2008. The dark pink area is the Pumpkin Creek Basin subarea, which already has in place rules and regulations for ground water metering, allocations and certification.

# Cost share is available for flow meters

Cost share assistance to purchase and install flow meters is still available and well owners are urged to put in their applications to get their share. Up to \$350 per meter will be paid by the NPNRD to help property owners cover the cost of installing flow meters.

The response for flow meter cost-share assistance has been strong since the flow meter regulation was approved at the Nov. 9 board meeting. The board obligated funds to approximately 460 applications at their Dec. 14 board meeting. According to North Platte NRD general manager Ron Cacek, the budgeted unobligated flow meter funds in the amount of \$76,526.28 have been tapped by these early applications. The funds were available on a first-come, first-served basis.

In order to provide additional cost-share assistance, the

board agreed to designate another \$385,000 in FY07. Those funds will be generated from Platte River Cooperative Assistance funds and a portion of the three-cent levy increase passed in September. This cost-share assistance, now \$350 per meter, will also be available on a first-come first served basis. Landowners are encouraged to apply now to ensure a portion of the funds.

A review of funding options will also be conducted again this spring. Cacek said funding for FY08 could also become available.

"We encourage landowners to go ahead and get their applications in for the cost-share," Cacek said. "We want

to help as many as we can. Applications not getting funded this go-round will be put on a waiting list for future funding."

Meters that are being cost-shared on must be one of the following brands: McCrometer, SeaMetrics, Geyser and Sparling. Landowners are urged to contact their meter dealer as soon as possible to place orders and set installation dates.

To apply for flow meter cost-share, contact your local NRCS office or call the North Platte NRD office at (308) 632-2749 or view the district website at [www.npnrd.org](http://www.npnrd.org) for complete information.

# Order trees now for 2007 season

Orders are now being taken for 2007 conservation trees. But hurry, trees are sold on a first-come, first-served basis.

The NPNRD has 28 varieties of two-year-old bare-root conifer and deciduous trees and shrubs and eight varieties of potted trees available. Trees are sold in bundles of 50 at 65 cents each for conservation purposes only. The district does not sell trees for landscaping purposes.

Supplies of potted Eastern red cedar and potted Rocky Mountain juniper trees are limited. NPNRD tree program coordinator Roy Lyles said those interested in ordering potted stock should stop by the NRD office in Scottsbluff.

The NPNRD also offers landowners several services to help get conservation trees established and improve survival rates. These include tree planting at 65 cents per tree and chemical weed control for 15 cents.

"We can go out, as a service, and take measurements and help with site selections," Lyles said. "We can make recommendations for site selections as far as soil types, conditions and slope. We don't charge extra, that's included in our planting fee."

Tree planting in the district has increased from 184,860 trees in 1990 to 274,870 in 2005.

Trees ordered through the NRD are shipped from the nursery and stored at the district's tree coolers until planting time, which begins April 1. Customers can either pick up the trees themselves and plant them, or take advantage of the NRDs tree planting services.

Tree order and tree planting/spraying request forms are available at the NPNRD office in Scottsbluff or can be viewed at and printed from our website <http://www.npnrd.org/trees.htm> and mailed in.

### Resources

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## NPNRD 2006 in Review

2006 will be marked by the North Platte NRD as a year of major decisions and major moves--many of which will have long reaching future effects.

**January** – Members of the Water Resources subcommittee meet with Gov. Dave Heineman in Scottsbluff to discuss the drought, water issues, and possible state policy and funding options; CNPPID proposes a basinwide plan that includes a 50 percent cut in groundwater river depletions in western Nebraska; The NPNRD board submits a sealed bid to the City of Scottsbluff for property located by the airport; Staff and delegates attend the annual Legislative Conference in Lincoln.

**February** — The board approves Order NPNRD-9 for revised rules for the Pumpkin Creek Basin; The water resources subcommittee approves funding for permanent retirement of irrigated acres through the EQIP Incentive Program for Pumpkin Creek; the NRD is awarded the high bid of \$277,500 on the Skyport property.

**March** – Newly revised rules and regulations for PCB go into effect March 9; the board approves \$20,000 joint funding with South Platte NRD for a study by Dr. Gary Hergert on Evap-Transpiration; the board approves funding for the retirement of 2,500 irrigated acres through the EQIP Incentive Program for PCB; The board recommends the voluntary use of flow meters on all wells.

**April** – Tree sales are up for 2006; Spring groundwater levels in PCB showed increases in the Murray Lake and Lawrence Fork areas and decreases in western Banner County. Overall precipitation averages are up in the basin; Work continues on the development of rules and regulations for the certification of groundwater uses.

**May** – Sixty-nine percent of the district's 249 monitoring wells showed an increase in groundwater levels; The board approved the sale of district property on Rundell Road to Triplephil, Inc. in the amount of \$200,000; Remodeling work begins at the Skyport property to add new offices and tree cooler; The board approves the final draft for Certification rules and regs; 95 area students participate in the NRD's poster contest.

**June** – Search continues among the North Platte and South Platte NRDs for a hydrology modeler to read the COHYST model; The Environmental Impact Study for the PRRIP is released to the public; The board approves a 1% increase in the district budget as allowed by law; the board approves to raise the maximum tax levy by the additional 3% allowed by law to be used for incentive programs and expenses related to the Integrated Management Plan.

**July** – The Nine Mile Creek tour was held July 11 with approximately 41 representatives from various agencies participating; The local Stakeholders meeting was held July 11 in Bridgeport with discussion on the transfer of groundwater uses; The annual Chamber Water Tour was held.

**August** — The board approves funding in the amount of \$200,000 for one year for the Canal Leakage Grant Proposal conducted on 350 miles of canals in the district by the USGS; The board approved the continuation of the agreement with DEQ for the Nine Mile Creek Project; Staff and equipment were moved Aug. 22-23 from Gering to the new district office location at 100547 Airport Road in Scottsbluff; A public hearing was held Aug. 31 on the rules and regs for Certification of Groundwater Uses.

**September** – NPNRD initiates talks with CNPPID to discuss shared water issues; Public



*A highlight of 2006 for the NPNRD was the move into the new district offices at 100547 Airport Road in Scottsbluff. An Open House and official ribbon cutting was held Nov. 16 with the Scottsbluff/Gering Chamber's Ambassadors assisting and 150 guests attending.*

meetings are held in Gering and Grand Island to gather public input on the signing of the PRRIP; A public hearing is held, with no public comment giving, on the district's total 2006-2007 property tax request of \$2,136,713.30; State NRD Conference award winners include Jim Olson of Oshkosh as Director of the Year, Laux Family as Master Conservationist-Production Agriculture, and Cedar Canyon School as Master Conservationist-Youth Group. **October** – Certification rules and regulations go into effect Oct. 12; The board approves to fund another year of EQIP Incentive Program for Pumpkin Creek; Gov. Heineman signs the PRRIP; Meetings continue between NPNRD and CNPPID on a joint drought management plan; The district hosts the 2006 Land Judging contest at the Bead Mountain Ranch south of Gering.

**November** — The NRD received a check from Attorney General Jon Bruning in the amount of \$3,000 to be used for environmental education; The district hosts its open house and Chamber ribbon cutting ceremony at its new offices with approximately 150 guests; the board votes unanimously to require that flow meters be installed on regulated wells in the Overappropriated area of the district by May 1, 2008.

**December** – The board postpones developing general transfer rules until the issues of river depletions, co-mingled water and the Integrated Management Plan are established; The board approves to obligate approximately \$358,000 in FY-07 for flow meter cost share. Approximately 460 applications have been submitted; A meeting was held Dec. 11, between the five Platte River Basin NRDs and Gov. Heineman to coordinate on the actions and funding needed to meet the requirements of the New Depletions Plan and LB962.



## NPNRD seeking 2006 Master Conservationists

The North Platte Natural Resources District is looking for nominees for the 2007 Master Conservationist Awards. These awards, recognizing excellence in soil and water conservation, are presented annually at the Nebraska Association of Resources District state convention in September. **Deadline for local nominations is March 1, 2007.**

Awards are available in the areas of production agriculture, residential, community, and youth. Five production agriculture awards are given, one each from five Master Conservationist District areas. District A, the western Nebraska district, consists of the Upper Niobrara-White,

North Platte, and South Platte NRDs. In 2006, the state District A winner was the Laux family farms of Bridgeport, and Youth Group was Cedar Canyon School of Gering for development of an outdoor schoolyard habitat.

We'd like to repeat that success in 2007. We also encourage landowners, residents, community officials and youth groups to begin developing practices, programs and projects now that could become Master Conservationist award winners in the future.

In the production agriculture division, nominees must be Nebraska farmers or ranchers who have demonstrated excellent conservation practices for at least a five-year period on Nebraska farms or ranches.

In the residential, community and youth divisions, nominees must have carried out the conservation program a minimum of two years at the site. Residential entries can include a typical home yard or small acreage. Community and youth entries can include groups or an individual. The statewide awards are sponsored by the Omaha World-Herald and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The awards adhere to the guidelines for nominations, which are available for viewing on the NPNRD website at [www.npnrd.org](http://www.npnrd.org). Call Kay Grote at (308) 632-2749 for more information and to submit a nomination.