



## 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 **Aug. 14 at 7:00 p.m.**

### Winter No Till Conference

One again, the North Platte NRD is partnering with other agencies to bring a **Winter No Till Conference** to Gering. This year's event is slated for **Nov. 18-19 at the Gering Civic Center** and will include No Till expert speakers, demonstrations, and exhibits. The North Platte NRD is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the South Platte and Upper Niobrara-White NRDs, and the Panhandle Resource Conservation & Development, Inc. (RC&D) to make a No Till Conference an annual event in western Nebraska.

In order to provide a high quality, well planned, educational conference for area producers, support and sponsorships are needed.

Exhibitors' booths will be available inside the Civic Center. This would be a great opportunity for businesses to promote their products to a large audience and help get the word out about the benefits of No Tillage farming. Booths are available at the \$250 or \$500 levels. Both levels include free advertising and one free pass for the exhibitor to the two-day event.

Sponsorships are also available, which includes multiple advertising throughout the two-day conference. Sponsorship levels are \$500 Break Sponsors or \$700 Evening Social Sponsors. Advertising is also available in the Conference's brochure that will be handed out to all participants. More details about becoming a sponsor and a booth/sponsor form are available at <http://www.panhandlercd.com/notill.htm>.

### Board Elections in November

Candidates for the NPNRD Board of Directors will be on the November ballots. The following filings for have been completed and are listed with the Secretary of State in Lincoln: Sub-district 1- Daniel Weinreis, Minatare; Sub-district 2 - Arden Wohlers, Scottsbluff; Sub-district 3 - Dave Deines, Gering; Sub-district 4 - George Hall, Bridgeport; and Myron Lembke,

See **BOARD**, page 2

## North Platte NRD now reading meters

North Platte Natural Resources District field staff has been working the past three months sealing and taking initial readings on flow meters. As of May 1, all regulated irrigation wells within the overappropriated area of the District are required to have a permanently installed flow meter.

Allocation of ground water in the overappropriated area of the District will begin in October for Water Year 2009. The initial base-line allocation of ground water for Water Year 2009 has been set at 18 inches.

NRD Resource Program Coordinator Greg Jackson and Resource Program Technician Preston Hilyard have been

locating, sealing, and reading flow meters since late May. Landowners are reminded that NRD vehicles and staff will continue to travel throughout the District to complete the readings. Landowners are encouraged to visit with NRD staff about any flow meter questions.

According to Jackson, early flow meter readings have gone smoothly.

"Right now we are taking the initial readings as we're sealing them. Garden County and Banner County are mostly completed. We are getting through Morrill and southern Sioux Counties and hope to have Scotts Bluff County done by September 1," Jackson

See **METERS**, page 2

## Certification must be completed

The certification of ground water uses should now be completed. However, NRD staff has found some "stragglers."

According to GIS Specialist Jeff Sprock, to date 1,874 ground water irrigated fields (226,245 acres) have been certified district wide. During the certification process, the NRD staff has located several active wells that have not yet been certified. If these uncertified active wells are used, they are in violation of NRD rules and regulations.

Rule 3-2 of the NRD's ground water management rules states: "Beginning January 1, 2008 no regulated groundwater well shall be operated unless such use has been certified and approved by the District pursuant to these Rules and Regulations."

"We are aware there are active wells out there that have not been certified," Sprock said. "If you still have ground water wells that are not certified with the NRD, you need to get them certified immediately."

The consequence for using ground water on land that has not been certified will be a loss in allocation of ground water for the coming water year. Allocation of ground

See **CERTIFICATION**, page 3



NRD GIS Specialist Jeff Sprock, center, demonstrates to NRD Field Technicians Preston Hilyard, left, and Carolyn Hudson how to enter data into an electronic palm notebook. NRD staff has been working throughout the summer to locate and collect data from flow meters on wells within District. Flow meters are now required on all wells in the Overappropriated Area. Ground water allocations begin in October.

## Transfer of Commingled Water rule passes

At the July 10 regular monthly meeting, the NRD Board approved the new rule for the Transfer of Commingled Water. This rule will go into effect on August 7, 2008.

Rule 5-7.9 states that the transfer of ground water from certified acres that are irrigated with both surface and ground water (commingled water) will be permitted on an acre-for-acre basis from agricultural land to other agricultural land if there is no increase in net ground water irrigated acres and all District water transfer conditions are met under specific circumstances.

The proposed rules allow for the transfer of ground water from an irrigated agricultural use to a non-agricultural use, the District will use the Net Crop Irrigation Requirement (NCIR) for corn developed by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in inches per acre for that location to determine the amount of the ground water portion which may be transferred.

If the surface water appropriation on acres irrigated by commingled water is eliminated due to relinquishment or abandonment or is otherwise lost when surface water was available, the District will rescind certification for ground water irrigation and prohibit the use of ground water for irrigation on said acres if the surface water appropriation is not transferred or assigned and the appropriation is lost resulting in a reduction in the appropriator's diversion entitlements.

If the transfer or assignment of surface water from acres irrigated by commingled water to previously non-irrigated acres occurs, the NCIR formula will be applied to the use of the remaining ground water on the original acres.

The transfer rule for commingled water has been developed in efforts to allow ground water users flexibility in the use and application of their ground water without jeopardizing current surface water appropriations.

NOTE: This rule pertains only to the instances where ground water will be transferred to another use or loca-

tion. This rule also falls under the provisions outlined in Chapter 5 – Transfer of Ground Water. A full text is available at the NRD office or on our website.

### WHAT IS COMMINGLED WATER?

Commingled water is irrigation water that is derived from both surface (canal) water and ground (well) water. Commingled water has presented a special challenge to water managers in the North Platte NRD because it accounts for over half of the irrigation water that is used on lands within the District. Current NRD data shows there are 110,320 commingled water irrigated acres and 105,185 ground water only irrigated acres.

It is not easy to account for ground water uses when the majority of the irrigation water in our District is mixed with canal water and applied to fields.

Another challenge is that a majority of the irrigation wells used in the District are actually supplemental wells, used as an "insurance policy" if surface water is not enough to raise the crop. Many wells are also used out of convenience rather than necessity, as in the case of many pivot systems.

But water managers have recognized that without the use of surface water and the keeping of current surface water appropriations, the ground water supply in the District will be adversely affected. Our District depends greatly on the seepage from canals, laterals, and ditches to recharge the aquifer and keep it in balance season after season.

The law also affects your water supply. By law, if surface water appropriations are not used every five years, those appropriations are subject to cancellation. Simply put, if you don't use it—you lose it. If you are a ground water user, can you afford to lose your surface water? The NRD and area irrigation districts urge you to rethink your water use—and use surface water first.

## METERS: NRD Field Staff Now Collecting Data

*Continued from page 1*

said. "We will then begin re-reading the meters in October to get the beginning baseline readings for Water Year '09."

Landowners are reminded that all flow meters must be sealed and approved by the NRD. According to the NRD's rules and regulations, removing any seal placed on a meter by the NRD will be considered tampering with a meter and subject to penalty. Once a meter is sealed by the NRD, it cannot be removed without first notifying the NRD.

Jackson said NRD staff can assist landowners who want to begin calculating their ground water use now by calling the office for calculation instructions. In preparation for the ground water allocations coming for the 2009 growing season, early readings will be an advantage to growers who have already started monitoring their total water use this year.

Jackson also reminds irrigators that all water that goes

through a flow meter will be counted as ground water, including any surface (ditch) water that is diverted through the irrigation system.

More information about flow meter requirements, including a full text of the District's flow meter rules, is posted at <http://www.nprnd.org/flowmeters.htm> or call the District office at (308) 632-2749.

### BOARD: *Continued from page 1*

Bridgeport. These candidates will appear on the General Election ballot in November 2008. Directors are elected to a four-year term.

The current Board of Directors includes: Sub-district 1 – John Maser and Gerald Dillman; Sub-district 2 – Arden Wohlers and David Ostdiek; Sub-district 3 – Gary Darnall and Dave Deines; Sub-district 4 – Jim Hass and George Hall; At Large – Pete Lapaseotes, Jr.

## Reality Check: Can you live without your NRD?

By Kay Grote  
Editor

Local control of local resources is still the best policy. This is especially true in the state of Nebraska where so much of the policy is made by eastern politicians with a "big city, big business" mentality.

Imagine for a moment that the management and regulation of your ground water was turned over to the State. What area code 402 number are you going to call to voice your concern about your ground water quality and quantity? And how fast are your concerns going to be addressed? And what are the chances that answers to your concerns are going to be dealt with on an individual basis. Chances are a state agency would take a blanket "good for one, good for all" approach. Do you want that?

The NRD system is not perfect. Our capabilities to perform services, offer programs, and conduct studies are limited by the revenues we collect from our own local property owners. Because of this, some Districts are better funded than others. But dollar for dollar, the North Platte NRD provides the most cost-effective answers for and efforts toward resources management, while maintaining decision making at a local government level.

The operation of each NRD is governed by an elected Board of Directors. As in all cases, locally elected boards are not perfect. But remember you, as a tax payer and voter, have a voice of who is elected to your Board of Directors. And remember, they work for you. Currently, we have a Board comprised of irrigators, businessmen, and educators who know better than Eastern lawyers, politicians, and big businesses what is best for western Nebraska resources and the landowners who depend upon them.

Local government means having a local voice. Simply put, if you're not using that local voice, you're not utilizing your local government.

The time has come here in western Nebraska for all good stewards to take a look at the current conditions of our resources. Do more trees need to be planted? Does more soil need to be stabilized? Do better land tillage practices need to be adopted? Do cropping rotations need to be changed to better fit our dry, arid conditions? Do irrigation practices need to be changed to preserve the delicate balance between surface and ground water supplies? Do ground water uses need to be better regulated to insure a stable aquifer for the next generation? Does a concerted effort need to be made to change state and federal legislation for natural resources funding in Nebraska? What will the face of western Nebraska agriculture, and ultimately its economic base, look like in 20 years if we keep up "business as usual"?

Hard questions. If you want local concerns addressed at a local level, you've got to use your local voice. Let your NRD know.

Visit Our Website  
[www.nprnd.org](http://www.nprnd.org)

# Stakeholders group focuses on commingled water

The North Platte Natural Resources District/ Department of Natural Resources Stakeholders group has been meeting regularly in Scottsbluff since January. This group is charged with developing and writing the integrated management plan (IMP) for surface and ground water within the District. The State requires this plan to be completed by May 15, 2009.

Good progress has been made by the stakeholders subcommittee, which is fine tuning the draft. This group consists of irrigation district managers Dennis Strauch, Kevin Adams, and Rick Preston; surface irrigator Robert Busch; at-large representatives Bruce Rolls and Gary Stone; NRD directors Gerald Dillman, Dave Deines, John Maser, and

David Ostdiek; DNR representative and technical advisors Tina Kurtz and Tom Hayden; and NRD staff.

One priority that the stakeholders is committed to is designing the plan so that surface (canal) water is used first and as the primary source of irrigation water in the instances of commingled water. During the June and July meetings, the stakeholders group considered the subcommittee's recommendation to write action guidelines that would encourage the use of surface water first.

A major challenge the group is facing is returning the overappropriated area of the District to 1997 levels of river depletion. The plan must include provisions for accomplishing this. Concepts being considered include

permanent acreage reduction, allocation, surface flow augmentation projects, and crediting of irrigated acres that have been removed due to industrial and economic development.

Municipal water use will also be part of the plan. The NRD and Tina Kurtz with the Department of Natural Resources have been meeting with municipal water managers to assist them with understanding the municipal requirements that must be included in the IMP.

The subcommittee will meet twice in August to further develop the IMP draft before it brings recommendations and concepts back to the full stakeholders group on September 23.

## How many meters are there?

North Platte NRD field staff has been busy this summer locating and inspecting flow meters for the upcoming allocation season which begins in the fall of 2008.

According to GIS Specialist Jeff Sprock, to date NRD staff has been out to 983 fields in the overappropriated areas of the District. Of those 983 fields, 171 (or 35%) do not have flow meters installed. Operating a ground water well in the overappropriated area of the District without a flow meter is in violation of NRD rules and regulations.

Sprock reports that these un-metered wells are located mostly in Scotts Bluff and southern Sioux Counties.

NRD field staff has been to all counties in the overappropriated area conducting inspection and entering initial meter data into the NRD's data system. All active irrigation wells have been GPSed into the data system and are now on file. During these summer-long inspections the NRD staff has made notes of which wells do not yet have meters. The NRD will begin contacting the owners of these un metered wells shortly in attempt to get them properly metered and prepared for the start of the allocation season.

Please assist the NRD in its effort of protecting the ground water resource. Make sure flow meters are installed on all of your ground water wells.

## Decommission abandoned wells

During their efforts to complete certification of ground water uses, and installation of flow meters, the NRD field staff is finding many unused wells that have not been properly abandoned or decommissioned. Unused wells that have not been properly decommissioned are a health threat to the ground water supply and a safety threat to humans and animals.

By law, abandoned water wells must be decommissioned – that is, filled in and sealed according to health standards. The current landowner is responsible, even if the well was abandoned 50 years ago.

Landowners can get cost assistance to decommission abandoned water wells.

The North Platte NRD's Water Well Decommissioning Program reimburses landowners up to 75 percent of the cost of properly decommissioning abandoned wells in accordance with state standards established by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. The NRD will reimburse the landowner after receiving proof that the work has been completed to state standards.

Reimbursement is limited to \$300 for wells up to 12 inches in diameter, \$500 for larger wells and \$700 for hand-dug wells.

To participate in the program, please contact the NRD's office at (308) 632-2749.

# CERTIFICATION: Ground water uses must be completed

Continued from page 1

water begins in Water Year 2009, which begins October 1.

Ground water irrigators or tenants of an absentee landowner who have overlooked their responsibility to certify need to contact the NRD immediately at (308) 632-2749. We can assist you in complying with our

### Resources

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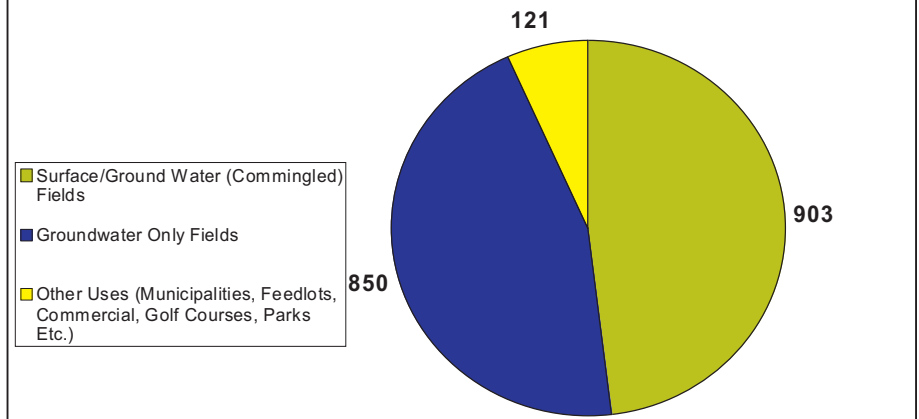
World Wide Web: <http://www.nprnd.org>

**Board of Directors:** John Maser, Chairman, Gary Darnall, Dave Deines, Jerry Dillman, George Hall, Jim Hass, Pete Lapaseotes Jr., David Ostdiek, and Arden Wohlers

**District Manager:** Ron Cacek

**Newsletter Editor:** Kay Grote

Current Ground Water Certification data is represented in the pie chart below. Of the 1,874 fields of certified ground water uses, 903 of those are commingled water (both ground and surface water) and 850 are sole source ground water.



## HEM Survey Termed a Success

Raw data from the Helicopter Electro Magnetic (HEM) survey conducted in June throughout the North Platte and South Platte Natural Resources Districts was provided by July 1.

Within two weeks of the final flight of a sensor-carrying Canadian helicopter over western Nebraska cropland in mid-June, maps showing preliminary data were produced and presented to the NRDs. Geologists and hydrologists will now further study and interpret the data, which will eventually be produced into three-dimensional maps of the region's geological formations.

Hydrologist Jim Cannia with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and HEM project chief was very pleased with the quality and accuracy of the raw data that was collected during the week-long survey.

"This was an excellent quality raw data set," Cannia said of the series of maps showing the conductivity levels of geophysical data. "This is real interpretable data

that will greatly enhance our ability to understand the ground water holding capacities of our aquifer."

The maps of the North Platte and South Platte River valleys, with concentrated surveys taken in the Dutch Flats area north of Morrill and Mitchell in Scotts Bluff and Sioux Counties and the Sidney draw and Lodgepole Creek in Cheyenne County, were shown with layers of colors that indicated thicknesses and geological characteristics in tiers of between six and 300 feet deep. Resistive matter, such as sands and gravels that have the highest water holding capacities showed up on the maps as red, while conductive matter such as clay and shale showed up as blue.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln ground water geologist Steven Sibray, who will assist Cannia with the raw data interpretation and the further development of high density mapping, said this data set will help "refine the geological understanding of the North Platte Valley" and greatly enhance the geophysical data that is already used in ground water management.



*USGS hydrologist and HEM project chief Jim Cannia (right) and UN-L ground water geologist Steven Sibray, (left) look over the maps showing resistive and conductive geophysical characteristics. The series of maps represent the first set of raw data that was compiled from the recent Helicopter Electro Magnetic survey commissioned by the North Platte NRD, South Platte NRD, United States Geological Survey and partially funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Far left, the helicopter and sensor make a pass.*



## Youth Science Camp a success

In June the North Platte NRD assisted with the second annual High Plains Science Adventures camp. This year's theme "Paleontology: Can You Dig It?" allowed for a week full of paleontology, geology, and technology fun for 48 area students.

NRD Information & Education Coordinator Kay Grote assisted with curriculum planning and GIS Specialist Jeff Sprock led activities using global positioning technology to teach campers how to locate items using satellite coordinates. The North Platte NRD also provided scholarships to four area students to attend the week-long camp.

Planning is now underway for next year's camp, which will focus on entomology and botany (bugs and plants). The High Plains Science Adventures camp is open to all area students in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade who have a genuine interest in science. Registration for the 2009 camp will begin next spring.

## NRD Buffalograss seed program going well

The inaugural year of the NPNR's Buffalograss program has met with both successes and challenges. Many homeowners have shown interest in making the switch from traditional turf grasses to the more water-conscious, native buffalograss. But some have experienced the first-year "weed blues" in their new stands (ours included). But don't lose heart! Just keep watering, mowing the weeds, and working through these initial growing pains.

Applications for the "Seeding for Savings" program were due May 1. We received a total of 30 applications and many phone calls after the deadline from folks still wanting to participate. These interested individuals were advised to go ahead and purchase a small amount of seed and plant a small plot to get the experience of growing buffalograss and then submit their application next spring for the 2009 season. Remember, the optimum time to

plant buffalograss is between Memorial Day and mid-July. It needs warm temperatures to germinate.

At the end of May the NRD hosted a Buffalograss workshop attended by 40 people. Jim Schild from the Panhandle Research and Extension Center, and Ron Ernst from the City of Gering provided their expertise in planting and maintaining buffalograss. If you were not able to attend this workshop, we still have handout literature at the office or it can be viewed at our website, [www.npnrd.org/buffalograss](http://www.npnrd.org/buffalograss).

Site inspections for program participants have now started and will continue through August and rebate checks have started to be issued. We will also be providing attractive signs to be displayed in participants' yards.

If you have questions about a new or established buffalograss stand, please call the NRD office at (308) 632-2749 or Jim Schild at (308) 632-1486.