

Resources

Spring 2010



Published by the North Platte Natural Resources District

www.npnrd.org

Vol. 17, No. 1

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 monthly meetings will be **March 18, 3:00 PM, Oshkosh Auditorium; April 8, 7:00 PM and May 13, 7:00 PM Scottsbluff.**

Get Your NRD Trees Now

Orders are now being taken for 2010 conservation trees. We have 27 varieties of bare-root conifer and deciduous trees and shrubs and potted trees available.

Trees are sold in bundles of 50 at 75 cents each for conservation purposes only. We also offers landowners several services to help get conservation trees established and improve survival rates such as tree planting at 75 cents per tree and chemical weed control for 15 cents.

Trees ordered through the NRD are shipped from the nursery and stored at the district's tree coolers until planting time. 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 our office in Scottsbluff or from our website <http://www.npnrd.org/trees.htm> and mailed in.

Full Scholarships Available for NEW Jr. High ACE Camp

Do you know a Jr. High (current 6th - 8th grade) student who loves learning about the outdoors and natural resources? Is adventuresome? Wants to go to a great summer camp?

Nebraska's NRDs are hosting the NEW Adventure Camp about the Environment (ACE) **June 20-23 at the State 4-H Center in Halsey, NE.** The North Platte NRD is sponsoring four full-ride scholarships for students to attend ACE camp. The \$175 registration includes meals, lodging and activities. Contact Kay Grote at (308) 632-2749 for a chance to attend ACE Camp for FREE For more information, visit our website at www.npnrd.org.

Scholarship application deadline is April 23.

NPNRD approves 56/4 allocation

The North Platte Natural Resources District Board of Directors unanimously approved a four-year, 56-acre-inch per certified irrigated acre ground water allocation at their regular monthly meeting held Feb. 25 in Scottsbluff. This allocation will take effect March 29, 2010 and will remain in effect through Water Year 2013.

Under the new Chapter 6 rules, irrigators are allowed **56 acre-inches of ground water per certified irrigated acre over a four-year allocation period beginning with Water Year 2010.** This amount can be applied at any rate on certified irrigated acres within the four-year allocation period, but must not exceed 56 acre inches during this period. This results in a yearly average allocation of 14 acre-inches per certified irrigated acre over the allocation period. This new allocation applies to all certified irrigated acres (acres) within the overappropriated area of the NRD with the exception of the Pumpkin Creek Management Area.

A **special exemption** is available for acres which are irrigated with ground water only through a gravity irrigation system. **The application deadline for this exemption is April 1.** If approved, this exemption would require the cessation of ground water irrigation on 1/15th of the total acres approved for the exemption as well as a dedicated flow meter to measure the amount of ground water applied to

See ALLOCATION, pg. 3

ANNUAL TREE PRUNING WORKSHOP MARCH 16

The North Platte NRD and Nebraska Forest Service will hold their Annual Tree Pruning workshop **Tuesday, March 16 from 10 a.m. to approximately 2:00 p.m. at the North Platte NRD office.**

The workshop is free of charge and open to all homeowners, parks and maintenance workers, and arborists, and will include lunch provided by the J.G. Elliott Insurance Center.

Northwest District Forester Doak Nickerson (right) will demonstrate the proper pruning tools and techniques. NRD Tree Program Coordinator Roy Lyles said this will be an excellent opportunity to learn proper tree care with Nickerson's expert tree care advice. The workshop will be conducted mostly outside rain or shine, so participants are reminded to dress accordingly. For more information contact Roy Lyles at (308) 632-2749.



Sign-up period is March 15-24 for NRD cost-share programs

Applications are now being accepted for 2010 cost-share funds through the North Platte Natural Resources District. Cost share programs are available to landowners in Banner, Garden, Morrill, Scotts Bluff and southern Sioux Counties for soil, water and range conservation improvements.

Applications can be submitted between March 15 and March 24, 2010 at USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices in Scottsbluff, Bridgeport, and Oshkosh.

Eligible practices include windbreak planting (65 percent cost-share rate) with a minimum of 300 trees planted; irrigation water management (50 percent) to conserve groundwater and surface water by improving water use efficiency on irrigated lands; and planned grazing systems (50 percent) to reduce erosion and improve water quality by maintaining or improving plant cover for increased forage production, enhanced wildlife habitat, grazing uniformity and water use efficiency.

Other eligible practices include terrace systems (65 percent); livestock water facilities (50 percent); irrigation tailwater recovery pits (50 percent); grade stabilization structures (65 percent); diversions (65 percent); grassed water ways (65 percent); range seeding or pasture planting (65 percent); stream bank stabilization (65 percent).

The Conservation Cost-Share Program reimburses cooperating landowners a portion of the costs of installing conservation practices on their farm or ranch. In most cases the cost-share rate is 50 percent to 65 percent of the actual or average cost (whichever is less). Maximum annual payment per landowner per practice is \$3,000. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provides technical assistance. Applicants must receive approval from the NRD Board of Directors before beginning work.

For more information contact your local NRCS office or the North Platte NRD in Scottsbluff at (308) 632-2749.

Answers for your Flow Meter, Water Use Questions

Recently the 2009 Water Use Reports were mailed out to all ground water irrigators within the overappropriated area of the District. These reports included the water use for each certified irrigated tract for the 2009 Water Year. These reports, developed by the North Platte NRD staff, are self-explanatory. But if you have any questions or need further explanations on how the water use was determined, please contact the NRD office in Scottsbluff at (308) 632-2749.

A second mailing is being sent out this week that will have more in-depth information about your current ground water use.

According to Jeff Sprock, GIS Specialist, this mailing will include a packet with individual water use amounts for 2009

and available water for 2010 through 2013 under the new 56-inch allocation rules. It will include a full text of Chapter 6 (Allocation rules), a brochure on How to Read a Flow Meter, and information on any carry-forward, penalties or overdraft and reminders on enforcement of these rules.

Sprock reminds irrigators that if you have any questions or want to make any modifications, changes, or repairs to your flow meters, you must contact the NRD office first to let us know.

If you have any questions on your readings, flow meter operations or maintenance, please contact the District office.

"We understand the use of flow meters and allocations are new, but we're here to help irrigators understand and successfully use the new rules," Sprock said.

Weather Watchers Wanted

Residents of Scotts Bluff, Banner, Morrill, Garden, 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. Precipitation reports by volunteers will be transmitted via the Internet to the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources each day. Climate analysts will process the data and prepare detailed maps showing rainfall patterns. Scientists and water managers will study these maps to learn how storms develop and move across the region and to make water-use decisions. NeRAIN information will be updated daily and available for public access on this website.

See <http://dnrdata.dnr.ne.gov/NeRAIN/> or call NRD Resources Coordinator Greg Jackson at 308-632-2749.



NRD news at www.nprnd.org



2010 Master Conservationist nominations sought

Nominations are now open for the 2010 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 April 1, 2010.

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. Past winners from our

District include the Serenity Garden Club of Scottsbluff in the Community-Public division in 2009; Laux Family Farms of Bridgeport, and Cedar Canyon School of Gering for development of an outdoor schoolyard habitat.

We'd like to repeat that success in 2010. 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.

For details on the requirements for Master Conservationist awards, go to Omaha World Herald <http://www.owh.com/files/MasterConservationist2010.pdf> or call Kay Grote at (308) 632-2749.

NRD's Buffalograss program is gaining popularity

The North Platte NRD is once again offering its buffalograss seed rebate program.

The NRD will provide reimbursement for the cost of seed purchased to convert up to 7,500 square feet of established lawn. Reimbursement will be based on the recommended seeding rate of three pounds per 1,000 square feet.

Application deadline for this program is May 15.

"Our first year of the program was very well received," said program coordinator Kay Grote. "We had 15 good stands of buffalograss established, all on sites that had previously been in Kentucky bluegrass or other traditional turf."

The NRD's buffalograss program reimburses residential homeowners for converting their existing irrigated lawns to either Bowie or Cody brands of buffalograss. Buffalograss is best established in areas with full sun exposure. Recommended planting time is between June 1 and July 10.

The buffalograss seed program is open to all homeowners within the boundaries of the North Platte NRD, including Scotts Bluff, Morrill, Garden, Banner and southern Sioux Counties.

University and industry studies have shown that switching from traditional bluegrass lawns to more drought-tolerant buffalograss saves on water usage and lawn maintenance, which in turn saves the homeowner money. Buffalograss is a drought-hearty, native grass species that once established, thrives on only 1/2 inch of water per week. Most other turf grasses use between 1 to 1 1/2 inches per week.

For complete information on the buffalograss seed program, visit the NPNRD website at www.npnrd.org or contact Grote at (308) 632-2749.



This stand of buffalograss planted in at the Al and Lois Herbel residence in Gering in June of 2008 is a good example of establishing a native grass in a large, sunny area.

Low-input Lawn Workshop Allocations to be April 8 in Bridgeport

Continued from page 1

Area home owners interested in low-input lawns have the opportunity to learn how to establish and maintain turf grass that requires less water, less fertilizer and less mowing by attending a workshop in Bridgeport. The meeting will take place on **April 8, 2010, 7:00 PM at the Prairie Winds Community Center in Bridgeport.**

This informal meeting, co-sponsored by University of Nebraska Extension and the North Platte NRD will feature Jim Schild, Extension Educator. Jim is the leading authority on turf in this area. Kay Grote with the NRD will discuss their cost-share program for buffalograss.

The program is FREE and open to the public.

Resources

Published quarterly by the North Platte Natural Resources District, 10547 Airport Road, Scottsbluff. Mailing: P.O. Box 280, Scottsbluff, NE 69363-0280.

Phone: 308-632-2749

Fax: 308-632-4346

E-mail: cacek@npnrd.org

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

Board of Directors: George Hall, Chairman
Gary Darnall, Dave Deines, Jerry Dillman,
Jim Hass, Pete Lapaseotes Jr., David Ostdiek,

Dan Weinreis, and Arden Wohlers

District Manager: Ron- Cacek

Newsletter Editor: Kay Grote

acres. The exemption would be in effect for the duration of the allocation period unless revoked by the District.

The allocation for certified irrigated acres or the acres receiving the exemption may be combined into a Designated Allocation Unit (DAU) provided certain criteria are met. The application deadline for a DAU is April 1 of the water year the irrigator wants to form a DAU.

A full text of these rules is available on the District's website, www.npnrd.org or at the District office in Scottsbluff.

For more information or to set up an appointment to apply for the exemption or a DAU, contact Greg Jackson at the District office in Scottsbluff at (308) 632-2749.



The North Platte NRD staff and Board of Directors have worked diligently for many months to develop rules and regulations for the allocation of ground water within the overappropriated area of the District. These rules are necessary to protect western Nebraska's water resource and comply with state statute. Above, NRD ground water modeler Thad Kuntz gives his recommendations to directors George Hall, Gerald Dillman, Pete Lapaseotes and Dave Deines.

Scottsbluff, Gering take top honors in 2010 Western Region Envirothon

GORDON - The Scottsbluff High School team of Austin Groskopf, Victor Torres, Spencer Darley, Alyssa Shuey and Creighton Booth captured top honors in the West Region Nebraska Envirothon here Wednesday, February 17, 2010, earning a berth in the state competition at Alda in May.

Sixty-three students on 14 teams competed in the contest. Schools represented included Scottsbluff, Gering, Sidney, Gordon-Rushville, Garden County and Creek Valley.

The Gering team of Ethan Walker, Kyle Gaudreault, David Safford, Rudy Cabrera and Thomas Jacobs finished second. This was the first year the Gering team had competed in the contest. Coach Randy Hughes was very pleased with the knowledge his students had on a vast field of topics.

The Envirothon is a program for 9th-12th grade students to learn more about our natural environment. The contest tests students' knowledge on subjects such as soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, range, current environmental policies and issues, and one special topic of national interest.

The Western Region Envirothon is open to science students, FFA members, scouts, 4-H members, home schoolers, etc. throughout the Panhandle. The Regional contest is sponsored by the South Platte, North Platte and Upper Niobrara White NRDs.

Five-member teams compete in a setting where they learn that cooperation is needed to achieve success. The activities are designed to help the students become environmentally aware, action-oriented adults.

The winning five-member team from each regional competition is invited to represent their region at the Nebraska State Envirothon Competition. An additional 8 wildcard teams are also invited. The state champion goes on to represent Nebraska at the Canon Envirothon.

The Nebraska Envirothon is guided by a steering committee made up of representatives from agencies involved in natural resources.

The Scottsbluff High School students, from left, Austin Groskopf, Victor Torres, Spencer Darley, Alyssa Shuey and Creighton Booth earned a berth at the Nebraska Envirothon by besting 130 other teams in the West Region Envirothon held in Gordon Wednesday, February 17, 2010. The Scottsbluff Team was coached by Heather Haberman.

The Gering High School team of Ethan Walker, Kyle Gaudreault, David Safford, Rudy Cabrera and Thomas Jacobs finished a close second. The Gering team was coached by Randy Hughes.



How to design a better tree windbreak

Tree windbreaks do a lot for protecting homes, people and livestock, but also have an added benefit of supporting wildlife. The color, sounds, tracks and mystery of wild creatures living in and around a windbreak can add enjoyment to people's lives.

"For best wildlife benefits, a windbreak should have a developed tree canopy, and an understory that includes shrubs and herbaceous plants for food and cover. The ground layer is critical in providing winter wind protection, especially for species that nest or feed near the ground.

Upper canopy layers provide wildlife with nesting and foraging sites," added Jim Brandle, University of Nebraska-Lincoln forester and co-author of "Windbreaks and Wildlife", an Extension circular.

Design of a windbreak for controlling air movement doesn't have to be altered much to include wildlife benefits. Options to enhance tree plantings for wildlife are:

- Including a variety of trees and shrubs in the planting, which also gives a more natural look, reduces disease or insect problems and adds more wildlife values for more species;
- Adding a shrub row to the windward side to trap snow before it enters the windbreak;
- Planting a mixture of grasses, a food plot, or leaving stubble 20-50 feet along the edge of a windbreak provides additional nesting and food sources.

There are several programs to aid landowners in creating wildlife areas near windbreaks. Statewide, the Conservation Reserve Program offers rental payments, a signing bonus and cost-share for establishing windbreaks and other woodland habitat like riparian forest buffers. One continuous CRP sign-up option (SAFE CP-38) allows partial or whole fields into CRP with acreage size limits. These lands are planted to a variety of grasses,

wildflowers and shrub thickets for upland game birds like quail and greater prairie chickens. The North Platte NRD, in cooperation

with local Pheasants Forever chapters, offers enhanced rental payment, plant establishment cost-share and a sign-up incentive for riparian forest buffers. Pheasants and Quail Forever chapters, in the Corners for Wildlife Program, offer cost-share on grass and wildlife shrubs plus a 5 year rental payment for habitat establishment in center pivot corners.

Planting trees and shrubs for wildlife along side existing windbreaks or adding onto the length of a present windbreak, makes for larger windbreaks that benefit more wildlife than a smaller one.

Planning, design and ordering of trees and shrubs assistance is available at Natural Resources District or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offices. Tree orders are now being taken by NRD's. Most cost-share programs are available through a continuous sign-up process.

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago... the next best time is NOW.

Full Scholarships Available to Attend 2010 Youth Range Camp

We want to send students to State Range Youth Camp! The 47th Annual Range Youth Camp will be held June 7-11, 2010, at the State 4-H Camp in Halsey. All youth at least 14 but not over 18 by October 1, can attend. As part of their commitment to the management and care of natural resources, the North Platte NRD will pay the full camp fee of \$275 for four students who reside in Scotts Bluff, Banner, Morrill, Garden, or southern Sioux counties. The camp fee covers meals, lodging, recreation, books, and camp insurance.

Scholarship application deadline is May 8. For more information, contact Kay Grote at (308) 632-2749 or go to <http://www.npnrd.org/camp.htm>