

North Platte Natural Resources District Irrigation Newsletter

Issue 12

Surface Water Registration

The North Platte NRD is currently mailing surface water registration paperwork to landowners who irrigate with surface water only. If you receive a packet, please review the materials carefully and follow the instructions to complete your registration and return the signed forms.

This registration process is part of the NRD's effort to improve nitrate management and maintain accurate, up-to-date records. Beginning January 1, 2025, all surface water irrigated acres must be registered and approved by the NRD under updated rules and regulations. This registration will not impact your existing water rights or any agreements with your Surface Water District.

Registering your acres ensures they are associated with annual nitrogen sample data in the NRD's database, supporting better groundwater protection and resource planning.

As of May 2026, registration materials have been distributed by mail to:

- Bridgeport Irrigation District
- Enterprise Irrigation District
- Farmers Irrigation District
- Gering–Fort Laramie Irrigation District
- Lisco Irrigation District
- Minatare Mutual Canal and Company
- Nine Mile Irrigation District
- Northport Irrigation District
- Pathfinder Irrigation District
- Shortline Irrigation District
- Winters Creek Canal



North Platte
NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

Welcome to Issue #12 of the Irrigation Newsletter! This newsletter is intended to inform **groundwater and surface water irrigators** within the District. The information included in this newsletter is made possible with the help of the University of Nebraska Extension and USDA-NRCS.

Visit or Contact Us

100547 Airport Road

Scottsbluff, NE

308-632-2749

www.npnrd.org



If you receive registration paperwork, please review the materials carefully, complete the required forms, and return the signed documents to the North Platte NRD as soon as possible. Promptly returning your paperwork will help ensure your irrigated acres are properly registered and included in the NRD's records. Additionally, if you have not received a packet, have misplaced your paperwork, or need an additional copy of the forms, please contact the North Platte NRD, and staff will be happy to assist you.

Flowmeter Installation

Flowmeters are an important tool for measuring water use, but even a properly functioning meter can provide inaccurate readings if it is not installed correctly. Conditions such as excessive turbulence from nearby pipe bends, partially filled pipes, or improper grounding can interfere with flow measurements and affect accuracy.

Years ago, some flowmeters within the District were installed incorrectly with the conditions listed above. If you are replacing irrigation pipe that contains a flowmeter, please contact the NPNRD before completing the work. District staff can provide guidance on proper installation requirements and help ensure that your flowmeter will meet District standards.

The NPNRD can also provide information on approved flowmeter models and answer any questions regarding installation and compliance. Taking a few minutes to verify proper installation can help ensure accurate water-use measurements for years to come.



Irrigation Management Pays Off

While recent rainfall has provided some relief across parts of western Nebraska, July is typically when crop water use reaches its highest levels of the growing season. With continued concerns about long-term moisture deficits and below-average runoff in the North Platte River Basin, making the most of every inch of water remains important.

One of the most effective ways to improve irrigation efficiency is simply knowing how much water is being applied. Water flow meters, irrigation records, and regular system checks can help ensure applications are matching crop needs rather than exceeding them. Over-irrigation not only increases pumping costs but can also move valuable nutrients below the root zone where crops can no longer use them.

Monitoring soil moisture is another valuable management tool. Whether using soil moisture sensors, crop water use estimates, or the traditional feel-and-appearance method, understanding what is happening below the surface helps take the guesswork out of irrigation decisions. Fields that received recent rainfall may not need the same irrigation schedule they required earlier in the season.

As corn enters reproductive stages and other crops approach critical growth periods, irrigation timing becomes just as important as the amount applied. Maintaining adequate soil moisture during these stages can help protect yield potential while avoiding unnecessary water use.

Efficient irrigation management benefits both producers and water resources. Applying water where and when it is needed can reduce energy costs, improve fertilizer efficiency, and help stretch available water supplies through the remainder of the season.

In a year where every inch counts, taking time to monitor soil moisture and track water applications can help ensure irrigation decisions are both economical and effective.

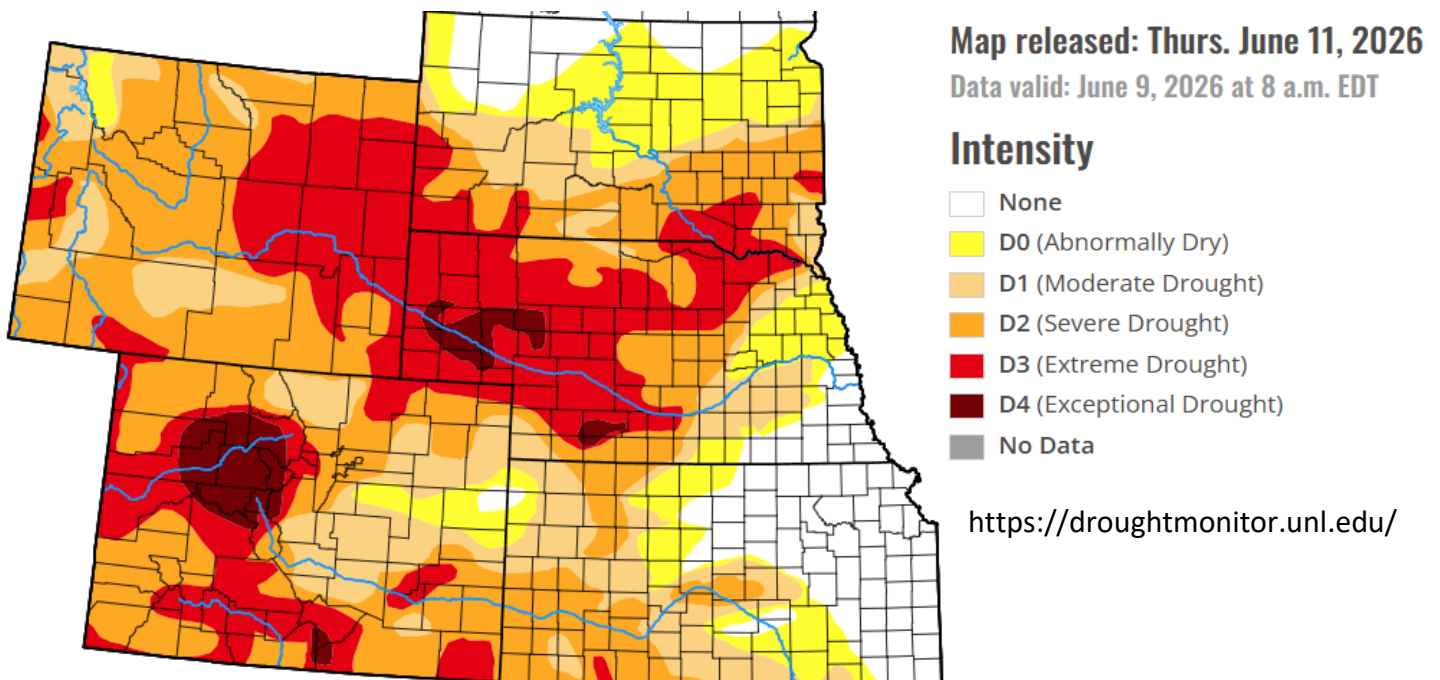
Drought Update

Drought conditions remain a significant concern across the North Platte NRD. According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, portions of the district continue to experience Extreme Drought (D3) and Exceptional Drought (D4), the most severe category on the drought scale. While recent rainfall events have provided much-needed relief in some areas, they have not been enough to eliminate the long-term moisture deficits that developed over the past year.

In our May newsletter, we discussed concerns surrounding below-average snowpack and reduced runoff forecasts in the North Platte River Basin. Those concerns remain. Earlier forecasts indicated significantly less water entering the system from mountain snowmelt this year, resulting in reduced inflows to reservoirs and less water available throughout the basin compared to a typical year. While local rainfall can improve crop conditions and reduce irrigation demand in the short term, it does not fully replace the benefits of a normal mountain runoff season.

The recent precipitation has improved topsoil moisture in many locations and provided welcome relief for crops entering critical growth stages. However, drought is a long-term condition that takes sustained precipitation over an extended period to overcome. Soil moisture, stream flows, reservoir storage, and groundwater recharge all continue to reflect the effects of prolonged dry conditions.

As we move through July and into August, crop water demand will be at or near its seasonal peak. Continued rainfall will be important to help meet crop needs and reduce pressure on available water supplies. Producers should remain aware that hot, windy conditions can quickly increase water use and reverse some of the gains made from recent precipitation.



<https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

Cost Share for Irrigation Well Sampling

Cost share will be available for water samples from May 15th through August 1st annually.

Samples will be accepted at the North Platte NRD office and the NRCS offices in Scottsbluff, Bridgeport, and Oshkosh. Landowner cost will be \$10 per sample with an approved cost share application. Payment is due at the time of sample drop-off.

Sample bottles can be picked up from the same offices.

The pump should run for at least 15 minutes to purge the well.

Samples must be collected from the well or at the final point of distribution. Samples taken from the final point of distribution must be georeferenced, and each well registration number that feeds into the final point of distribution must be provided. Please do not take a sample from a distribution point when surface water would be part of the sample collected.

If chemigation has occurred, wait 14 days before collecting a sample.

Label the sample bottle with your name, the location, date, and time the sample was collected.

Samples must be kept below 40 degrees Fahrenheit once the sample has been collected.

Samples must be received at the NRD or NRCS office, Monday through Friday, within 48 hours of collection.

If you choose to send samples yourself, select a lab of your choice and follow the instructions they provide.

Samples must be taken between October 1 and September 31. Those results must be submitted to the North Platte NRD before December 31st of the same year.

100547 Airport Road
P.O. Box 280
Scottsbluff, NE 69363-0280
(308) 632-2749
www.nprd.org

Application
Ground Water Sample Cost-Share

NAME: _____
SAMPLE TIME: _____
DATE: _____

1. (we), the undersigned, do hereby request cost-share assistance to help defray the cost of water sampling from the well or final distribution point described herein below. It is understood that if the North Platte NRD is unable to provide cost-share assistance, the applicant will be responsible for the full cost of the sample.

2. Before receiving any cost-share funds, it will be necessary for the applicant to complete the requirements of the program:

a. Only one sample can be submitted per well or final distribution point.

b. Samples must be either taken from the well or final distribution point.

i. Samples taken from the well must be taken from the final point of distribution.

c. All sample results must be shared with the North Platte NRD.

3. The North Platte NRD will only accept water samples taken from a well or final distribution point that feeds into the final point of distribution.

4. Funds will be paid on a first-come, first-served basis.

5. Landowner's/Operator's cost will be \$10 per sample.

6. Samples must be submitted to the North Platte NRD office.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Landowner Name: _____ Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Operator Name: _____ Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Soil Sample Cost-Share Program

The North Platte NRD is offering cost-share assistance to help defray the cost of soil sampling on eligible lands. To participate, landowners or operators must meet program requirements, including submitting one application per sample, georeferencing each probe site with an attached map, and collecting composite samples representing no more than 80 acres.

Samples must be paired with surface samples up to 12 inches and subsoil samples containing nitrate nitrogen only at a minimum depth of 24 inches. All soil sample results must be shared with the North Platte NRD.



Applications will be approved by the NRD, and funds are limited and distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The maximum reimbursement is twenty-five dollars per paired sample. Only one party, either the landowner or operator, will receive cost-share funds per tract.

North Platte NRD's
**Annual Water
Expo**

Free Event

August 15th, 2026

9:00 am - 2:00 pm

**100547 Airport Road
Scottsbluff, NE**

Family Friendly day of fun and learning with a Free Lunch provided. For more information call the North Platte NRD at **(308) 632-2749** or visit our website at **npnrd.org**.



100547 Airport Road, P.O. Box 280
Scottsbluff, NE 69363-0280

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
NORTH PLATTE NRD
PERMIT NO 280

Board Meetings

The public is welcome to attend all Board meetings and the Committee meetings. The North Platte Natural Resources District conducts its Board Meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 3 pm. Committee meetings are held as needed. The meetings are held at the office located at 100547 Airport Road, Scottsbluff. We welcome your thoughts and opinions on upcoming projects

This is part twelve of an ongoing series designed to provide education and information to the Landowners and Operators irrigating within the North Platte Natural Resources District boundaries.

Information found in this Newsletter has been reproduced from "Irrigation and Nitrogen Management, User Education/Certification Program" a Nebraska Extension Circular EC2008. If you would like more information, please contact the North Platte Natural Resources District.