

North Platte Natural Resources District Irrigation Newsletter

Issue 6

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.

If you have questions or need assistance, contact the North Platte NRD at (308) 632-2749 or visit our office at 100547 Airport Road in Scottsbluff. To ensure timely help, we recommend calling ahead to schedule an appointment with the appropriate staff member.



Welcome to Issue #6 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



Pumpkin Creek Allocation

Among the most significant changes to the 2025 to 2029 allocation period is the launch of a 5-year pilot project in the Pumpkin Creek Basin, which increases the annual groundwater allocation from 12 to 14 acre-inches, matching the rest of the District's allocation. This targeted adjustment is designed to provide greater flexibility for local agricultural producers while also promoting sustainable land management practices, such as the use of cover crops to improve soil health.

Throughout the pilot period, the NRD will continue its monitoring and modeling efforts to track water use and evaluate long-term impacts on the aquifer. Additional monitoring will include taking groundwater level measurements in March, July, and October; capturing site photos; and labeling each location based on whether it is flowing, damp, or dry. These enhanced practices will help the NRD closely observe how the increased allocation affects the local groundwater system over time.



Fall Sampling

This fall, North Platte NRD groundwater technicians will be out across the district collecting nitrate samples. Our monitoring well network, comprised of nearly 560 wells, is sampled twice a year to track long-term water quality and protect our shared groundwater resources. These efforts help ensure clean, sustainable water for future generations. Landowners with monitor wells on their property will receive sample results by mail in late fall. You can also visit npnrd.org to see district-wide Nitrogen sample results.

Modern Tools for Monitoring Soil Moisture

Healthy soil is vital for agriculture, water quality, and environmental sustainability. One key indicator of soil health is moisture content. Due to modern technology, farmers now have powerful tools to monitor it in real time.

Soil moisture probes, especially Time Domain Reflectometry (TDR) sensors, have become essential in precision agriculture. These probes use metal rods inserted into the soil to send voltage pulses. The time it takes for the pulse to return reveals the soil's moisture level, slower in wet soil, faster in dry soil. Some models also measure temperature and electrical conductivity, giving a more complete picture of soil conditions. These real-time readings help farmers optimize irrigation, prevent overwatering, and support healthier crops. When connected to data systems, they allow for instant decision-making and long-term tracking of field conditions.

Other moisture-monitoring technologies include dielectric sensors, which measure soil's permittivity, and spectroscopic tools that assess soil composition, including water content, by analyzing light absorption. These are sometimes integrated into mobile probes or even drones.

The benefit of these tools is clear: they reduce guesswork, conserve water, and promote sustainable farming. As climate variability increases, the ability to track soil moisture precisely will be more important than ever.

Information from cropwatch.unl.edu



Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Cost-Share Program

The Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Cost-Share Program (NSWCP) provides financial assistance to landowners and operators who implement conservation practices that reduce erosion, improve water quality, and protect natural resources. This statewide program is funded by both Natural Resources Districts and the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund.

To be eligible, applicants must have an approved conservation plan through their NRD. The program supports a variety of practices, including terraces, water and sediment control basins, native grass seedings, buffer strips, windbreaks, streambank stabilization, irrigation water management, planned grazing systems, and grade stabilization structures. The cost-share rate is 50 percent of the actual costs up to a set amount, with a \$5000 limit.

Unlike first-come, first-served programs, NSWCP uses a ranking system to evaluate applications. Projects are prioritized based on conservation benefit, project readiness, and local resource needs. This ensures that funding goes to the projects that will have the most environmental impact.

To apply, contact your local NRD to develop a conservation plan and complete the application process. The **application deadline is February 13, 2026**. Since funding is limited, higher-ranked projects are more likely to be approved.

Landowners can contact NRCS for technical assistance in implementing these practices. Participating in this program not only improves land productivity and resilience but also helps protect Nebraska's soil and water for generations to come.

DNR and NDEE Merger

Effective July 1, 2025, the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (DEE) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) merged to form the Department of Water, Energy and Environment (DWEE). As part of this change, the Water Well Standards, Well Registration, and Change of Ownership programs will now fall under DWEE's Groundwater Division.

Staff, phone numbers, and email addresses will remain unchanged. The forms and website will be updated gradually to reflect the new agency name. Most saved bookmarks will still work.

The online well registration, pump installation, modification, and decommissioning pages will be updated with DWEE branding, but the functionality and your bookmarks will stay the same.

For those who email scanned PDF forms (excluding well registrations), please continue sending them to: dnr.groundwater@nebraska.gov.

New Agency Contact Information:

Nebraska Department of Water, Energy and Environment
245 Fallbrook Blvd., Suite 100
Lincoln, NE 68521-6729
Phone: 402-471-2186
Fax: 402-471-2909



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

Free Event

**August 16th, 2025
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**.

Tree Sales

Fall offers ideal conditions for tree planting with cooler nights, shorter days, and less wind means less transplant shock for young trees. The North Platte NRD will offer a limited selection of smaller, conservation-grade trees for sale this fall. Orders are due by August 15th, and quantities are limited.

Looking ahead, the NRD is also accepting 2026 tree orders. Seedlings are available in bundles of ten on a first-come, first-served basis. Bare-root trees are \$1.10 each, and plugs are \$2.20 each. We offer a variety of evergreens, broadleaf trees, and shrubs.



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 six 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.