

North Platte Natural Resources District Irrigation Newsletter

Issue 11

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 February 2026, registration materials have been distributed by mail to Farmers Irrigation District, Gering–Fort Laramie Irrigation District, Lisco Irrigation District, Enterprise Irrigation District, and Pathfinder Irrigation District. If you have not received any paperwork for these irrigation districts, please reach out to the North Platte NRD.



Welcome to Issue #11 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



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.



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.



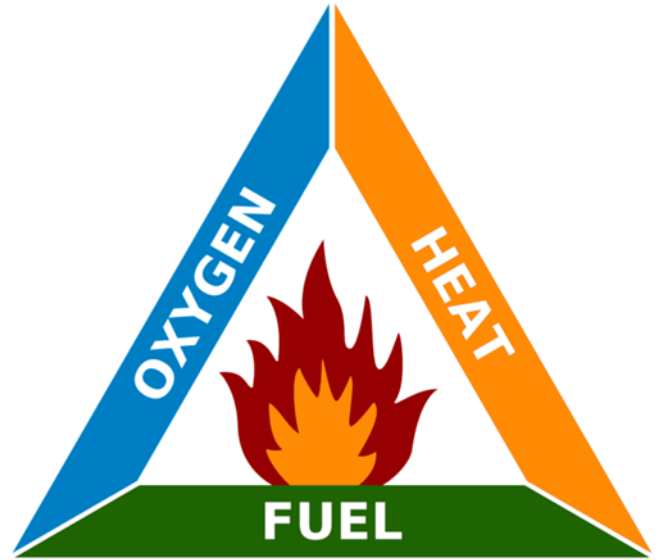
Applications will be approved by the NRD, and funds are limited and distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. The maximum reimbursement is twenty-five dollars per paired sample. Only one party, either the landowner or operator, will receive cost-share funds per tract.

The Fire Triangle and Options After a Wildfire

By Todd Filipi, Resource Conservation Coordinator

My heart goes out to everyone affected by the recent wildfires. I hope by the time that this article reaches everyone, that pastures are greening back up, fences and infrastructure are getting rebuilt, and that the rains have returned.

Most folks have heard of the fire triangle or what's sometimes called the combustion triangle. The basis, as most folks know it, is that the basic ingredients to fire are heat, fuel, and oxygen. Combine the three at a certain level, and you get a reaction, aka fire. The name of the game when fighting fire is thus to remove or greatly reduce at least one of the three ingredients to hopefully put the fire out or prevent it from starting to begin with. Most will agree that it is a fairly easy, straightforward concept. I don't disagree. What gives me anxiety, though, is that I fear we oversimplify it a bit too much when we look at both fire prevention and evaluation of a fire after the fact, especially with regard to range management.



Most will agree that management of fuels is probably one of the biggest things we can do as managers when thinking about fire. Remove or reduce fuels, which should equate to a reduced fire risk, correct? Maybe? I'm here to maybe try to convince you to put some more consideration into it. I hear the story quite a bit; it was a hot, dry summer, so I grazed down the pasture a little more to reduce my fire risk. That has some merit and practicality. The pasture may still have lit, but my fuels were such that it shot quickly across the pasture with such low intensity that it didn't light the fence or the house on fire when it shot past. That's a win in a lot of situations, right?

Let's look at the other side of it, though. You cut the head off of all of your perennial vegetation reducing your fuel loads but in turn you reduced your ground shading causing more heat, more evaporative losses of your moisture, potentially increased your surface air flow thus increasing your oxygen, plus further stressed your pasture and range opening the door for cheat grass and many of the other short window annual grasses that only increase extreme fire potential on the backside. You reduced one prong of the triangle, but at the cost of an increase to the other two. Did you limit fire or increase its potential? You may say, well, all vegetation can burn, and when it does catch fire, you have a fire with much more intensity. I won't argue that point, but what I will argue is that we can actually drastically slow a fire with more vegetation and sometimes deter it altogether, too.

Back to the fire triangle. Heat and oxygen can play as big a role as fuel does. Less heat, less oxygen, and generally more humidity in the heavy fuel may strike a balance back in your favor. It takes time to burn fuel. When fires break out at the buffet, it's in no hurry to leave until the buffet is gone. What does that have to do with anything? Think about first responders and those brave men and women who fight fire, who are trying to get out in front of these things. Lots of factors to consider. Deeply rooted plants and those in the best shape are going to have the best vigor and recovery on the back end, regardless of whether they got burnt or not. Broadleaves will generally hold moisture content longer in the season than our annual grasses. Back to reducing heat and oxygen. Not every situation is the same, but I hope people will get out and take a look at

the burn scar with a critical eye. Why did it burn the way it did? I still believe protecting critical infrastructure through fuel removal is a powerful tool, but maybe we can bring multiple different approaches to the table to better equip ourselves going forward. What works at the house may not be the best for what works out in the pasture.

If you started a well certified for groundwater, use as a fire suppression method, please contact the North Platte NRD if we have not already contacted you about the water used. In the future, if there is a threat of fire, the NRD will work with landowners regarding the use of groundwater for fire suppression.

With that said, I know folks have lost an awful lot in these fires and in those of the past. Please keep in mind the NRDs Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP) as perhaps a tool to help remediate some of the damage in the name of conservation and rebuilding that which was destroyed. It's a cost share program with a wide array of conservation related practices for things like windbreaks, cross fencing in the name of range health, grass planting assistance for things like burn lines, plus a whole host of water related activities. The program is 50% cost share up to a \$5,000 max per year. Reach out to the NRD or your local NRCS office for more details and assistance.

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**.

Drought Update

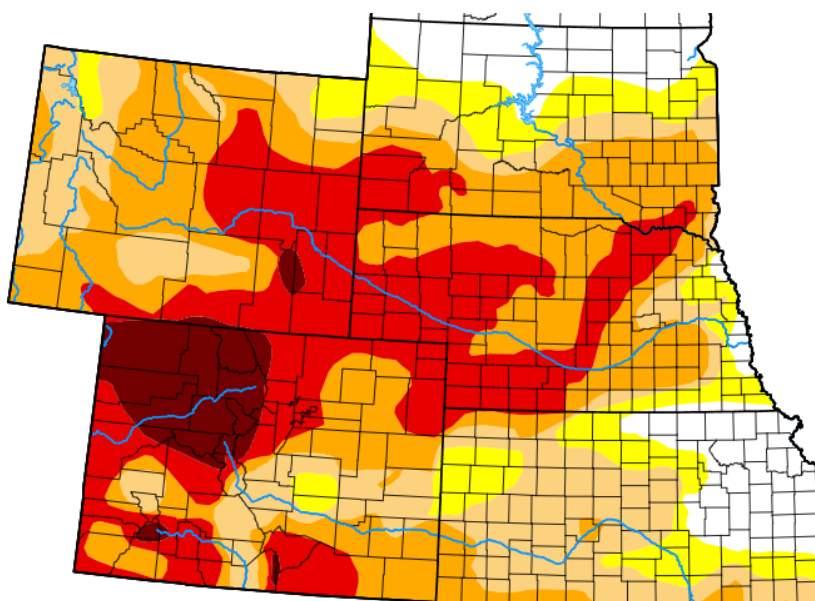
According to the U.S. Drought Monitor, drought conditions remain widespread across Nebraska and the High Plains. Most of the state is experiencing some level of drought following a dry winter and below-average precipitation. These conditions have led to declining topsoil and subsoil moisture, creating added concern as we move further into the irrigation season.

Recent information shared through the University of Nebraska–Lincoln CropWatch at the Yonts Water Conference highlights additional concerns for the region. Snowpack in the North Platte River Basin is well below normal, and April 1st forecasted runoff is significantly reduced, at about 489,497 acre-feet compared to an average of 891,000 acre-feet. With less water expected to flow into the system, reservoir storage remains limited. As a result, irrigation districts are preparing for the possibility of reduced water availability and shorter delivery windows, which would impact surface water users throughout the season. With less fresh, clean water coming from the mountains and recharging groundwater this year, there is likely to be increased stress on both water quality and quantity.

While there have been a few recent precipitation events across parts of the state, they have not been enough to make a meaningful improvement in overall conditions. Drought is a cumulative condition, and it will take consistent, above-average moisture over time to see significant recovery. Until then, conditions will continue to depend heavily on timely rainfall and careful water management.

At this time, the North Platte NRD does not plan to make any changes to groundwater allocations based on current drought conditions.

We are currently in the second year of a five-year allocation, so please plan accordingly as we move through the growing season. If you have any questions about where you stand or need assistance reviewing your usage, do not hesitate to call.



Map released: Thurs. April 16, 2026

Data valid: April 14, 2026 at 8 a.m. EDT

Intensity

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

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



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

Chemigation Permits

The North Platte NRD mailed the annual Chemigation Permits beginning March 16th. These permits must be signed, dated, and returned to our office with the correct payment amount no later than June 1, 2026. Even if you are no longer chemigating, you need to fill out the permit with last year's chemicals and return the document to our office. Inspections will start after June 1st.



This is part eleven 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.