
Tri-Basin NRD
1723 N Burlington Street
Holdrege, NE 68949



Phone: (308) 995-6688
Fax: (308) 995-6992
Email: tribasin@tribasinprd.org

Natural Resources District

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact: Nicole Salisbury, Information & Education Coordinator
Phone 308-995-6688 or email nsalisbury@tribasinprd.org

Tri-Basin NRD Approves Budget Focused on Groundwater Projects

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (NRD) Directors held a public hearing on the district's 2015-2016 fiscal year budget at their August meeting. Following the hearing, directors approved the budget. Tri-Basin directors voted to increase the levy three percent in order to fund anticipated groundwater recharge projects. They also established a sinking fund which will allow them to fund future projects that will protect the district's groundwater supply for future generations.

A public hearing was also held on proposed changes to the district's groundwater rules. Following the hearing, approval of the rules changes was tabled until the September board meeting to allow directors to further review submitted testimony.

John Thorburn, Tri-Basin NRD General Manager, reviewed groundwater quantity data with directors. While groundwater levels have stayed fairly steady across most of the district, there are two areas of concern. Groundwater levels in May Township in Kearney County are being reviewed for a possible Phase 2 designation, while Elk Creek Township in Gosper County is being reviewed for a possible Phase 3 designation. The Phase 2 and Phase 3 designations are ways Tri-Basin's directors have developed to help them protect the district's groundwater supplies. All wells in Phase 2 Groundwater Quantity areas are required to have flowmeters installed and report annual water use. Certified irrigated acres may not be transferred into Phase 2 areas. Under Phase 3 rules, groundwater use is allocated and stricter rules for well spacing are applied. Directors set a public hearing to take

testimony on designation of these two areas at the September board meeting on Tuesday, September 8 at 7:30 p.m. Prior to the public hearing, Tri-Basin NRD staff will be holding public information meetings to discuss groundwater levels with landowners and operators in May and Elk Creek Townships. The informational meeting for May Township in Kearney County will be held on Thursday, August 20 at 2:30 p.m. at the Kearney County Fairgrounds in Minden. The informational meeting for Elk Creek Township has yet to be scheduled.

Tri-Basin directors decided to work with the Little Blue NRD and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) to develop an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) for the Little Blue River Basin. While an IMP is not required in the Little Blue Basin, directors from the two districts are proactively working to manage and protect groundwater in that basin.

Andy Bishop from the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture reviewed plans to apply for a \$500,000 Nebraska Environmental Trust grant that would allow reuse pits in the Rainwater Basin area to be filled in for better use of the land for crop and wildlife purposes. A portion of the funds (\$100,000) would be targeted at the Lake Seldom Wetland watershed south of Holdrege. Directors voted to support the grant proposal.

David Nickel, a long-time member of the Tri-Basin NRD board, submitted his resignation because he has moved out of his sub-district. Directors accepted his resignation and will advertise for possible candidates for the position.

Tri-Basin NRD's board also:

- Approved applications for two groundwater transfers, two irrigated acre transfers and one well permit variance request.
- Approved four applications for well decommissioning cost-share funds totaling \$2,000 and three cost-share applications totaling \$4,377.00.

Tri-Basin NRD's next Board of Directors meeting will be Tuesday, September 8, 2015 at 7:30 p.m. at Tri-Basin NRD, 1723 Burlington in Holdrege, Nebraska.

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