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Natural Resources District

NEWS RELEASE

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Holdrege Area Farmers Benefit from Spring Rainfall

Holdrege has received above average rainfall this spring, setting local farmers up to start the crop production season with plenty of moisture in the soil. During April of this year, Holdrege received 10.41 inches of precipitation. In April 2015, Holdrege had just 2.4 inches of precipitation. April 2016 was the wettest April on record for Holdrege since 1894. May 2016 rainfall was average.

Curtis Scheele, Irrigation Water Management Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), manages the Nebraska Agricultural Water Management Network (NAWMN) sites in Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (TBNRD). The NAWMN utilizes technology such as atmometers (ET gages) and soil moisture sensors to monitor crop water use and help local farmers manage their irrigation scheduling and conserve natural resources. The data collected from the NAWMN sites can be found at <https://nawmn.unl.edu/>. Scheele explains what the above average precipitation this spring means for local farmers.

“All of the spring rains in 2016 have completely filled the soil profile to a 4-foot depth,” says Scheele. “Across the entire TBNRD on all 13 (NAWMN) sites and at all 4-foot levels, even the dryland site, there was not one recording of less than 100 percent soil moisture on May 31. The entire profile is full, which provides ideal soil moisture conditions heading into the 2016 crop season.”

While summer months are typically drier in the Holdrege area, some long-range forecasts call for the higher precipitation trend to continue. The National Weather Service’s Three-Month Outlook map puts Holdrege in an area forecasted to receive above-average precipitation. The accompanying graph “Tri-Basin NRD Holdrege Monthly Precipitation-2016” compares this year’s precipitation with Holdrege’s average. While 2016 data is not complete yet, at 17.1 inches of precipitation so far this year, we have already surpassed the yearly total of 15.84 inches in 2012, which was a year of extreme drought. If Holdrege were to receive the average precipitation (based on historical data) for the remainder of 2016,

we would end the year with 32.56 inches, the wettest year since 2010. Tri-Basin NRD tracks historical weather data for Holdrege and makes this information available to local farmers as a tool in planning and scheduling irrigation.

Another irrigation planning tool that Tri-Basin NRD helps provide farmers in Gosper, Phelps, and Kearney Counties, is cost-share funding for soil moisture sensors. These sensors measure the amount of water available for crops in the soil, and the energy required to remove the water from the soil. By utilizing soil moisture sensors, in combination with data from atmometers, farmers can schedule irrigation to most efficiently use available water resources. Cost-share information on soil-moisture sensors is available at your local NRCS office.

Finally, Tri-Basin NRD provides funding for the Water Use Hotline from June 1 to September 1. This is a cooperative project of Tri-Basin NRD, High Plains Regional Climate Center, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID), and Nebraska Extension. The hotline provides updated crop growth and water use calculations for corn, soybeans, wheat, grain sorghum, and alfalfa. Farmers can access this information by calling 308-995-2255 locally or 1-800-993-2507 toll-free. Weather station data is recorded from five locations: Holdrege, Holdrege 4N, Lexington, Minden, and Smithfield. Online access is available at <http://www.cnppid.com/news-info/weatheret-data/>.

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