

Tri-Basin Topics

Spring 2009

"Dedicated to Conservation of our Natural Resources"

Volume 23, Issue 2

Republican Basin Irrigators Conserved Water in 2008



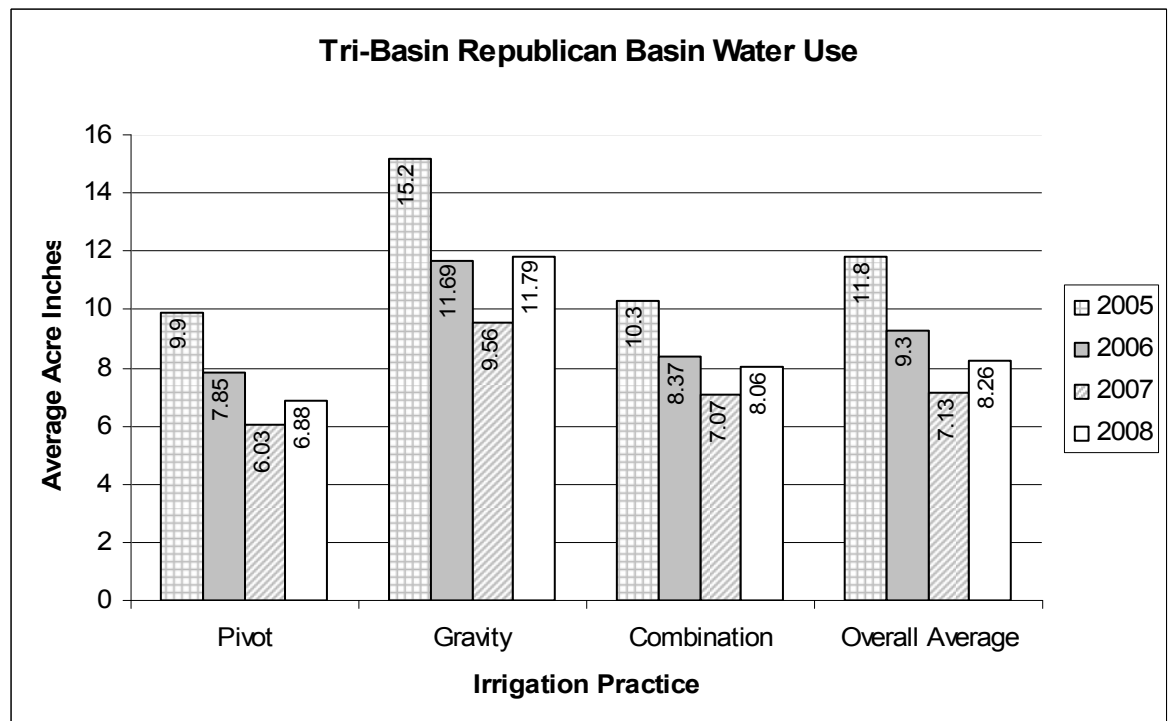
Irrigators in the Republican Basin portion of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District used slightly more irrigation water in 2008 than in 2007, according to groundwater pumping data submitted to Tri-Basin NRD by farmers and verified by NRD personnel. Overall average water use in this portion of the district was 8.26 inches of water per acre in 2008, versus 7.13 inches per acre in 2007. Water use in all sub-categories also increased slightly in 2008, when compared to 2007 (see chart below). This increase in water use is attributable to less timely rain events than occurred in 2007, as well as an increase in the number of acres planted to higher water use crops such as corn.

While overall average water use was higher in 2008 than in 2007, we at Tri-Basin NRD recognize that our farmers are still working to conserve groundwater and use it as efficiently as possible. Our 2008 overall average water use is still significantly lower than the allocation limits set by the Tri-Basin NRD board of directors for Union Township in Gosper County (9 inches per year). It is also lower than allocation limits established by neighboring Lower Republican NRD (also 9 inches per year).

We encourage our farmers to continue to closely monitor their water use and to conserve our groundwater.

Soil probing and newly available soil moisture sensors help farmers track soil moisture. Irrigators can also track crop water use by calling the Water Use Hotline at 1-800-993-2507. All these tools help farmers make informed decisions about when they should irrigate.

Wise use of groundwater reduces the likelihood that Tri-Basin NRD will need to limit water use to protect our groundwater supplies.





Manager's Message

By: John Thorburn

In 2006, Governor Dave Heineman committed the State of Nebraska to participate in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP). This program is a cooperative effort between the states of Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado and the US Department of Interior. It is intended to restore and enhance habitat for endangered Whooping Cranes and Piping Plovers.

In most areas of the nation, the US Fish and Wildlife Service reviews all aspects of projects that receive federal funds or require federal permits or licenses, to insure that they don't harm endangered species or their habitat. The PRRIP provides an alternative to regulation by the Fish and Wildlife Service for irrigation districts, public power districts and other entities that have such a "federal nexus". In exchange for regulatory relief, the participating states have agreed to help the Fish and Wildlife Service restore habitat for the endangered birds along the Platte River in central Nebraska.

The program will purchase as many as 10,000 acres of land along the river. It will also build water storage and supply projects that could deliver as much as 150,000 acre-feet of water a year to the Platte River. The program also plans to address what some biologists see as a shortage of coarse sand and gravel in the Platte River. For this purpose, the program plans to excavate many tons of sand and gravel and dump it in the riverbed at multiple locations. The hope is that



river flows will reshape these piles of sediment to create new sandbars and islands.

All these projects require money. The program will receive most of its funding from the federal government. The first "increment" of the program is supposed to last 13 years. It is anticipated that total cost of the program over that 13-year period will approach \$320 million. Of that amount, \$187 million will be cash provided by the federal government and the states of Wyoming and Colorado. Nebraska entities will contribute no cash, but will provide land and water.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program has many ambitious plans to improve wildlife habitat, but it also has a good neighbor policy that commits the program to prevent or mitigate impacts of program activities on private lands. There is a Land Advisory Committee that is specifically charged with making sure that this policy is enforced. Furthermore, the program has no power of eminent domain. It can only buy land from willing sellers.

A private consulting company called Headwaters Corporation has been contracted to administer the PRRIP. This effort is led by PRRIP Executive Director Jerry Kenney. If you want more information about the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, call their office in Kearney. Their phone number is 308-237-5728. They also have a website, platteriverprogram.org.

Platte Basin NRDs have representatives on all PRRIP committees. We look out for the best interest of local landowners, making sure that the program lives up to its commitment to be a good neighbor. Feel free to contact me at Tri-Basin NRD or Ron Bishop, manager of Central Platte NRD if you have concerns about the program or any of its projects.

Nebraska Natives



Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*) is native to Nebraska. It grows on a wide variety of sites, but grows best on rich, moist bottomlands. Bur oak has a slow to moderate growth rate and is fairly drought tolerant. It is an excellent species to include in wildlife habitat plantings. It is less susceptible to oak wilt than northern red oak and has no serious insect problems.



The large (up to 10- to 12-inch-long), dark green leaves turn yellow-brown in fall. The gray-brown bark becomes deeply ridged and furrowed with age. The bur oak's average height at 20 years is 20 to 26 feet, and at maturity is 35 to 45 feet.

Bur oaks are available from Tri-Basin NRD each spring for wind-break and shelterbelt plantings.

<http://www.tribasinnrd.org>

TBNRD Staff Changes



Tami Reese

Tami Reese is the new Field Office Secretary in the Holdrege NRCS office. She and her husband, Denis, live in Loomis, where Denis is the Industrial Technology instructor and high school football coach. Tami and Denis have two grown children: Aaron, of Des Moines, IA and Lindsey of Kearney.

Tami is active in All Saints Catholic Church in Holdrege. She enjoys gardening and walking. She says she has enjoyed "getting to know the nice people at the Tri-Basin NRD, FSA, and the NRCS offices." If you have not yet met Tami, stop in the Holdrege office and say hello.

Patty Abrahamson has retired from her position as Field Office Secretary in the Holdrege office and is now working as a part-time Assistant Office Clerk in the Tri-Basin NRD office. Patty will be helping with computer data entry and filing in the NRD office.



Patty Abrahamson



Nolan Little, Tri-Basin NRD Water Resources Technician, conducts a routine chemigation inspection.

Chemigation Permits Due June 1

Chemigation renewal forms have been sent to producers and are due, along with payment, in the Tri-Basin NRD office by June 1, 2009. Anyone needing to apply for a new chemigation permit for the 2009 season should contact the Tri-Basin NRD office at 308-995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688. All newly permitted chemigation systems must be inspected before use.

Staff will be doing routine inspections on chemigation systems from June until August. Routine inspections are required every three years. If your system is due for an inspection, you will receive a postcard this summer. Routine inspections must be completed for the permits to be renewed for the following year.

Free Domestic Water Testing Available

Rural residents in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties can have their household drinking water tested for nitrates and bacteria free of charge once a year through a program offered by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District.

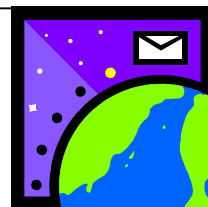
Any district resident who has a private household water well can pick up a free water testing kit from the Tri-Basin NRD office at 1308 Second Street in Holdrege. The kits are also available at the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation District offices in Elwood, Minden and Holdrege. The kits include instructions for obtaining the water samples. Household owners mail the samples to Ward Laboratories in Kearney for testing. Test results are sent to Tri-Basin NRD office, where they are recorded in a water quality database. The results are then forwarded to the household owner, along with information on protecting water quality.

For more information on this program, please contact Tri-Basin NRD at (308) 995-6688 or 1-877-995-6688.



Electronic Edition of Tri-Basin Topics Available

If you are interested in receiving a PDF version of Tri-Basin Topics newsletter via e-mail, please let us know. Simply send an email to nsalisbury@tribasinnrd.org requesting the electronic version and we'll take you off the mailing list and add you to the e-mail edition list.



ONLINE RESOURCES

- <http://dnrdata.dnr.ne.gov/wellssql/?&>Dept. of Natural Resources Well Data
- <http://water.usgs.gov/ogw> Ground water information
- http://www.cnppid.com/Elevation_Flows2.htm Reservoir elevation/Platte River Flow
- <http://tribasinnrd.org/domesticwatertest.html> Domestic Nitrate Testing
- <http://www.arborday.org> Tree recommendations, identification
- <http://www.websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>Determining soil type
- http://water.usgs.gov/cgi-bin/daily_flow?ne Current water resource conditions for Nebraska

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(All meetings are at NRD office in Phelps County Ag Center unless otherwise noted.)

April

- April 8 Rainwater Basin Conservation Day
- April 14 NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*
- April 22 & 23 Water Jamboree
- April 24 Arbor Day

May

- May 12 NRD Board Meeting 7:30 p.m.*
- May 25 Memorial Day (office closed)

June

- June 1 Chemigation permits due at TBNRD
- June 9 NRD Board Meeting at 7:30 p.m.*

* Times are tentative

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 Ruth Nielsen Minden Office Secretary
 Lori Hagan Elwood Office Secretary
 Tami Reese Holdrege Office Secretary

A mailing list is maintained and requests to be placed on the list should be sent to the above address. Comments and suggestions may be addressed to the General Manager.

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WATER CONSERVATION TIP

Remember to check your sprinkler system valves periodically for leaks and keep the sprinkler heads in good shape.



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- ◆ New Holdrege secretary

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**1308 Second Street
 Holdrege, NE 68949**

Natural Resources District



**Non-Profit Permit
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