

The Pipelining Newsletter

SOUTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

Board Looks At Districtwide Rules

Proposed changes in two areas of the SPNRD's Districtwide Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations are currently under review by the board of directors, who could take action as early as the August 2009 board meeting.

On June 16, 2009 the board held a

public hearing to receive input regarding the proposed changes and accepted additional written testimony until June 23.

The subjects of the hearing are rules pertaining to NRD access to land within the District and possible changes to ground water allocations. Four of the District's Allocation Subareas are currently under review. They are Wyoming state line to Oliver Reservoir, Oliver Reservoir to Buffalo Bend, Buffalo Bend to Sidney, and Sidney to the Colorado state line. All are in the District's overappropriated area.

The second allocation period begins in 2010. The Districtwide Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations provide that changes to the allocation are reviewed one year before the next allocation period begins.

Among the many considerations the board is looking at are overall water use within the subdistrict, ground water level trends and the state's requirement that water use within the over-appropriated subdistricts, (where water use

See Districtwide page 4

SPNRD Launches Redesigned Website

The District recently launched its new Website at www.spnrd.org, incorporating updates which officials hope will make the flow of information easier for users to access.



"We're excited about the opportunities the redesign should give us," says Information & Education Coordinator Don Ogle, who administers the site.

See Website page 2

Integrated Management Provisions Under Review

The South Platte NRD board of directors has been reviewing testimony from recent public hearings on the proposed Basin-Wide Plan for Joint Integrated Water Resources Management of Overappropriated Portions of the Platte River Basin, Nebraska; and proposed amendments to Rule 9 of the District's Integrated Management Plan.

The public hearings for the measures were held June 16 in Sidney and written testimony was accepted until June 23, 2009. The hearings on the Basin-wide Plan and IMP Rule 9

See Integrated Management page 6

NRD Among Those Seeking Solutions With Expiring CRP

With over 778,000 acres of Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts expiring between next October and 2013, conservation officials have been exploring a number of options to see that highly erodible land can remain in cover, yet continue to produce income for owners.

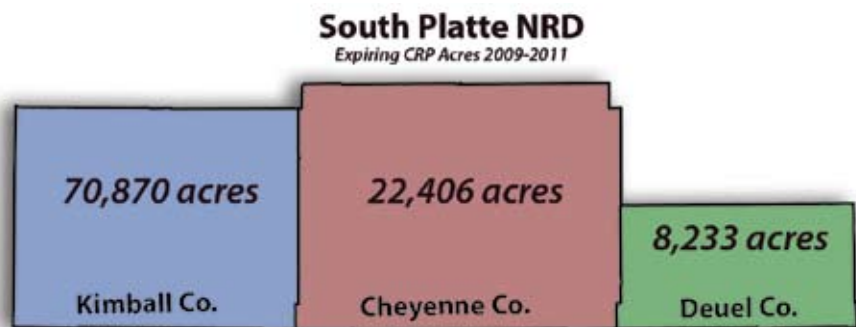
In the South Platte NRD, the bulk of retirements are scheduled between 2009 and 2011. In that time frame more than 101,000 acres in contracts could retire. Of those, 70,870 are in Kimball County, the most in the state.

Cheyenne County has 22,406 acres and Deuel County 8,233 acres expiring.

South Platte NRD board members

have been among those seeking solutions and have been working with state and federal officials to seek answers.

See CRP Solutions page 3



NRD Coordinates Hazard Mitigation Planning

The South Platte NRD is coordinating with local officials throughout the District to review the possible need for a multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Officials throughout the region were approached earlier in the year about forming a plan, which would identify area-wide needs and prepare for responses in case of wide-spread disaster.

Plan components could include pre-disaster planning, providing proactive steps toward reducing disaster damage. There could also be provisions for an emergency response plan and plans for recovery and clean up following disasters. Counties currently have Local Emergency Operating Plans

(LEOPs) used as guidelines during emergencies, but the current effort is for a federally-approved plan.

As such, those within the Plan area would be eligible for disaster grants they would otherwise not qualify for.

While smaller jurisdictions such as counties could develop plans, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suggests multi-jurisdictional plans. In Nebraska, a number of natural resources districts have served as the coordinating agency, as they cover a number of counties.

In the first phase of developing a local plan, SPNRD will apply for a planning grant. From that point, it will take about two years to complete the plan.

and have it approved by FEMA.

In forming the plan, information will be gathered to determine the needs of communities involved and if they should be included as possible plan components. Any number of needs could be identified in pre-disaster planning. Flood levees, structure and infrastructure protection and other public safety provisions could be determined as areas where further attention is needed and pursued through additional grant funds.

After that, officials would develop the plan, which would be reviewed by Nebraska and Federal Emergency Management Agencies.

FEMA, in many cases through NEMA, provides funding in a number of areas, including program development, hazard mitigation and flood mitigation assistance. Estimated cost for plan development is about \$105,000 and grant funds could be used for a portion of that cost.

New Program May "Reduce" Size of Government

You might be seeing less of some SP-NRD staff and board members soon – not because they'll be around less often, but because there might be less of them to see.

While covered by a different health plan, natural resources districts across the state are following Governor Dave Heineman's lead in wellness program participation. The Nebraska Association of Resources District has instituted a wellness program as well, seeking to improve lifestyles and overall health of its membership, while at the same time reducing health-related insurance claims.

With their voluntary participation, SP-

NRD staff and board members are not only watching out for their own health, but also keeping personal and taxpayer costs down.

Recent studies have shown that participation in wellness programs can reduce the number of sick days, doctor visits and insurance claims.

With that in mind, participating natural resources district employees have begun to track and increase the number of servings of fruits and vegetables they have, plus any increase in their daily activity. Friendly competitions are also in store.

If successful, the program may let you "see less" of government employees.

Website Easier Access to Information Continued from Page 1

"For a number of years the website has served the District well in providing an informational outlet. What we feel we've done in this next evolution is to make it easier for people to access South Platte Natural Resources District, its programs and the huge amounts of information we have for their use."

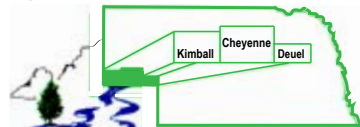
The site's main page features a District news and links to pages on various aspects involved with ground water management, various District programs, information about the board of directors and the District in general, as well as links to rain and weather information.

Once past the front page, the site was

designed with ease of navigation in mind. From interior pages, users can easily access other pages quickly. For instance, a user can be reading the overview on integrated water management and click on the link to cross reference water quality. Information on District rules, forms and maps are also readily available.

"We're continuing to update the information we have and plans are in the works to add access to much more information," Ogle says. "One of our goals is easy access to any information District residents may need to manage their natural resources."

SOUTH PLATTE



NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

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Cheryl Burkhart-Kriesel	Vice-Chair
Tom Biggs	Secretary
James C. Johnson	
Bill Halligan	
Paul A. Hutchison	
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Kyle Liebig	Water Resources Coordinator
Travis Glanz	Water Resources Technician
Chris Kaiser	Natural Resources Coordinator
Don Ogle	Information & Ed. Coordinator
Jane Joyce	NRCS/NRD Field Office Secretary
Hilary Cook	NRCS/NRD Secretary/Technician

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Flow Meter Inspection, Maintenance Remains Important

With this year's extra spring moisture, many irrigations systems were only recently turned on for the first time. But when they are, Travis Glanz, SPNRD water resources technician, reminds irrigators of the importance of proper flow meter inspections and maintenance.

Most flow meter owners within the District participate in the Flow Meter Maintenance Cost Share Program, which provides \$30 per meter for maintenance by a certified contractor every three years. Even so, inspecting flow meters on a regular basis between those periods can help owners catch potential problems and potentially reduce additional maintenance costs.

One of the things to look for during the irrigation season is if there are erratic movements of needles or flow rate indicators while the system is operating. Jerks could indicate improper gear meshing, while a wobble of the meter could indicate bearing wear or an unbalanced propeller.

Moisture under a flow meter lens face could indicate a moisture leak and seals that should be checked. Dust under the lens also shows there might be improper wear within the system.

One simple, yet effective preventative step that Glanz suggests is the use of rubber boots on meters. Boots are an inexpensive protection that could reduce meter exposure to damage from the elements.



This pictures shows what can happen to a register without a canopy boot. Regular inspection and maintenance could have prevented costly repairs or replacement with this meter.

With proper inspections and maintenance, the chance for flow meter problems can be greatly reduced, lowering costs and keeping the system within the requirements of the Districtwide Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations.

CRP Solutions *Easier Access to Information* Continued from Page 1

While some of the answers cannot be undertaken on the federal level, options have been added on the state level.

SPNRD Chair Keith Rexroth, who also serves on the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, was among those lobbying to add perimeter fencing to practices eligible for cost-share assistance through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP).

While federal funds through the Environmental Quality Enhancement Program (EQIP) approves cross fencing as a practice for shared funding, perimeter fencing has not been part of the program. One reason could be the complexity of fencing boundaries, not only within Nebraska's borders, but nationally as well.

Rexroth explains boundary fencing law within Nebraska dates back many years and the effort could likely result in changes to those laws to accommodate current needs. But, he says, many officials are willing to take the risk, "so we can maintain the grass we need to keep potential erosion in check."

By using NSWCP funds for perimeter fencing, it will allow producers another option as they consider future use for CRP ground. Building a perimeter fence could cost producers up to \$3,500 per mile, an expensive choice without cost-share assistance.

Rexroth and others hope many producers, especially those with highly erodible land, can use the perimeter fencing option as opposed to breaking the ground up and placing it back into farm land. Officials at many levels agree that much of the land currently in CRP is not best suited for agricultural production, which is why producers and government invested so much money into the CRP program and lands.

Rexroth says by taking advantage of perimeter fencing that investment doesn't have to go to waste. "It can allow producers to take an established resource and convert it to a multiple use of ground cover and grazing."

Those wishing to take advantage of NSWCP funds for perimeter fencing are

urged to contact the South Platte NRD or Natural Resources Conservation Service as soon as possible. Funds have been allocated, but are expected to be in great demand.

Additional conservation buffer practices are also available through NRCS, including buffer strips, filter strips, grassed waterways, cross wind trap strips and field windbreaks. Limited areas can also be enrolled in Continuous CRP.

While many CRP contracts are expiring, extensions were also made available in some areas. Rexroth and other NRD officials were among those lobbying for extensions, meeting with state and federal officials.

Rexroth and board member Jim Johnson of Dix were among members of a Nebraska delegation making a trip to Washington, D.C. earlier this year. The delegation, made up of NRD officials, spoke with federal representatives and agency officials on resources management issues, such as CRP, important to the state and its future.

Wet Spring Brings Abnormal Tree Problem To Area

This spring's long-lasting moisture has been a blessing in many critical ways, but at the same time has resulted in a tree problem not commonly seen in our area.

Galen Wittrock is the SPNRD assistant manager and heads tree programs. He says one of the problems, Diplodia tip blight (also known as Sphaeropsis tip blight), is more commonly seen in eastern parts of the state. This year, however, wetter conditions have allowed the fungal disease to survive where it has not in the past.

Diplodia tip blight results in browning and death of branch tips in pine plantings. It can infect young trees, but the disease is more common as pines age. Tip blight commonly occurs in landscape, windbreak and park plantings and is most severe in Austrian pines but will also affect Ponderosa, Scotch and Mugo pines as well.

Infection of new shoots can be reduced significantly with copper-based fungicidal treatment applied twice during the period when current-year shoots are most susceptible. The best time for treatment begins with the opening of shoot bud, usually from mid-April to the first week in May, depending on the year.

Another, similar-looking problem showing itself in Austrian, Ponderosa and Scotch pines is damage from the Zimmerman Pine Moth. This is more common in the area, but has been reported more this year than others.

Districtwide *Proposed Changes to Allocation, Access Reviewed* Continued from Page 1

is greater than recharge capability) be returned to 1997 levels.

The process began with review by the District's Allocation Subcommittee, comprised of ground water users from varying backgrounds. Opinions by individual subcommittee members ranged from no decrease in allocations to as much as a four-inch decrease. Keeping the recommendation of the subcommittee in mind, the board chose in March to move forward with a two-inch allocation reduction.

If approved as proposed, the allocations, in acre-inches, would change to:



Diplodia tip blight (left) is a fungal disease uncommon in this part of the state, but may have been brought on by wet springs. An infestation of Zimmerman Pine moth can be determined when Pine pitch begins to flow (top right) and more easily seen later after pitch masses build up (bottom right).

While browning on the ends of needles can be an indicator, the more certain sign is the appearance of pitch masses on tree trunks and branches.

The pitch masses form where larvae are feeding under the bark. Their appearance is as if blotches of milky gum were placed on the tree and often there is sap running down the tree below the mass.

Because the pitch masses are in the center of the tree hidden by the needles, Wittrock says many times owners don't know there is a problem until a branch

falls off. A more serious manifestation is when the center trunk breaks out, usually in the top half of the tree.

While the window for treating Diplodia is past, those identifying problems from the Zimmerman Pine Moth still have an opportunity to help their trees. There are two effective periods to spray, during the second week in April and again in the second week of August.

Homeowners can spray with products using the active ingredient Permethrin, while commercial applicators can also use Chlorpyrifos-based sprays.

Wyo. to Oliver Reservoir: from 16" to 14" per year, or 42" over 3 years;

Oliver to Buffalo Bend: from 18" to 16" per year, or 48" over 3 years;

Buffalo Bend to Sidney: from 16" to 14" per year, or 42" over 3 years;

Sidney to Colorado: from 18" to 16" per year, or 48" over 3 years.

Allocations in the two remaining sub-areas, the Tablelands and South Platte Valley, both at 20" per year (80" over 4 years) went into effect last March.

In the public hearing, a number of agricultural producers spoke against reducing allocations, asking the board

to wait longer to see the long-term effect the measures were having on the aquifers. Two speakers, one from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and one from Nebraska Public Power District, spoke in support of the reductions.

One producer spoke against the other section up for review, which provides for District access to properties. District staff explained the language change is to bring the districtwide rules more into line with state statute. The landowner objected to the change, feeling the language provides unfair access.

First Come, First Served In New Buffer Strip Signup

Applications are currently being accepted for the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program, which has seen provisions for new acres and increased incentives.

The Program was implemented in January 1999 through fees assessed on registered pesticides. Cropland adjacent to perennial and seasonal streams, ponds, and wetlands can be enrolled in buffer strips, which are designed to filter agrichemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides.

Two kinds of buffer strips are eligible - filter strips, which are narrow strips of grass; and riparian forest buffer strips containing trees and grass.

The program is designed to be used in conjunction with the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), or other programs, however it can be used by itself, as well. Program rental rates provide:

- For irrigated cropland where CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs are also used, rental rates are \$250 per acre minus payments from the other programs.

- For irrigated cropland where CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs are not used, the rental rate is \$225 per acre minus any other program payments.

- For non-irrigated cropland enrolled in CRP, CREP or other governmentally-funded programs, the rental rate is equal to 20% of the average CRP soil rental rate.

- For non-irrigated cropland without CRP, CREP, or other governmentally-funded programs, the rental rate per acre is equal to 120% of the average CRP soil rental rate plus \$5 per acre, minus the payment rate from any other programs.

In no case may payments from all programs exceed \$250 per acre.

To apply for the Program, contact the South Platte NRD. Funding is limited and will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis until funds are gone.



Heavy Duty Grass Drill Ready To Meet Demand

The NRD recently received a new, heavy duty grass drill that is expected to be in high demand as District land owners gear up for Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land enhancements.

The grass drill, a 10-foot Great Plains no till model, was made possible through funding commitments by the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the High Plains Chapter of Pheasants Forever. The \$15,000 grant from NET was one of 82 projects receiving \$15,065,944 in grant award from the Trust this year. Pheasants Forever committed \$10,000 and the SPNRD covered the remainder of the \$29,039 purchase.

Need for the new drill in the southern Panhandle arises from a number of variables. The District's current no till drill was purchased in 2001 and has since planted more than 3,800 acres and has recently needed extensive and more frequent repairs. The drill will remain available for smaller plantings, but a heavy, more reliable drill will be needed to meet expected demand.

That demand comes with the CRP Enhancement requirement, through

which CRP cooperators in the southern Panhandle will be required to conduct mid-contract enhancement of their CRP acres. Approximately 226,000 acres of enhancements are expected. The drill is expected to allow program cooperators to efficiently accomplish larger practice plantings.

Grass drills available for lease through the NRD are essential not only for the CRP enhancements, but also for Corners for Wildlife Plantings, wildlife food plots, buffer strip plantings and grass plantings in Wellhead protection areas.

For more information, contact the NRD at 308-254-2377 or go to the District Website, www.spnrd.org.

The Nebraska Legislature created the Nebraska Environmental Trust in 1992. Using revenue from the Nebraska Lottery, the Trust has provided over \$142 million in grants to 1,134 projects across the state. Anyone – citizens, organizations, farmers and businesses – can apply for funding to protect habitat, improve water quality and establish recycling programs in Nebraska. The Nebraska Environmental Trust works to preserve, protect and restore our natural resources for future generations.



SPNRD, Game & Parks Renew Agreement For Oliver

The South Platte NRD and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission recently came to an agreement that will see the Commission continue to manage NRD-owned Oliver Reservoir.

The five-year agreement is much shorter than the previous lease, allowing the parties to evaluate costs as the state strives to meet tighter budget requirements. The Commission will continue to collect park permit fees to offset costs, while SPNRD will pay the Commission \$14,000 each year for its services.

Under the agreement Commission responsibilities will include, but are not limited to:

- Enforcement of rules and regulations governing recreational areas, including law enforcement, camping, boat safety, hunting and fishing;
- Maintenance and repair of roads;

- Fisheries and wildlife management;
- Entrance fees including those for camping or other Commission fees;
- Collection and removal of garbage and other refuse;
- Implementation of the District's Emergency Preparedness Plan.



District responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Operation, maintenance, repair and inspection of the flood control structure;
- Controlling noxious weeds on the

- dam and land surrounding the lake;
- Reading, maintaining and repairing the property's monitoring wells;
- Grassland management on the south side of the lake;
- Preparing an Emergency Preparedness Plan with Commission assistance;
- Organizing and supervising volunteers who may assist in District or Commission sponsored activities on the property.

The full agreement is on file at the SPNRD office.

"We're very pleased to be able to continue our relationship with the Game and Parks Commission at Oliver Reservoir," says Galen Wittrock, SPNRD assistant manager. "By combining the expertise from our respective agencies we continue to manage Oliver as a valuable recreation area in the southern Panhandle."

Integrated Management Basin-wide, District Rule 9 Reviewed Continued from Page 1

were held in cooperation with officials from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR), who are also performing reviews.

Once reviews are complete, SPNRD and NDNR will come to an agreement on possible changes in the integrated management regulations. Once each document is finalized, the SPNRD board will formally approve it, as will NDNR. The final step will be an exchange of letters between the entities.

The process dates back to 2004, when NDNR designated areas of the District as either fully- or overappropriated. That designation ruled the entire district as fully appropriated (with all water resources being completely used) and the South Platte Basin, including Lodgepole Creek, as overappropriated (where water use exceeded supply).

Under requirements of the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act (LB962), the state's natural resources districts with areas designated as fully- or overappropriated are required to work with NDNR develop integrated management plans to man-

age the state's ground water and surface water resources. That stipulation was also placed on river basins, requiring the districts to work with the Department on basin-wide integrated management plans as well.

On June 20, 2008 South Platte NRD chairman Keith Rexroth and Nebraska Department of Natural Resources acting director Brian Dunnigan (appointed Director in late 2008) exchanged letters of agreement approving the District's Integrated Management Plan (IMP). The IMP became effective July 20, 2008.

At that time the overappropriated basin-wide plan was incomplete and final approval of the District's IMP section dealing with the District's overappropriated areas, Rule 9, needed to be rewritten as the basin-wide plan was completed. That is due to the requirement that Rule 9 must meet requirements set forth in the basin-wide plan.

Now, both documents are nearly finished pending the results of the final reviews and any changes that might need to be made.

In their review of testimony, board

members focused on one subject that many of those testifying questioned. Both the basin-wide plan and District IMP call for the use of "the best science and data available." At this time, the basis for many assumptions made in the plans are from information in the Cooperative Hydrology Study (COHYST) commissioned to explore the hydrological and geological conditions in the Platte Basin.

During the hearings and in additional testimony, many questioned the COHYST application of the same constants to both Lodgepole Creek and the South Platte River. In their review, the directors acknowledged the concern, and stress the importance of continued efforts to maintain updated data.

The directors are continuing to review the data and will make their final decision on the basin-wide Plan and the amended Rule 9 at the August 11, 2009 board meeting. By law, both the Basin-Wide Plan and the District's complete IMP (with the final approval of Rule 9) must be agreed to and implemented by September 15, 2009.

Your NRD & Natural Resources

Water Cycle

E R J S E V A P O R A T I O N
 O E P R E C I P I T A T I O N
 M F N O I T A S N E D N O C B
 E T A R T V H O Z I R T B H N
 E B T R A N S P I R A T I O N
 M A C T A K G L Q M V T R A N
 Y F F O N U R S X P J M F X A
 X E F Q W A T E R T A B L E K
 K Y U L K F R K D T K N Y G U
 X F Q D F Z Q P O L A R C A P
 D N R H J K E H W I W B L K H
 K N G R E T A W D N U O R G S
 T L K G W M I F D R O U G H T
 R L A G L A C I E R B Y R Z K
 T M N A T J K D K D E C L A H

Find and circle the words related to the Water Cycle

Condensation
 Evaporation
 Glacier
 Drought
 Groundwater

Polar Cap
 Runoff
 Precipitation
 Transpiration
 Water Table

Did you know?

Since 1972 Natural Resources Districts have been protecting and managing natural resources in Nebraska. Officials who are elected in your area represent the interest of all people. We work to protect and conserve ground water and soil, wildlife habitat and other resources for everyone to use and enjoy. Do you like science, natural resources and the outdoors? Maybe you'll help us some day!

Choose the two main surface waterways running through part of the South Platte NRD.

- A. South Platte River
- B. North Platte River
- C. Lodgepole Creek
- D. Horse Creek

It's a Fact!

People in the South Platte NRD depend on ground water for nearly all their water needs. Our ground water comes mainly from two aquifers:

- Ogallala Aquifer
- Brule Aquifer

The Ogallala Aquifer lies under parts of eight states. It is also known as what?

- A. The Indian Aquifer
- B. The Prairie Aquifer
- C. The High Plains Aquifer
- D. The San Diego Formation

Lodgepole Creek runs through most of Kimball, Cheyenne and Deuel counties. In total, the creek runs through part of three states and is about 212 miles long. How much of it is in the South Platte NRD?

- A. One-fourth
- B. One-half
- C. Three-quarters
- D. All of it

A-South Platte River and C-Lodgepole Creek; C-The High Plains Aquifer; B-One half

Answers

The Pipeline SOUTH PLATTE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT Newsletter

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One of the natural resources the South Platte NRD works to manage is Lodgepole Creek. Its course runs nearly the entire length of the District. Lodgepole Creek is an intermittent stream that runs above ground in some areas and under ground in others. Heavy rains in the area this spring rejuvenated many parts of the creek and also brought water levels up at Oliver Reservoir in western Kimball County.

To find out more about the work the District does to protect lives, property and natural resources in the southern Panhandle, go to the District Website at www.spnrd.org.

