

SPRINKLES & SPLASHES

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Middle Republican Natural Resources District

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 2 ::: SPRING 2005

First Year of Water Allocations 'Well' Underway

Now that the Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations and the Integrated Management Plan are in place, we begin the first year of allocation with this pumping season. We have fielded numerous questions this winter and spring about how the process will work. While there are no easy answers, we hope that the process is not too confusing. Several important provisions need to be restated.

- Meters have been read and everyone has a beginning reading for this season.
- The allocation is 39 inches for 3 years and you could pump all 39 inches this season if you wanted. You would be required to be dryland for the remaining two years of this allocation.
- A landowner can use their allocation on any or all of

their certified acres. This means that if you have 200 certified acres and choose to water only 150, you could spread the remaining water for the 50 acres on the 150 you watered. There is no penalty or loss of certified acres just because you choose not to water some of them in any given year.

- If you have certified acres that you own and certified acres that you rent, you should have a transfer permit to bring water from the rented ground to the ground you own. This transfer permit is available from the district and protects both you and your landlord.

The full text of our rules and regulations is available on our website at mnrnd.org.

To those of you who have signed up in the Conservation Reserve

Enhancement Program (CREP) and the EQIP Special Incentive Program, first let me thank you for your interest in these programs. The incentive programs will greatly assist the State in maintaining compliance with the Compact Settlement. Over 30,000 acres in the Republican Basin have been enrolled in CREP, 9,000 of which are located in the Middle Republican NRD. A maximum of 50,000 is all that will be enrolled, so we are off to a good start. Another 10,000 acres have been enrolled in the EQIP Special Incentive. Both of these programs have an

impact on your allocations. In the EQIP program you have to plant dryland for 4 years. You do not receive an allocation for these acres while they are in the program but you do maintain your certification. When the acres come out of the program for the 2009 crop year you can go back to irrigated acres if you wish. The CREP program requires that you plant the acres to grass for 10 to 15 years. Once again you do not receive an allocation for these acres while they are in the program and they too can be brought

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NRD Area Students Busy with Natural Resources Education

Spring has been a busy time for students in the Middle Republican Natural Resources District. In keeping with the district's goals to provide educational opportunities in natural resources curriculum, the Middle Republican Natural Resources District sponsors and participates in many programs.

In celebration of Arbor Day, Information & Education coordinator Kara Gall distributed nearly 600 tree seedlings to students at schools throughout the district. Through songs, storytelling, and games such as Tree Jeopardy, students from preschool through fifth grade learned about parts of trees, benefits of trees, and how we can conserve this renewable resource.

Gall joined forces with NRCS Irrigation Specialist Ben Hardin to teach McCook

area 7th graders about water quality at the McCook Outdoor Science Day in Barnett Park. Students tested local water samples for nitrates and discussed possible sources of contamination, while learning about local governmental policy that seeks to improve water quality.

In addition to these programs sponsored by the MRNRD, Gall also made presentations and volunteered at other events throughout the state, including the Nebraska Children's Groundwater Festival in Grand Island, TREEmendous Day at the Arapahoe Outdoor Classroom, and the Water Jamboree in Alma.

In May, district students competed at the State Envirothon in Halsey, where Wauneta-Palisade High School's Envirothon team won the Orals Contest and took 2nd place in the overall competition. Other district schools invited to participate in the State Envirothon, based on their high scores at the Mid Plains Regional Envirothon contest, were Southwest High School, Medicine Valley High School and Hayes Center High School.

In addition to hands-on presentations, the Middle Republican Natural Resources District supports natural resources and agricultural education by providing scholarships for post-high education and summer camps, as well as scholarships for educators.

The NRD Board awarded Post-



WAUNETA-PALISADE ENVIROTHON TEAM TAKES 2ND PLACE AT THE NEBRASKA STATE ENVIROTHON. FROM LEFT: JAMES STRAND, JESSE SKELTON, BRENNAN KEISER, KATIE ERICKSON, LUKE WRIGHT, COACH TERESA HAYES AND NARD CHAIR OF THE INFORMATION & EDUCATION COMMITTEE JIM JOHNSON.

High School Scholarships to Mysti Mues and Hannah King. Mues is a recent graduate of Cambridge High School who plans to attend McCook Community College this fall, majoring in Agriculture Education and Photography. King is a 2nd year student at NCTA, majoring in Ag Production / Ag Business. Each will receive a \$200 college scholarships.

The Board also awarded a Summer Camp Scholarship, worth \$250, to Courtney Fritsche of Maywood, NE, to attend the Nebraska Range Youth Camp June 13-17 at the Nebraska State 4-H camp.

Educator Scholarships are still available for any district teacher attending a continuing education workshop or class related to natural resources or agriculture. The deadline for these \$200 scholarships is June 10. For more information, contact Kara at (800) 873-5613 or kgall@mnrnd.org. ♦

Program Updates

Tree Planting: The 2005 tree planting season is finally over. Although final figures are not in, it appears that district tree planting and mulch crews planted over 16,000 trees. We are still calculating the total feet of conservation mulch laid. Due to the timely spring rains this year's tree seedlings should have a favorable survival rate as compared to recent years. Final numbers and statistics will be available at a later date.

Chemigation: Chemigation renewals and new applications were due in the MRNRD office June 1. Renewals not received by this date are considered expired. Chemigators with expired permits need to contact the MRNRD for a new application and will be charged \$30 for a new permit.

Entire Republican River Basin Undergoing Allocation Process

With all the changes in water policy occurring in the Middle Republican NRD, you may be wondering how other NRDs in the Republican River Basin are handling these changes. The TriBasin NRD adopted a Joint Action Plan in June of 2004. The Upper Republican NRD has adopted their Integrated Management Plan and the Lower Republican NRD is having another hearing in May to consider changes to their proposal.

With the final effective date of these rules and their respective Integrated Management Plans, all the districts in the Republican River basin will have rules in place. These plans are a structured to limit new uses and

to reduce current uses. These reductions are what is needed to insure that Nebraska maintains compliance with the compact settlement.

By themselves, the reductions would not have been enough. That is why the incentive programs of CREP and EQIP were so important. With the levels of participation shown in those programs, there is a good chance we will not have to consider more reductions in the future. All of this is contingent on somewhere near normal rainfall. If the drought continues the reductions and incentives may still not be enough. We all must try to conserve when possible and hope that the rains return. ♦

NRD Bids Fond Farewell to Technician Mike Keahey

After three years of service to the Middle Republican Natural Resources District, technician Mike Keahey has taken a position with the Little Snake River Conservation District in Baggs, Wyoming.

Before joining the NRD, Mike worked at Ag Valley Coop in Maywood. A native to South Dakota, Mike moved to Nebraska in 1992 to attend Chadron State College. He was active in the Curtis community as a volunteer with the Fire Department and an avid outdoorsman.

Many of our readers will have



NRD TECHNICIAN MIKE KEAHEY

encountered Mike reading meters, planting trees, or conducting chemigation inspections. Though he will be missed in the NRD office, we wish him much success in his new position! ♦

Visit us on the web at:

<http://www.mrnrd.org>

Allocations Underway, Continued from page 1

back into irrigated production when the contract expires. If you deferred your CREP contract till the end of this crop season you are limited to pumping 115% of your allocation this year. That amounts to 14.95 acre inches. It is important that you track this water use because if you over-pump you will be ineligible for the CREP program.

Meter readings for last years use are very encouraging. Average water use for the nearly 290,000 irrigated acres reported was 14.6 acre-inches. Hayes and Lincoln Counties reported the lowest use with 13.07 and 13.78 inches respectively. Frontier County averaged 14.54 ac/in, Hitchcock County averaged 16.34 ac/in and Red

Willow County averaged 16.52. With a little help from mother nature, producers should be able to hold average uses at 14 inches or less.

We currently have 312,802 certified irrigated acres and 3290 active irrigation wells. As most of you know the newer maps from FSA have numerous small changes in field sizes. We

can resolve those differences without any problems. Larger discrepancies or fields that were missed require a variance hearing by the board. Missed acres with a history can generally be added. Acres with no history or limited history may not be considered. Variance forms are available from the district and must be completed before you request will be considered. ♦

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

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|---------------|------------|--|
| May | 30 | Memorial Day, Office Closed |
| June | 10 | Educator Scholarship Applications Due |
| | 14 | Board of Directors Meeting, Curtis, 8:00 PM |
| July | 4 | Independence Day, Office Closed |
| | 12 | Board of Directors Meeting, McCook, 8:00 PM |
| August | 2-3 | Water Policy Task Force Tour of Republican River |
| | 9 | Board of Directors Meeting, Curtis, 8:00 PM |

There are more activities and events on our online calendar at: <http://www.mrnrd.org/calendar.html>

The USDA is offering grant money to farmers, irrigators, and businesses for developing renewable energy sources OR making energy efficiency improvements to existing businesses and farms. Learn more at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/farmbill/index.html>

ATTENTION TEACHERS!!



Money may not grow on trees, but we'll give you money to LEARN about trees... and other natural resources or ag related topics. If you are employed by a school located in the Middle Republican NRD AND intend to teach there in the 2005-2006 school year:

**APPLY NOW FOR THE
MIDDLE REPUBLICAN NRD
EDUCATOR SCHOLARSHIP
WORTH \$200**

Applications are due June 10, 2005.

The Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors will make the final award decision.

Call (800) 873-5613 to have an application mailed to you or apply online at <http://www.mrnrd.org/education/scholarships/scholarships.html>

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SPRINKLES & SPLASHES is the official publication of the Middle Republican Natural Resources District. It is published quarterly by the MRNRD, 220 Center Av., PO Box 81, Curtis, NE 69025. We can be reached at 800-873-5613, 308-367-4281, Email: office@mrnrd.org or www.mrnrd.org.

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