Manager’s Message—Todd Siel

After experiencing a Bomb Cyclone and historic flooding events in 2019, we all believed that 2020 in Nebraska would surely be a much “kinder, gentler year”, right? Right. Just like any loyal Cubs fan (Husker fan?) will tell you, there is always next year! Our groundwater usage last year was the lowest we had seen in decades and now in 2020 it appears usage will be toward the upper end of the spectrum. This has been a difficult year in so many ways, but the irrigators in the Lower Republican NRD are to be admired—leading the way in utilizing management techniques and technology to monitor and conserve both groundwater and surface water applications.

In the photo above, I present to you the staff of the Lower Republican NRD. Even though our home office is in Alma, our staff can also be found throughout the district at NRCS field offices and every township will see our technicians reading and repairing flowmeters or performing chemigation inspections. In this photo, there is over 107 years of valuable experience at the Lower Republican NRD. It is our goal to be natural resource partners with all the residents of our district, realizing the importance of conservation, but also maximizing the beneficial use of those same resources in a sustainable way.

Quick Take – Harlan County Lake is currently holding at an elevation of 1,942.7 (ca. 3’ below pool level). It is expected there will be a full irrigation supply in 2021 for the Nebraska Bostwick Irrigation District.
Southwest Region Land Judging Held

The Southwest Region Land Judging contest was held on October 7th in Gosper County. The competition teaches students the physical features of soils. They also look at the slope of the land and determine erosion and flood potential. Land judging is a great introduction to understanding the balance between the soil, water, and air, and how that sustains the life of plants and animals.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there was limited mixing between students from different schools. Anything the students touched was either discarded or sanitized. These changes complicated the contest but ensured that it would be safe for staff and participants.

District schools competing in this years competition were Alma, Cambridge, Arapahoe, and Southern Valley. Four district teams placed in the top ten with a team from Alma placing first. For full contest results, please visit www.nrdnet.org/nebraska-land-judging-soil-evaluation.

Congratulations to all the participants.

Conservation Funding Available for Irrigation Improvements

The Lower Republican NRD is pleased to announce that agricultural producers have the opportunity to receive conservation funding again this year as part of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Application deadline is November 20, 2020.

The funding is made available for improvements to irrigation systems. Eligible conservation practices include; installing high intensity soil moisture sensors, converting gravity systems to subsurface drip, and permanently retiring end guns on pivots. Priority is given to high water use areas, but all areas within the NRD are eligible.

Funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is also available to producers in the Lower Republican NRD to improve wildlife and pollinator habitat and improve soil health through increasing cover crop and crop rotation activities.

Producers in the Lower Republican NRD interested in participating in theses conservation efforts should contact the local NRCS office and apply for funding.

Time to plan your Spring Tree Planting

The deadline for having your tree plan completed with the NRCS and ordering trees is March 5. Early planning and tree ordering is encouraged. The Lower Republican NRD cost-shares trees and shrubs and their planting with minimum orders of 100 trees or $100.

Planting windbreaks help protect your home and livestock from the harsh winter winds. Also, a windbreak along cropland edges can increase your crop production.

Orders are now being accepted at your local NRCS office for spring plantings. They will assist you with tree species, draft planting plans, and filling out cost-share forms. Check with your local NRCS office now.
Flow Meter Readings

The Lower Republican NRD technicians are currently reading irrigation flow meters in the District. These meter readings will be used to determine water usage for the 2020 irrigation season. If you are not done irrigating or there is a possibility that you irrigated after your meter was read, please contact our office at 308-928-2182.

Please remember that it is the water user’s responsibility to have operational flow meters on every well. The Lower Republican NRD provides assistance to water users to make sure that flow meters are reading properly. Our staff is certified and trained by McCrometer to make necessary repairs. Additionally, we can provide ultrasonic testing to assist water users with their water management decisions. Contact our office if you believe your meter is not working properly. Please have your flowmeter serial number handy when you call.

Irrigation Meter Calculator

Below is our new Irrigation Meter Calculator you can find on our webpage at www.lrnrd.org. All you need to do is type in your beginning meter reading, ending meter reading and the number of acres irrigated. Make sure you select how your flow meter reads then press calculate. It will figure how much water you have used on that field.

Irrigation Meter Calculator

Beginning Meter Reading:

Ending Meter Reading:

Acres Irrigated:

Select Option:

Gallons x 100

Calculate

How Safe Is Your Drinking Water?

Private domestic wells, which deliver water to many of our families, can be susceptible to nitrate and bacteria contamination because of depth, location, age and poor construction. The EPA has established a Maximum Contaminant Level of 10 parts per million for nitrate-nitrogen for public drinking water supplies. Bacteria concentration of 1.0 per 100/milliliter or greater is considered unsafe.

Private water wells should be tested for bacteria or nitrate contamination at least once a year, when a new well is constructed, when any component of the water system is repaired, or whenever the well is inundated by flood waters or surface runoff.

A water test for nitrate contamination is highly recommended for households with infants, pregnant or nursing mothers, or elderly people as these groups are most susceptible to nitrates. Nitrate and bacteria contamination are not detectable without a test because both are tasteless, colorless, and have not smell.

The Lower Republican NRD offers testing kits for both nitrates and bacteria. Please contact the Lower Republican NRD office or your local NRCS office for more details.
UPCOMING EVENTS

November 26—Thanksgiving Day, Office Closed
December 10—Board Meeting 2 pm, LRNRD Meeting Room, Alma
December 24—Christmas Eve, Office Closed At Noon
December 25—Christmas Day, Office Closed
January 1, 2021—New Year’s Day, Office Closed
January 14, 2021—Board Meeting, 2 pm, LRNRD Meeting Room, Alma
January 18, 2021—MLK Jr Day, Office Closed
February 11, 2021—Board Meeting, 2 pm, LRNRD Meeting Room, Alma
February 15, 2021—Presidents’ Day

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