

Natural Resources News

Spring 2004 A Newsletter of the Twin Platte Natural Resources District Vol. 18

Come visit our web page to find out more about what we can do for you: <http://www.tpnrd.org>

Board Approves Temporary Suspension

During the Board of Directors meeting on December 9, 2003, the Board approved the preparation of a joint action plan for the integrated management of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water. The District will consult with affected appropriators, affected surface water project sponsors, and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources during the preparation of the joint action plan. The estimated time to complete a joint action plan is three to five years.

During the Board of Directors meeting on February 12, 2004, the Board approved a temporary suspension of drilling new wells within the area shown on the map entitled “Proposed Area for Suspension – Drilling New Wells”. The effective date for the temporary suspension is July 1, 2004. The area included in the temporary suspension runs the length of the district through Keith and Lincoln Counties, and six to eight miles either side of the North Platte, South Platte, and Platte Rivers. A precise map of the area is available on the Twin Platte Natural Resources District web site at www.tpnrd.org or may be viewed at the District’s office.

The suspension of drilling new wells will allow the Board and the State of Nebraska to assess the interconnection between ground water and surface water to determine if a problem exists, and how bad it might be. The current drought has aggravated the water problems, especially between surface water and ground water. The District felt that if nothing was done, existing surface water users and/or ground water users would increasingly be faced with less and less water supply, which could affect the assets of current water users.

The temporary suspension can be lifted by the Board anytime conditions change, but would normally last for three years and may be extended for an additional two years to complete studies and the management plan. At the end of the suspension, the management plan could include a provision for drilling new wells with approved plans of augmentation, and the management plan could include a moratorium if science determines the need.

Wells not subject to the suspension include replacement wells, those wells that pump less than 50 gallons per minute, de-watering wells pumping less than 90 days, and test hole wells. Variances may be granted for emergency situations involving the provision of water for human consumption or other good causes shown, including contamination or remediation, and monitoring and observation wells.

Two current situations that influenced the implementation of the temporary suspension were the unknown future requirements following the expected implementation of a program to protect critical habitat and threatened and endangered species in the Platte River Basin in Nebraska and the recommendations of the Water Policy Task Force to the Nebraska Legislature.

The State is participating in discussions with Colorado, Wyoming, and the Federal Government in a Platte River Cooperative Agreement to determine if a joint program can be implemented to protect critical habitat and threatened and endangered species in the Platte River Basin. The agreement began in 1997 and a proposed program could be implemented in 2005. The State is currently proposing to mitigate or offset any new depletions after July 1, 1997. The mitigation amount continues to build as new wells are being drilled. If the State doesn’t pick up their obligation, the responsibility will likely fall back to the water users who would be required to offset depletions from post July 1, 1997 wells.

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The Water Policy Task Force recommendations to the Nebraska Legislature include an annual study of each River Basin in Nebraska to determine if a Basin is fully or over appropriated. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources has indicated to the District that the Platte River Basin is over appropriated upstream from Elm Creek. The Water Policy Task Force recommendations provides that a stay be placed on new wells and new irrigated acres in over appropriated Basins. The effective date for the Legislation is anticipated to be July 15, 2004. The Board felt that adequate time was needed for producers to develop new irrigated acres from newly constructed wells.

During the Board of Directors meeting on February 12, 2004, the Board approved that, unless prohibited or limited by state law, the Twin Platte Natural Resources District intends to allow, until at least July 1, 2005, acres not previously irrigated with ground water to be developed for irrigation through the use of legal water wells constructed between October 1, 2003 and July 1, 2004.

The temporary suspension of drilling new wells allows the Twin Platte Natural Resources District to be proactive to the water situation within the District, and allows time for a joint action plan to be developed.

GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 1985 the Twin Platte Natural Resources District Board of Director's developed a Ground Water Management Plan. The plan was reviewed and revised in 1995.

The objective of the plan is to maintain for 100 years the ground water quantity for domestic, agricultural, and commercial purposes. The ground water Reservoir Life Goal in the plan is infinite for domestic purposes, and 100 years for agricultural and commercial purposes.

The plan provides for the establishment of Target Areas for individual townships in those parts of the District where ground water quantity could become a problem, and provides for the establishment of Management Areas for Major Land Resource Areas where ground water quantity is a problem. The plan also provides for Strategic Sub Areas, which may be identified within Major Land Resource Areas for implementation of a Management Area. Strategic Sub Areas would be considered in Target Areas previously implemented.

The triggering mechanism, when considering a Target Area, is a 5.0 feet decline from the 1983 baseline year. The triggering mechanism, when considering a Management Area, is a 10.0 feet decline from the 1983 baseline year. The triggering mechanism, when considering a Strategic Sub Area, is subsequent declines equal to 50% of the average decline, which initiated the Target Area.

The plan provides that the main reason for establishing a Target Area or a Management Area is to prevent or reduce declines of water quantity.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE

Information and links are available on the Twin Platte Natural Resources District web site at www.tpnrd.org. On the web site is a precise map of the area approved for a temporary suspension of drilling new wells within the District. The web site also includes the rules and regulations for the temporary suspension as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

We encourage you to call or visit our office to obtain or view any of the information that is available on the District's web site. Our office is located in the United Nebraska Bank Center at 111 South Dewey Street in North Platte, and our phone number is 308.535.8080. Office hours are Monday - Friday 8-12 and 1-5.

QUICK FACTS

Management of Ground Water

- 1975 – Legislature enacts the Ground Water Management & Protection Act
- 1976 – Twin Platte NRD began a ground water monitoring program
- 1977 – Twin Platte NRD Board approved a Water Resources Policy
- 1982, 1983, and 1984 – Legislature enacted amendments to the Ground Water Management & Protection Act requiring NRD's to prepare Ground Water Management Plans
- 1985 – Twin Platte NRD Board approved a Ground Water Management Plan
- 1992 – Computer model “Hydrology of Parts of the Twin Platte NRD and Middle Republican NRD, Southwestern Nebraska” is completed (NE Water Supply Paper 70)
- 1995 – Twin Platte NRD Board approved a revised Ground Water Management Plan
- 1997 – Computer model “Simulation of Ground Water Movement in the High Plains Aquifer, Southern Sandhills Area, West Central Nebraska” is completed (USGS Open File Report 96-206)

Management of Hydrologically Connected Ground Water & Surface Water

- 1996 - Legislature enacted amendments to the Ground Water Management & Protection Act to include Hydrologically Connected Ground Water & Surface Water
- 1997 – Cooperative Hydrology Project is begun to develop a scientifically supported database and analysis (computer model). Sponsors include the Natural Resources Districts in the Platte River Basin, State Agencies, and Public Power & Irrigation Districts (Completion is expected during 2004)
- 2003 - Twin Platte NRD Board approved the preparation of a joint action plan
- 2004 - Twin Platte NRD Board approved a temporary suspension of drilling new wells

NeRAIN

Nebraska Rainfall Assessment and Information Network

The Twin Platte Natural Resources District is looking for volunteers to take rain gauge readings at their home and/or place of business. The Twin Platte Natural Resources District is partnering with 12 other NRD's statewide to develop a rain gauge reading consortium. You will become a part of a special network of rain gauge readers across Nebraska. The information that you provide through your readings will affect local, state, and the National Weather Service reporting. The Twin Platte Natural Resources District will furnish a free rain gauge for your use. This gauge is a special unit that is approved by the National Weather Service and is necessary for taking correct measurements. Through your daily readings, you will have a direct impact on how the National Weather Service will report conditions in Nebraska. If you are interested in volunteering to take readings, please go online and download a volunteer application form at www.tpnrd.org. Complete the form and send to Glen Bowers, Water Programs Coordinator, Twin Platte Natural Resources District, PO Box 1347, North Platte NE, 69103-1347. If you have any questions, please contact us at (308) 535-8080.

The ever-present water issues reflect the need for a more systematic and uniform data collection process to assist in making timely decisions for better utilization of water resources. More comprehensive rainfall collection data could benefit all citizens, help crop specialists, planners, and decision makers, both urban and rural, assess local conditions, and make timely decisions for their operations.

Twin Platte Natural Resources District

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Board of Directors..... | Sub-District |
| Jim Rubenthaler.....(H)584-3578..... | At-large |
| (Chairperson) | |
| Doug Stack.....(W)535-8308..... | 3 |
| (Vice-Chairperson) | |
| Jerry Weaver.....(W)534-9240..... | 3 |
| (Secretary) | |
| Jim Meismer.....(H)284-6509..... | 5 |
| (Treasurer) | |
| Bob Petersen.....(H)532-2689..... | 2 |
| Joe Wahlgren.....(H)537-3136..... | 2 |
| Todd Kramer.....(H)764-2421..... | 1 |
| Jeff Baldrige.....(H)534-7780..... | 4 |
| Bob Wiseman.....(H)368-5866..... | 4 |
| Eric Hansen.....(W)532-6244..... | 1 |
| Dennis Schilz.....(W)287-2341..... | 5 |

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Staff Members..... | Position |
| Kent O. Miller..... | General Manager |
| Dave Slattery..... | Conservation Programs Coordinator |
| Bill Carhart..... | Range Programs Coordinator |
| Glen Bowers..... | Water Programs Coordinator |
| Ann Dimmitt..... | Water Programs Technician |
| Amy Mapes..... | Administrative Assistant |
| Kathy Clark..... | Field Office Secretary, North Platte NRCS |

Natural Resources News is the official publication of the Twin Platte Natural Resources District. This quarterly publication is partially funded by a 319 Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or would like to be placed on our mailing list, please feel free to submit them to:

Twin Platte Natural Resources District
 C/O Ann Dimmitt, Water Programs Technician
 P.O. Box 1347
 North Platte, NE 69103-1347
 Phone: (308)535-8080
 Fax: (308)535-8207
 e-mail: tpnrd4@nponline.net

Free Hazardous Waste Collection!



The collection is to take place **April 24, 2004, from 9 am to 1 pm at 1402 N. Sycamore, North Platte, behind the city shop.** Some accepted items include: batteries, paint products, oil and fuel additives. Computer monitors will be accepted for \$3.00 a monitor. Items **NOT** accepted include: tires, medical waste, radioactive materials, furniture, appliances, and PCB's. Questions about material and quantities accepted will be answered by calling (308) 534-8100 or go online at www.KeepNorthPlatteBeautiful.org.

This Hazardous Waste Collection is not just limited to residents living in Lincoln County, but is open to anyone living anywhere. If you have any of these items laying around the yard or the homestead, this is a great opportunity to get them off of your hands and do the environment a favor.



Upcoming Events:

April

8 Board of Director's Meeting - 7:30 p.m. CDT*

24 Hazardous Waste Collection Day! - North Platte — 9 am — 1 pm

May

13 Board of Director's Meeting - 7:30 p.m. CDT*

June

10 Board of Director's Meeting - 7:30 p.m. CDT*

* Board Meetings are held in the United Nebraska Bank Center-North Platte



Twin Platte

NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

PO Box 1347
 111 South Dewey Street
 North Platte, NE 69103-1347

Postal Patron