



2027 COVER CROP PROGRAM INTEREST

Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District
319 East 25th Street, York NE 68467
Phone (402) 362-6601; Fax (402) 362-1849
Email: ifling@upperbigblue.org

Applicant Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Operator Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Legal Description of Field _____

Estimated Acres to be Seeded _____

COSTS Estimated Cost of Seed _____

Estimated Cost of Seeding _____

Estimated Total Cost _____

Reason for Planting Cover Crops (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Reduce erosion from wind and water. | ☐ Increase soil organic matter content. |
| ☐ Increase biodiversity. | ☐ Suppress weeds. |
| ☐ Minimize and reduce soil compaction. | ☐ Manage/conservate soil moisture. |
| ☐ Capture and recycle or redistribute nutrients in the soil profile. | ☐ Promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use. |
| ☐ Improve yields by enhancing soil health. | ☐ Reduce use of herbicides and pesticides. |
| ☐ Grazing | |

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District

Water Quality Management Plan Implementation

Cover Crop Cost-Share Program

The Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District (UBBNRD) is looking for landowners, or operators, in the Beaver Creek Watershed (see Attachment 1), the Lake Hastings Watershed (see Attachment 2), and most Municipal Wellhead Protection Areas (see Attachment 3) willing to plant cover crop seed on their row crop acres. Cover crops are proven to:

- Reduce erosion from wind and water.
- Increase soil organic matter content.
- Capture and recycle or redistribute nutrients in the soil profile.
- Promote biological nitrogen fixation and reduce energy use.
- Increase biodiversity.
- Suppress weeds.
- Manage soil moisture.
- Minimize and reduce soil compaction.
- Improve yields by enhancing soil health.
- Reduce use of herbicides and pesticides.
- Create grazing opportunities

The UBBNRD will administer the Cover Crop Cost-Share Program in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to plant up to 2,000 acres of cover crops annually in the Recharge Lake Watershed, the Lake Hastings Watershed, and most Municipal Wellhead Protection Areas. Landowners/Operators interested in applying should fill out a 2026 Cover Crop Interest Form and submit this form to their respective county NRCS Office or the Upper Big Blue NRD. The District will rank applications and notify successful applicants that they have been approved for cost share funding. Approved applications are eligible for five years of funding through this program over a span of six years. Interested landowners, or operators, should start their application at their respective county NRCS office, or contact Jerod Fling of the UBBNRD, at (402) 362-6601.

Funding Availability

An estimated \$80,000 is available beginning in the fall of 2026. For approved applications, the cost-share rate will be actual costs up to \$50/acre the 1st year, up to \$50/acre the 2nd year, up to \$40/acre the 3rd year, up to \$30/acre the 4th year, and up to \$30/acre the 5th year, up to a maximum of \$7,500 per landowner/operator per year. The five year commitment can be completed over a six year span. Applicants that do not complete the five year commitment within the six year term must return 50% of the cost share funding that they have received. Applicants are required to submit incurred costs for the cover crops. NRCS and/or other federal, state, or local funds may not be combined with this program. All seed selection and seeding must abide by NRCS Code 340 Cover Crop Criteria and Scenarios (see Attachment 3). Cover crop termination is not eligible for funding under this program.

Recharge Lake Watershed

Tracts located in the Beaver Creek Watershed are eligible. Applications will be ranked according to a risk ratings determined by the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) which identifies Critical Riparian Zones, Very High Risk Areas, and High Risk Areas of the watershed.

Lake Hastings Lake Watershed

Tracts located within the Upper Big Blue NRD and within the Lake Hastings Creek Watershed are eligible. Applications will be ranked according to a risk ratings determined by the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) which identifies Critical Riparian Zones, Very High Risk Areas, and High Risk Areas of the watershed.

Municipal Wellhead Protection Areas

Tracts located in a Municipal Wellhead Protection Area where the municipality has an approved Wellhead Protection Area Plan are eligible.

Eligibility

- Landowners and Operators are eligible for this program.
- If approval is given to a Tenant, the District will notify the Landowner by mail that the practice was approved for planting.
- Land must be located within the “Riparian Critical Zone” or the “Very High Risk” or the “High Risk” categories within the Recharge Lake Watershed (Attachment 1) or the Lake Hastings Watershed (Attachment 2), and/or within a qualified Municipal Wellhead Protection Areas (Attachment 3).
- Applications will be ranked/prioritized by the following;
 - Critical Riparian Zones (see Attachments 1 and 2)
 - Very High Risk Areas (see Attachments 1 and 2)
 - High Risk Areas (see Attachments 1 and 2)
 - Municipal Wellhead Protection Areas (See Attachment 3)
 - Other areas within the Beaver Creek Watershed or the Lake Hastings Watershed

Approval Process

Approved applications will be notified in writing. Once approved, the applicant must call the UBBNRD for an authorization number. Upon authorization, the applicant will have 90 days to complete the practice. After completion, final invoices must be turned in to the NRCS. The NRCS will review the practice and invoices and forward to the UBBNRD for final payment. Any purchases of seed or services made prior to authorization are not eligible for funding. Cover crop termination is not eligible for funding under this program.

Cost-Share Rate

The cost-share rate share rate will be actual costs up to \$50/acre the 1st year, up to \$50/acre the 2nd year, up to \$40/acre the 3rd year, up to \$30/acre the 4th year, and up to \$30/acre the 5th year.

The maximum cost-share is \$7,500.00 per landowner/operator per year.

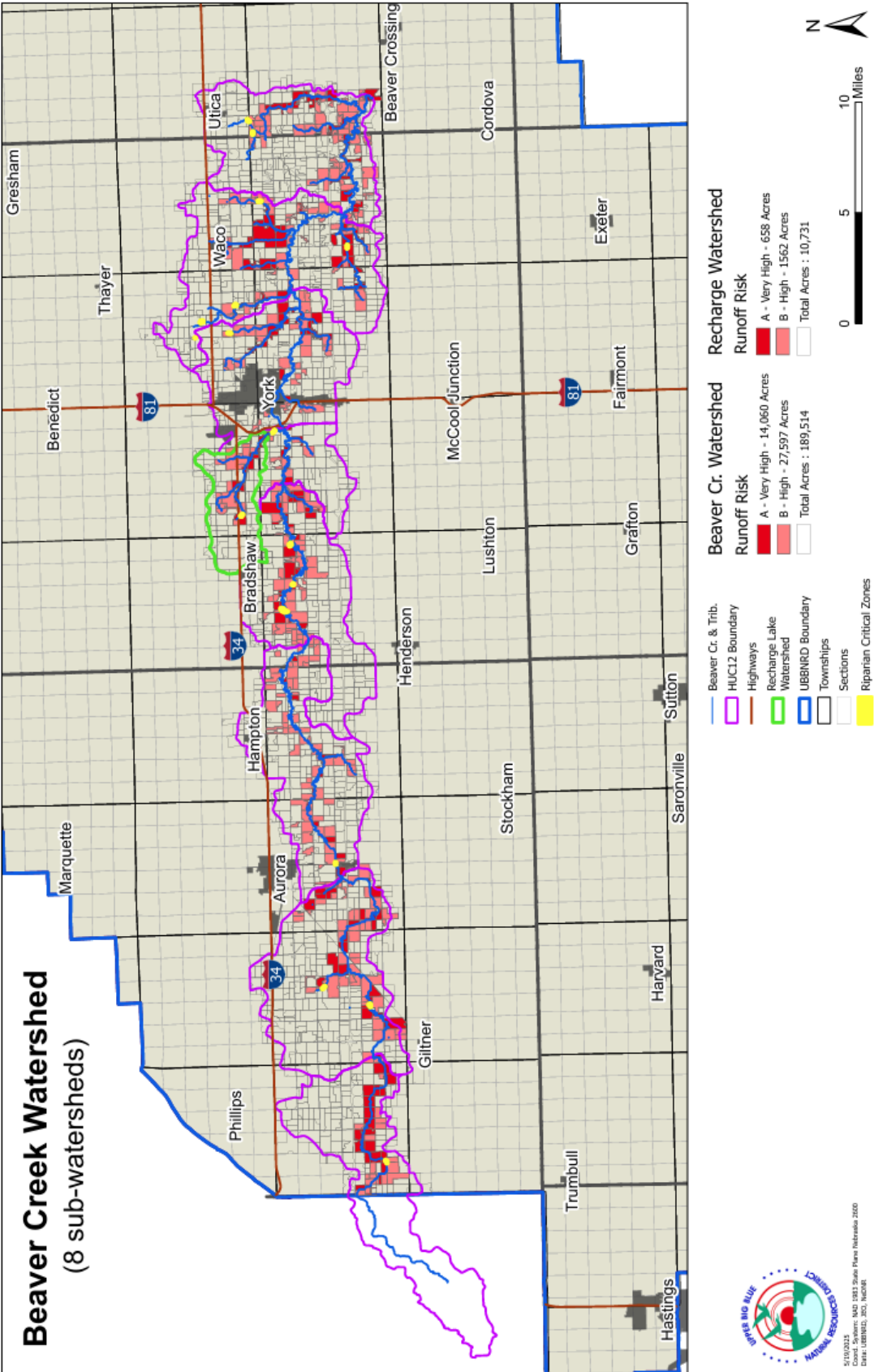
Applicants that do not complete the five year commitment within the six year term must reimburse the UBBNRD 50% of the cost share funding that they have received.

NRCS and/or other federal, state, or local funds may not be combined with this program.

Seed selection and planting rates must abide by the NRCS Code 340 Cover Crop for planting rate, planting date, and termination (termination costs are not covered under this program). Seeding may be completed by drilling, aerial, or broadcast application (see Attachment 4).

Participation in this cover crop cost-share program will not affect the landowner's/operator's ability to participate in the UBBNRD's Land Treatment Program.

The UBBNRD reserves the right to re-allocate program acres/funds between the Recharge Lake Watershed, the Lake Hastings Watershed, and the Municipal Wellhead Protection Areas in order to best utilize available funding.



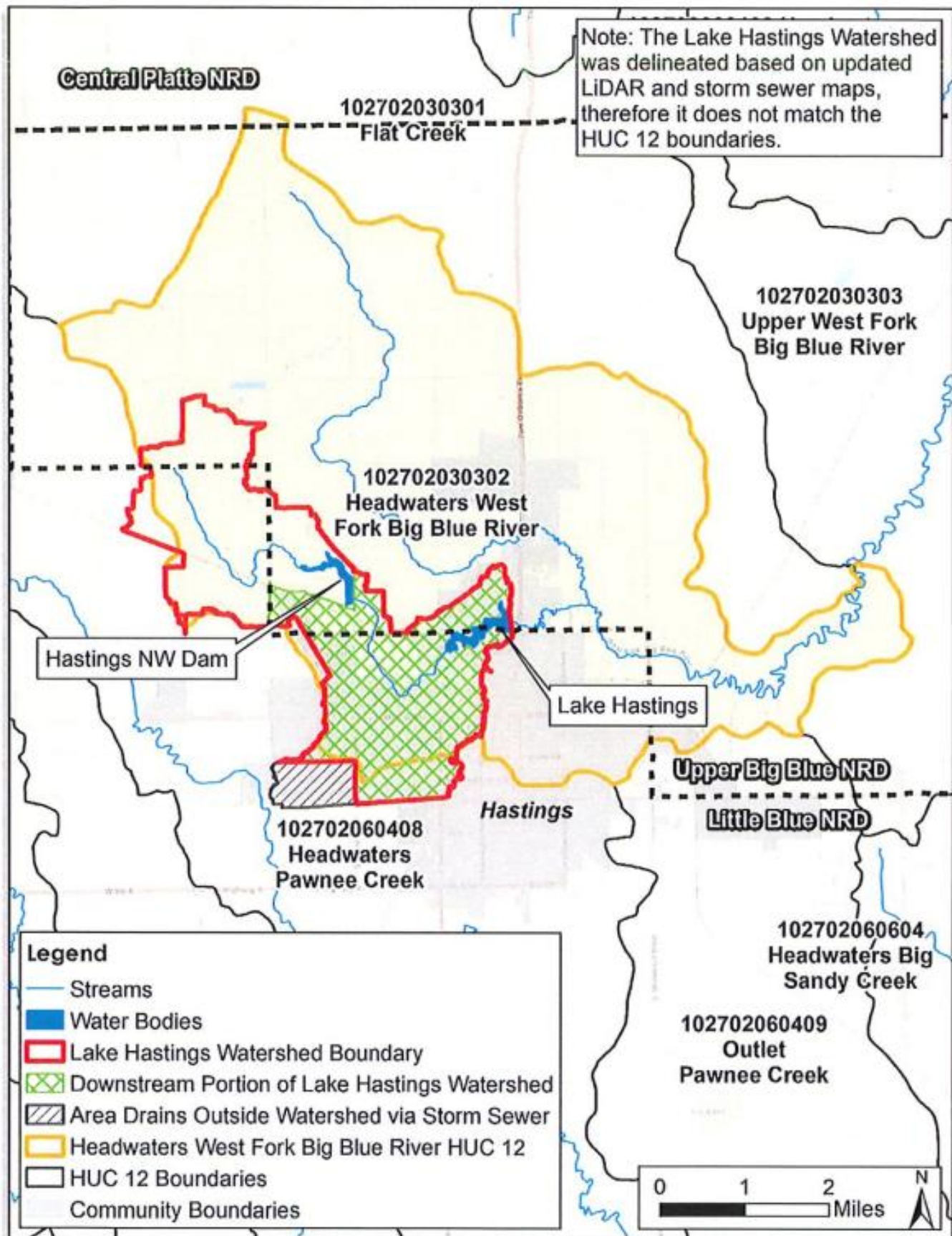


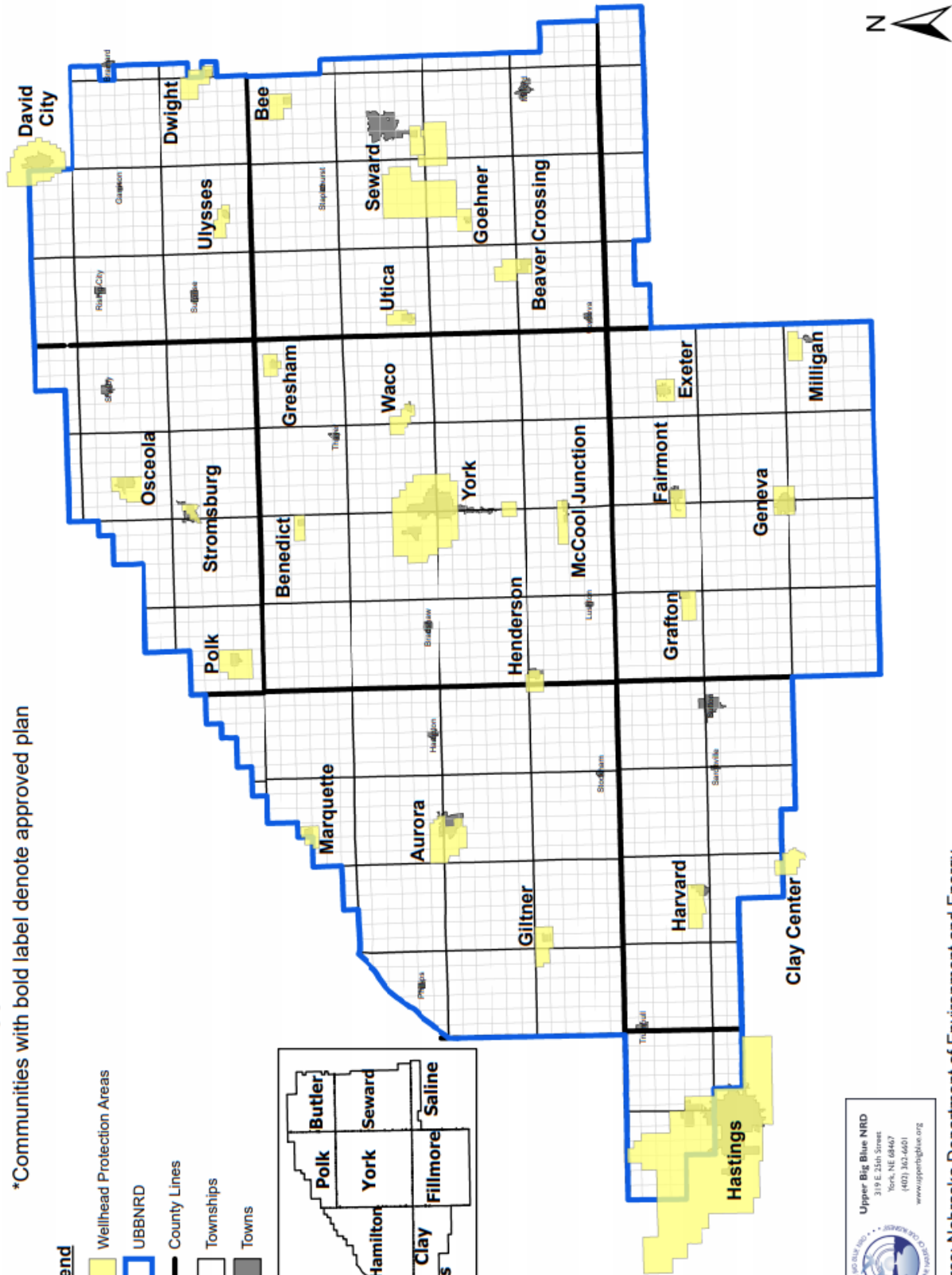
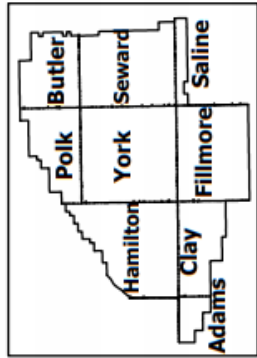
Figure 2: Location of Lake Hastings Watershed

Communities with Approved Wellhead Protection Plans

*Communities with bold label denote approved plan

Legend

- Wellhead Protection Areas
- UBBNRD
- County Lines
- Townships
- Towns



Upper Big Blue NRD
319 E 25th Street
York, NE 68467
(402) 362-6601
www.upperbigblue.org

Source: Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy

NRCS Code 340

Cover Crop

Conditions Where Practice Applies:

On all lands requiring vegetative cover for natural resource protection and or improvement.

Scenario 17: Cover Crop, Basic (Organic and Non-Organic)

Typically, a small grain or legume (may also use forage sorghum, radishes, turnips, buckwheat, etc.) will be planted as a cover crop immediately after harvest of a cash crop and will be followed by a cash crop that will utilize the residue as a mulch. This scenario assumes that seed will be planted with a drill, however aerial or broadcast seeding into the growing crop just prior to harvest is allowed. The cover crop should be allowed to generate as much biomass as possible prior to termination without delaying planting of the following crop. The cover crop will be terminated prior to or just after planting the subsequent crop per the NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines.

Payment Unit: Acre

Scenario 19: Cover Crop, Multiple Species (Organic and Non-Organic)

Typically a multi-species (three or more species) cover crop mix is seeded immediately after harvest of a cash crop and will be followed by another cash crop that will utilize the residue as a mulch. This scenario assumes that the cover crop will be seeded with a drill, however aerial or broadcast seeding into the growing crop just prior to harvest is allowed. The cover crop should be allowed to generate as much biomass as possible prior to termination without delaying planting of the following crop. The cover crop will be terminated prior to or just after planting the subsequent crop per the NRCS Cover Crop Termination Guidelines.

Payment Unit: Acre

Scenario 44: Cover Crop, Multiple Species, Frost Terminated (Organic and Non-Organic)

Typically, the multi-species (three or more species) cover crop mix will include a warm season grass, a warm season broadleaf or legume, and at least one other species such as oats, radishes, turnips, or rapeseed which will frost terminate. This scenario assumes that the cover crop will be seeded with a no-till drill or air seeder in the late summer or early fall immediately after harvest of a small grain or silage, or immediately after the construction of structural practices. The cover crop should be seeded early enough to allow six to eight weeks of growth prior to the first killing frost and will normally be followed by another cash crop that will utilize the residue as a mulch.

Payment Unit: Acre