

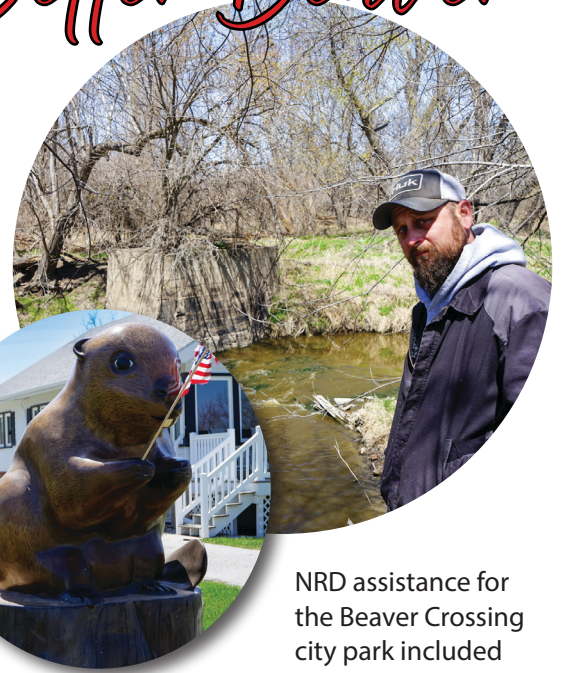


Building a Better Beaver

Community groups to receive NRD funds for new park projects

Whether you're looking to "walk a dog or cast a rod," a new linear park running along the bank of the Big Blue River in Beaver Crossing will have much to offer the community, says village trustee Brandon Mares. Mares and others with the non-profit Build Beaver have begun raising funds and solidifying plans for a new community enhancement to provide river access. It's one of two new parks projects that will be supported in part by \$10,000 from the Upper Big Blue NRD Parks Program.

The NRD Parks Program offers financial assistance to communities for the development or improvement of natural resources in nature areas, campgrounds, and park facilities. This program is available for any city, town, county, or school located in the district. The district will consider—on a case-by-case basis—providing cities and villages with planning and financial assistance for multi-use parks and recreation improvement/development that encourages tree planting, creation of wildlife habitat, open spaces, and other enhancements of natural resources. Past



NRD assistance for the Beaver Crossing city park included storm damaged tree

replacement, construction of a hiking and biking trail, and improvements to the park restroom and snack shack facility.

While Beaver Crossing already has an active community park with a ball field and campground, the new park project will "bring something to the community that doesn't currently exist," said Mares, as it will provide a tranquil nature experience with public river access. Mares says the only way to fish the river today without accessing private property is to drop a line from the Pioneers Road bridge.

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Recreation Exploration
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Groundwater Levels Decline Slightly, Yet Remain Above Allocation Trigger

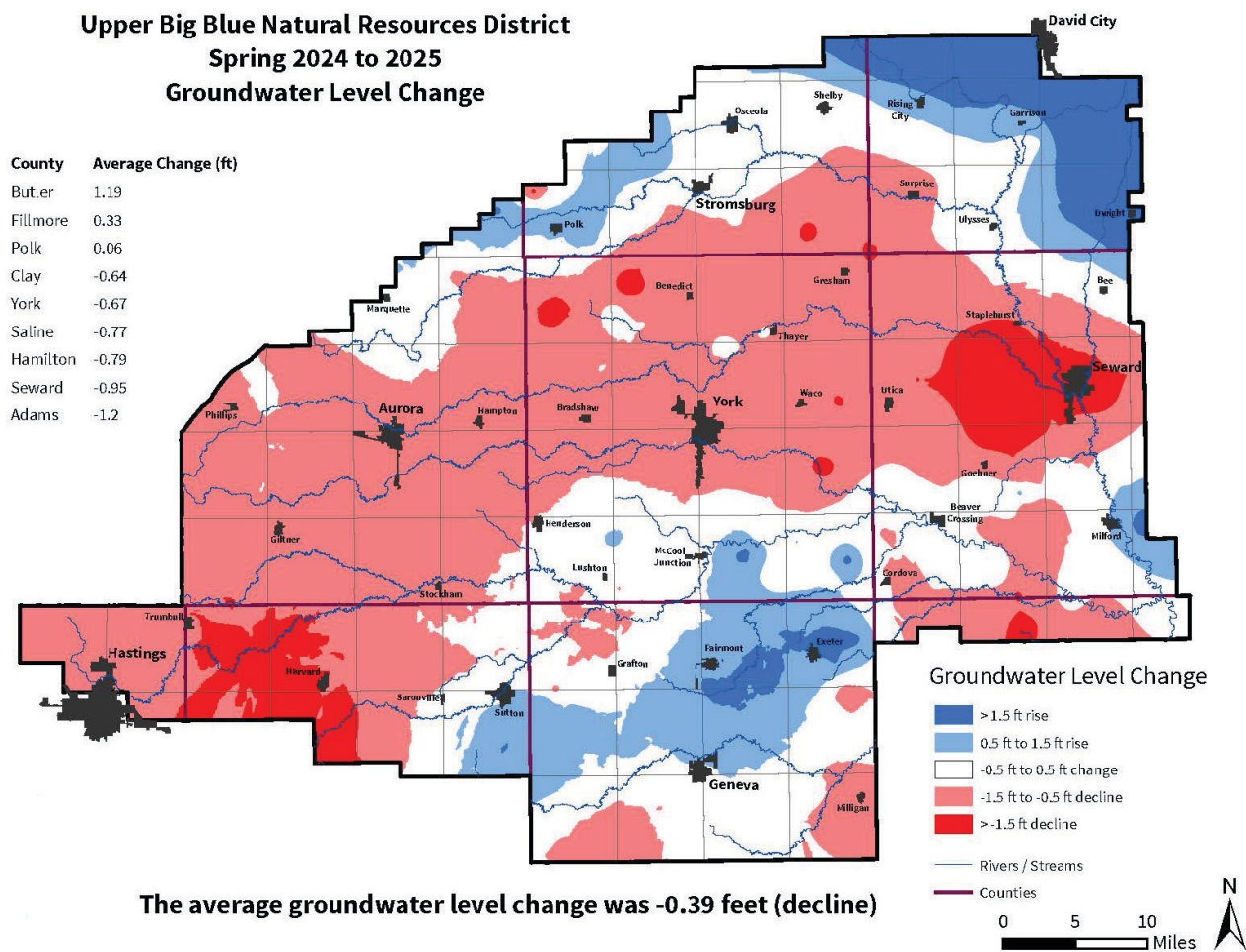
During March and April 2025, NRD staff measured roughly 500 observation wells throughout the district to determine the average water level change, based on a weighted change from each well. For spring 2025 water level measurements, the NRD has determined that the average groundwater level change shows a decline of 0.39 feet from last spring. The spring 2025 average groundwater level is now 3.21 feet above the "Allocation Trigger." Thus, there will be no allocation restrictions enacted at this time.

Observation wells are measured in the spring of each year, allowing the water table to rebound from the previous irrigation season. The wells that are measured are uniformly distributed throughout the district to provide an accurate profile of the average groundwater level change. Each well measured is assigned an area of the district based on

distances from other measured wells. This method gives the average groundwater level change a weighted average.

In spring 2024, the NRD reported an average groundwater decline of 3.08 feet. Spring 2023 showed a decline of 2.21 feet on average. Fluctuations from year to year are common throughout the district, however we have seen several dry years in the district with sustained declines. The Upper Big Blue NRD sits above the High Plains Aquifer, which stretches from South Dakota to Texas. This portion of the aquifer is dynamic and factors like rainfall and pumping affect how the aquifer reacts.

In addition to the average change, the NRD also provides a more detailed look at water levels across the district. Water



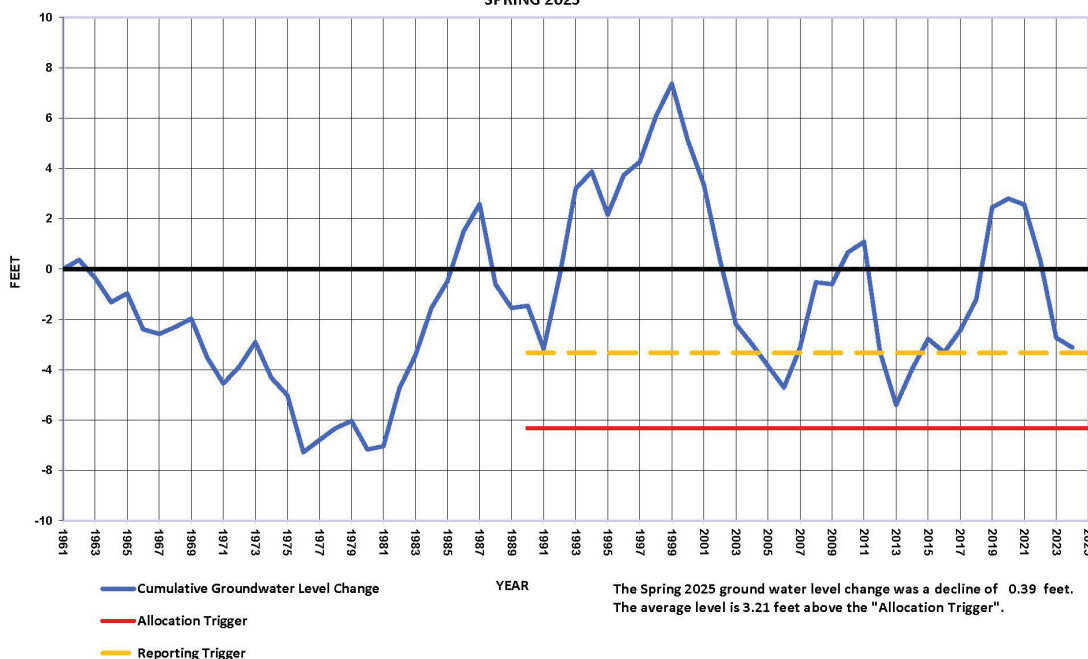
levels declined most in Adams and Seward Counties, each with a drop of about 1 foot. On the other end of the spectrum, Butler County saw a groundwater level increase of 1.19 feet. Fillmore and Polk Counties also saw marginal increases.

Water use records enable informed management decisions and practices

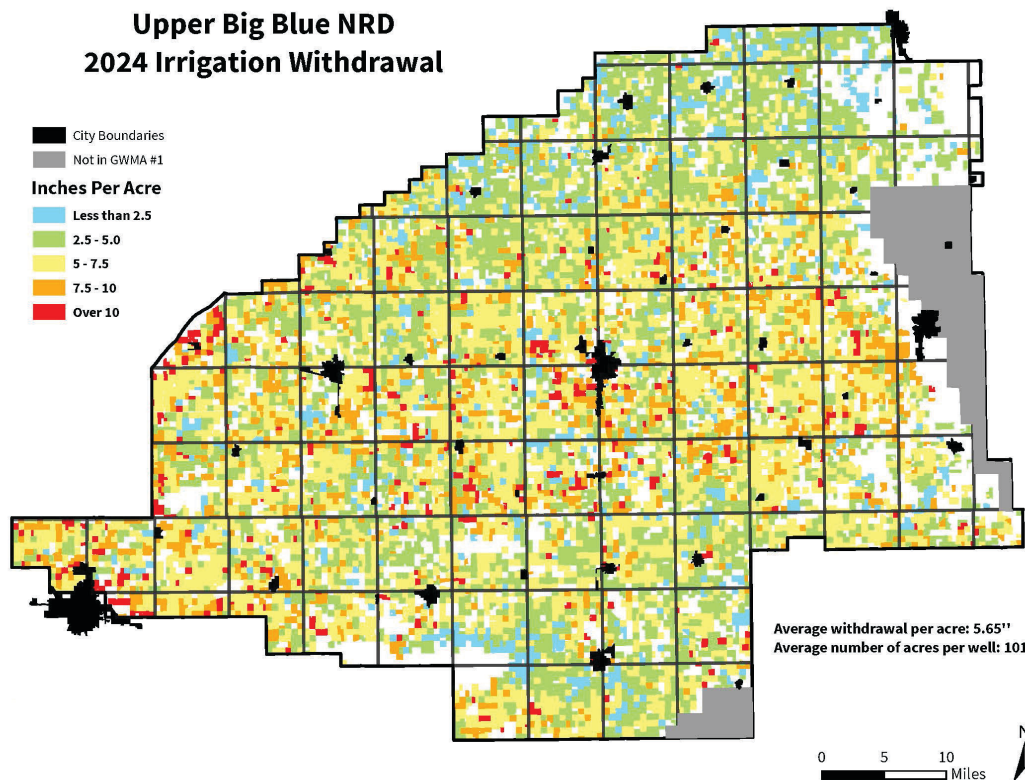
Producers in the district continue to do an exceptional job of managing the use of district water resources and cooperating with the NRD on conservation activities and monitoring. Along with NRD staff measuring observation wells, all groundwater users are required to annually report their water use. This is how the NRD maintains records on historic groundwater usage. Groundwater use records are very important to the district for making informed management decisions. The 2024 district average groundwater usage was 5.65 inches/acre. The district average groundwater usage is 6.1 inches/year since 2007.

The district's goal is to hold the average groundwater level at or above the 1978 level. In 2005, the district average groundwater level reached the "Reporting Trigger," initiating mandatory reporting of annual groundwater use to the district and certification of irrigated acres. If the district average water level falls below the 1978 level ("Allocation Trigger"), groundwater allocation will begin.

UPPER BIG BLUE NRD - AVERAGE GROUNDWATER LEVELS
TRIGGERS COMPARED TO HISTORIC LEVELS
SPRING 2025



Upper Big Blue NRD 2024 Irrigation Withdrawal



Practical Application

For farmers just thinking about getting started with regenerative agriculture practices, one of the most important resources to consider is connecting with other farmers a few years further along in the process. That was a key component of a recent event held in McCool Junction that drew about 30 attendees for conversations and presentations on grazing cover crops, relay cropping, and building soil health.

The event was organized by The Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Center for Rural Affairs, and the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District. It drew farmers and ag industry professionals from Friend, Marquette, David City, Fairmont and surrounding areas.

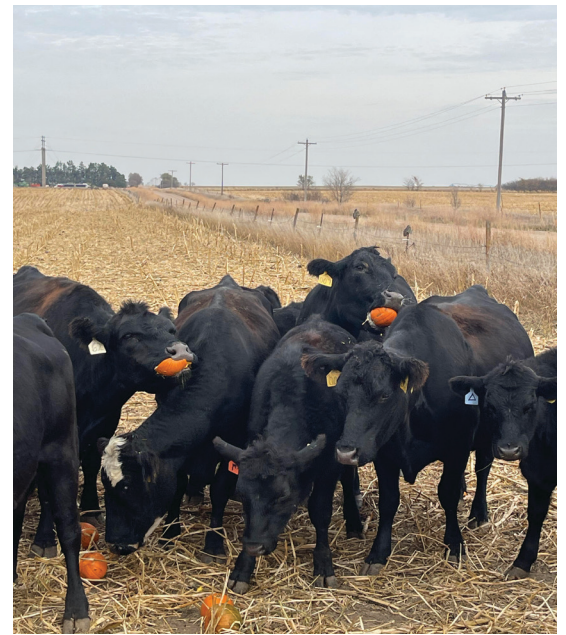
The main speakers were Hank McGowan, who farms in McCool Junction, and Jordan Uldrich, who farms near Milligan. Previously, McGowan was a speaker at a regenerative agriculture conference hosted by area natural resources districts in spring of 2024. In the fall of 2024, Uldrich hosted a farmer field day. Both producers are passionate about best management practices including

no-till and cover crops and are happy to share their experiences with other farmers.

The format of the recent event was conversation driven, with lots of questions and comments from attendees during McGowan and Uldrich's presentations. The question of how to make these changing agricultural practices make financial sense was a reoccurring theme.

With some of these practices, the financial return is readily apparent. "With the price of farm ground being what it is, topsoil is expensive. Try to keep it. That's what we're doing," said McGowan, talking about erosion prevention measures achieved through soil health practices.

McGowan has been implementing regenerative agriculture practices for the last several years. It started with cover crops on his roughest ground as an erosion prevention measure and as an additional forage for cattle. When he saw the soil health benefits happening in the fields with cover crops, he became a soil health convert and began implementing additional practices on more of his acres. In the 2024 growing season, he tried something new: relay cropping. While this practice is common elsewhere, it's somewhat unusual in this part of the world. Relay cropping involves planting a second crop into a standing first crop before the first crop is harvested. In McGowan's operation, that meant drilling soybeans into standing rye.



This experiment had some challenges as well as some benefits, McGowan told the producers in the room. Benefits included weed suppression and protection of the soybeans from Dicamba drift. Harvesting was more complicated with this system, however. The heads of the rye were harvested over the beans using specialty equipment. When he harvested the beans later, it took more time and effort because the extra ground cover slowed down the process.

The benefits far outweigh the challenges in McGowan's opinion. He showed pictures of the robust root structure of the beans that grew in the rye, which had large nodules on the roots and evidence of beneficial fungal activity. The beans had more pod production than he's seen before as well.

Rotational Grazing Explored

Jordan Uldrich has been experimenting with many soil health activities in the last few years as well, including cover crops, no till, and input reduction. Two years ago, he implemented a rotational grazing system that has been beneficial so far. Uldrich shared his enthusiasm for this practice with event attendees,



giving a practical demonstration of how to set up such a system with little expense. Uldrich uses high tensile poly wire to move his cattle in small blocks around the pasture, instead of having them roam through the entirety of the pasture throughout the season. “The principle of intensive grazing is to improve the root system [of the grass] and stretch your pasturage,” he said. This type of grazing also reduces the parasite load and suppresses fly problems on the cattle.

This grazing method makes the cattle become less selective, so they will eat the weeds as well as the grass. “I’ve seen a cow eating a thistle,” Uldrich said, though previously his herd would have avoided the spiny plants.

The action of the cattle means less fertilizer is needed and the water infiltration in the pasture is higher. Intensive, rotational grazing more closely simulates the action of herds of buffalo, which would mob graze one area and move on, not to return to that area for months. Grazing cattle this way requires more effort, but it’s “getting more bang for your buck,” said Uldrich. “It’s a way to make the cattle work for you, rather than you working for them.” Not only is it more cost effective, but Uldrich said at the end of the season his calves were the healthiest and biggest he’s ever seen.

A Systems Approach to Management

It all comes down to adding carbon to the system, McGowan stressed. Carbon sequestration is a buzzy term these days, but McGowan contends that if farmers improve their soil carbon, they can reduce the amount of fertilizer

they need and thereby improve their bottom line while protecting groundwater from contamination. Additionally, more carbon in the system means more nutrient uptake by the crops, which in turn increases the BRIX level of the plant, making them more resistant to pests. McGowan recommends adding humic acid as it increases the bioavailability of nutrients naturally occurring in the soil, thus reducing the need for inputs over time.

McGowan is concerned with the health of the web of life in the soil, from the beneficial bacteria to fungi to microorganisms, all of which have a role to play in the health of plants. When you’re taking a system-wide approach, change is slow, he admits. But if you hang on, you will see the results. He suggested that for those just getting started with new soil health practices, that you don’t implement a new strategy on every acre to begin with. Take your time and add more practices and more acres with each growing season. Jenny Brhel, Nebraska Extension educator, suggested an easy way to start is to participate in on-farm research trials.

Interested in adding regenerative agriculture practices to your acres? Jerod Fling, integrated water programs specialist with the NRD, can help connect you with funding programs and other resources. Contact him at jfling@upperbigblue.org or call (402) 366-5272.

Photos:

- (left) Jordan Uldrich demonstrates how to divide a pasture using high tensile poly wire during the recent farmer field day.
- (left) Uldrich’s cattle enjoyed hunting for small pumpkins that were part of his cover crop mix as they foraged in fall 2024.
- (right) Hank McGowan shows off his soybeans grown in a relay cropping system that had great pod production and lots of root nodules and fungal hyphae.





Less Water, Similar Yield

Irrigation study shows district growers have nothing to fear from allocation

Appropriate irrigation is key to managing both the quality and quantity of Nebraska's precious groundwater reserves as well as maximizing agricultural productivity, but what is the best way to determine when and how much to irrigate? Helping producers to evaluate precision irrigation sensing equipment was the goal of a recent study at the South Central Agricultural Laboratory (SCAL), commissioned by the Upper Big Blue and Little Blue Natural Resources Districts.

The NRDs partnered with SCAL researchers in Clay Center on a study to evaluate different irrigation sensor technologies as well as deficit irrigation strategies. The result of the 2024 growing season study showed that even in a dry year, it is possible to grow a healthy crop while using less water with precision irrigation tools. The study results indicate that even if the Upper Big Blue NRD were to enter a period of allocation due to declining water levels, the allocation requirements as they are currently set would not provide an undue burden on producers' bottom line.

The study utilized two types of technology, Watermark soil tension sensors (which are inserted in the soil at 1-, 2-, and 3-foot depths) and Aluvio Precision Irrigation Scheduling (which uses satellite imagery in addition to soil sensors and real-time weather data). Using these tools in different plots, they irrigated some plots at 100 percent of the rate recommended by the technology, and other plots at 70 percent of the recommended rate. This meant that the total irrigation ranged from 4.38 to 8.15 inches throughout the growing season, based on the different recommendations from the two technologies and the different rates utilized. Irrigation was applied with a pivot equipped with variable rate.

The Aluvio system suggested irrigating earlier than the Watermark sensors.

Overall, the study organizers felt that the Aluvio system was more effective than the Watermark sensors, though it does come at a higher cost. Watermark sensors are a low-cost way to improve data driven decision making about irrigation. The Upper Big Blue NRD offers district producers discounts on Watermark sensors as well as other irrigation equipment to encourage their use. Scheduling based on Watermark sensors was included in the study because this is the most common method of irrigation scheduling in the region after traditional scheduling based on condition of crop and feel of soil.

Saleh Taghvaeian (saleh.taghvaeian@unl.edu) oversaw the NRD's irrigation study at SCAL, from design to final analysis of results. Taghvaeian is an associate professor and irrigation engineer at the University of Nebraska Lincoln as well as a Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute faculty fellow. His area of specialty is precision irrigation technology.

The average yield for the study was 249.6 bu/ac. Fields in a 25-mile radius that were not a part of the study that were using the same hybrid ranged between 230 and 280 bu/ac according to Bayer Crop Science, so the irrigation study yields were very close to the average. Drilling down further on the yields, the two Aluvio-managed fields that received full irrigation and the one that received only 70 percent irrigation (5.65 inches) had very similar yields (about 251 bu/ac).



If yield is the only measure of success, then the field managed by Watermark sensors at 100 percent of the recommended rate was the winner, with 254.4 bu/ac. However, that was also the field that received the greatest amount of irrigation (8.75 inches). The average yield of the Watermark sensor managed field at a deficit (4.38 inches applied for the season) yielded 239.5 bu/ac. This is a statistically significant decrease; however, it is worth noting that this is only a 6 percent yield drop with about 50 percent less irrigation applied.

The average yield of dryland (non-irrigated) corn at SCAL for the same hybrid and same row spacing was 180 bu/ac in 2024. "Based on this, we can estimate the Irrigation Water Productivity (IWP) as the yield increase that was achieved compared to the dryland yield because of irrigation application," Taghvaeian stated in his report on the project. He estimated that for every inch applied there was a 14 bu/ac yield increase. There is a balance to be reached to maximize yield potential as well as return on investment for irrigation cost.

The main take away was that reducing irrigation during a dry growing season can still yield a healthy crop if appropriate technology is utilized to maximize timing of the irrigation.

Organizers anticipate that this study will be continued in the 2025 growing season and may evaluate additional irrigation scheduling technologies including FieldNET or Soil Scout. You can see the full report on the Upper Big Blue NRD website.

About SCAL

This project was conducted at the South-Central Agricultural Laboratory (SCAL) located in Clay County in south-central Nebraska. With over 100 field research trials per year, SCAL is dedicated to developing and refining irrigated crop production practices. The total area of irrigated research fields at SCAL is about 600 acres. Approximately 80 percent of the registered irrigation wells in Nebraska are within a 75-mile radius of SCAL. As a result, research findings of projects conducted at SCAL receive a great deal of attention from local irrigators. The soils at SCAL are mostly Crete and Hastings silt loam. Normal precipitation at SCAL is 30 inches, however in 2024 just 25.1 inches of rain fell January 1 - December 31; 16.7 inches of precipitation was measured during the growing season.

New NebGuide Recommends In-Season Nitrogen Management

With developments in sensor technologies and fertilizer application systems over the past 10 years, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has updated its guidance documents to recommend that irrigated corn growers adopt sensor-based in-season nitrogen management. This approach offers clear advantages in profitability and nitrogen use efficiency compared to traditional management approaches.

A new NebGuide from Nebraska Extension, "In-Season Nitrogen Management for Irrigated Corn" (G2365), publication briefly reviews the history of nitrogen management research and fertilizer recommendations for corn in Nebraska, and the need for improved approaches for nitrogen management to increase profitability and reduce environmental impacts of fertilizer use. Based on research over the past 20 years in Nebraska,

it describes approaches for using crop canopy sensor information to manage nitrogen during the growing season, rather than pre-season application, for irrigated corn production.

Nebraska has been working to improve nitrogen fertilizer use for decades. While there have been improvements, some areas still have high nitrate levels in the groundwater. By adopting these updated strategies, farmers can continue to improve their practices and protect Nebraska's precious water resources.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has developed a tool to help farmers determine the right amount of nitrogen to apply, considering factors like yield potential and soil conditions. Sensor-based systems allow for precise nitrogen application based on the corn's real-time needs. NebGuide G2365 is available at <https://www.upperbigblue.org/G2365>.



Cover Crops: The Water Balance Question

After several dry years that saw the average groundwater level decline in the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District, some producers have wondered about the water balance equation for the growing season if they implement cover crops. If you irrigate the cover crops after planting to ensure best establishment, are you essentially “wasting” water on a non-essential crop? Does the cover crop consume moisture in the soil profile that would otherwise go to the cash crop? Ultimately, is it poor practice to plant cover crops during a period of drought?

We asked Katja Koehler-Cole (kkoehlercole2@unl.edu), statewide soil health extension educator with Nebraska Extension, to weigh in on the matter:

I want to start by saying it is not always necessary to irrigate a cover crop to establish. In our long-term trials (8 years) in Clay Center in corn and soybean fields under a linear irrigation system, cover crops were planted well after irrigation had ended. While their biomass production was modest (around 1,000 lb/ac or equivalent to 6-8” of growth), they improved soil aggregation, soil carbon and microbial biomass. The cover crops had no statistically significant effect on plant available water or infiltration, however, as the graph below shows, the numbers were definitely trending towards an increase (Blanco et al., 2023). For the first three years of these trials, we measured soil water storage several times throughout the years using neutron probes. Most times there was no difference between the plots with and without cover crops. In one measurement in June 2016, the cover crop plots had about an inch more soil water than the no-cover crop plots, probably because cover crop residue reduced evaporation (Baker et al., 2018).

Cereal rye cover crops use about 1” of water for each 1,000 lb/ac of biomass they produce (Feria et al., 2016). Due to the timing of crop planting, most cover crops are

terminated in April to early May, at which time they have about 1,000 to 2,000 lb/ac of biomass and used 1 to 2” of soil water. Usually spring precipitation is sufficient to recharge soil water which is why we never saw a soil water deficit in our experiments. It is possible that cover crops prevent some water percolating to deeper layers which could be beneficial as it may also reduce residual soil nitrate leaching.



Nebraska on-farm studies (Nygren and Melvin, 2021, see “Effects of Cover Crops on Soil Water In Irrigated Soybean-Corn Systems” on the NRD website) on irrigated soybean fields comparing soil water content in cover crops and no-cover crop plots had similar findings. While soil water content was lower in the cover crop plots at the time of soybean planting, it was mostly still above field capacity. In wet years, soybean planting conditions were actually better following a cover crop. Rainfall in the weeks after planting was enough to refill the soil water profile and no soybean yield difference was detected following the cover crops in any of the sites.

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Agronomic Practices to Reduce Nitrate Losses to Groundwater

By John Nelson, Nebraska Extension Educator, Lancaster County

Groundwater nitrate has been a problem in Nebraska and throughout the Midwest for many decades and is growing in its scope and severity across our state. As crop producers, we have proven production practices to help reduce the movement of nitrate into the groundwater. One of the simplest solutions is to reduce our nitrogen (N) rates on corn. Nebraska On-Farm Research has produced many studies demonstrating that lower nitrogen rates on corn can have minimal impact on yield while also resulting in greater profitability — see https://go.unl.edu/ofr_results. On-Farm Research was conducted in the Waverly area during the 2024 season to examine the possibility of using less nitrogen in corn production. Two treatments were evaluated: the farmer's rate of 150 lb N/ac and the reduced rate of 115 lb N/ac. The UNL nitrogen recommendation for this field, with a 185 bu/ac yield goal, was 77 lb N/ac. The table shows that the reduced N rate had no statistically significant effect on corn yield or subsequent net return.

Another method to reduce nitrate leaching through the soil profile is to



implement cover crops. An ongoing On-Farm Research study in Lancaster County is examining interseeding cover crops in standing corn as a part of the Highboy Cover Crop Interseeding Project — see <https://go.unl.edu/highboycovercrop>. The study examines the effect of cover crops on nitrate movement through the soil profile in the fall and following spring.

Figure 1 (below) shows, by spring 2024, the cover crops had taken up a

significant amount of nitrate compared to the areas with no cover crops. This nitrate is preserved in the cover crop biomass, rather than being leached out of the root zone toward the groundwater.

These are only two of the many strategies farmers can implement to reduce nitrate losses to the groundwater. These practices offer the additional benefits of improving productivity, soil health and profitability.

Photos:

- (left) Participants at a cover crops farmer field day held in Milligan in early fall 2024.
- (above) The Upper Big Blue NRD partnered with Nebraska Extension and other agencies on a highboy interseeder cover crop demonstration in 2022 and 2023.

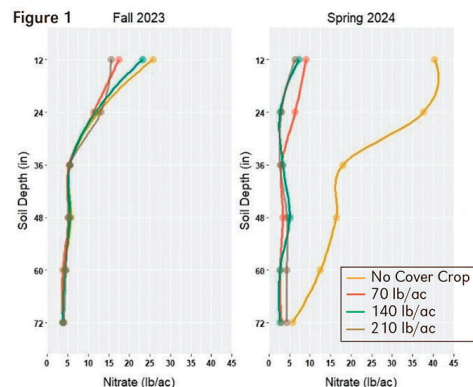
	Moisture (%)	Yield (bu/ac)†	Marginal Net Return‡ (\$/ac)
115 lb N/ac	11.1 A*	172 A*	\$689 A*
150 lb N/ac (Check)**	11.1 A*	174 A*	\$680 A*
P-Value:	0.99	0.92	0.89

*Values with the same letter are not significantly different at a 90% confidence level.

**Untreated ground.

†Bushels per acre corrected to 15.5% moisture.

‡Marginal net return based on \$4.35/bu corn, \$57.50/ac 115 lb N/ac, \$75/ac 150 lb N/ac.



New Parks Coming Soon

...continued from page 1

This bridge is shared by vehicles, which creates a safety issue. “The west fork of the Big Blue River runs right through the backyard of Beaver Crossing. It’s a shame that we have this neat thing with no way to enjoy it.”

Mares often fished with his dad when he was young, creating memories he still cherishes today. He hopes that there are those in the community who will benefit from a place to share in special family bonding moments in nature, just as he did as a child, as well as a place to “just go down to relax and listen to the water.”

The location of the proposed park is a three-acre strip of land owned by the village on the southeast side of town. Mares is excited about this location because as a local history buff, he would like more people to know about the gristmill that used to stand there. “You can still see the concrete pylons where they dammed the river for the mill,” he said. Eventually, Mares would like to see signs at the park about the history of the place from the early days of Beaver Crossing.

The linear park project plan is currently very simple: a walking trail, some trees, a few benches and signs, and a place to fish. “As small of a footprint as this will have, it could grow into something more over time if people enjoy it,” said Mares. While access to public lands may seem like an insignificant thing, “it’s hugely important for those that don’t have an acreage to still have access to nature,” he said.

While a time line for the park’s development is still very tentative, Mares is planning an event in July at the site to show the community what is to come. In addition to the NRD funds, the Beaver Crossing park is also receiving support from the Nebraska Forest Service and the Seward County Legacy Fund.

All-Abilities Playground Coming to Aurora

Families in the Aurora area will soon have a new place to play where everyone can interact, regardless of their age or ability. The Hamilton County Inclusive Playground project aims to “create an inclusive space in Hamilton County for intergenerational play,” where all “can explore, engage, learn and have fun side by side.”

The Hamilton County Inclusive Playground will be located on Aurora city property on Old Creek Road,

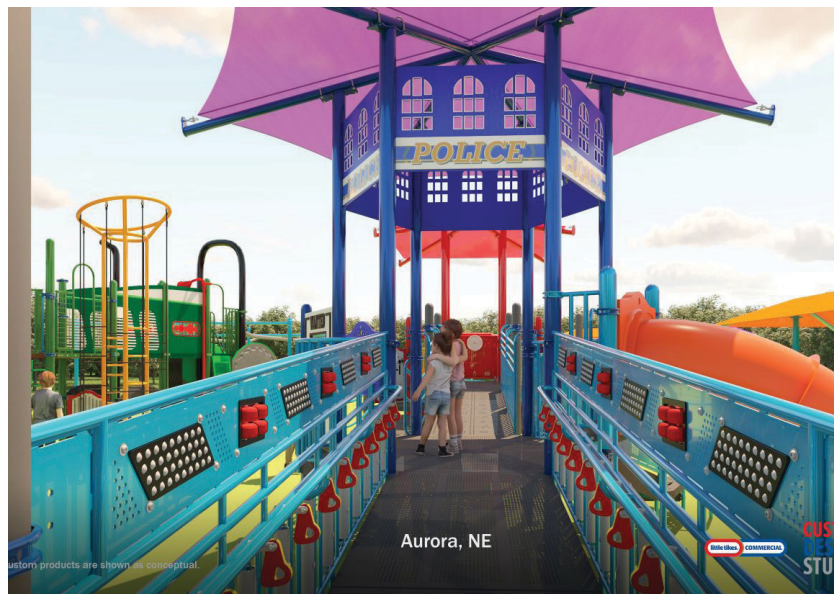
east of Highway 14 and north of Highway 34. According to playground fundraisers, the project is designed to utilize different forms of play to stimulate varied developmental needs.

The playground allows for direct interactive play as well as parallel play for individuals with differing levels of physical capabilities. The theme of the park will be community heroes and will celebrate “the everyday heroes that make communities thrive,” including farmers, teachers, firefighters, medical professionals, and police officers.

The Upper Big Blue NRD will provide \$10,000 toward the project through the district Parks Program. In 2021, the NRD provided the same amount for a similar project in York.

The playground will feature shade structures over much of the equipment, which is especially important for individuals who have trouble with temperature regulation. Finding appropriate bathroom facilities is often a challenge for families with older children with mobility issues, as they may require changing stations that can accommodate larger individuals. The bathrooms to be constructed at the Hamilton County Inclusive Playground will be equipped for these needs, thus allowing greater use of the park. For kids with sensory processing disorders, it can be easy to get overwhelmed by noise and activity so there will be a ‘quiet zone’ included in the park, as well.

The playground will be fully ramped, so that all equipment is accessible for those with a range of mobility levels, including an in-ground merry-go-round that can accommodate wheelchairs. There will also be educational panels featuring braille and sign language learning opportunities.



Notice of Adoption

District Rule 5 Change

The Upper Big Blue NRD held a public hearing on March 20, 2025, for citizens to provide testimony concerning changes to the District's Rule 5 – Ground Water Management Area Rules and Regulations including the addition of Chapter 7 Large Volume Water Users rules. The proposed change recognizes preferences of use and requires a hydrologic analysis with particular requirements for any

proposed qualifying well. The proposed change also included altering the format of Rule 5.

As its regular meeting of the Board of Directors on April 17, 2025, the board considered all comments received. In open session, the Board of Directors voted to adopt the proposed amended rules and regulations. Copies of the adopted amended rules and regulations are available on the NRD's website or at its office.

Recognitions

NRD Directors Bill Kuehner Jr. (L) and Paul Weiss (R) were recognized in January for 10 years of board service. Board Chairperson Lynn Yates is pictured with them. Gentlemen, thank you for your service to the people of the district!



Data Privacy Statement

Each year, the Upper Big Blue NRD collects information relevant to water quality and quantity from district producers and other water users. Depending on the management zone of the district and its level of management, this information may include water usage, pounds of nitrogen fertilizer applied, and best management practices used. The information collected will not be used to regulate individual producers but when aggregated assists in forming regulation decisions by the board of directors that will impact portions or the entirety of the district. Once collected, this information becomes subject to open records request rules, as detailed in Nebraska Statute 84-712.01. That means that anyone can request information that has been submitted to the NRD and the NRD is required to provide it. While it is not required by law, the NRD will notify any individual if their information is requested by a person, company, or other agency.

Additionally, the NRD uses submitted information to track trends across the district that provide insight into better natural resource management. This information allows the board of directors to make informed, data-driven decisions about projects and programs for the district. Occasionally this data is shared with other agencies that can provide more robust analysis. When producer-reported data is aggregated for analysis and key take-aways are communicated to the public, individual producer information will not be directly identifiable. Our goal is to provide useful information to all constituents while protecting the privacy of individuals submitting that information.

BLUEPRINT



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Terry Julesgard..... Water Dept. Manager
Jacob Reiber.....WaterResourcesTechnician
Aiden Bishop.....Water Resources Technician
Erin Lee.....Water Resources Technician
Amanda Chab.....Water Resources Technician
Calvin Epp.....Water Resources Technician
Valerie Paul.....Water Conservationist
Jerod Fling Integrated Water Program Coordinator
Seth Norquest.....PrecisionConservationSpecialist
Carleen Light Water Dept. Secretary
DeeDee Novotny Water Data Specialist
Jessica Simants.....Water Data Assistant
Chrystal Houston..... Public Relations Manager

Enjoy Nature, Win Prizes

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts encourage participation in the NRD Recreation Exploration program, which is designed to inspire individuals and families to venture into the great outdoors and explore the state's natural beauty. The program aims to foster a deeper connection with nature while offering participants the chance to win a grand prize of \$1,500 in Scheel's gift cards.

The NRD Recreation Exploration Program invites participants to embark on an adventure through more than 80 diverse NRD recreation areas. From the rolling grasslands of the Sandhills to the tranquil shores of the Platte River, Nebraska boasts an abundance of breathtaking landscapes.

The program will run through September 19, 2025. By exploring a range of NRD recreation areas and documenting their visits, participants will be eligible for prizes. Whether biking scenic trails, fishing in lakes or rivers, or simply basking in the serenity of Nebraska's wilderness, each exploration offers a chance to connect with nature in a meaningful way.

To participate in the NRD Recreation Exploration Program, individuals can follow these simple steps:

1. Visit a NRD recreation areas across Nebraska.
2. Capture a photo while exploring.
3. Upload the photo using the NRD Recreation Exploration form at nrdnet.org/recreation

By actively participating in the NRD Recreation Exploration program, participants not only stand a chance to win prizes but also instill a love for the outdoors, promote physical activity, and encourage environmental stewardship.

The NRD Recreation Exploration Program is supported by the Nebraska Association of Resources District's Foundation and Scheel's, a leading sporting goods retailer. For more information about the NRD Recreation Exploration program, including a list of recreation areas and the prize structure, visit www.nrdnet.org/recreation.



Beau Hawkins with his big catch at Overland Trail Recreation Area



Hannah Clark enjoys fishing at Pioneer Trails Recreation Area



Buddy and Rebel visit Oxbow Trail Recreation Area with owner Marc Walters



Brandy and Jasper Ward, 2024 Recreation Exploration Challenge Winners