

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF LAND AND WATER RESOURCES

Adopted by the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District Board of Directors
at a Public Hearing Held on November 10, 1992
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at a Public Hearing Held on September 8, 2009

SECTION 1 GENERAL DEFINITIONS

1 **Definitions** - As used in these rules and regulations of the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District:

- 1.1 Alleged Violator shall mean any person against whom a complaint has been filed in accordance with these rules and regulations.
- 1.2 Alluvial Water Well, Alluvial Well or Well, shall mean a well that is located within the boundaries of the alluvium of the Republican River and its tributaries, as mapped by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and which draws water from alluvial formations (see sub-section 5.3 of these rules for identification procedures).
- 1.3 Alternate Use Well- a conditional replacement well that is intended to provide water for a use other than irrigation of crops.
- 1.4 Baseline Average Consumptive Irrigation Water Use- the average amount of irrigation water consumed on a per-acre basis by a conventionally-tilled, fully-irrigated corn crop that is raised to maturity. This amount is determined to be nine inches per acre in Kearney County, ten inches per acre in Phelps County and eleven inches per acre in Gosper County.

- 1.5 Beneficial use of groundwater shall mean utilizing water for domestic, agricultural or industrial purposes in amounts reasonable for said purposes.
- 1.6 Best Management Practices shall mean schedules of activities, maintenance procedures and other management practices utilized to prevent or reduce present and future contamination of groundwater. BMPs may include, but are not limited to soil testing, water testing, irrigation scheduling, monitoring of irrigation water applications, use of inhibitors, proper timing and rate of fertilizer and pesticide application and other management programs and technologies.
- 1.7 Board or Board of Directors shall mean the Board of Directors of the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District and/or its employees and agents acting at the direction of the Board of Directors.
- 1.8 Certification shall mean:
- 1.8.1 a certificate issued by the District to an operator for completion of the necessary fertilizer and irrigation water management educational programs approved by Tri-Basin NRD, as referred to in Section three of these rules.
- 1.8.2 Data collected by the NRD to locate and enumerate cropland, hayland and pasture land within district boundaries that is irrigated from groundwater or surface water resources, as referred to in sections eight through ten of these rules.
- 1.9 Complainant shall mean any person who files a complaint alleging a violation of these rules and regulations.
- 1.10 Compliance officer shall mean one or more persons authorized by the Board of Directors to perform the functions assigned thereto by these rules and regulations.
- 1.11 Conditional Replacement Well- A water well may be considered by the NRD to be a conditional replacement well if it supplements existing groundwater wells or surface water rights on NRD-certified irrigated lands. The owner of a conditional replacement well permitted by the NRD may be subject to limitations, regulations and operational conditions regarding use of that well that are different from limitations, regulations and conditions of operation imposed by the district on owners of other wells within the district. In the absence of any other limitations, regulations or conditions of operation, the beneficial consumptive use of water resulting from operation of a conditional replacement well shall be no greater than the historic consumptive use of water from the well or surface water use which it is to replace or supplement.
- 1.12 Conservation Assistance shall mean any payments, technical and/or planning assistance or other forms of compensation provided by Tri-Basin NRD utilizing district equipment and/or funds or utilizing funds from programs administered by the district.
- 1.13 Conservation Plan- a plan to implement conservation measures on a parcel of irrigated land that will prevent damage to adjacent property from irrigation runoff water and sediment.
- 1.14 Conservation Program- any program or project developed or sponsored by a federal, state or local agency or a non-profit organization that has as its purpose protection of land or water resources or restoration or creation of wildlife habitat.
- 1.15 District, Natural Resources District or NRD shall mean the Tri-Basin Natural

Resources District.

- 1.16 Educational program shall mean information and educational training sessions designed to acquaint landowners and operators with best management practices in the operation of their irrigation and cropping systems.
- 1.17 Eligible, shall mean:
- 1.17.1 any non-domestic alluvial water well that is capable of pumping 50 gallons per minute or more which is not registered as inactive with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, as referred to in sections five and six of these rules.
- 1.17.2 any non-domestic water well that is located within the watershed boundaries of the Republican River and its tributaries, as mapped by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, that is capable of pumping 50 gallons per minute or more or b.) any new or conditional replacement well permitted after September 15, 2004, or c.) any well for which a landowner has an approved groundwater transfer permit.
- 1.18 Flowmeter, shall mean a device, meeting certain specifications described in Section 6 of these rules, designed to record the rate of flow and cumulative volume of flow of water within a pipe.
- 1.19 Groundwater shall mean that water, which occurs in or moves, seeps, filters, or percolates upward, downward or laterally through rock, soil or unconsolidated geologic material to or from the surface of the land.
- 1.20 Groundwater Management Area, or GMA shall mean any geographic area, up to and including the entire Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, that shall be designated by the Board of Directors as subject to rules and regulations for purposes of managing groundwater resources and regulating their use to protect groundwater quality (Quality GMA), to maintain groundwater supplies (Quantity GMA), or to protect surface water supplies (Integrated GMA).
- 1.21 Groundwater management plan shall mean a plan developed by the Tri-Basin NRD, and approved by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-656.12.
- 1.22 Groundwater user shall mean a person who at any time extracts, withdraws, or confines groundwater for any use or allows such use by other persons. The meaning of the term “groundwater user” shall include both the landowner and the operator.
- 1.23 Historic Average Consumptive Irrigation Water Use- the baseline average consumptive irrigation water use multiplied by the number of certified irrigated acres in a parcel of land.
- 1.24 Illegal well shall mean:
- 1.24.1 Any well not registered pursuant to the provisions of Neb. Rev. Stat. §§46-602 to 46-605;
- 1.24.2 Any well in violation of spacing requirements specified by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-609 or §46-651 or sections four or eight of these rules;
- 1.24.3 Any well utilized for application of chemical materials in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat. §§46-1101 to 46-1148, as such, statutes may be amended and supplemented and such rules and regulations as may be adopted from time to time by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

- 1.24.4 Any well or pit from which water is transported to an adjoining state in violation of Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-613.01;
 - 1.24.5 Any well or pit located within 50 feet of the bank of any of a channel of a natural stream and utilized for irrigation purposes without a permit issued pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-637;
 - 1.24.6 Any well from which water flows under natural pressure in excess of the provisions of Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-281; or
 - 1.24.7 Any well constructed or operated in violation of these or other rules and regulations of the Tri-Basin NRD or of other applicable laws, rules and regulations of the State of Nebraska and its agencies.
- 1.25 Improper irrigation run-off shall mean the occurrence of irrigation runoff water (1) which causes or contributes to the accumulation of water upon or beneath the surface of the lands of any other person(s) to their detriment, damage, or inconvenience; (2) which causes or contributes to the deterioration of water quality by depositing sediment and/or associated chemicals in surface water within the area; or (3) which contributes to waste.
- 1.26 Inspector shall mean one or more persons authorized by the compliance officer to perform the functions assigned thereto by these rules and regulations.
- 1.27 Integrated Management Plan shall mean a plan to manage interconnected groundwater and surface water resources, as required by state law 46-715 (1), RRS 1943. The goals and objectives of such a plan, as well as the plan itself, will be jointly developed and agreed upon by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, after consultation and collaboration with any entities statutorily entitled to consultation and collaboration, as well as affected stakeholders.
- 1.28 Integrated groundwater resources- Shall mean any groundwater resources which contribute water to perennial springs, streams, wetlands, lakes or other perennial surface water features.
- 1.29 Integrated surface water resources-Shall mean any surface water resources which replenish groundwater aquifers.
- 1.30 Irrigation run-off water shall mean groundwater used for irrigation purposes which escapes from land owned, leased, or otherwise under the direct supervision and control of a groundwater user. Groundwater, which becomes co-mingled with irrigation run-off from surface water, shall be treated as irrigation run-off water.
- 1.31 Landowner shall mean any person who owns or is in the process of purchasing land.
- 1.32 Leaching Potential shall mean the potential ability of a soil to allow water to pass through it in an unsaturated state. Leaching potential is a function of the texture of a soil. Leaching potential of soil series known to occur within Tri-Basin NRD are described in the USDA-SCS (NRCS) Field Office Technical Guide, Section II, Notice #431, USDA-SCS, Lincoln NE, Nov., 1994.
- 1.33 Operator shall mean that person who has the most direct control over the day-to-day farming operations of the land concerned.
- 1.34 Overlying land. A parcel of land upon which a water well is located. It shall also include any other contiguous parcel of land that meets all of the following criteria:
- 1.34.1 The parcel is located within the same watershed as the parcel upon which the

- well is located.
- 1.34.2 The parcel of land is located within the administrative area of Tri-Basin NRD (Gosper, Phelps and Kearney Counties in Nebraska).
- 1.34.3 The parcel of land is owned by the same entity as the parcel upon which the well is located.
- 1.35 Overlying right. Right of a landowner to take water from ground underneath for beneficial use on overlying land within the same river basin. An overlying right is based on ownership of land and is appurtenant thereto.
- 1.36 Parcel. A contiguous quantity of land in possession of, owned by, or recorded as property of the same claimant, person or entity.
- 1.37 Parts per Million (ppm) shall mean a ratio used to describe the presence of any substance that may contaminate water, where one part of the contaminant is present among one million parts of water.
- 1.38 Permit shall mean:
- 1.38.1 the conditional authorization given by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District to any person for construction of wells capable of pumping more than 50 gallons per minute as defined in Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-656.29.
- 1.38.2 the conditional authorization given by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District to any person who desires to construct a new well, use or modify an existing well or wells for the purpose of enabling said well or wells to pump water at a rate of more than fifty gallons per minute off of overlying land.
- 1.38.3 the conditional authorization given by Tri-Basin Natural Resources District to any person for transferral of certified irrigated land from one parcel to another.
- 1.39 Person shall mean a natural person, partnership, association, corporation, municipality, irrigation district and any agency or political subdivision of the state.
- 1.40 Phase Area shall mean a geographic area, designated by the Board of Directors, within which groundwater users shall be subject to regulations to protect groundwater quality, groundwater supplies, or surface water supplies. The boundaries of all phase areas shall be designated on an official map in the Tri-Basin NRD office. The map will be kept up to date and will be available for public inspection during regular office hours. Copies will be provided to the public upon request.
- 1.41 Replacement well shall mean:
A water well which replaces an existing well that 1) will not be used after construction of the new well, and 2) will be decommissioned within 90 days before or after such construction. Owners of replacement wells will be subject to all limitations, regulations or conditions of operation imposed by the district on the well which is to be replaced.
- 1.42 Republican Basin Water Well, or Well, shall mean a well that is located within the watershed boundaries of the Republican River and its tributaries, as mapped by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and which is not subject to the provisions of Section 5 of these rules and regulations (see sub-section 6.3 of these rules for identification procedures).
- 1.43 Saturated Zone- Any area below the land surface where groundwater completely fills

- pore spaces between particles of geologic materials.
- 1.44 Surface Water Turnout shall mean any source of irrigation water other than a water well.
- 1.45 Township shall mean an area of land, usually composed of 36 sections, as defined in the Federal Land Law of 1796.
- 1.46 Water well, or well shall mean any excavation which is drilled, cored, bored, washed, driven, dug, jetted, or otherwise constructed for the purpose of exploring for groundwater, monitoring groundwater, utilizing the geothermal properties of the Earth, obtaining hydrogeologic information, or extracting water from or injecting water into the underground water reservoir with the intention of utilizing it for a beneficial purpose. Dewatering systems are not considered wells for purposes of this definition.
- 1.47 Well interference shall mean any action by a landowner or operator that affects the water level in another landowner's well to such an extent that the well can no longer be reliably utilized for the purpose for which it was intended, provided that such actions shall not include the pumping of a well which has a higher preference of use than the affected well.

SECTION 2 GENERAL PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES FOR ENFORCEMENT

- 2 **General-** The Tri-Basin NRD shall enforce the provisions of the Groundwater Management and Protection Act, and all rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto, by issuing cease

and desist orders, pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-656.08, and in accordance with the procedure hereinafter specified and by bringing appropriate actions in the District Court of the county in which any violations occur for enforcement of such orders. The board of directors may also choose to impose any controls specified in 46-746 NE R.R.S. as penalties for violations of cease and desist orders issued by the district for violations of district rules, after providing notice to violators and holding a hearing to consider the violations of district rules.

- 2.1 Groundwater Management Area Designation - The Tri-Basin NRD may, by order, designate a groundwater management area following a hearing initiated in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-656.19, if it shall be determined, following evaluation of relevant data and protection of effects of current and new developments, that a management area is necessary in order to achieve the groundwater reservoir quality goal or groundwater reservoir life goal specified in the Tri-Basin NRD's groundwater management plan, or for the integrated management of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water supplies, or to protect surface water supplies.
- 2.2 Groundwater Regulations - The Tri-Basin NRD may manage those activities having an effect upon groundwater quality, quantity or management of integrated groundwater and surface water resources by any of the following means:
 - 2.2.1 Requiring the use of best management practices;
 - 2.2.2 Requiring attendance at educational programs ;
 - 2.2.3 Requiring the submission of reports or forms;
 - 2.2.4 Declaring that alleged violators of Tri-Basin NRD rules and regulations shall have the processing of pending applications for Tri-Basin NRD conservation assistance suspended until all outstanding complaints against an alleged violator are resolved.
 - 2.2.5 Allocating the amount of groundwater that may be withdrawn by groundwater users;
 - 2.2.6 Adopting a system of rotation of the use of groundwater;
 - 2.2.7 Adopting well spacing requirements more restrictive than those found in state statutes;
 - 2.2.8 Requiring the installation of devices for measuring groundwater withdrawals from water wells;
 - 2.2.9 Adopting a system that requires reduction of irrigated acres pursuant to subsection (2) of section 46-740 NE R.R.S.;
 - 2.2.10 Limit or prevent the expansion of irrigated acres or otherwise limit or prevent increases in the consumptive use of groundwater withdrawals from water wells used for irrigation or for other beneficial purposes;
 - 2.2.11 Require water quality monitoring and reporting of results to the district for all water wells within all or part of the district;
 - 2.2.12 Require district approval of (i) transfers of groundwater off the land where the water is withdrawn or (ii) transfers of rights to use groundwater that result from district allocations imposed pursuant to subdivision (1) (a) of section 46-739 NE R.R.S. or from other restrictions on use that are imposed by the district in accordance with 46-739 NE R.R.S.;

- 2.2.13 Require that, when conditions so permit, new or replacement water wells to be used for domestic or other purposes shall be constructed to such a depth that they are less likely to be affected by seasonal water level declines caused by other water wells in the area;
 - 2.2.14 Close all or a portion of the management area to the issuance of additional permits or may condition the issuance of additional permits or compliance with other rules and regulations adopted and promulgated by the district to achieve the purpose or purposes for which the management area was created; and
 - 2.2.15 Adopt and promulgate such other reasonable rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the purpose for which the management area was designated.
- 2.3 Complaints - Any person who owns land, leases land, or resides within the Tri-Basin NRD; or any non-resident person who can show that the actions of any landowner or operator within the Tri-Basin NRD directly affects him; or the District Compliance Officer; or the Board on its own motion, may file a written complaint. Said complaint shall be filed against a landowner or operator alleging a violation of these rules and regulations or any state or federal statutes administered by the NRD.
- 2.3.1 Complaints shall be filed at the office of the Tri-Basin NRD, 1723 N. Burlington Street, Holdrege, Nebraska, 68949, on complaint forms prepared by said District. Forms shall be made available at such office or at such other office or offices as from time to time the Board of Directors shall designate.
 - 2.3.2 Upon receipt of a complaint alleging a violation of Tri-Basin NRD rules and regulations, the district will immediately suspend processing of any applications made by the alleged violator for district conservation assistance.
- 2.4 Inspections - In the case of a written complaint alleging a violation of these rules and regulations where the Compliance Officer determines that an inspection is necessary to determine whether or not the landowner or operator is, at the time of inspection, or was, at the time of complaint, in violation of these rules and regulations, then the land where the alleged violation occurred shall be inspected by the Inspector within five (5) days after the complaint is filed (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays).

- 2.4.1 The Inspector, upon proper identification and after informing the landowner and operator, either in person or by certified U.S. mail, of the complaint and the Inspector's purpose, is authorized to enter upon the land, if necessary, for the purpose of making an inspection of the alleged violation.
- 2.4.2 Upon completion of the inspection, the Inspector shall file a report of his findings in the Tri-Basin NRD office and shall deliver a copy of the complaint and said report to the alleged violator and to the complainant, if other than the Compliance Officer, in person, or shall transmit the same by certified restricted mail.
- 2.5 Submission of Inspection Report alleging violation and alleged violators' alternatives. If the Inspector finds in his report that there is reasonable cause to believe that a landowner or operator is, at the time of inspection or was at the time of complaint, in violation of these rules and regulations, then said inspector's report, prepared and delivered in accordance with sub-section 2.5., shall be accompanied by a formal notice of the alternative actions available to the alleged violator. Alternative actions shall be:
 - 2.5.1 Agree with and accept as true and correct the inspector's finding that the alleged violation has in fact occurred or is occurring; consent in writing to cease and desist from continuing or allowing the reoccurrence of such violation; and in the case of irrigation runoff complaints or other problems that require ongoing measures to maintain or attain compliance, shall additionally submit a schedule of compliance in accordance with sub-section 2.7; or
 - 2.5.2 Reject the findings of the Inspector's report and request in writing that a formal hearing by the Board of Directors be scheduled and conducted in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Tri-Basin NRD.
 - 2.5.3 The alleged violator shall be granted not less than seven (7) days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays) from the date that said report and notice is provided to him to respond and to indicate any actions intended.
- 2.6 Schedule of Compliance - If the alleged violator named in a complaint agrees with the findings of an Inspector's report filed under sub-section 2.5, he or she shall submit a schedule of compliance to the Tri-Basin NRD for approval by the Board of Directors. The schedule shall provide for the discontinuance and/or non-reoccurrence of the violation. If appropriate, the schedule of compliance shall include the identification and description of all proposed procedures or measures that will be utilized to prevent, control, or abate the problem that is the subject of the complaint.
- 2.7 Action Subsequent to Alleged Violator's Consent to Cease and Desist - when an alleged violator has been notified in accordance with sub-section 2.5 and has consented to cease and desist in accordance with sub-section 2.5.1 the District Compliance Officer shall review the complaint, the inspector's report, the schedule of compliance, and any other related or pertinent documents.
 - 2.7.1 The Compliance Officer shall determine whether the actions agreed to by the alleged violator will, when applied, bring the alleged violator into

compliance with these rules and regulations.

- 2.7.2 If the Compliance Officer determines that the measures that the alleged violator proposes to address the complaint in the proposed schedule of compliance are adequate and will prevent future non-compliance with Tri-Basin NRD rules and regulations for a reasonable time period, he shall recommend that the Board of Directors approve said schedule of compliance.
 - 2.7.3 If the District Compliance Officer determines that implementation of the proposed schedule of compliance will not bring the alleged violator in compliance with the rules and regulations of the Tri-Basin NRD, he shall indicate the additions or changes he deems necessary.
 - 2.7.4 The alleged violator shall have five (5) days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays) to consent to such additions or changes or reject such additions or changes and request a formal hearing by the Board of Directors. The original actions under sub-section 2.5.1 and the documents filed in accordance therewith by the alleged violator shall not be considered at such hearing unless the alleged violator consents to such consideration.
 - 2.7.5 The complainant shall be provided with a copy of the schedule of compliance and any proposed changes by the District Compliance Officer. The complainant shall have five(5) days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays) to object to the schedule or changes.
 - 2.7.6 If no objections to the proposed compliance schedule are received, the proposed schedule of compliance shall be submitted to the Board of Directors for approval.
 - 2.7.7 If said complainant objects to the approval by the Compliance Officer, he or she may request a formal hearing by the Board of Directors or agree to negotiate changes in the proposed schedule.
 - 2.7.8 Upon agreement of the terms of the compliance schedule between the Board of Directors, the complainant and the alleged violator, the alleged violator shall agree to implement and abide by the terms of said schedule, within a time frame set by agreement between the Board of Directors and the alleged violator.
- 2.8 Board Action Subsequent to Alleged Violator, Complainant, Compliance Officer or Board Member Request for Hearing - in the case of a written complaint alleging a violation of these rules and regulations, and where the Compliance Officer determines that an inspection is not necessary to determine whether or not the alleged violator is, at the time of complaint, in violation of these rules and regulations, or in accordance with sub-sections 2.5.2, 2.7.4, or 2.7.7, the Board of Directors shall hold a formal hearing when requested by either an alleged violator, complainant, Compliance Officer or a Board member. Notice of the hearing shall be delivered to the alleged violator and the complainant, in person or shall be transmitted by registered U.S. mail.
- 2.8.1 If, following a hearing, the Board of Directors determines that the alleged violator has violated these rules and regulations, it shall adopt an order directing such alleged violator to immediately cease and desist from all

- activities determined by the Board to be violations, specifying any actions deemed necessary and appropriate. Said order shall be transmitted to the violator in person or by registered U.S. mail.
- 2.8.2 If the Board of Directors, after a formal hearing, determines that an alleged violator has violated the rules and regulations of the Tri-Basin NRD, the violator shall be required to pay half the costs incurred by the Tri-Basin NRD directly related to conducting the hearing. Assignable costs shall include, but are not limited to the costs for employing a hearing officer and court recorder.
- 2.8.3 The Board of Directors may waive violator's share of hearing expenses, if the groundwater user presents evidence showing that paying half the costs of the hearing would produce undue hardship.
- 2.9 Board Action if Alleged Violator Fails to Respond or Appear- When an alleged violator has been notified of the complaint, the Compliance Officer's report and the alternatives available to respond to said complaint, in accordance with sub-section 2.6 and the alleged violator has failed to respond thereto, or when an alleged violator has been notified of the Board of Director's intent to hold a formal hearing in accordance with sub-section 2.9 and has failed to appear at any properly scheduled formal hearing, the Board shall:
- 2.9.1 Review the complaint, and the Inspector's report, if an inspection was necessary, as well as any other pertinent information; and
- 2.9.2 Issue such order or orders in accordance with these rules and regulations as it deems appropriate, and
- 2.9.3 Bill the alleged violator for half of the directly assignable costs of the hearing, in accordance with sub-section 2.9.2.
- 2.10 Violator's Actions Following Issuance of Cease and Desist Order - Any violator against which a cease and desist order has been issued for non-compliance with the Groundwater Management and Protection Act in accordance with these rules and regulations may, within seven (7) days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays) following receipt of such order, submit a schedule of compliance. The schedule of compliance shall be considered, amended, and/or approved by the District Compliance Officer and Board of Directors as per sub-sections 2.8.1 through 2.8.7.
- 2.11 Board Authorization to Initiate Court Action - The Board of Directors may initiate appropriate legal actions in the District Court of the County in which the violation has occurred whenever necessary to enforce any action or orders of the Tri-Basin NRD in accordance with these rules and regulations.

SECTION 3
GROUNDWATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA REGULATIONS

- 3 **Groundwater Management Area for Water Quality Purposes, General** - The Board of Directors, in order to effectively enforce the Nebraska Groundwater Management and Protection Act and district rules established to protect groundwater quality, declared all Tri-Basin Natural Resources District a Groundwater Management Area for purposes of protecting and improving groundwater quality, effective November 15, 1989. Because groundwater quality problems vary in their degree of severity within the Tri-Basin NRD, the Groundwater Management Area Regulations will be implemented in the following phases.
- 3.1 Phase Area Criteria - The boundaries for Phase I, Phase II and Phase III regulations will be based on the average of groundwater quality sample tests results taken by Tri-Basin NRD personnel. Criteria for designation of Groundwater Management Area regulation phase areas are as follows:
- 3.1.1 Phase I Areas - Townships where the average groundwater nitrate content is between 0 and 9.0 ppm will be regulated under phase I regulations.
- 3.1.2 Phase II Areas - Phase II rules and regulations will be required in any township where average groundwater nitrate content is above 9.0 ppm. The Tri-Basin NRD board may initiate phase II rules and regulations in any township where average groundwater nitrate content is below 9.0 ppm, but average groundwater nitrate content increases at least 1.0 ppm within a four-year period. Phase II management areas will be designated only after providing public notice, holding public hearings and receiving public comment.
- 3.1.3 Phase III Areas - If the average groundwater nitrate content of groundwater samples collected in the present northern Phase II Area (along and adjacent to the Platte River) by NRD personnel does not decline by at least one ppm during a period of four consecutive years prior to November 2005 (fifteen years from the effective date of the Groundwater Management Area rules on November 15, 1990), all townships in Phase II Areas that were designated on November 15, 1989 where average nitrate-nitrogen content of groundwater has not declined by at least one ppm over the last four consecutive years as compared to 1989 average nitrate levels will be declared Phase III Areas regardless of the nitrate level. Other Phase II Areas will be declared Phase III Areas fifteen years after they are designated Phase II Areas, unless NRD water sampling indicates that the average groundwater nitrate content in those townships have declined by at least one ppm during the preceding four consecutive years. Phase III management areas will be designated only after providing public notice, holding public hearings and receiving public comment.
- 3.2 Phase Area Designation - The level of regulation in the three phase areas is in proportion to the severity of nitrate-nitrogen contamination. The severity of nitrate-nitrogen contamination is determined by averaging the groundwater sample test

results for all Tri-Basin NRD sampled wells within a township. Outliers (wells that consistently test more than 10 ppm higher or lower than surrounding wells) will be excluded from averages.

3.2.1 Criteria exist to designate phase areas based on the level of nitrate-nitrogen contamination (see section 3.1). In addition to these criteria, the Board of Directors, after receiving public comment, may choose to re-designate Phase areas if the average groundwater nitrate content of a particular area has changed by more than one ppm during the preceding four year period.

3.2.2 The Board of Directors may re-designate all or any part of a township from one Phase area to another, following a public hearing, in order to protect groundwater quality, or to arrest the deterioration of groundwater quality.

3.3 Phase I Rules and Regulations - The following regulations shall apply to all landowners and operators of irrigated farm land in Groundwater Management Areas with a Phase area designation of Phase I:

3.3.1 Application of commercial nitrogen fertilizer shall be prohibited on fields where more than 50% of the areal extent consists of soils with high leaching potential (sands and sandy loams) between September 1 and March 1 of the following year.

3.3.2 Fall and winter applications of commercial nitrogen fertilizer for spring-planted irrigated crops shall be prohibited on fields where more than 50% of the areal extent consists of soils with nominal or intermediate leaching potential (loamy sands, loams, silts and clays) between September 1 and November 1.

3.3.3 Commercial fertilizer may be applied to fall-planted crops (e.g., winter wheat), perennial crops (e.g., alfalfa), and pastureland at any time during the year.

3.3.4 If average groundwater nitrate levels in any township within the Phase I area, as monitored by Tri-Basin NRD's Groundwater Sampling Program, increase more than 1 ppm in any four year period, hearings will be held to inform the public of the potential problem.

3.4 Phase II Rules and Regulations - The following regulations shall apply to all landowners and operators of irrigated farm land in Groundwater Management Areas with a Phase area designation of Phase II:

3.4.1 Continue controls set forth in sub-sections 3.3, as required in Phase I Areas except to the extent that they are superseded by controls set forth in this section.

3.4.2 Water from each irrigation well shall be sampled and analyzed annually for nitrate/nitrogen content in parts per million. The analysis must be made by a laboratory utilizing Environmental Protection Agency approved methods. A copy of the laboratory report shall be submitted to the NRD along with annual crop reports.

3.4.3 Annual deep soil sampling to a minimum depth of 30" is required on each irrigated field or 80-acre tract, whichever is smaller, that will be planted to corn or potatoes. Soil sampling will be conducted utilizing BMPs developed

by the University of Nebraska. Soil samples will be analyzed for nitrate-nitrogen content using approved soil analysis techniques. Soils will be sampled and analyzed to a minimum depth of 30 inches. In soils where the effective root zone is limited to a depth of less than 30 inches by bedrock, gravel layers or high groundwater levels, soils will be sampled and analyzed to the bottom of the effective root zone.

- 3.4.4 Deep soil sampling will not be required on fields that will not be irrigated or that will be planted to fall-planted crops, perennial crops, native grasses, soybeans, dry edible beans or certified organic crops.
- 3.4.5 Any person who is directly responsible for determining the timing, method or amount of application of commercial fertilizer on cropland will be required to become certified in nitrogen management by passing a test administered at the NRD office or by attendance at a Tri-Basin NRD-approved educational program designed to acquaint landowners and operators with BMPs in the operation of their irrigation and cropping systems. Certification is valid for four years.
- 3.4.6 Landowners will be responsible for submitting annual crop reports to Tri-Basin NRD for each field that they own that is planted to irrigated crops on or before a date set by the Board of Directors on forms furnished by or approved by the Tri-Basin NRD. The information provided shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - 3.4.6.1 The legal description of each field that is planted to irrigated crops.
 - 3.4.6.2 The results of the water nitrate/nitrogen analysis in ppm for each well, with each well identified by its state registration number. Tri-Basin NRD will not require nitrate-nitrogen analysis of surface water used for irrigation, but landowners will identify the water source of all fields irrigated using surface water using the appropriation number or docket number associated with an individual water right, or the ID number of a Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District canal water delivery point.
 - 3.4.6.3 Results of the residual nitrate/nitrogen deep soil analysis on each field or 80-acre tract, whichever is less.
 - 3.4.6.4 The crop to be grown and the per-acre yield goal used as the basis for determining nitrogen needs on each field.
 - 3.4.6.5 The recommended commercial nitrogen fertilizer application rate utilizing the University of Nebraska formula for commercial nitrogen fertilizer recommendations.
 - 3.4.6.6 The actual amount of commercial nitrogen fertilizer applied, measured in average pounds per acre on each field. The type and rate of any nitrification inhibitor applied shall also be reported.
 - 3.4.6.7 The actual amount of water applied in average inches per acre on each field.
 - 3.4.6.8 The actual yield achieved per acre on each field.
 - 3.4.6.9 An affidavit signed by the landowner or their designated representative indicating that information submitted on the report is

true and accurate to the best of their knowledge.

3.4.7 Landowners whose land is farmed by someone other than themselves may apply to Tri-Basin NRD for a one-year waiver to the reporting requirements described in section 3 and associated sub-sections for a particular field or fields when data necessary to complete an annual crop report is unavailable due to a change in the farm operator or other circumstances. The Tri-Basin NRD General Manager will have discretion to approve or deny such waiver requests.

3.4.8 Crop reports will be considered delinquent 90 days after the due date set by the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors. Landowners who fail to submit reports will be subject to enforcement actions, including issuance of cease and desist orders at the discretion of the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors.

3.4.9 Crop reports submitted for irrigated fields or tracts planted to soybeans, dry edible beans, winter wheat, spring wheat, alfalfa, native grasses or certified organic crops are only required to submit information associated with sub-sections 3.4.6.1, 3.4.6.2 (if applicable) and 3.4.6.4 through 3.4.6.9, inclusive.

3.5 Phase III Rules and Regulations - The following regulations shall apply to all landowners and operators of irrigated farm land in Groundwater Management Areas with a Phase area designation of Phase III:

3.5.1 Continue controls set forth in subsections 3.3 through 3.4 inclusive, as required in Phase I and Phase II Areas, except to the extent that they are superseded by controls set forth in this section.

3.5.2 Application of commercial nitrogen fertilizer for spring-planted crops shall be prohibited on all soils between September 1 and March 1 of the following year, except to the extent that less than 60 pounds per acre of actual N is applied as an ingredient in a fertilizer formulation primarily composed of other nutrients.

SECTION 4 WELL INTERFERENCE

4 **General** - The board of directors finds that it is necessary and advantageous to establish rules and regulations regarding the preferences of use between different beneficial uses of groundwater, and to regulate the spacing between wells with similar or different preferences of use, in order to prevent the operation of a well or wells from interfering with the operation of another well or wells.

4.1 Preferences of use - Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-613, states that “preference in the use of ground water shall be given to those using the water for domestic purposes. They shall have preference over those using it for any other purpose. Those using the water for agricultural purposes shall have the preference over those claiming the same for manufacturing or industrial purposes.” For purposes of these regulations, the categories of domestic, agricultural and industrial uses are further defined as follows:

4.1.1 Domestic groundwater use shall include use of groundwater for purposes of health, fire control, consumption, and sanitation of humans. Domestic groundwater supplies may be used and consumed by domestic livestock and food crops as long as human use is the primary purpose of a well. Public water supply wells (municipal wells) shall be considered domestic wells in preference of use. Unlike domestic wells intended for private use, public water supply wells are subject to spacing restrictions.

4.1.2 Agricultural groundwater use shall include irrigation of crops and pastures, aquaculture, as well as providing groundwater for the health, consumption and sanitation of livestock. When livestock or irrigation are the primary uses of a well, a well shall be considered agricultural in preference of use.

4.1.3 Industrial groundwater use shall include the consumptive and non-consumptive use of groundwater in industrial processes.

4.2 Spacing of wells - All wells will be separated from other wells with similar or dissimilar preferences of use in the following manner:

4.2.1 No public water supply well shall be drilled within one thousand feet (1,000') of any registered agricultural water well, registered industrial water well or a well of any other public water supplier. Further, no agricultural or industrial water well shall be drilled within one thousand feet (1,000') of any registered public water supply well. Domestic water wells, which are intended for use by individual households are not subject to spacing restrictions under these rules.

4.2.2 No agricultural water well shall be drilled within one thousand feet (1,000') of any registered industrial or public water supply well, nor within six hundred feet (600') of any other registered agricultural water well. Further, no industrial or public water supply well shall be drilled within one thousand feet (1,000') of any registered agricultural water well.

4.2.3 No industrial water well shall be drilled within one thousand feet (1,000') of any registered agricultural or public water supply well. Further, no agricultural or public water supply well shall be drilled within one thousand feet (1,000') of any registered industrial well.

- 4.2.4 Well spacing restrictions shall not apply to the location of one or more wells of any type drilled by a landowner within the boundaries of his or her own property, as long as all wells are properly spaced in relation to any and all registered wells on neighboring properties.
- 4.2.5 The NRD board of directors may find it necessary to supersede the well spacing requirements in this section with stricter well spacing requirements to protect groundwater supplies within the district.
- 4.2.6 The NRD board of directors may approve exceptions to the well spacing requirements described in this section in cases where landowners are able to negotiate voluntary agreements with any and all neighboring landowners whose existing water wells are within the specified spacing distances of the site of a well to be drilled. Exceptions to such spacing restrictions also require approval by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

SECTION 5
REPUBLICAN BASIN ALLUVIAL GROUNDWATER USE

DATA ACQUISITION

This section repealed by NRD Board of Directors on September 8, 2009.

SECTION 6
GROUNDWATER USE DATA ACQUISITION

6 **Authority** - The Board of Directors of the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District hereby adopts these rules and regulations in accordance with Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-739 (1) (d).

6.1 **General** - The Board of Directors recognizes the need for improved water use measurement on water wells within the Tri-Basin NRD. Therefore, the Board of Directors requires that owners of eligible water wells within the Republican River Basin install flowmeters in accordance with these rules and regulations for purposes of gathering data on water use from those wells.

6.2 **Procedure for identification of eligible water wells** - Tri-Basin NRD staff will visit each well site to determine whether the well location corresponds to the location listed on the well registration. The well location coordinates will be measured using a surveying device, Global Positioning system locating device, or other device of comparable accuracy. If a well location varies from the location recorded in the well registration, this information will be provided to the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

6.2.1 Non-domestic wells that are capable of pumping 50 gallons per minute or more and which are either:

- a) located within the Republican River Basin;
- b) new or conditional replacement wells permitted after September 15, 2004; or
- c) used in association with an approved groundwater transfer permit

are required to have flowmeters. In the case of Republican Basin wells, each well registration will be examined to determine, if possible, the pumping rates. If the pumping rate cannot be determined from the registration, Tri-Basin NRD personnel will visit the well site and measure the pumping rate with a portable flowmeter.

6.2.2 Notice will be sent to the owner or owners of each eligible well, notifying them of said classification as an eligible well subject to these rules and regulations.

6.2.3 All wells identified as eligible wells within Tri-Basin Natural Resources District are subject to the provisions of this section unless the NRD Board of Directors grant an exception to the requirements of this section. The NRD Board of Directors may grant conditional or unconditional exceptions to some or all of the requirements of this section under one or more of the following circumstances:

6.2.3.1 NRD staff determine that a well is used primarily for domestic purposes or is not capable of pumping 50 gallons per minute or more or

6.2.3.2 NRD staff determine that a well irrigates less than 15 total acres of cropland.

6.2.4 Any exceptions to the provisions of this section granted by the NRD Board of Directors in accordance with rule 6.2.3 will be revoked when the

circumstances that justified granting the exception no longer exist. When an exception to this section is revoked, the landowner must immediately install flowmeters on all wells that were the object of such exception in compliance with the provisions of this section.

- 6.3 Installation of flowmeters - all active eligible water wells within the boundaries of Tri-Basin NRD shall have flowmeters installed and operational whenever said wells are in use.
- 6.4 Enforcement- Owners of active eligible Republican Basin water wells who do not install flowmeters will be considered to be in violation of the Tri-Basin NRD's Rules and Regulations.
- 6.4.1 The Tri-Basin NRD reserves the right to seek cease and desist orders against owners of wells which do not have flowmeters installed to prevent them from using any wells under their ownership until flowmeters are in place and operational on all wells under their ownership.
- 6.4.2 One flowmeter may be utilized to measure water flow from multiple eligible wells, if said flowmeter can be installed in compliance with and conformance to all the specifications and requirements listed in these rules and regulations.
- 6.5 Flowmeter specifications and requirements- All flowmeters installed for purposes of compliance with these rules and regulations must meet or exceed the following specifications and requirements.
- 6.5.1 All flowmeters will be accurate within two percentage points, plus or minus, for every acre-inch (27,154.25 gallons) recorded by the flowmeter as determined by the NRD.
- 6.5.2 All flowmeters used on eligible water wells must have a clearly visible and readable, non-resettable, totalizing counter that records water used in units of gallons or acre-inches. All flowmeters must also have a clearly visible and readable analog or digital display that provides a real time reading of the rate of flow of water through the flowmeter.
- 6.5.3 All flowmeters used on eligible water wells must be installed in accordance with all applicable manufacturers' specifications.
- 6.5.4 All flowmeters used on eligible water wells must be installed in such a way that there will be a full pipe flow of water at all times during normal operation of the well.
- 6.5.5 All flowmeters used on eligible water wells must conform to the American Water Works Association's standard number C700-90 or applicable successors.
- 6.5.6 All flowmeters will measure the entire amount of water pumped by a well or series of wells.
- 6.6 Flowmeter readings, inspections and maintenance - Owners of eligible wells shall report water use data to the district in a format specified by the district no later than December 31 of each year. Owners of eligible wells shall allow Tri-Basin NRD personnel access to their wells and flowmeters at any reasonable time.
- 6.6.1 Tri-Basin NRD may, from time to time, require owners of eligible wells to provide information about water use and energy consumption of eligible

wells.

6.6.2 Landowners shall be responsible to insure that flowmeters are fully functional, properly maintained and operational when wells are in use.

6.7 Damage to or tampering with flowmeters. - It shall be a violation of these rules and regulations for anyone to intentionally damage, alter, obstruct, tamper, re-set or otherwise modify a flowmeter on an eligible well in such a way that its capability to measure water flow is reduced or impaired.

6.7.1 Anyone who unintentionally damages a flowmeter, or who discovers that a flowmeter is malfunctioning or inoperable, shall report said condition to the office of Tri-Basin NRD at Holdrege, Nebraska within 72 hours of said damage or discovery.

SECTION 7 GROUND WATER TRANSFERS

- 7 General. The right to use groundwater for beneficial purposes is a derivative right immediately dependant on ownership of the surface land over a source of ground water. The Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors desire to regulate transfers of groundwater off of overlying land as part of their efforts to achieve the NRD's infinite groundwater reservoir life goal, described in the Tri-Basin NRD Groundwater Management Plan.
- 7.1 Transfers off of overlying land. Any person who desires to withdraw ground water from wells located within the district and to transfer the ground water withdrawn off of the overlying land for beneficial use elsewhere may do so after applying for and obtaining approval from Tri-Basin NRD. Withdrawal and use of such water shall be consistent with all applicable state statutes and rules and regulations of this district. Once granted, such permits will remain in force until the owner of a well that is the subject of such a transfer notifies the NRD in writing that the permit should be cancelled, or until the NRD board of directors determine that such transfers are no longer in the best interest of the public, except as specified in rule 7.1.2.
- 7.1.2 In those instances where groundwater will be transported off overlying land using surface water delivery systems or natural streams or where surface water and groundwater will become commingled as a result of a groundwater transfer, said transfer permit will be valid until December 31 of the year in which it is issued.
- 7.2 Transfers out of the District. Any person who desires to withdraw ground water from wells located within the district and to transfer the ground water withdrawn out of the district for beneficial use elsewhere may do so after applying for and obtaining approval from Tri-Basin NRD and the natural resources district or other jurisdictional entity where the water will be beneficially used. Withdrawal of such water shall be consistent with all applicable statutes, rules and regulations of this district. Use of such transferred water shall be consistent with all rules and regulations in the natural resources district or other jurisdictional entity where the water is used. Approval of said natural resources district or other jurisdictional entity must be secured before Tri-Basin NRD will act upon a request to transfer water out of the district. If no rules, regulations or transfer permit processes are established in the natural resources district or other jurisdictional entity where the water is used, then the rules and regulations of this district shall apply.
- 7.2.1 Anyone seeking a permit to transfer groundwater out of the district will be required to offset water withdrawals associated with the permit by reducing existing groundwater or surface water uses in the same river basin in which the proposed withdrawal will occur in an amount equivalent to the annual volume of the proposed withdrawal. The applicant must provide information to the district specifying how, when and where the new depletion to groundwater supplies proposed in the permit application will be offset. The board reserves the right to place additional restrictions on the location, timing, rate and volume of groundwater withdrawals and associated offsets for those withdrawals. The board also reserves the right to restrict the timing

and rate of discharges of groundwater pumped to streams or other water bodies within the NRD.

- 7.3 Transfers into the district. Any person who desires to withdraw ground water from wells located outside the district and to transfer and use the ground water withdrawn into the district for beneficial purposes may do so after applying for and obtaining approval from Tri-Basin NRD. Use of such water shall be consistent with all applicable statutes, rules and regulations of this district. Withdrawal of such water shall be consistent with any and all rules and regulations of the natural resources district or other jurisdictional entity in which it is withdrawn. If no rules and regulations are established in that natural resources district or other jurisdictional entity where the water is withdrawn, then the rules and regulations of this district shall apply.
- 7.4 Transfers out of the state. Requests for transfer of ground water out of state pursuant to NE statute 46-613.01 will not be acted upon by the district until such time as the person has acquired a required transfer permit from the NE Department of Natural Resources.
- 7.5 Permits. Any person who desires to construct a new well, use or modify an existing well or wells for the purpose of enabling said well or wells to pump water at a rate of more than fifty gallons per minute off of overlying land must first submit a permit request to Tri-Basin NRD, on a form provided by the district, in accordance with NE state statute 46-656.29. Permits for constructing or modifying wells to enable them to pump water off of overlying land at a rate of more than fifty gallons per minute must be approved by a majority of the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors. Before approving such a permit, the board of directors must consider whether use of the well or wells that is the subject of the proposed permit could be reasonably expected to detrimentally deplete the groundwater supply available in the vicinity of the parcel beyond groundwater quantity trigger levels specified in the Tri-Basin NRD Groundwater Management Plan. The board of directors may approve such permits as proposed, or condition their approval by limiting the rate or duration of pumping or the location or locations to which water may be transferred. The board will approve or deny all properly completed permits within 90 days, unless the applicant agrees to a longer permit review period.
- 7.6 Measuring and reporting water pumping. Any person who holds a permit that allows transfer of water off of overlying land must install a flowmeter on the well or wells that are the subject of the permit. The permit holder must also annually report the legal description and total volume pumped from said well or wells or, at the discretion of the board of directors, allow Tri-Basin NRD personnel to read and record data from said flowmeter or flowmeters.
- 7.7 Cease and desist orders. The Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors, may, at their discretion, issue cease and desist orders to prevent a person from transferring groundwater off of overlying land without an approved permit or in violation of the conditions attached to an approved permit.
- 7.8 Agreement Between Landowners to Utilize Irrigation Runoff Water - A landowner whose irrigation runoff water is capable of being captured and utilized by another

person in a manner which will prevent waste of such water, deterioration of surface water quality and accumulation of water upon the land of any other person without his consent may submit an agreement providing for capture and utilization of said water signed by all affected parties to the Tri-Basin NRD.

7.8.1 When such agreement is approved by the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors it will show the Tri-Basin NRD's concurrence that the landowner's irrigation runoff water is under adequate control. Tri-Basin NRD may withdraw its approval for said agreement whenever the board of directors determine that such agreement no longer prevents or controls improper irrigation runoff water. If the Tri-Basin NRD withdraws its approval of said agreement, written notice shall be provided to both parties. If one of the parties to the agreement causes the agreement to be terminated, written notice shall be provided to the other party and to Tri-Basin NRD.

7.9 Re-use of groundwater shall not constitute a groundwater transfer unless such re-use is specifically determined to be so by the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors.

**SECTION 8
QUANTITY GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREA
RULES AND REGULATIONS**

8. **Groundwater Management Area for Water Quantity Purposes, General** - The Board of Directors, in order to effectively enforce the Nebraska Groundwater Management and Protection Act and in accordance with the Tri-Basin NRD's Groundwater Management Plan, have declared all of the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District a Quantity Groundwater Management Area (hereinafter "Quantity GMA or QGMA") for purposes of protecting groundwater supplies, effective September 15, 2004. Because groundwater quantity problems vary in their degree of severity within the Tri-Basin NRD, the Quantity GMA Regulations will be implemented in phases.
- 8.1. Phase Area Designation Process - The NRD Board of Directors will vary the level of regulation in proportion to the severity of groundwater declines.
- 8.1.1. The NRD Board of Directors shall determine whether a need exists to designate the entire district as a Phase I Quantity Groundwater Management Area (QGMA) to protect existing groundwater supplies from depletion based upon the best information available to them on the date when they vote to approve these rules and regulations.
- 8.1.2. The Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors shall utilize average springtime static water level elevation measurements for the years 1981-1985 as the reference level to compare current water level data against when they consider whether to invoke Phase II or Phase III management rules in any section within the district. Average data for the 1981-85 period and current water level data are derived from TBNRD and other public domain water level data records.
- 8.1.3. The Board of Directors may, following a public hearing, designate all or any section within the district subject to regulation under Phase II or Phase III rules according to the criteria described in rules 8.2.2 and 8.2.3 below in order to arrest groundwater declines. The board may rescind such designation in any area where criteria for initiation of Phase II or Phase III rules are no longer met.
- 8.2. Phase Area Criteria - Criteria for designation of Quantity GMA regulation phase areas are as follows:
- 8.2.1. Phase I Areas - The entire district may be regulated under Phase I regulations to protect groundwater supplies.
- 8.2.2. Phase II rules and regulations will be required to arrest groundwater declines in any section within the district, except that portion of the Little Blue River Basin within the district, where the NRD Board of Directors determine that a three-year rolling average of spring groundwater levels have declined to the point that they are at 100% of the thickness of the saturated zone when compared to 1981-85 average groundwater reference levels, if the average water table level is greater than forty feet below the land surface.
- 8.2.2.1. In areas where groundwater level data indicate that groundwater levels during the period 1981-85 were at least ten feet above previous historic levels, phase II groundwater quantity management will be initiated if the NRD Board of Directors determine that a three-year rolling average of spring groundwater levels have declined to the

point that they are at 100% of the thickness of the saturated zone when compared to the 1981-85 reference levels, if the average water table level is greater than forty feet below the land surface.

8.2.2.2. Phase II rules and regulations will be required to arrest groundwater declines in any section within the Little Blue River Basin within the district where the NRD Board of Directors determine that a three-year rolling average of spring groundwater levels have declined to the point that they are five feet below 1981-85 average groundwater reference levels, if the average water table level is greater than forty feet below the land surface.

8.2.2.3. Upon designation of any section or sections of the district as a Phase 2 Quantity Groundwater Management Area, Tri-Basin NRD will locate at least one dedicated observation well in the township in which the designated section or sections are located. The NRD will also seek to identify wells that have groundwater level measurement data from the period 1981-85 and ask landowners for permission to periodically measure these wells. Data derived from these additional measurements will be reviewed by the NRD board of directors when they consider the groundwater management status of sections previously designated as Phase 2 for groundwater quantity management.

8.2.3. Phase III Areas -Phase III rules and regulations will be required in any section within the district where the Board of Directors determine that a three-year rolling average of spring groundwater level readings in an existing Phase II Quantity GMA have not returned to levels equal to or higher than the 1981-85 reference levels after Phase II controls have been in effect for three (3) years.

8.3. Phase I Rules and Regulations- The following regulations shall apply to all landowners in a Phase I Quantity GMA:

8.3.1. Landowners must obtain well construction permits from Tri-Basin NRD before drilling new wells, conditional replacement wells, alternate use wells or replacement wells which have a capacity greater than 50 g.p.m. Landowners shall specify the intended pumping capacity of new wells when they apply for a well construction permit. The NRD Board of Directors may determine that it is necessary to place additional conditions and constraints on the operation of wells permitted by the district. Landowners must agree to all lawful terms, conditions and constraints on the operation of a well authorized by the NRD Board of Directors at the time a permit is requested before the NRD will grant a well construction permit.

8.3.1.1. Any water user who, after September 15, 2004, wishes to construct a new well or wells, replace an existing well or use an existing well or series of interconnected existing wells with the intention of removing water from the district or consuming more than 76 acre-feet of groundwater within a single parcel of land containing 320 acres or

less for purposes other than irrigation of crops must apply to the NRD for a high volume groundwater consumption permit. A high volume groundwater consumption permit must be reviewed by the NRD board of directors, who may place conditions and limitations upon the operation of such wells they determine to be necessary to protect groundwater supplies, prevent groundwater runoff problems or prevent depletions to streamflows. Such conditions and limitations may include, but are not limited to: a) requirements to offset depletions to streamflows, b) limitations on the rate or volume of groundwater pumping, c) reporting pumping to the NRD on a periodic basis, d) allowing NRD personnel periodic access to the well site for inspection of the well and flowmeter, e) limitations on the location, rate and manner of discharge of groundwater after use in an industrial facility and f) constructing and maintaining groundwater observation wells in the vicinity of the production well, at locations to be determined by the NRD.

- 8.3.2. Upon designation by the Board of Directors of a Phase I Quantity GMA, the well spacing requirements in Section 4 will be superseded, to the extent applicable, by more restrictive spacing requirements listed below.
- 8.3.2.1. All new individual wells or new physically connected series of wells that are constructed with a total pumping capacity in excess of 1000 g.p.m. must be 1320 feet from all existing registered wells with capacity in excess of 50 g.p.m., even registered wells under the same ownership. Any well constructed in compliance with these spacing restrictions will be protected from encroachment by new non-domestic wells with capacity in excess of 50 gallons per minute within a 1320-foot diameter circle centered on that well. Public water supply wells shall be exempt from the requirements of this rule.
- 8.3.2.2. All new individual wells or new physically connected series of wells that are constructed with a pumping capacity in excess of 1500 g.p.m. must be 2640 feet from all existing registered wells with capacity in excess of 50 g.p.m., even registered wells under the same ownership. Any well constructed in compliance with these spacing restrictions will be protected from encroachment by new non-domestic wells with capacity in excess of 50 gallons per minute within a 2640-foot diameter circle centered on that well. Public water supply wells shall be exempt from the requirements of this rule.
- 8.3.3. Landowners must agree to install flowmeters in accordance with specifications listed in Section 6 of the district's rules and regulations on all wells or series of wells with pumping capacity in excess of 50 g.p.m. constructed after the effective date of these rules, as a condition for approval of NRD well construction permits. Flowmeters must be installed before wells are first used and well owners must report water use to the NRD no

- later than November 30 of each year on forms provided by the district.
- 8.3.4. Any landowner who wishes to transfer groundwater within or outside the district must apply for and receive a transfer permit in accordance with Section 7 of the district's rules and regulations before initiating such a transfer.
 - 8.3.5. Groundwater consumed by a facility or process using an alternate use well must be offset by discontinuing or replacing an equivalent amount of existing water uses in the basin and stream reach in which the facility is located. The amount of water consumed by existing irrigation water uses can be calculated by multiplying the per-acre baseline consumptive irrigation water use by the number of NRD-certified irrigated acres in a parcel.
- 8.4. Phase II Rules and Regulations- The following regulations shall apply to all landowners in a Phase II Quantity GMA:
- 8.4.1. Continue controls set forth in sub-sections 8.3.1 through 8.3.4, as required in Phase I Areas, except to the extent that they are superseded by controls set forth in this section.
 - 8.4.2. Landowners shall not develop any new irrigated acres within a Phase II area or transfer groundwater out of a Phase II area after the effective date of Phase II area designation. Landowners will be allowed to transfer irrigated acres within or out of a Phase II area as described in Section 10 "Irrigated Land Certification". The NRD board may allow groundwater transfers within a phase II management area, as described in Section 7, "Groundwater Transfers". Landowners must also notify the county assessor of such re-location.
 - 8.4.3. The Board of Directors must approve all well construction permits in Phase II areas that result in re-locating certified irrigated acres.
 - 8.4.4. Landowners must agree to submit and implement conservation plans for a period of three years before new well permits that result in re-locating certified irrigated acres will be approved by the NRD Board of Directors.
 - 8.4.5. All wells or series of wells with a capacity in excess of 50 g.p.m. in Phase II areas must have flowmeters installed in accordance with specifications listed in Section 6 of the district rules and regulations and well owners must report water use to Tri-Basin NRD no later than November 30 of each year on forms provided by the district.
 - 8.4.6. Owners of all non-domestic wells with a pumping capacity greater than 50 g.p.m. must be able to demonstrate to Tri-Basin NRD staff once every five (5) years that their wells are operable and comply with applicable well construction standards. If a well is not operable and/or does not comply with applicable well construction standards it must be repaired, registered with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources as inactive or be properly decommissioned.
- 8.5. Phase III Rules and Regulations- The following regulations shall apply to all landowners in a Phase III Quantity GMA:
- 8.5.1. Continue controls set forth in subsections 8.3 through 8.4.6 as required in

Phase I and Phase II Areas except to the extent that they are superseded by controls set forth in this section.

- 8.5.2. Water use from surface water supplies and groundwater aquifers will be limited to a combined total not to exceed 48 inches per certified irrigated acre during the initial three-year period after an area is designated as a Phase III management area.
- 8.5.3. Procedures for allocating water for industrial and commercial uses within municipalities will be agreed upon by the NRD and affected municipalities. Municipal allocation procedures and amounts will be described in inter-local cooperative agreements that will be approved by both the NRD board of directors and a city council or village board.
- 8.5.4. The NRD Board of Directors will establish allocations for industrial and commercial water users using the following methods:
 - 8.5.4.1. Livestock feeding operations, industrial and commercial water users that are not supplied by municipal systems uses will receive allocations based on metered pumpage for each of the three years preceding designation of a phase III QGMA.
 - 8.5.4.2. Allocations for livestock operations that do not have metered water use will be set at a rate of 22 acre-feet per 1000 animal units of NDEQ-permitted capacity.
 - 8.5.4.3. After the initial three-year allocation period the Board of Directors will review allocation amounts and the duration of allocation periods. After the initial review, the NRD Board of Directors will review allocation amounts and the duration of allocation periods every five (5) years based on all information available at that time.
- 8.5.5. New wells or series of wells that are constructed with a total pumping capacity in excess of 50 g.p.m. must be 1320 feet from all existing registered non-domestic wells (with capacity in excess of 50 g.p.m.), even registered wells under the same ownership.
- 8.5.6. No new additional groundwater transfers out of a Phase III area will be allowed after the effective date of these rules.
- 8.6. Groundwater Quantity Management Rules for High Groundwater Table Areas
 - 8.6.1. Criteria. A high-groundwater quantity management area (High Quantity GMA) will be declared in an NRD-defined area where a three-year rolling average of spring groundwater levels are equal to or higher than the reference levels, and the average water table level is less than forty feet below the land surface.
 - 8.6.1.1. Groundwater quantity management Phases II and III do not apply in High Quantity GMAs where the current average water table level is less than 40 feet below the land surface.
 - 8.6.1.2. Landowners may use pumps, tile drains or other methods to lower groundwater tables as far as 30 feet below the land surface without being subject to restrictions on groundwater transfers or allocations in High Quantity GMAs.

8.6.1.3. Landowners may petition the NRD Board of Directors to request formation of Improvement Project Areas (IPAs) to improve drainage and stabilize groundwater levels in High Quantity GMAs.

SECTION 9
INTEGRATED GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT AREA
RULES AND REGULATIONS

9 Groundwater Management Area for Integrated Water Management Purposes, General -

The Board of Directors, in order to effectively enforce the Nebraska Groundwater Management and Protection Act, and to conserve integrated groundwater and surface water resources within the district, hereby establishes the following rules and regulations.

- 9.1 Criteria - The Board of Directors shall designate all or any sections within the district as an integrated GMA upon occurrence of any of the following:
- 9.1.1 A finding by the Director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources that a conflict exists between groundwater and surface water users;
 - 9.1.2 A finding by the Director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources that a river basin or a sub-basin is fully appropriated or over appropriated; or
 - 9.1.3 The implementation of a joint action plan by the NRD Board of Directors in accordance with Nebraska Revised Statutes as may be amended from time to time.
- 9.2 Limitations on Irrigated Acres- Landowners shall not use integrated groundwater resources to develop any additional irrigated acres in an Integrated GMA or transfer groundwater out of an Integrated GMA except that the NRD Board of Directors may approve requests by landowners to reassign certified irrigated acres from one location to another, if landowners agree to convert existing NRD-certified irrigated acres to a non-irrigated land use, as provided for in Section 10, Irrigated Land Certification. Landowners shall also notify the county assessor of such conversion.
- 9.3 Well Construction Permits – The Board of Directors of Tri-Basin NRD declare a moratorium on drilling new wells for the purpose of developing additional irrigated land or initiating new industrial or commercial water uses within the district. The district will only issue replacement or conditional replacement well construction permits to landowners in the Integrated GMA for the purpose of irrigating NRD-certified irrigated acres.
- 9.3.1 The NRD Board of Directors may grant variances to the moratorium on drilling new wells for the purpose of developing additional irrigated land or initiating new industrial or commercial water uses within the district if the applicant can demonstrate that they will completely offset any depletions to surface water appropriations and water wells constructed in aquifers dependent upon recharge from streamflow.
 - 9.3.2 The NRD Board of Directors may determine that it is necessary to allocate groundwater pumping, as described in sub-sections 8.5.2 through 8.5.4 of section eight of these rules, or that it is necessary to require landowners to reduce irrigated acres, as allowed by NERRS 46-739 (1) (e), to prevent depletions to surface water appropriations and water wells constructed in aquifers dependent upon recharge from streamflow.
 - 9.3.3 The NRD Board of Directors hereby create a streamflow depletion offset account. Landowners may make payments into this account in lieu of

providing offsets for depletions to streamflows. The NRD Board of Directors may also choose to grant exemptions to landowners from compliance with rule 9.3.2 in exchange for said landowners agreeing to make contributions to the streamflow depletion offset account which the NRD Board of Directors determine are adequate to enable the NRD to purchase water of sufficient quantity and available in sufficient amounts to offset depletions to surface water appropriations and water wells constructed in aquifers dependent upon recharge from streamflow resulting from groundwater use on property owned by said landowners.

- 9.4 Landowners will be issued new well construction permits to drill new wells that irrigate cropland acres not certified by the NRD without being subject to the requirements set forth in rule 9.3 above PROVIDED, the landowner submits clear and demonstrable proof to the Board of Directors that such development will not deplete integrated water resources at a rate greater than the allowable depletion limit.

SECTION 10 IRRIGATED LAND CERTIFICATION

10. **General** - Tri-Basin NRD staff will gather data to locate and enumerate cropland, hayland and pasture land within district boundaries that is irrigated from groundwater or surface water resources.
 - 10.1. All parcels or portions of parcels that were classified as irrigated cropland or irrigated grassland on the 2004-05 county property tax rolls, or that can be shown to have been farmed, grazed or hayed as irrigated land during or after 1997 and before the effective date of designation of an area as an Integrated Management Area or a Phase II Quantity Groundwater Management Area will be certified. The NRD Board of Directors may also certify irrigated acres as described below.
 - 10.1.1. The number of certified irrigated acres in a parcel cannot exceed the number of actual acres in said parcel.
 - 10.2. Procedure to Certify Irrigated Acres. County property tax rolls will be used as the primary data source for classification of irrigated land that the district will use to certify irrigated acres district-wide.
 - 10.2.1. Any landowner who wishes to get NRD certification to use groundwater to irrigate land within the district that was irrigated for the first time during or after 2004 must be able to demonstrate that a crop was irrigated on that parcel of land before the effective date of the Integrated GMA. Classification of land as irrigated by a county assessor prior to designation by the NRD Board of Directors of an area as an Integrated Management Area or a Phase II Quantity Groundwater Management Area shall suffice to demonstrate that a parcel of land is certifiable for groundwater irrigation for purposes of these rules.
 - 10.2.2. If a parcel of land or portion thereof is not classified as irrigated by a county assessor prior to designation by the NRD Board of Directors of an area as an Integrated Management Area or a Phase II Quantity Groundwater Management Area, the NRD Board of Directors may accept aerial photos, USDA Farm Service Agency records, or other independently verified documents that indicate a parcel of land or portion thereof was irrigated during or after the 1997 crop year as information to justify revision of NRD irrigated acre certifications.
 - 10.2.3. Land within an integrated groundwater management area or a phase II quantity groundwater management area that is not certified by the NRD, may not be irrigated using groundwater except to the extent that the board approves applications by landowners to reassign certified irrigated acres by ceasing irrigation on land previously certified by the NRD for groundwater irrigation. The amount of land that needs to be returned to a dryland land use will be determined by Tri-Basin NRD staff using maps or computer programs approved by the NRD Board of Directors and the NE Department of Natural Resources. These maps or computer programs will account for depletions to surface water appropriations and water wells constructed in aquifers

dependent upon recharge from streamflow resulting from groundwater use on property owned by said landowners. In all instances, applicants will be required to permanently cease irrigation on at least one acre of certified irrigated land, in return for approval to develop for irrigation one acre of previously non-certified land.

- 10.3. Procedure to reassign NRD-certified irrigated acres. Landowners may request that the NRD Board of Directors authorize changes in the location or number of certified irrigated acres. Requests to reassign certified irrigated acres from one parcel to another must be accompanied by a title search completed by an attorney or registered abstractor that identifies all lienholders who have an interest in the parcel from which certified irrigated land will be reassigned. The NRD will charge a non-refundable fee of \$100 to cover the costs incurred processing each application for reassignment of certified irrigated land. If the NRD Board of Directors approve a request to reassign certified irrigated acres, NRD staff will file an “Instrument of Water Transfer” that will be recorded by the county clerk, in connection with the parcel containing the irrigated acres that are to be transferred. The NRD Board of Directors will reject requests to reassign certified irrigated acres if one or more of the following circumstances exist:
- 10.3.1. A landowner request would result in reassigning certified irrigated acres from a Phase I Quantity GMA area to a Phase II or Phase III Quantity GMA area or from an area not subject to integrated management rules to an area within the Integrated GMA.
 - 10.3.2. A landowner request would result in reassigning irrigated acres from this district to another natural resources district, except that the directors may approve requests to reassign irrigated acres outside of the boundaries of Tri-Basin NRD, with the concurrence of the neighboring affected NRD.
 - 10.3.3. A landowner request would result in reassigning certified irrigated acres from one river basin to another river basin.
 - 10.3.4. A landowner request would add irrigated acres in an Integrated Management Area or a Phase II or Phase III Groundwater Quantity Management Area without ceasing irrigation on a sufficient number of acres in the parcel within which the certified acres were originally located to a non-irrigated land use.
 - 10.3.5. A landowner fails to report changes in land use on all parcels that are involved in reassignment of irrigated acres to the County Assessor.
 - 10.3.6. A citizen or NRD staff provide information to the NRD Board of Directors indicating that adding irrigated acres in a particular area is likely to deplete groundwater or surface water in excess of the maximum allowable depletion or is otherwise contrary to NRD rules or state or federal laws.
 - 10.3.7. A request would result in reassignment of certified irrigated acres from a parcel of land which is irrigated either with surface water alone, or with a combination of surface water and groundwater, to a parcel of land which is irrigated with groundwater as the sole source of water supply.
 - 10.3.8. A landowner does not secure consent for a request to reassign certified irrigated acres from all affected lienholders.

10.3.9. A request to reassign certified irrigated acres would result in reassigning irrigated acres from another NRD into this NRD, unless the NRD Board of Directors determine that such a request would not lead to any of the circumstances described in rules 10.3.1 through 10.3.8.

10.4 Reassignments of certified irrigated acres are considered complete on the day that they are approved by the NRD board of directors.

10.5 Procedure to Withdraw NRD Certification of Irrigated Acres. The NRD Board of Directors may withdraw certification of irrigated acres under the following circumstances:

10.5.1 The County Assessor of the county in which the certified irrigated acres are located changes the land use classification of the certified acres from an irrigated to a non-irrigated land use class.

10.5.2 A landowner petitions or asks the County Assessor of the county in which the certified irrigated acres are located, requesting changes in land use classification of the certified acres from an irrigated to a non-irrigated land use class.

10.5.3 A landowner is not in compliance with Tri-Basin NRD Rules and Regulations.

10.6 Procedure to Certify Irrigated Land Enrolled in Conservation Programs. Landowners who, before September 15, 2004, voluntarily enter into contracts, agreements or easements as part of federal, state, local or private conservation programs that involve temporary cessation of irrigation on land with a previous history of irrigated crop production, may apply to the NRD for certification of those acres when those contracts, agreements or easements are terminated.

10.6.1 Such application for certification will be necessary only in those instances where land was re-classified by the county tax assessor from an irrigated to a non-irrigated property tax valuation class.

10.6.2 In order to obtain NRD certification for land that was not classified as irrigated land on the 2004-05 property tax rolls due to enrollment in a conservation program, landowners must agree to ask the county assessor to classify as irrigated land any acres for which they seek certification.

SECTION 11 SEVERABILITY OF RULES AND SUPREMACY OF STATE LAW

11 Severability and Supremacy, general. The NRD Board of Directors desire to clearly state their expressed will in regard to the severability of district rules and regulations and the supremacy of state laws and regulations to the extent that these rules and regulations may conflict with these statutes, regulations or common law.

11.1 Severability of rules. In the event that any court of competent jurisdiction should find or rule a provision of these rules and regulations to be unconstitutional, invalid or other wise unlawful, the remaining rules and regulations shall remain in full force and effect.

11.2 Supremacy of state law. All rules and regulations adopted by the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District Board of Directors are intended to be in full compliance with state common law, statutes and state agency regulations. These rules and regulations are not intended to, nor can they, supersede any valid regulatory provisions or state agency regulations regarding the use and administration of surface water.