

NEWSRELEASE

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Little Blue NRD Adopts New Groundwater Rules

The Little Blue NRD Board of Directors approved revisions to regulations for administering the Groundwater Management and Protection Act at their September 13, 2011 Board Meeting. An informational meeting was held prior to the hearing to inform the public about the grounds for the new regulations. A public hearing was held with several questions about the revisions from producers and consultants. The changes were approved by the full board at the regular monthly meeting later in the evening. The adopted revised rules will take effect on October 12, 2011.

Some of the new and revised regulations will apply equally across the district.

- The current November 1st anhydrous fertilizer date will continue as in the past as no change was made to this application. However, farmers who wish to apply liquid or dry pre plant nitrogen fertilizers, in which nitrogen is the greatest percent of the compound, or when the application results in a rate of over 20 pounds per acre of nitrogen over the field, may only do so after March 1st, except under the following conditions:
 - A "Fertilizer Permit" will be required by the LBNRD prior to fertilizer applications.
 - A nitrogen inhibitor will be required if applying over 20 lbs of active nitrogen/acre.
 - An annual report will be required by March 15th of each year if the "Fertilizer Permit" was obtained.
- Another change is to lessen the limitations for irrigation water transfers by removing the need for a permit if the transfer is to be within the same section of land. Under the new rules, transfers across section lines still would require a permit, and the water could be moved no farther than to the quarter-section immediately adjacent or cater-corner to the section from which it is being pumped. (Transfers however, will not be allowed if the ground to which the water is to be pumped has no aquifer beneath it, or if the aquifer there would be insufficient to support the irrigation system on its own with no more than two wells.)
- One key change to the rules and regulations would apply only to certain areas based on hydrogeologic (aquifer) conditions. Specifically, no more than two irrigation wells would be allowed per quarter-section within "very high risk" areas identified on a map generated through a recently completed hydrogeologic study of the district. These areas generally lie along the fringes of the district's principal aquifer. **Any wells already**

drilled and in use by the rule's adoption date will be considered "Grandfathered" and can continue use, even in those "very high risk" areas.

- Additional district-wide changes include modification of an existing rule requiring that new irrigation wells be outfitted with a straight section of pipe equal to 10 times the diameter of the pipe, allowing room for future installation of a flow meter, if necessary. That requirement would be extended to existing wells in which the discharge piping was being repaired, modified or replaced "to the extent that such free space could be installed."
- Another major change is that all new well permit applications will be subject to a resource evaluation, looking at both the aquifer characteristics and the irrigation suitability of the soils at that location. If the resulting evaluation score for the site falls below the board's minimum standard score with respect to either water availability or soil erodibility, conditions could be applied to the permit requiring best management practices necessary to protect the land and water resources of the site.

The revised rules and regulations as well as the "Risk Map" have been posted on the Little Blue NRD website.

The Little Blue NRD General Manager, Mike Onnen, said that changes to the rules and regulations have been discussed for some time, but the district board was waiting for completion of the hydrogeologic mapping and soils irrigation suitability investigations so it would have the best science on which to base its decisions.

The Little Blue NRD encompasses all of Thayer County and parts of Adams, Clay, Fillmore, Jefferson, Nuckolls and Webster counties. The entire district is designated as a Level 1 Management Area.

*Little Blue Natural Resources District
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