

UPPER ELKHORN The Oracle

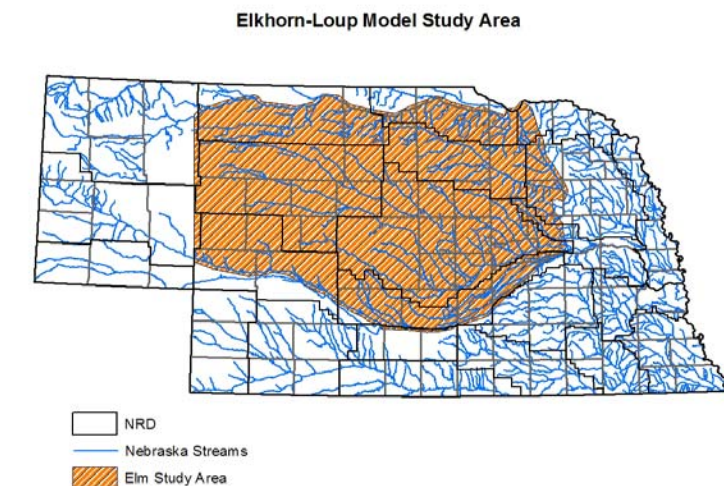
"Making Wise Decisions Concerning Our Natural Resources"
<http://www.uenrd.org>

Upper Elkhorn NRD assisting development of the Elkhorn-Loup Modeling (ELM) Project

The Upper Elkhorn NRD is an active participant and funding partner in the Elkhorn Loup Model (ELM) study. The study area covers approximately 29,300 square miles (more than 1/3 of Nebraska) and extends from the Niobrara River to the Platte River upstream of Norfolk in the Elkhorn River basin and Columbus in the Loup River basin, encompassing most of central Nebraska. The entire Upper Elkhorn NRD, constituting of nearly 1.9 million acres, falls within the boundaries included in the study. Also involved with this project are the Lower Elkhorn NRD, Upper Loup NRD, Lower Loup NRD, Middle Niobrara NRD, Lower Niobrara NRD, Lewis & Clark NRD, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Conservation Survey Division

(CSD) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The Natural Resource Districts are participating in order to develop a scientific based tool for properly managing and understanding groundwater within the study area, the impact of water uses within the study area, and the interaction of groundwater with surface water in the Elkhorn River and Loup River basins. This study was prompted by the passage of LB962 and the imposed moratoriums on well drilling in each basin when the DNR implements a "Fully Appropriated" status for the District.

The primary goal is to add a more in-depth scientific method to the currently used Jenkins model that is technically sound and is acceptable to better define



boundaries to a Fully Appropriated designation by the DNR. The ELM will assess the data available to determine the amount of additional water uses, both ground and surface water, which are available for development. The data from the ELM will also be utilized by both the DNR and the NRDs

for the issuance of new water uses. Potential impact of each type of water use will be incorporated into the ELM and a direct impact of additional uses should be properly represented through the model.

Furthermore, as a result of the ELM project,

when a designation of Fully Appropriated is made by the DNR the ELM will be incorporated into the required development of the integrated management plan. This is a plan that requires the DNR and NRD to work together to address additional impacts of new water uses added onto a stable water system. The preliminary development of this model is being used to estimate pumping amounts prior to major construction of irrigation wells in Nebraska.

See Study continued on pg 4

Department of Natural Resources declares UENRD Not to be "Fully Appropriated" in 2007!

Water has been deemed "issue of the decade" by newly elected Governor Dave Heineman and has been evident across the District and the state following the passage of LB 962. LB 962, which was drafted from the recommendations of the Water Policy Task Force instructs the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to

evaluate every river basin in Nebraska and determine whether or not it is fully appropriated. The initial evaluation took place in 2006 and all Districts in the Elkhorn River Basin received word from the Department of Natural Resources Director, Ann Bleed that none of the Elkhorn River Basin would be designated as "fully

appropriated" in 2006. The preliminary 2007 evaluations have been released to the Nebraska Natural Resource Districts and have shown that once again, no portion of the Upper Elkhorn NRD will be Fully Appropriated for the 2007 Irrigation season. This is based on the best available data collected and reviewed by the DNR, they have

determined that there is enough water available in the Elkhorn Basin to meet the current needs. However, DNR has stated that the Loup and the Elkhorn River Basins are the closest subbasins to failing to meet the water availability flows for surface irrigation. The DNR is required to review Nebraska's water basins annually and when the water needs of a basin are equal to the water available that basin or parts of a basin will be labeled "fully appropriated". Once a basin is designated as "fully appropriated" it will be subject to the rules and regulations of LB 962, which will require the development of an integrated management plan and include a moratorium on all high capacity well development, including irrigation wells.

UENRD Phase I Water Quality Program Reminders!!!!!! Applies to Entire Upper Elkhorn NRD

- ◆ Anyone applying more than 50 pounds of Nitrogen Fertilizer per acre must be certified in Nitrogen Management through the Upper Elkhorn NRD.
- ◆ Irrigation water samples are Required at least once every four years for Nitrogen Management Re-certification!

See back page for Phase II Reminders

Natural
Resources
District

Spring & Summer 2006

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Upper Elkhorn NRD Report Card for FY 05-06

- ◆ Planted 56,754 machine plant seedlings
- ◆ Distributed 27,851 hand plant seedlings
- ◆ Tilled 322,000 feet or 60.9 miles of ground in preparation for weed mulch
- ◆ Installed 339,740 feet or 64.3 miles of conservation weed mulch
- ◆ Sold 583 weed mulch squares
- ◆ Sold 8045 feet of drip irrigation hose
- ◆ Sold 3159 pounds of grass seed
- ◆ Sold 5,750 pounds of poison barley
- ◆ Distributed \$128,032 in NSWCP/NRD Cost Share
 - ◆ 125 Cooperators received \$71,525 for Windbreaks
 - ◆ 16 Cooperators received \$22,917 for Planned Grazing Systems
 - ◆ 16 Cooperators received \$25,682 for Irrigation Water Management
 - ◆ 2 Cooperators received \$4,058 for Pasture Planting & Range Seedings
 - ◆ 2 Cooperator received \$3,850 for Critical Area Planting
- ◆ Distributed \$3,495 in Water Well Decommissioning funds to properly abandon 14 wells
- ◆ Distributed \$2,915 to 16 cooperators participating in the Deep Soil Sampling Program
- ◆ Distributed \$4,033 to cooperators through the Domestic Water Quality Program
- ◆ Offered cost share for cooperators who would like to participate in the Liquid/NH3 Application Program
- ◆ Distributed \$26,080 to cooperators participating in the Buffer Strip Program
- ◆ Distributed \$25,252 to cooperators participating in the Corners for Wildlife Program
- ◆ Distributed \$14,926 to cooperators participating in the Wild NE Program
- ◆ Maintain weather stations in the Brunswick, Elgin, O'Neill and now Newport areas
- ◆ Worked with Game & Parks to maintain the water level at Goose Lake
- ◆ Designated Phase II Groundwater Management Areas (GWMA) January 1, 2003
- ◆ Issued 152 water well permits due to the GWMA
- ◆ Certified 163 cooperators in nitrogen management
- ◆ Sampled approximately 480 irrigation wells for water quality parameters & 226 for pesticides
- ◆ The District maintains 53 dedicated monitoring wells at 21 different locations
- ◆ The District maintains a vadose zone sampling program to analyze nitrates in the soil

2005 Chemigation Update

Last season, the Upper Elkhorn NRD approved 2082 applications for chemigation. District personnel inspected 201 new chemigation sites and 936 renewal sites.

There was a total of 16,632,396 pounds of nitrogen applied to 135,827 acres for an average of 122 pounds of nitrogen per acre. Chemigators applied approximately 1,974 gallons of pesticides and herbicides on 33,848 acres of cropland for an average of 7.5 ounces of chemicals per acre.

The annual chemigation deadline is June 1. All renewal applications must be submitted to the NRD on or before June 1. Applications may be picked up at the Upper Elkhorn NRD office, the Neligh NRCS office and the RC&D in Bassett. Remember, due to the tremendous number of application sites which change from year to year the Upper Elkhorn NRD does not mail out applications. However, applications may be downloaded from the internet at the Upper Elkhorn NRD website at www.uenrd.org.

Area Schools Compete in Annual Water Program

The 17th annual Wonderful World of Water Festival was celebrated September 20 at the Willow Creek State Recreational Area near Pierce. Thirty-two teams of ninth and tenth grade students from 19 schools across Northeast Nebraska competed in the day long program vying for championship honors.

The day began with registration and a brief overview of the Willow Creek State Recreational Area by Park Superintendent Dan Sutherland. Then each team competed in a track of hands-on activities focusing on water quality and other water related issues. The teams were then quizzed regarding those sessions to accumulate points for the competition. Following the educational sessions, the teams were given one last chance to extend their point totals by participating in the Water Wheel of Fortune Game. Then while the final totals were being calculated each team was given the opportunity to participate in the Wonderful World of Water special project.

This year's special project was Water Rockets which is a program taught through the Jr. Academy of Sciences. Each team was invited to build a water rocket and demonstrate their knowledge of mass, velocity and engineering. The



Winning Team from Orchard High School

rockets were judged on distance, time in the air and creativity. Several rockets were launched Wednesday with prizes being awarded to Pope John CC, Winside and West Point-Beemer.

Following the presentation of the special projects the winners of the 2006 Northeast Nebraska Wonderful World of Water were announced. The winner of the South Track was Orchard High School. Team Members included; Scott Horstmann, Burt Newman, Willie Willats, Cory Stelling, Laura Allen and Erin Twibell. The winning team from the North Track was Winside High School consisting of Aaron Mangels, Jake Kander, Chelsey Milenkovich, Katie Gray and Katie Clocker. Both First Place teams were awarded Wonderful World of Water T-shirts.

The Wonderful World of Water program would not be possible without our many natural resources professionals from across the area who volunteer their time each year to share their expertise and work with students who might be interested in a career related to natural resources. They come from a variety of agencies including: The Natural Resources Conservation Service; Nebraska Department of Natural Resources; UNL Conservation & Survey Division; Nebraska Public Power District; University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension; Northeast Nebraska RC&D and, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission. The Wonderful World of Water is sponsored by: the Upper Elkhorn NRD; Lower Elkhorn NRD; Lower Niobrara NRD; and, Lewis and Clark NRD.

UENRD Offers Scholarships to Graduating High School Seniors

Each year, the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District offers three \$500 scholarships to graduating High School Seniors from the District. These scholarships are available for students who are planning to further their education in a field related to natural resources or agriculture. Seniors who are interested should contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD or visit the website at www.uenrd.org/education.html for further information, eligibility requirements and applications. The deadline for all scholarship applications is April 6, 2006.

Bruning Provides \$69,000 for Environmental Education to Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts

Attorney General Jon Bruning presented \$69,000 for environmental education efforts to the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts today at their annual conference in Kearney. The money was made available through the Attorney General's Environmental Court Ordered Settlement Fund. The fund is comprised of voluntary payments collected in court-approved settlements from entities that have violated state and federal environmental regulations.

"The NRDs are a main provider of environmental education in the state, particularly in our schools," Bruning said. "Helping prevent environmental problems in the future and investing in the health and well-being of our children is an ideal way to use these funds."

Ted Hughes, President of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, said, "Attorney General Bruning's support of environmental education will help the NRDs educate Nebraskans about the importance of protecting our natural resources."

The NRDs currently provide numerous environmental education programs, including educator workshops, the Leopold Education Project, Project Wild, Natural Resources Educator of the Year and many other environmental education programs.

Upper Elkhorn NRD Programs

Sign Up Underway for NRD Cost Share Programs

Anyone wishing to participate in an Upper Elkhorn NRD cost share program should contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD office or their local NRCS office. Cost share is available for the installation of the practice itself and will not include any sales tax on the materials or labor. Cost share programs available include:

NSWCP/NRD: The UENRD in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources offers cost share practices to landowners wishing to install conservation practices. Some practices included in the program are: windbreaks; planned grazing systems; irrigation water management; pasture planting and range seeding; grade stabilization; and, windbreak renovation. Cost share is available at a rate of 50%.

Water Well Decommissioning: The UENRD in conjunction with the Department of Natural Resources offers cost share funds at a rate of 75% up to a maximum of \$500 for water wells and \$700 for hand dug wells to landowners who wish to properly decommission an abandoned well.

Domestic Water Quality: The UENRD offers cost share to cooperators whose drinking water is contaminated with nitrates over the federal health standard of 10 parts per million. Cost share is available at a rate of 50% or a maximum of \$800.

Nitrogen Management: The UENRD offers 50% cost share not to exceed \$200 to cooperators to encourage producers to manage fertilizer application better by accounting for residual nitrate-nitrogen which already exists in the soil root zone and irrigation water.

Cost share applications are approved by the Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors and funding is available on a first come first serve basis.

Nominate Your Neighbor

Do you know someone who has done outstanding conservation work to help protect and preserve our natural resources? The Upper Elkhorn NRD would like to reward those individuals or groups for their contribution to conservation! Award categories include: Outstanding Grassland; Outstanding Tree Planter; Outstanding Community Conservation; Agri-Business; Wildlife Habitat; and, Honor Farm/Ranch. For more information contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD 301 North Harrison, O'Neill, NE 68763 or 402-336-3867.

UENRD Sets Budget for 06-07 Fiscal Year

On September 18, 2006 the Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors adopted the fiscal year 2006-2007 budget. As you can see from the chart, the UENRD continues to respect the concerns of our taxpayers by continuing to find other funding mechanisms to maintain your NRD! The total budget for the 2006-2007 fiscal year is \$1,445,820 which is 2,819 more than last fiscal year. The tax asking for FY 06-07 is \$420,771 or 2.52 cents per \$100 of property valuation which is only five cents more than last year.

Up to 90% Cost Share and Annual Payments for Trees

There are two attractive cost share programs available for tree planting this year. One involves the continuous CRP program administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency. This program offers 90% cost share and annual payments to cooperators who want to plant trees in cropland. The second program offers cost share assistance through the Nebraska Soil and Water Program and is available to cooperators at a rate of 50% with a minimum hand plant order of 200 trees or 150 machine plant trees. Cost share information for the continuous CRP program can be obtained by contacting your local NRCS office; while, NSWCP cost share information can be obtained through the Upper Elkhorn NRD or local NRCS office. To receive cost share all forms must be completed and returned to the NRD office along with full payment for the trees before the request can be approved.

Demand for Trees Continues....Place Orders Early!

As the demand for conservation tree seedlings grows, the Upper Elkhorn NRD will be taking orders from now until March 1st. Trees are available on a first come first serve basis and are available in a variety of species consisting of conifers, broadleaves and shrubs. Hand plant trees should be ordered in bundles of 25 while machine plant orders will be based on the windbreak design. The NRD can also provide technical assistance to cooperators who would like help designing a new windbreak or renovating an old one. The technician will suggest the type of trees best suited for your soil type and design a layout beneficial to your area.

The NRD also offers two practices to help increase the survival rate of new seedlings, drip irrigation and conservation weed mulch. Drip irrigation is a flat hose installed at the time the trees are planted and is used when there is a water source at the site. Conservation weed mulch is installed over the seedlings to help control weeds and retain moisture. Both practices can be very beneficial to young windbreaks and should be considered when placing your order.

Remember, the Upper Elkhorn NRD is also your one-stop shop to order trees and weed mulch. The NRD can plant and install the trees and fabric as we have for the past 30+ years. Trees and mulch purchased from the Upper Elkhorn NRD could be eligible for local or state funds. For further information or to place an order contact your local NRCS office or the Upper Elkhorn NRD at 301 N. Harrison Street, O'Neill or (402) 336-3867.

Species Available

Conifers

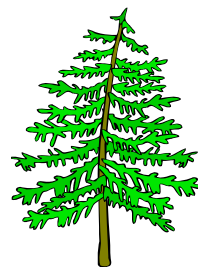
Eastern Red Cedar
Rocky Mountain Juniper
Austrian Pine
Ponderosa Pine
Jack Pine
Colorado Blue Spruce
Scotch Pine

Shrubs

Caragana
Sumac
Honeysuckle
Chokecherry
Willow
Sandcherry
Elderberry
Redosier Dogwood
Harbin Pear
Cotoneaster
American Plum
Golden Current
Lilac
Crabapple
Black Cherry
Buffaloberry
False Indigo
Manchurian Apricot

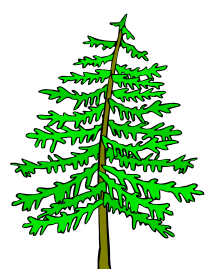
Broadleaves

Native Cottonwood
Green Ash
Hackberry
Swamp White Oak
Honeylocust
Bur Oak
Silver Maple
Black Walnut



Cost of Trees & Material

Hand Plant Trees-Storage-Tax	\$80.88/100
Machine Plant Trees-Storage-Tax	\$122.33/100
Pull in Charge - less than 150 trees	\$75.00
Drip Irrigation	\$0.12/foot plus tax
Weed Mulch (Installed)	\$0.55/foot plus tax
Weed Mulch (by the Roll)	\$100/300 feet plus tax
Weed Mulch Squares	\$1.50 each plus tax



Prices Subject to Change

Cost Share Eligibility Requirements

Any person who fails to comply with any of the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District's Rules and Regulations shall not be eligible to participate in any programs or receive payments that are administered by the District. Programs requiring compliance include but are not limited to the following: UENRD Groundwater Management Plan - Phase I and Phase II Rules & Regulations; Chemigation Act; Irrigation Runoff and Erosion and Sediment Control. Cost share programs that may be affected due to lack of compliance include but are not limited to the following: Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Program; Upper Elkhorn NRD Conservation Program - Land Treatment Fund; WILD Nebraska/Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program; Nebraska Buffer Strip Program; Corners for Wildlife; Liquid/NH₃ Application Program; Livestock Manure Analysis Program; Domestic Water Quality Program; Nitrogen Management Program; and, the Water Well Decommissioning Program. Anyone who is already a participant in any of these programs or may be a participant will not receive any payments as long as they fail to comply with any District rules and regulations.

NeRAIN Volunteers Needed!!!

If you are a weather enthusiast and would like to volunteer for the NeRAIN Program contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD at 402-336-3867! Volunteers will receive a new quality rain gauge, installation and brief training (on internet) to record data. All you need is a computer with internet access and a few minutes each day to report readings from your gauge!



Department
of Natural
Resources



Upper Elkhorn NRD Static Water Level Summary

The Upper Elkhorn NRD has administered a static water level monitoring program since 1975. This fall, the District's sampling network has been increased to 148 observation sites including both 106 irrigations wells and 52 dedicated monitoring wells. The static water level is measured by the District on a biannual basis during the spring and fall seasons. By consistently collecting data during the same time of year, frequency and duration of fluctuations in aquifer levels can be successfully monitored and recorded. Differing water levels can also indicate flow patterns changing and could mean a potential for an influx of low quality water.

Spring water level readings generally are taken between March 1 and May 1 each year, after the fall and winter recharge cycle and before the summer irrigation season begins. Spring levels are generally the most utilized reading in water resource management.

Static Water Level Results for the Spring of 2006

County	Spring 2000	Spring 2001	Spring 2002	Spring 2003	Spring 2004	Spring 2005	Spring 2006
Antelope	66.22	66.89	66.15	68.62	67.02	68.76	66.43
Holt	22.81	23.65	23.28	25.71	24.31	24.37	22.93
Wheeler	19.98	20.40	20.25	20.96	19.77	20.48	19.16
Rock	16.30	17.40	16.38	19.28	17.51	17.05	15.96

Fall water levels reflect the amount of stress that has been imposed on an aquifer. By determining fall water levels, the impact of pumping on the aquifer can be gauged as well as the ability that aquifer has to recover from such usage by examining levels over a period of time.

Static Water Level Results for the Fall of 2006

	Antelope	Holt	Rock	Wheeler
2001	68.23	25.64	18.06	21.03
2002	70.37	26.44	20.05	22.73
2003	72.19	27.99	20.95	23.79
2004	70.92	25.27	22.58	18.16
2005	71.02	24.94	20.76	18.84
2006	70.36	26.12	21.60	18.84

This year, across the District, there was an abundance of winter precipitation which credits to recharge but an absent of spring precipitation with less than 6 inches of natural precipitation occurring May through July. The lack of rain affected the amount of irrigation required as there was a need to run the irrigation wells immediately at germination in order to keep up with moisture evaporation in the soil column. Major precipitation events did not occur until late August and early September. This combination of pumping and lack of precipitation may have contributed to the decrease in fall water levels we are seeing. Though the declines have been slight, the UENRD will continue to monitor water levels and report of any changes.

" Water Optimizer" A Decision Support Tool for Producers With Limited Water

The Water Optimizer tool was developed in response to several years of drought across the state and to farmers facing water restrictions in the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Republican River Basin.

This tool evaluates single fields for several crop options. Irrigated crops include; corn, soybeans, sorghum, wheat, alfalfa, edible beans and sunflowers. Dryland crops include; corn, soybeans, sorghum, sunflowers, alfalfa and wheat in continuous, summer fallow and eco-fallow rotations.

The tool allows users to input information into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, including soil type and irrigation system options. Irrigation options include center pivot or gravity irrigation systems, well or canal delivery, and systems powered by electricity, diesel or natural gas. After entering this basic information, producers enter their production costs, irrigation costs, crop prices, crop type and available water. After these parameters have been set, the program calculates what crops will be most profitable with the given costs and available water.

The Water Optimizer program (Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet) and user manual (Microsoft Word Document) are available via download or by ordering the Water Optimizer DVD/CD set for \$7.00. The CD includes the Water Optimizer program and users manual, and the DVD contains background information, applications, examples and research results for the Water Optimizer program. Information found on the DVD is not available for download. For more information call 800-755-7765. This article provided by the University of Nebraska Lincoln.

Study.....In time groundwater discharge to surface water will be estimated using stream gaging station information

The District is currently working on a number of projects that will assist in the development of the model. These projects are within the

plan to develop the ELM to its maximum potential and focus almost entirely on gathering data for groundwater modeling and its uses. Some of these projects include continual monitoring of the spring and fall static water levels, pressure transducer installation, construction of

dedicated monitoring well sites, and surface water flow monitoring across the entire District. These projects will be conducted by the USGS, CSD and UENRD personnel. Further updates on the ELM will be released to the public as they become available.

Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District Board of Directors

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Janet Koinzan - Vice Chair	Subdistrict 7 ~ Elgin	(402) 843-2410
Dale Wiles - Treasurer	Subdistrict 3 ~ O'Neill	(402) 336-2338
Greg Felker	Subdistrict 3 ~ O'Neill	(402) 336-2864
Ted Hughes - NARD Rep	Subdistrict 6 ~ Neligh	(402) 887-4942
Reg Green	Subdistrict 5 ~ Creighton	(402) 358-5479
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James Dvorak	Subdistrict 2 ~ Atkinson	(402) 925-5776
Curtis Gotschall	Subdistrict 2 ~ Stuart	(402) 925-2504

UENRD Board Meetings are held the 4th

Monday of every month.

March through October at 8:00 P.M. and November through February at 2:30 P.M.

UENRD Staff

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Joy Knapp	NRCS Clerk, Neligh
Mary Zakrzewski	NRCS Clerk, O'Neill
Barbara Shannon	NRCS Clerk, Ainsworth

Phase II Groundwater Quality Management Area Requirement Reports Due February 1

A continuation of Phase I activities will remain in effect unless modified or negated by Phase II requirements.

The District will require the certified operator to accomplish a deep soil sampling analysis (mandatory two foot sample, three foot sample encouraged, if applicable) for nitrate-nitrogen content on each field larger than 40 acres with more than 50 pounds per acre per year of actual nitrogen fertilizer applied. The sample must be collected and analyzed using UENRD approved methods. Approved sampling and analysis techniques will be included as part of the District's educational program. This

analysis will give the certified operator knowledge of usable and inaccessible nitrogen in the soil profile.

Certified operators must submit a report to the UENRD by February 1 following each crop year on forms provided by the District for areas larger than 40 acres where more than 50 pounds per acre per year of actual nitrogen fertilizer is applied. The report may consist of, but is not limited to, the following sections:
Section I. Nutrient Mgt
Section II. Pest Management
Section III. Irrigation Management

The Oracle is the official publication of the Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District. It is produced for the purpose of educating the public regarding natural resources issues. Any comments or questions should be sent to Beth Walsh, Upper Elkhorn NRD, 301 N. Harrison Street, O'Neill, NE 68763 or e-mailed to bwalsh@uenrd.org. The Upper Elkhorn NRD is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer