

UPPER ELKHORN The Oracle

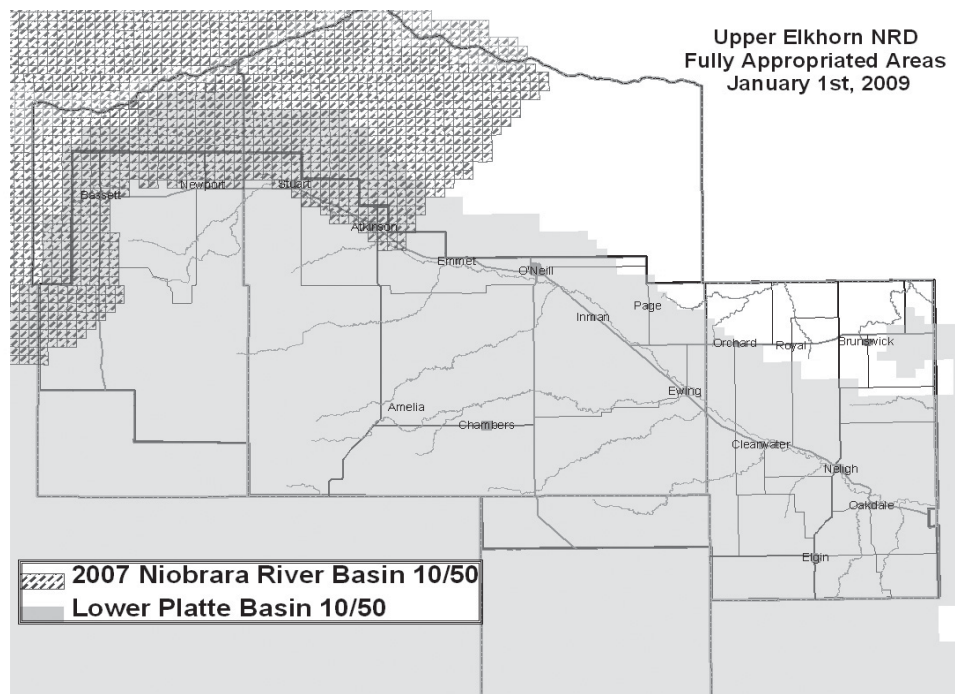
"Making Wise Decisions Concerning Our Natural Resources"
<http://www.uenrd.org>

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources Declares Lower Platte River Basin and Its Tributaries Fully Appropriated Which Includes the Upper Elkhorn NRD

The Upper Elkhorn NRD received word December 16, 2008 that a large portion of the NRD has been preliminarily labeled fully appropriated by Brian Dunnigan, Director, of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. DNR is required by state statute to complete an evaluation of each of the state's river basins that is not involved in the integrated management planning process once a year beginning January 1, 2006. This year's report includes a preliminary conclusion that the Lower Platte River Basin, upstream of the confluence with the Missouri River including all tributary drainages is fully appropriated. This includes the majority of the Upper Elkhorn NRD as well as portions of the Upper Niobrara-White NRD, Middle Niobrara NRD, Lower Niobrara NRD, Upper Loup NRD, Twin Platte NRD, Lower Loup NRD, Central Platte NRD, Upper Big Blue NRD, Lower Platte North NRD, Lower Platte South NRD, Lewis and Clark NRD and the Pappin Missouri River NRD. This designation means that any further development will have a negative impact on surface water flows. The area being designated is being triggered by surface water flows not being met at stream gaging stations at North Bend and Louisville.

The designation prompts an immediate stay on new permits to construct a high capacity well (>50 gallons per minute) for industrial, municipal and agricultural use and the expansion of any new irrigated acres as of December 16, 2008. Stays are also placed on any new surface water permits. The stays will remain in effect until DNR has made their final determination regarding this portion of the Lower Platte River Basin which will be on or before April 15, 2009. The Department of Natural Resources will hold one or more public hearings on the preliminary determination on or before March 16, 2009.

For questions or further information please contact the Upper Elkhorn NRD at 402-336-3867 or visit the website at www.uenrd.org. Copies of this report can also be found on the Department of Natural Resources website at www.dnr.ne.gov or by requesting a copy from DNR, 301 Centennial Mall South, P O Box 94676, Lincoln, NE 68509-4676.



Natural
Resources
District

Spring & Summer 07-08

Inside this Issue

- ◆ Program Updates
- ◆ Certifying Acres
- ◆ Scholarships
- ◆ 07-08 Report Card
- ◆ Chemigation Notice
- ◆ Static Water Results
- ◆ Tree Order Info

Phase 2
Reports
Due Feb-
ruary 1,
2009

David Gibbens WHHS Receives Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Educator of the Year Award

David Gibbens, Agricultural Science Educator at West Holt High School, was awarded the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Educator of the Year Award at its annual conference held in Kearney, September 29, 2008. NRD's from across the state nominate their outstanding educators annually for this award. This year Mr. Gibbens was selected as the recipient for his dedication in promoting our natural resources to his students and the community.



Pictured with Mr. Gibbens are Dennis Schueth, UENRD General Manager, Curtis Gotschall, UENRD Board Member, Megan Gotschall, Mr. Gibbens and Dan Steinkruger, NARD President.

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



07-08 Upper Elkhorn NRD Report Card

- ◆ Planted 42,245 machine plant seedlings
- ◆ Distributed 18,768 hand plant seedlings
- ◆ Installed 221,760 feet or 42 miles of conservation weed mulch
- ◆ Sold 628 weed mulch squares for seedling protection
- ◆ Sold 1,875 feet of drip irrigation hose
- ◆ Sold \$1,512 of grass seed
- ◆ Sold 5,690 pounds of poison barley
- ◆ Distributed \$118,307 in NSWCP/NRD Cost Share
 - ◆ 98 Cooperators received \$75,625 for Windbreaks
 - ◆ 11 Cooperators received \$13,930 for Planned Grazing Systems
 - ◆ 11 Cooperators received \$24,668 for Irrigation Water Management
 - ◆ 2 Cooperators received \$3,093 for Pasture Planting & Range Seedings
 - ◆ 1 Cooperator received \$991 for Critical Area Planting
- ◆ Distributed \$5,173 in Water Well Decommissioning funds to properly abandon 16 wells
- ◆ Distributed \$1,987 to cooperators participating in the Deep Soil Sampling Program
- ◆ Distributed \$1,729 to cooperators through the Domestic Water Quality Program
- ◆ Distributed \$29,925 in costshare to cooperators for flowmeters through the UENRD and Environmental Trust Grant
- ◆ Sponsor the East Branch Verdigris Creek Project which distributed over \$44,000 is costshare and other conservation measures for the watershed in conjunction with the Nebraska Environmental Trust
- ◆ Distributed \$26,080 to cooperators participating in the Buffer Strip Program
- ◆ Distributed \$5,092 to cooperators participating in the Corners for Wildlife Program
- ◆ Distributed \$5,381 to cooperators participating in the Wild NE Program
- ◆ Maintained weather stations in the Brunswick, Elgin, O'Neill and Newport areas
- ◆ Worked with the Northeast Research & Extension Center on a crop rotational study in northern Antelope County
- ◆ Continue monitoring Phase I and Phase II Groundwater Management Areas (GWMA)
- ◆ Issued 109 water well permits due to the GWMA
- ◆ Certified 87 cooperators in nitrogen management
- ◆ Sampled approximately 369 irrigation wells for water quality parameters and tested 54 dedicated monitoring wells for pesticides
- ◆ Measured static water levels in approximately 145 irrigation wells & 54 dedicated monitoring wells across the district
- ◆ The District maintains 54 dedicated monitoring wells at 24 different locations for quality and quantity parameters
- ◆ The District maintains a private drinking water sampling program which includes testing for bacteria and other household contaminants
- ◆ The District maintains a vadose zone sampling program to analyze nitrates in the soil

Irrigated Acres Certification Pending

All acres of ground under the impact of irrigation could potentially be required for certification through the Upper Elkhorn NRD. The Board of Directors is discussing acre certification as a potential project to give the NRD an accurate estimation of the amount of irrigation taking place within the District. The requirement of certified irrigated acres would be part of the changes taking place to the District's Groundwater Management Plan and development of an Integrated Management Plan for the portion of the District labeled "Fully Appropriated" by the Department of Natural Resources.

Acre certification is being required by several other Natural Resource Districts throughout the State including the Lower Loup NRD, Upper Loup NRD, Middle Niobrara NRD and Lower Niobrara NRD which shares boundaries with the Upper Elkhorn NRD. Once required, acre certification will need to be completed by a set deadline and any changes to those acres will be required to be conducted through the NRD. Landowners who fail to comply with certification rules, once required, would be out of compliance with NRD rules and regulations and could face cease and desist orders and potential fines.

The process of certification is completed in a variety of ways depending on what each District's Board of Directors decides. Generally, a copy of an aerial photo of the irrigated field from the FSA is required along with the matching records for that field from the FSA office. County Assessor records may be required as well to complete the certification process. Often a certification form is utilized to streamline the process. The certification form would be developed by the NRD and would be available to the public through the District or any NRCS office in the District.

As an irrigator or landowner with irrigated ground, the best way to prepare for the certification process is to ensure that all FSA and county assessor records for your property are current and all data associated is accurate. The NRD has yet to determine the policy regarding those acres that are under conservation programs, such as CRP, however the required records should still be available. The Upper Elkhorn NRD will also be requesting that all irrigation well registrations be updated to current landowner with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

While this process is only in the preliminary stages, the irrigators within the Upper Elkhorn NRD would be well advised to prepare for this potentially required process. More information regarding the certification process will be publicized by the NRD as the Board reaches consensus.

**Order
Trees from
Now Until
March 1 To
Reserve
Your
Favorite
Species**

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 4, 2008.

Attention Chemigators!!!

Anyone who permitted a chemigation site in 2008 will received their 2009 Chemigation Application(s) in the mail!! These forms have been sent to you based on the Chemigation information you submitted to the NRD for the 2008 Chemigation season. Please follow the instructions below to renew your Chemigation sites from last year for the 2009 Chemigation season:

1. Review **ALL** the information (name, address, phone, legal description(s) and certified applicator(s) information) provided on the form for accuracy **AND** update any incorrect information!
2. Fill in **ALL** the remaining information marked with a red asterisk! Note the Fertilizer and Pesticide information is what you put through the system last year (2008)!
3. Sign and date **ALL** the applications!
4. Return **ALL** your 2009 renewal applications with the appropriate fee to the Upper Elkhorn NRD on or before the June 1, 2009 deadline.

Also enclosed will be a blank form (may be copied as needed) for your use in the event you have a new chemigation application. Additional applications are available on the website at www.uenrd.org, the NRD office in O'Neill, the RC&D office in Bassett and the Neligh NRCS office.



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.

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% 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.

Anhydrous Ammonia Appli-

cation: The UENRD offers 50% cost share to landowners for the purchase of a flow control monitor not to exceed \$900; and, \$200 for the purchase of a vertical dam manifold.

Livestock Manure Analysis: The UENRD offers 50% cost share not to exceed \$200 for manure analysis to credit useful materials into the soil.

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 available on a first come first serve basis and does not include sales tax.

"Conservation Trees for Nebraska Initiative" Promotes Planting 1 Tree Per Person in Nebraska for 2009!!

Irrigation Development Pushes Trees Aside!

Due to the passage of LB 962 in 2004, its association with well moratoriums and growing commodity prices over the past few years, a number of trees have been removed to develop areas for crop production. The Upper Elkhorn NRD estimates that over 3,128 acres of trees have been removed from pivot corners, shelterbelts and wildlife habitat areas over the last 12 years. This is an average of 4 acres of trees per quarter. The Upper Elkhorn NRD would like to encourage all those landowners who removed trees to consider replacing them this upcoming spring. There are several incentive programs to help offset the cost of installing a new windbreak on the federal, state and local level. Federal programs include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP); Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP-limited to appropriate wetland sites); and, Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). State programs include Nebraska

Soil and Water Conservation Program (NSWCP); individual NRD programs; Nebraska Buffer Strip Incentives Program; and, WILD Nebraska. Private organizations also offering assistance to promote tree planting are Corners for Wildlife, Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever chapters.

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.

Available Tree Species

Conifers	Broadleaves	Shrubs	
Eastern Red Cedar	Native Cottonwood	Caragana	Manchurian Apricot
Rocky Mountain Juniper	Swamp White Oak	Golden Current	Chokecherry
Colorado Blue Spruce	Bur Oak	American Plum	Willow
Black Hills Spruce	Black Walnut	Crabapple	Sandcherry
Scotch Pine	Kentucky Coffee	Black Cherry	Elderberry
Jack Pine	Hackberry	Buffaloberry	Redosier Dogwood
Ponderosa Pine	Honeylocust	False Indigo	Harbin Pear
Austrian Pine	Silver Maple	Cotoneaster	Lilac
Southwestern White Pine	Catalpa		

Cost for Trees & Materials

Handplant Trees - Handling & Tax	\$ 84.88 per 100
Machine Plant Trees - Storage & Tax	\$ 138.15 per 100
Drip Irrigation	\$ 0.12 per foot
Weed Mulch - Installed	\$ 0.60 per foot
Weed Mulch - by the roll	\$ 105.00 for 300 foot roll
Weed Mulch Squares	\$ 1.75 each
Prices Subject to Change	

Environmental Grant resubmitted for Flowmeter Cost-share

The NRD is furthering promotion of sound irrigation management through the resubmission of the Environmental Trust Grant for Flowmeter Cost-share as provided through the Nebraska Environmental Trust and the Upper Elkhorn NRD. The District has received cost-share for the purchase of flowmeters on irrigation wells for any of the landowners and operators who cooperate with the District in any of the water monitoring programs. Priority is given to those who allow the District to measure the biannual static water levels followed by monitoring well sites, irrigation nitrate quantity sampling, deep soil analysis, and finally those irrigation wells that fall in the Phase II area. Since receiving the Grant in 2008, cost-share was provided for 26 new flowmeters across the District.

Once a flowmeter is installed, the NRD will continue to monitor the irrigation amounts on that particular site in order to better understand irrigation usage on all the different types of crops planted. Also, flowmeters should hopefully provide a better understanding on the impacts of precipitation on irrigation and the resulting changes in static water levels each year following the irrigation season.

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 Water Resources Report

Precipitation: Since 1999 we have seen a continual decrease in the amount of moisture received during both the irrigation season and during the winter months. However for the latter half of the ten year period from 1998 to 2008, according to the High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC), we have received more moisture in most locations than the earlier portion of the ten year period. The chart below describes the precipitation totals from the first of each year through October 31st from 2005 to 2008. The percent of normal shows the status of each year's precipitation amounts from the overall average.

	2008		2007		2006		2005	
	1-Jan	% of Normal	1-Jan	% of Normal	1-Jan	% of Normal	1-Jan	% of Normal
Precip Since:								
Brunswick	23.74	98	32.18	134	18.46	77	26.92	112
Elgin	28.28	120	26.80	129	16.09	78	18.84	91
Newport	24.11	112	24.78	115	19.73	92	25.62	119
O'Neill	22.30	100	26.28	118	17.83	80	30.30	135

Fall static water level readings were completed on October 29 by District Staff. The results show recoveries across most areas of the District by a total average of 0.95 feet except in Rock County. Rock county static water levels have recovered 1.12 feet from last year but are still down from 2001 levels by slightly more than 2 feet. Fall readings are used to determine the stress on the aquifer from year to year.

Spring static water level readings were completed last April prior to the irrigation season by District Staff. 2008 spring water levels have seen a rebound in levels similar to the recoveries that took place in spring of 2006 across most of the District. Rock County however is still seeing slow recoveries since 2003, the lowest readings on record. Springtime water level readings are generally used as the primary indicator of the status of the aquifer. Off-season precipitation and previous years stresses including drought and irrigation usage are best indicated by spring readings which therefore are most utilized for management decisions.

This Chart Represents Depth to the Water Table

County	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Antelope	68.27	69.57	65.28	66.22	66.89	66.15	68.62	68.22	69.99	67.62	68.22	65.62
Holt	21.37	22.71	21.82	22.81	23.65	23.28	25.71	22.68	22.75	21.65	21.45	20.24
Rock	14.33	14.88	13.95	9.98*	17.40	16.38	19.28	19.77	20.48	19.32	19.47	19.58
Wheeler	16.16	17.64	18.62	16.30	20.40	20.25	20.96	17.51	17.05	15.96	16.20	14.45

*Indicates incomplete dataset

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

Conservation Tree Seedlings are Available on a First Come First Serve Basis! Order by March 1! Supplies Are Limited!

Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District Board of Directors

Dale Wiles - Chairman	Subdistrict 3 ~ O'Neill	(402) 336-2338
Tim Knuth - Vice Chair	Subdistrict 5 ~ Brunswick	(402) 358-5430
Gregg Felker - Treasurer	Subdistrict 3 ~ O'Neill	(402) 336-2864
Ted Hughes - NARD Rep	Subdistrict 6 ~ Neligh	(402) 887-4942
Jerry Childers	Subdistrict 4 ~ Chambers	(402) 482-5688
Chris Dierks	At Large ~ Ewing	(402) 485-2618
James Dvorak	Subdistrict 2 ~ Atkinson	(402) 925-5776
Janet Koinzan	Subdistrict 7 ~ Elgin	(402) 843-2410
Curtis Gotschall	Subdistrict 2 ~ Stuart	(402) 925-2504
Reg Green	Subdistrict 5 ~ Creighton	(402) 358-5479
Jim Keller	Subdistrict 1 ~ Newport	(402) 244-5448
Jerry Heithoff	Subdistrict 7 ~ Elgin	(402) 843-2467
Jeff Krebs	Subdistrict 6 ~ Neligh	(402) 887-5215
Mike Russman	Subdistrict 4 ~ Ewing	(402) 485-2638
Roy Stewart	Subdistrict 1 ~ Newport	(402) 244-5360

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

Dennis Schueth	General Manager	e-mail: dschueth@uenrd.org
Marsha Hart	Administrative Assistant	e-mail: mhart@uenrd.org
Tylr Naprstek	Water Resources Manager	e-mail: tnaprstek@uenrd.org
Kelly Kloppenborg	Water Resources Technician	e-mail: kloppenborg@uenrd.org
Don Caouette	Assistant Manager	e-mail: caouette@uenrd.org
Beth Walsh	Information & Education/Chemigation Coordinator	e-mail: bwalsh@uenrd.org
Joy Knapp	NRCS Clerk, Neligh	
Barbara Shannon	NRCS Clerk, Ainsworth	
Mary Zakrzewski	NRCS Clerk, O'Neill	

Important Phone Numbers

Upper Elkhorn Natural Resources District	(402) 336-3867
O'Neill - Natural Resources Conservation Service	(402) 336-3798
Neligh - Natural Resources Conservation Service	(402) 887-4176
Burwell - Natural Resources Conservation Service	(308) 346-4457
Ainsworth - Nat. Resources Conservation Service	(402) 387-2242
O'Neill - Farm Service Agency	(402) 336-3796
Neligh - Farm Service Agency	(402) 887-4176
Burwell - Farm Service Agency	(308) 346-4399
Ainsworth - Farm Service Agency	(402) 387-2242
Holt County Extension Office	(402) 336-2760
KBR Extension Office	(402) 387-2213
Antelope County Extension Office	(402) 887-5414
National Parks Service	(402) 336-3970
Diggers Hotline of Nebraska	(800) 331-5666
Northeast Nebraska RC&D	(402) 582-4866
North Central Nebraska RC&D	(402) 684-3347
Loup Basin RC&D	(308) 728-3393
Middle Niobrara NRD	(402) 376-3241
Lower Niobrara NRD	(402) 775-2343
Lower Loup NRD	(308) 728-3221
Department of Natural Resources	(402) 471-2363

Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors 2008 Election Results

Subdistrict 1	
√ Roy Stewart	2856
Gene DeBolt	2705
Subdistrict 2 (Unopposed)	
Curtis Gotschall	5644
Subdistrict 3 (Unopposed)	
Gregg Felker	5296
Subdistrict 4 (Unopposed)	
Mike Russman	5158
Subdistrict 5 (Unopposed)	
Reg Green	5134
Subdistrict 6 (Unopposed)	
Ted Hughes	5412
Subdistrict 7 (Unopposed)	
Jerry Heithoff	5412