

UPPER REPUBLICAN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT MASTER PLAN 2010-2020

ENABLING LEGISLATION

Nebraska Statutes Section 2-3201: Natural resources, declaration of intent (1969):

The Legislature hereby recognizes and declares that it is essential to the health and welfare of the people of the State of Nebraska to conserve, protect, develop and manage the natural resources of this state. The Legislature further recognizes the significant achievements that have been made in the conservation, protection, development, and management of our natural resources and declares that the most efficient and economical method of accelerating these achievements is by creating natural resources districts encompassing all of the area of the state, as provided by this Act. The Legislature further declares that the functions heretofore performed by soil and water conservation districts, watershed conservancy districts, watershed districts, advisory watershed improvement boards, and watershed planning boards shall be consolidated and made functions for the natural resources districts; and the governing boards of such districts and boards shall complete, before July 1, 1972, the necessary transfers and arrangements so that such boards may on that date, begin the operation of natural resources districts, as provided by this Act. The Legislature further declares that other special-purpose districts, including rural water districts, ground water conservation districts, drainage districts, reclamation districts, and irrigation districts are hereby encouraged to cooperate with, and if appropriate, to merge with natural resources districts.

This legislation created twenty-four Natural Resources Districts in the State of Nebraska. The initial twenty-four (now 23) Natural Resources Districts boundaries were based on the approximate hydrologic boundaries of recognized river basins of the State.

The Upper Republican Natural Resources District, which encompasses Dundy, Perkins, and Chase Counties, began operations on July 1,

1972. On that date, the District accepted the assets, liabilities, and obligations of the Dundy, Chase, and Perkins County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

THE DISTRICT

The Upper Republican Natural Resources District is located in the Republican River Basin in Southwest Nebraska. The District is bounded by Colorado on the west and Kansas to the south. Population of the District, according to the 2000 census, was 8,900. This is down from 10,330 residents as reported in the 1990 census. Three county seats are located in the District at Grant, Imperial and Benkelman. Residents of these three towns represent 43% of the total population of the District.

Agriculture and agricultural related employment are the primary sources of income in the District. There are about 1.7 million acres in the District. Crops are grown on 980,000 acres or 57% of the total land area. The remainder is utilized for pasture/range, towns and miscellaneous purposes. Irrigated land (449,000 acres) accounts for approximately 47% of cropland and 27% of all land in the District. Crops grown include corn, wheat, sugar beets, edible beans, potatoes, soybeans, sunflowers, sorghum, alfalfa, irrigated grass/hay, popcorn and grapes. Inventories of cattle and hogs are an estimated 150,000 and 130,000 respectively. Most of the grain produced in the District is shipped to areas outside the District.

There are approximately 449,000 irrigated acres and 3275 irrigation wells in the District. The number of irrigation wells increased by less than 100 during the past decade. Average annual water use per certified acre during the past decade has been just over 13 inches. Total annual water use for irrigation is approximately 433,000 acre feet.

Recreation, such as hunting and fishing is enjoyed in all areas of the District. Surface waters include the Frenchman and Republican Rivers, and several creeks and springs. Enders

Dam, located on the Frenchman River, is a popular camping and boating area for local residents. Many Colorado residents also regularly visit the Enders area.

Climate

The climate of the Upper Republican NRD is transitional between continental sub-humid and semiarid, with semiarid conditions predominant in most years. Average annual precipitation ranges from about 17 inches in the northwestern and southwestern parts of the District to nearly 20 inches in the southeastern part. Annual amounts, however, are variable.

About 75 percent of the annual precipitation occurs during the warm season (April-September). This peak precipitation season coincides with large rates of plant evapotranspiration, which generally results in no seasonal surplus of soil water. Warm-season precipitation, which often occurs as small scattered thunderstorms, is typically distributed irregularly within the District. The cool season (October-March) is normally very dry.

Annual potential evapotranspiration (PET), which is affected by factors such as solar radiation, air and soil temperatures, humidity, and wind, ranges from nearly 50 inches in the northeastern part of the District to 66 inches in the southwestern part, and averages about 53 inches. The combination of a high percentage of days with sunshine, high temperatures, low humidity, and high average wind speed, particularly during the warm season, contributes to these large PET values. Warm-season PET (April-September) averages about 42 inches.

Soils

Soils in the District can generally be placed in three categories, reflecting the parent-material differences that in turn affect the available water holding capacity. These are silt loam to silty clay loam soils with high water holding capacity at 0.18 to 0.21 of an inch per inch of depth; sandy loam soils with medium water holding capacity at 0.11 to 0.17 of an inch per inch of depth; and sandy soils with low water holding capacity at 0.05 to 0.10 of an inch per inch of depth.

The proportion of soils in each county in the high, medium, and low water holding capacity

categories respectively are: Dundy – 24%, 14%, and 53%; Chase – 45%, 22%, and 33%; Perkins – 62%, 18%, and 20%. These proportions are reflected in the relative per acre water use among counties, with Dundy usually averaging the highest, and Perkins generally having the lowest per acre irrigation water use.

Land Use

Soils and topography largely determine land use in the District. Soils derived from sand dunes or with large topographic slopes often are left uncultivated and in native vegetation. Soils with less sloping topography and less sandy texture are generally well suited for cultivation and irrigation.

About 40 percent of the area of the District is grassland (pasture and rangeland not harvested for hay). Cultivated land, including unharvested crop and fallow, accounts for almost 57 percent of the area. Less than 3 percent of the area is used for nonagricultural purposes, including transportation, communication, farmstead, commercial, and urban functions. Natural woodlands occupy less than one percent of the District. These woodlands generally occur along permanent streams and consist largely of phreatophytes, such as willows and cottonwoods that thrive under shallow water-table conditions.

Although the percentage of land area classified as cultivated has remained generally constant through time, short-term fluctuations have occurred as some rangeland was cultivated temporarily but later allowed to revert to rangeland. Since 1950, the total acreage of crops has remained relatively constant, but crop types have changed over time. Wheat and grain sorghum acreage has decreased, but corn acreage has increased. These changes are related principally to the development of ground water irrigation between the mid-1960's and the late 1970's and, to a lesser extent, to changes in government agricultural programs, herbicides, corn genetics and commodity prices.

Hydrogeologic System

Surface Water: The surface-water system in the District consists of streams, reservoirs, and one surface water irrigation district, the Pioneer Irrigation District. These components, along with the aquifer system, form a complex hydrogeologic system. The Republican River is the major stream system in the District. The Republican River and the North Fork of the Republican River have several tributaries within the District, including: Stinking Water, Frenchman, and Spring Creeks in Chase County, and Buffalo, Rock, Horse, Spring, Indian, and Muddy Creeks in Dundy County.

Enders Reservoir is the only surface-water impoundment in the District with storage capacity greater than 1,000 acre-feet. Numerous small impoundments also exist. There are no permanent natural lakes in the District. Enders Reservoir, on Frenchman Creek, has an average surface area of 1,242 acres and is used for storing irrigation water. Water is released from reservoir into Frenchman Creek during the irrigation season and flows out of the District to a diversion dam. Enders Reservoir provides no irrigation water for lands within the District. The Pioneer Irrigation District is a surface water appropriator on the North Fork of the Republican River, an interstate stream, in Dundy County. Pioneer holds a water right to 47.39 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water with a priority date of April 4, 1890. The water is diverted into a canal called the Pioneer Ditch, which runs from Yuma County across the state border into Nebraska. Pioneer's right to divert water in Colorado to irrigate Nebraska lands has been memorialized by the Republican River Compact, an interstate agreement between the states of Colorado and Nebraska.

Ground Water: The High Plains Aquifer is the foundation of irrigated agriculture in the District, and likewise, is the base of much of the economic activity in the District. In the past three decades, there have been significant declines in the aquifer level under some areas of the District. The declines have generally been greatest in Dundy County and the western part of Chase County.

Geology: The youngest geologic unit underlying the District is the Pierre Shale of

Cretaceous age. Pierre Shale consists mostly of blue, ochre, or black-colored shale and clay, and is the uppermost bedrock unit in the District, except in parts of Chase and Perkins Counties, where it is overlain by the White River Group. The White River Group consists of two formations, the lower of which is the Chadron Formation and the upper of which is the Brule Formation. The Chadron Formation generally consists of olive-green to brick-red silty to sandy clay and claystone. The Brule Formation, which overlies the Chadron Formation, contains buff to olive-green clay silt and siltstone. Where present, these units are overlain by the Ogallala Formation of Tertiary age. The Ogallala Formation directly overlies the Pierre Shale where the White River Group is absent.

The Ogallala Formation underlies all but the extreme southern and northwestern parts of the District. It ranges in thickness from a feathered edge to more than 400 feet. The Ogallala Formation consists of beds of silt, sand, gravel, caliche, and clay, with considerable variability in the character of the formation within short vertical or horizontal distances. These variations are consistent with the fluvial environment in which the Ogallala was deposited. This environment was characterized by a series of braided streams carrying sediment eastward. Some of the sand and gravel deposits are weakly cemented by calcium carbonate into rocks ranging from friable sandstone to relatively hard, ledge-forming mortar beds. Except in a few areas, most notably western Perkins and Chase Counties, the Ogallala Formation is overlain by unconsolidated Quaternary deposits.

The unconsolidated Quaternary deposits, which comprise the land surface of most of the District, consist of sand, gravel, silt, and clay of fluvial origin and sand, silt, and clay carried in by the wind. These deposits range in thickness from a feathered edge to more than 100 feet. These occur as alluvium and terraces in stream valleys and dune sand and loess deposits in upland areas.

High Plains Aquifer: The uppermost aquifer in the District is the High Plains aquifer. It consists of the saturated parts of the Quaternary deposits and the underlying Ogallala Formation. The aquifer is unconfined. In

general, the direction of ground-water flow in the District is west to east except in the vicinity of the Republican River a prominent discharge area. Average ground-water-flow velocities range from less than 50 to more than 200 feet per year.

The White River Group and the Pierre Shale are relatively impermeable in the District, and form the base of the High Plains aquifer. The volume of ground water in storage in the High Plains aquifer is a function of the saturated thickness of the aquifer, the area that aquifer covers, and the porosity of the aquifer. All ground water cannot be withdrawn by dewatering or pumping because some water molecules cling to rock or soil particles due to the surface tension of water. The typical specific-yield value or recoverable, available water for the aquifer is in the range of 0.18.

Irrigation Development: The first irrigation well in the District was completed in 1913 near the town of Champion, and only a few additional wells were dug in the following 20 years. Between the mid-1930s and mid-1950s, more than 90 additional irrigation wells were constructed. During the 1960s and 1970s the number of irrigation wells greatly increased so that by 1975 there were more than 1,700 registered irrigation wells in the District; and almost 2,800 in 1980. Drilling activity leveled off in the 1980s. There are currently 3275 registered active irrigation wells in the District.

NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Ground Water Use and Levels

As the number of irrigation wells increased in the District during the 1960s and 1970s, ground water withdrawals exceeded recharge, and the amount of water in storage in the aquifer under the District declined. The USGS estimates that during the period 1952 to 1975, ground water in storage decreased by 420,000 acre-feet. This is slightly less than the current annual ground water withdrawals for irrigation in the District. From 1980 to the present, ground water level changes have declined on average 20 feet District wide with half of the decline occurring

during the drought years of 2000 to 2007 and more than a quarter of the decline occurring from 1980 to 1990. These declines were determined using approximately 245 wells measured continuously from 1980 to present by District staff.

To better understand the hydrology and other factors causing these declines, the Board in the early 1970s cooperated with the USGS to develop a ground water model for the District. In the early 1990s, the Board contracted with USGS to update that model.

Utilizing the information from the model, and in response to the generally declining aquifer level, the District Board of Directors, in cooperation with the Nebraska Department of Water Resources, established a ground water control area and adopted rules and regulations designed to slow the rate of withdrawal of water from the aquifer. Controls initially adopted by the Board included the requirement that ground water pumped by irrigation, industrial, and municipal wells be measured, and a five-year maximum allocation of ground water for each certified acre. However, in the Board's opinion, the initial rules and regulations did not sufficiently arrest the declines in aquifer level. Therefore, the Board established lower allocations, and eventually a moratorium on the number of certified irrigated acres and tracts and on new wells with pumping capacity of more than 50 gallon per minute.

In spite of the actions taken by the Board, ground water levels under most of the District are still declining. How to control declines to an acceptable level without imposing undue economic hardship on water users in the District will continue to present a management challenge. This issue will be addressed through actions to be taken in accomplishing the ground water management goal and objectives set out in the next section of this plan.

Ground Water Quality

The Board recognizes a responsibility to monitor and protect the quality of the ground water in the District. To this end, District staff members have for several years annually inspected all chemigation systems. Each year, defective check valves, low-pressure drains, and injection valves have been identified. Because

of the importance of ground water quality, the Board, in 1997, designated the entire District as a ground water quality management area.

A scientifically sound sampling and monitoring program was initiated at that time. It appears that in some areas of the District, especially in Dundy County, the nitrate content of the ground water is reaching levels that suggest fertilizer management controls by the Board may be necessary.

Provided sufficient funds are available, actions implied by the goal and objectives specified under Ground Water Management in the next section will lead to an effective and appropriate approach to maintaining and even enhancing ground water quality for all residents of the District.

Ground and Surface Water Relationships

During the past decade, there has been substantial consideration at the state and local levels of the conjunctive nature of ground and surface water. In 1996, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 108 that allowed for potential NRD action to study and develop management plans addressing ground and surface water interaction. Also, an U.S. Supreme Court lawsuit by Kansas against Colorado and Nebraska raised questions regarding the interaction of ground and surface water. As indicated in the next section, the Board will continue investigation of the conjunctive nature of ground and surface water in the District. If results of the investigation imply Board action is desirable, the Board will take appropriate steps.

Soil Conservation

Soil erosion caused by wind and water is an on-going problem in the District. The potential for wind erosion is especially serious in areas of the District dominated by medium to low water holding capacity soils. However, even silt loam soils are subject to wind erosion if they are void of surface residue. All soils, and especially sandy soils, require tillage practices that leave adequate residue on the surface to protect the soil from the strong winds that are typical in this region.

Although average annual moisture received throughout the District is less than 20 inches,

local rainfall of three to five inches, or even more, within a 24-hour period is not uncommon. Severe gully erosion and rill erosion are common results of such concentrated moisture.

Soil erosion, whether caused by wind or water can reduce the productive capacity of the soil. It can also cause detrimental off-site sediment and economic damage to fields, pastures, waterways, fences, and road ditches.

The District has adopted sediment and soil erosion control rules and actively investigates erosion complaints. Through the actions implied by the goals and objectives set out in the next section, the District will cooperate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop conservation plans and to make cost-share funds available for eligible soil erosion control practices.

The Upper Republican NRD is participating in a multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan with several entities in all three counties of the District. A Hazard Mitigation Plan is a pre-disaster planning document that provides a proactive approach to reduce damages from disasters through planning. By having a Hazard Mitigation Plan the jurisdictions involved are eligible for Federal grant funding for mitigation projects. Pre-disaster mitigation projects are designed to reduce or eliminate damages that occur due to natural disasters such as wildfire, tornados, blizzards, drought, and flooding. JEO Consulting Group, Inc. worked with the jurisdictions involved in Chase and Perkins counties to develop and finalize the Hazard Mitigation Plan, both of which have been approved by FEMA. A Dundy county plan is being developed by JEO Consulting Group, Inc. and the involved jurisdictions.

Range Management

Much of the range and grass in the District is on sandy soils. These lands are fragile and highly susceptible to wind and water caused erosion. "Blow-outs" can be caused by what sometimes seems to be minor disturbance of the grass cover. Erosion can be caused by over grazing of areas within the pasture due to lack of distributed water sources, vehicle trails,

livestock paths, and even installing or replacing poles for telephone or electric lines.

Once erosion starts, prevention of expansion and successful reseeding can be a complicated and difficult undertaking. Grazing plans with cross fencing and appropriately distributed water sources are critical for prevention of erosion as well as for maximizing the productivity of the grasslands of the District. Cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the availability of cost-share funds for cross fencing and planned water sources are essential components of establishing good range management in the District. The activities implied under the goal and objectives set out in the next section for range management will bring about progress in the prevention of soil erosion and enhancement of productivity of the grasslands in the District.

Wildlife Habitat and Recreation

Maintaining sufficient habitat for game and non-game wildlife is a continuing challenge. The relatively severe weather, summer and winter, makes it important that birds and wild animals have trees, shrubs and grasslands for food and shelter. Windbreak and shrub plantings are essential to the enhancement of wildlife habitat. Improved habitat generates recreation opportunities and economic activity from hunters and fishermen. Non-game species contribute to the quality of life for residents, and are important components of the overall ecosystem. As is indicated in the next section, the District will cooperate with state and federal agencies and private organizations to generate cost-share funds for planting of trees and shrubs, seeding CRP lands, and assisting landowners to develop and complete wildlife enhancement plans.

Pollution Control

The District is primarily responsible for monitoring and controlling non-point source pollution, while the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality has the lead role in preventing or controlling point-source pollution. Excess contamination of the ground or surface water can potentially result in serious detrimental health and/or economic effects on residents, domestic animals and wildlife. The

District conducts chemigation inspections, cooperates with landowner or other agencies in ground and surface water sampling, and distributes educational material on preventing pollution. District staff members, in the process of carrying out other activities regularly travel throughout the District and are vigilant for sites that represent potential ground or surface water contamination. If appropriate, such sites are reported to the appropriate agencies. The goal and objectives set out in the next section provide the framework to assure that ground water quality is appropriately protected.

In recent years, Nebraska's solid waste regulations have changed. Landfills that weren't properly designed, operated or sited were required to shut down, as were unauthorized dumps. Now, all landfills must be approved and permitted by the State. If a permit is not issued, the landfill cannot legally operate. Currently, the only permitted landfill in the Upper Republican NRD is a facility northwest of Grant.

Flood Control

Even though the District normally receives less than 20 inches of moisture annually, serious local flooding and sediment erosion does occur and can result in substantial economic losses to structures and fields. The District cooperated with state and federal agencies and the town of Wauneta to develop a flood control canal. The District regularly cost-shares on terraces, waterways, and other structures and practices that can help to minimize detrimental effects of unusually heavy rainfall. Also, the District cooperates with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Farm Service Agency to identify flood-damaged lands and to develop proposals for emergency funding assistance to rebuild damaged structures such as terraces, dams, and waterways. As outlined under goals and objectives in the next section, the Board will continue to meet District responsibilities in flood and sediment control.

It is the general policy of the District not to provide financial assistance for drainage improvement and channel rectification unless a project has public benefit and is sponsored by a city or county.

DISTRICT PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

General Goal

To enhance the natural resources of the District for the benefit of the people of the District and the State.

Process

The URNRD Board will initiate and execute plans and programs as appropriate under the powers and authorities granted by the legislature and according to the priority needs of the District as related to:

Ground water management, utilization,
and conservation

Soil erosion prevention and control

Range management

Wildlife habitat and recreation

Pollution control

Prevention of damages from
floodwater and sediment

Goals

The following goals and objectives have been adopted by the Upper Republican NRD and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources in the Integrated Management Plan.

To assist the State of Nebraska, in cooperation with the other Districts, in maintaining compliance with the Compact as adopted in 1943 and as implemented in accordance with the Settlement Agreement approved by the United States Supreme Court on May 19, 2003.

To ensure that groundwater and surface water users within the URNRD assume their share, but only their share of the responsibility to maintain compliance with the Compact.

To provide that the URNRD's share of that responsibility be distributed within the URNRD in an equitable manner and to minimize, to the extent possible, adverse economic, social and environmental consequences. (URNRD IMP).

Republican River Basin Objectives

- Monitor, provide testimony on, and inform citizens of the impact of pending legislation; and work with legislators to introduce and support legislation that will promote conservation and management of ground water available to the District ground water users.
- Cooperate with other agencies and ground and surface water users in the Republican River Basin.
- Begin study of the conjunctive nature of ground and surface water in the District. (URNRD Master Plan)
- The URNRD is involved with ongoing invasive weed management in stream channels. As a member of the Southwest Weed Management area, the URNRD supports invasive plant removal along stream channels. The removal of invasive plants will enhance stream flow and provide flood control. Funding for the first phase in a two-part SWWMA project was made possible through a grant received from the Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture in 2007; funding was continued in 2008 to further the project. (Fall 2008 URNRD Fact Sheet)
- Implement River Flow Enhancement projects that benefit Republican River Compact Compliance and protect the local economy. Existing projects include surface water leasing and well-field augmentation.
- Cooperate and provide support for UNL Chase County Extension Office and Monsanto to implement nitrogen and irrigation efficiency studies.

Ground Water Management

Goal: Develop management programs to extend ground water reservoir life to the greatest extent practicable, consistent with beneficial use of the ground water and best management practices, and

protect the quality of ground water aquifers within District boundaries.

Objectives:

- (a) Develop, promulgate and enforce rules and regulations that provide for: appropriate protection of the aquifer; incentives to use water efficiently; conservation of ground water; and maintaining or enhancing ground water quality.
- (b) Conduct monitoring and other data collection activities and research necessary for interpretation of changes in ground water levels and actual and potential pollution of the aquifer.
- (c) Cooperate with other agencies to plan and conduct data collection activities related to ground and surface water quantity and quality.
- (d) Reduce the potential for non-point contamination of ground and surface water through education, research, management practices, incentives, and rules that protect the water but also minimize adverse effects on the economy of the area.
- (e) Carry out provisions of the Nebraska Chemigation Act by annually inspecting all chemigating systems in the District.
- (f) Through education programs and cost-share assistance, encourage proper decommissioning of water wells that are no longer used.
- (g) Initiate, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, County Extension Educators, and the UNL West Central Nebraska Research and Extension Center, irrigation efficiency research and education programs.
- (h) Disseminate to citizens, agencies, and organizations information regarding changes in water quantity and quality in the District.
- (i) Inform citizens and furnish materials to schools for educational programs about District activities and principles of water conservation and pollution prevention.

- (j) Assist communities to plan and delineate appropriate wellhead protection areas.
- (k) Establish contacts for residents of the District with agencies associated with or responsible for water related issues.
- (l) Monitor, provide testimony on, and inform citizens of the impact of pending legislation; and work with legislators to introduce and support legislation that will promote conservation and management of ground water available to the District ground water users.
- (m) Cooperate with other agencies and ground and surface water users in the Republican Basin.
- (n) Continue study of conjunctive nature of ground and surface water in the District.

Soil Conservation

Goal: Maintain, and where possible improve the quality and long-term productivity of soil resources of the District, and prevent on-site and off-site damage from sediment caused by wind and water erosion.

Objectives:

- (a) Distribute educational information to individuals, businesses, agencies, and organizations that encourages soil management and tillage practices, which will maintain or improve the quality and productive capability of land resources in the District.
- (b) Cooperate with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop conservation plans and to provide cost-share assistance to landowners for eligible voluntary soil management practices that will reduce wind and water erosion.
- (c) Implement, update, and enforce sediment and erosion control rules as specified by the Nebraska

Erosion and Sediment Control Act and other related legislation.

- (d) Cooperate with and seek technical advice from local, state and federal agencies relative to best management and tillage practices that will increase effective surface residue and help to prevent erosion.
- (e) Provide secretarial and personnel assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Board for District land and water programs.

Hazard Mitigation Long Range

Objectives

- (a) Work with entities in Chase, Dundy and Perkins counties to implement hazard mitigation projects identified in Hazard Mitigation Plan to reduce or eliminated damages from natural disasters such as wildlife, tornados, blizzards, drought, and flooding.
- (b) Ensure that Hazard Mitigation Plan objectives and projects are achieving Upper Republican NRD Legislative goals and objectives for flood prevention and control.
- (c) Identify and submit to FEMA, through JEO Consulting Group, Inc. revisions needed in Chase, Dundy, and Perkins counties Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Range Management

Goal: Maintain and, where possible, enhance the productivity of the grasslands of the District.

Objectives:

- (a) Provide private landowners educational information on developing grazing plans that include cross fencing and appropriately distributed watering sites for controlled and rotational grazing.
- (b) Cooperate with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, county extension educators, and the

UNL by holding workshops, mini-courses, and demonstrations on effective range management.

- (c) Pursue, in cooperation with landowners and other agencies, an active noxious weed control program.
- (d) Distribute to owners of grassland information on the prevention of wind and water erosion in fragile grassland areas; and provide assistance in re-establishing grass stands on eroded areas.
- (e) Cost-share on the establishment of eligible grassland, grazing, and other effective management practices.

Wildlife Habitat and Recreation

Goal: Enhance game and non-game wildlife resources in the District.

Objectives:

- (a) Cooperate with federal and state agencies, private organizations, and individuals to establish projects that improve wildlife habitat.
- (b) Provide tree-planting services to private landowners for the establishment or enhancement of wildlife habitat areas.
- (c) Obtain funding from private, local, state and federal sources that can be used as cost share for habitat projects.
- (d) Encourage private landowners to preserve wetlands where practical.
- (e) Provide information and educational material on practices that enhance game and non-game resources.

Pollution Control

Goal: Protect water and land resources from non-point contamination, enhance and maintain the quality of, surface and ground water resources of the District.

Objectives:

- (a) Update and implement District ground water, sediment, and erosion control rules and regulations.
- (b) Monitor ground water quality in the District.

- (c) Cooperate with the Department of Environmental Quality on point-source contamination problems.
- (d) Increase public awareness of the importance of protecting natural resources from contamination by either point or non-point sources.
- (e) Promote installation of buffer strips by landowners through cooperation with state and federal programs.
- (f) Provide technical assistance to municipalities and other public water suppliers in the development and management of appropriate wellhead protection areas.
- (g) Assist and encourage communities in establishing collection locations for recyclable wastes.
- (h) Assist District cities and counties in establishing pickup days for hazardous household and farmstead wastes.

Floodwater and Sediment Management

Goal: Minimize loss of life and property through feasible floodwater and sediment control programs.

Objectives:

- (a) Encourage management practices that reduce runoff.
- (b) Assist entities in applying for local, state and federal financial assistance for constructing terraces, waterways, and other water management projects.
- (c) Inform landowners of sources of engineering and technical assistance to solve flood, erosion, and related water problems.
- (d) Cooperate with other districts where runoff problems extend across district boundaries.

GOVERNANCE OF THE DISTRICT

An eleven member Board of Directors governs the Upper Republican Natural Resources District. All eligible electors of the District may vote for Board Members at general elections.

The District is divided up into ten sub-districts. One Board Member is elected from each sub-district, and one at-large member is elected. Candidates for sub-district Board positions must reside in the sub-district for which they are elected. The at-large Board Member may reside anywhere within the District. The Board appoints eligible persons to fill unexpired terms.

The Board is responsible for establishing District policies, programs, rules and regulations, and adopting budgets required to fulfill responsibilities of the District as authorized and required by law. The Board oversees management to insure that policies, programs, and regulations, are carried out as intended.

The Board holds regularly scheduled monthly public meetings, at which time action is taken as necessary and required by law. These meetings must comply with the Open Meetings Law. The Board generally conducts business according to Robert's Rules of Order.

Officers of the Board: Officers include Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary-Treasurer. The officers of the Board are elected by majority vote of the Board.

Officers are elected for a one-year term. A vacancy in any office is filled by election of the Board for the unexpired term of the office.

Committee Responsibilities: There are five standing committees. The Executive Committee appoints membership to the other four standing committees. The committees exercise duties in the best interest of the District. The committees have responsibilities of overseeing District functions and activities and making recommendations to the board as necessary and appropriate.

The Executive Committee, consisting of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Secretary-Treasurer, is responsible for Board organization, functions, ethics, and discipline. The Committee oversees personnel (including salary, wages, and benefits), building and equipment needs, and general management of the District, and

makes recommendations to the Board regarding these issues.

The Budget Committee oversees the financial management and long range planning of the District. The annual budget of all the District's activities is reviewed and approved by this Committee which then makes recommendations to the Board prior to Board consideration and approval of the budget.

The Variance Committee meets with all individuals who request a variance from the rules and regulations of the Board. The Committee reports to the Board. Variance requests are reviewed by the Board at one meeting and placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting for decision. At that time, the Committee recommends action on the request.

The Ground Water Control Committee reviews information received from the staff, and state and federal agencies. The Committee makes recommendations to the Board on needed studies and research projects; amendments to the ground water control rules and regulations; date, time and place to hold information meetings and public hearings; and material to be made available to the public at information meetings and public hearings.

The Education and Information Committee oversees education and information activities related to tree planting, wildlife habitat, public relations, legislative analyses and proposals, long-term ground water levels, and informing the public of District activities.

FISCAL POLICY

The Board sets an annual budget following procedures outlined by the State Auditor and the Natural Resources Commission. The Board must:

- Hold an annual budget public hearing as required by the Statutes of the State.

- Maintain an accounting system of all revenues and expenditures as required by the State Auditor and the Department of Natural Resources.
- Have an annual audit by a Certified Public Accountant as set by the Statutes of the State of Nebraska.

The District may make available for resale certain items that are not readily available from private enterprises. Sales will be on a cash basis with accounts due within thirty days of the first billing. The District shall send statements to all persons owing bills on the first of each month. Accounts receivable will be discussed at each regular board meeting. After 30 days the accounts shall bear an interest charge of 1.5 percent per month. The District shall file past due accounts with the Small Claims Court when all other methods of collection have been exhausted.

The District Treasurer with the assistance of the District General Manager will pay routine expenditures that occur in the general operation and maintenance of the District. These items must be approved by the Board of Directors and shall be included in the minutes of the Board Meetings.

The Directors shall review and approve at each regular Board meeting a monthly financial statement. This statement will be made available to Board members with an agenda of the meeting.

Acquisitions of real estate and property rights will be conducted in a manner consistent with laws and regulations and negotiations will be in a manner serving both the interests of the general public and the owner whose property rights are being relinquished. Appraisals of land acquisitions for District projects may be made for both fee title and easement unless the landowner and the District previously agree upon the type of appraisal.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- The District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will cooperate on programs that enhance conservation and wise use of land, water and related resources. The District will rely on the Service for technical assistance on wildlife, range and tillage practices.
- The District will request assistance from the Department of Natural Resources on cost-share, databases and other related activities.
- The District will cooperate with the Extension Service on issues of mutual interest.
- The District will cooperate with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission concerning wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- The District will cooperate with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture on point and non-point pollution issues.