

HISTORY OF WATER

MANAGEMENT

ERA OF INDEPENDENT MANAGEMENT OF GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATERS



1895

Surface water rights are assigned according to doctrine of prior appropriation (first in time, first in right).

1920

Nebraska constitution is amended to recognize the public interest in the use of water.

1933

Correlative use (shared use) doctrine is adopted for groundwater established through Nebraska Supreme Court ruling.

1943

Nebraska enters into Republican River Compact with Kansas and Colorado. Today, this is just one of six decrees (allocating water across multiple states).

1967

Legislature directs state Soil and Water Conservation Commission to prepare a State Water Plan.

1968-71

First portions of the State Water Plan are published.

1971

Legislature passes Nebraska Environmental Protection Act and creates the Nebraska Department of Environmental Control (now Environmental Quality).

1972

Legislature creates Natural Resources Districts as multipurpose, locally elected management bodies.

1975

Legislature directs primary responsibility for regulating groundwater to Natural Resources Districts.

Legislature prohibits state agencies from taking actions that jeopardize endangered species or their critical habitat.

1976

Legislature passes standards complementary to the National Safe Drinking Water Act.

1978

At request of Legislature, Natural Resources Commission and other state agencies issue a policy statement and workplan which recommends replacing the State Water Plan with a State Water Planning and Review process.



ERA OF WATER PLANNING AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1981

Legislature authorizes a State Water Planning and Review process.

1984

Legislature authorizes instream flow appropriations to protect recreation, fish and wildlife.

Legislature requires Natural Resources Districts to prepare local groundwater management plans.

1986

Legislature passes bills to implement groundwater quality protections, including expanding water quality authorities.

1991

Legislature requires Natural Resources Districts to expand their management plans to include protection of groundwater quality.

1993

Legislature enacts laws governing the use of pesticides.

1996

Legislature establishes integrated management of groundwater and surface water.



ERA OF COLLABORATIVE WATER PLANNING PROCESS IMPLEMENTATION

2000

Natural Resources Commission is merged with Department of Water Resources to create the present Department of Natural Resources.

2004

Legislature directs NRD/DNR collaboration of Integrated Water Management Plans to address surface water and groundwater as a single resource.

2010

Legislature allows voluntary Integrated Water Management Plans.

2014

First voluntary Integrated Water Management Plans adopted.

SURFACE WATER

Comprises all rivers and streams, lakes and reservoirs, or any other water that is on the Earth's surface.

GROUNDWATER

Does not run off and is not taken up by plants, but soaks down into an aquifer.