

**Middle Republican Natural  
Resources District**  
220 Center Avenue  
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Curtis, NE 69025  
1-800-873-5613  
www.mrnrd.org



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## Calendar of Events

visit: [www.mrnrd.org/calendar](http://www.mrnrd.org/calendar)

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|-------------|--|
| November 24 | Office Closed                          |
| December 13 | Board Meeting                          |
| December 13 | Annual Luncheon                        |
| December 26 | Office Closed                          |
| January 2   | Office Closed                          |
| January 10  | Board Meeting                          |
| January 16  | Office Closed                          |
| February 8  | Mid-Plains Envirothon,<br>North Platte |
| February 14 | Board Meeting                          |
| February 22 | Mid-Plains Envirothon,<br>Curtis       |
| February 20 | Office Closed                          |
| March 13    | Board Meeting                          |
| March TBA   | SW NE Water Conf.                      |

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\*Check online calendar or newspaper notices  
for meeting times, place and changes.

**Technicians are currently reading  
water meters. Please make sure  
your meter is accessible and visible.**

**Board of Directors:** Joseph Anderjaska, Hayes Center; Steven Cappel, Culbertson; Kevin Fornoff, Hayes Center; Buck Haag, Bartley; Bill Hoyt, McCook; Rick McConville, Indianola; John Palic, McCook; Brad Randel, Indianola; Rick Spencer, Culbertson; Blaine Stinson, Palisade; and James Uerling, Indianola.

**MRNRD Office:** General Manager, Daniel Smith; Assistant Manager, Robert Merrigan; Office Supervisor, Stacie Owens; Ground Water Program Assistant, Sylvia Johnson; Secretary/Receptionist, Mary Tidyman; Information & Education Coordinator, Roger Lawson; Technical Supervisor, Rich Karre; Technicians, Tom Hansen and Spencer Campbell.

**NRCS Field Office Clerks:** Frontier County, Doris Burke; Hayes County, Kathy Barger; Hitchcock County, Carol Lashley; Lincoln County, Neolle Turner; Red Willow County, Betty Fritsch

**Farmers and ranchers interested in soil, water  
and wildlife conservation or wetland restoration  
funds are encouraged to sign up now for  
conservation programs available from the USDA  
Natural Resources Conservation Service.**

**The application deadline is Nov. 18, 2011**

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**Edited by Roger Lawson, Information and Education Coordinator, [rlawson@mrnrd.org](mailto:rlawson@mrnrd.org)**

# SPRINKLES & SPLASHE S

FALL 2011

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE MIDDLE REPUBLICAN NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT

VOL. 21 NO. 4

## From Dan's Desk

Recently the Nebraska Supreme Court issued a decision on the occupation tax that has been under challenge for the last three years. That decision said that the occupation tax was constitutional in all aspects. With that decision, the district can now move forward with projects that will be funded with the occupation tax. The purchase of the Riverside Irrigation Company is one of those projects. Riverside is a relatively small irrigation company located in Hitchcock County. The water diverted by that district will now go into a credit system to be used by the NRD when needed. This is just one of the management actions that we can develop that will help prevent the shutdown of the wells in the rapid response area. In years when this water is not needed it can be used by any downstream user. In compact call years it will be protected as it moves through the system on its way to Kansas.

The occupation tax was first introduced in LB 701 in 2007. Our authority was later revised in LB 862 in 2010. LB 862 required that the occupation tax language and authority be included in our Integrated Management Plan and that action was taken in August of 2010. We levied an occupation tax last year and the occupation tax for this year will be \$8.50 per irrigated acre. Irrigated acres are certified through the NRD for ground water acres and are assessed by the county for surface water acres. In some cases acres are served by both ground water and surface water. You are not taxed double on those acres. This year the board decided that if your only water supply was from a surface water system then you

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## NRD Receives Clean Water Act Grant

The Middle Republican Natural Resources District (MRNRD) was recently awarded a grant for \$17,000 from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. The grant will allow the Middle Republican NRD to protect and monitor 51 wells for nitrate levels across the District on an annual basis. The grant is funded by the Clean Water Act which is managed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The funds will allow MRNRD to purchase the necessary equipment to collect well water samples from the 51 wells for nitrate testing. Results of the sampling will then be used to establish a ground water quality baseline. "This project will be used to establish baseline numbers on nitrate levels that we can use to detect early nitrate contamination in the ground water and protect the quality of the groundwater in the monitored area," said Bob Merrigan, Assistant Manager of the Middle Republican NRD.

Currently, MRNRD contracts with the United States Geological Survey, North Platte Office, to collect well water samples from 15 wells within the Ground Water Quality Area. This area includes the main stem of the Republican River and Beaver Creek in Hitchcock and Red Willow Counties. High nitrate levels were discovered in this area in 1991. The MRNRD has been monitoring this area since 1991 and they have seen nitrate levels gradually decline after remediate actions were taken by land owners.

This funded project will allow the District to expand current sampling efforts to the entire District using District staff. The total project cost will be \$29,000. Meanwhile, nitrate levels in the remainder of the District remain unknown. With baseline numbers, we can detect early nitrate contaminations in the ground water and initiate remediation actions much sooner.

The Middle Republican NRD protects lives, property and the future of the District through a wide range of stewardship, management and

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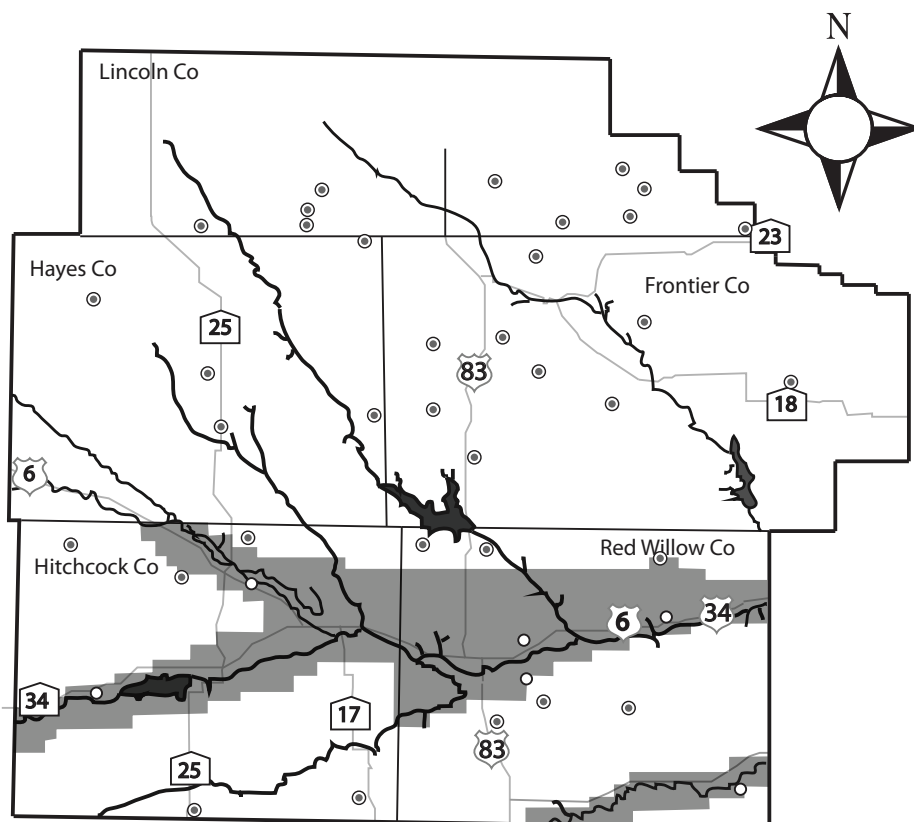
## From Dan's Desk

could get a refund on your occupation tax. You must still pay that tax but if you bring your paid receipt to the office in Curtis we can refund the tax you paid. Remember this applies to surface water only as the source of your irrigation supply and only to the tax for the upcoming year. Previous occupation taxes from 2007 and 2010 are still due and will not be eligible for this refund.

The district continues to work on the revisions to rules and regulations that will take effect for the 2013 crop year. These rules and regulations will implement the changes in the most recent Integrated Management Plan. Expect to see some recommended changes to transfers and a new allocation. Our technicians are still out reading meters. The weather has cooperated this year and we should have a majority of the meters read in record time. As always we will get reports sent out to individual operations as soon as possible. ♦

## Clean Water Act Grant

education programs—from flood control to groundwater monitoring, from irrigation management to soil conservation and more. Activities and projects of the Middle Republican NRD are reviewed and approved by a locally elected board of directors. For more information, visit [www.mrnrd.org](http://www.mrnrd.org) or call 1-800-873-5613. ♦



## Meet Mrs. Sylvia Johnson

You might already know her as Miss Sylvia Robison. She joined the NRD staff part-time last August assisting Stacie Owens with updating Certified Acres data files. Since then, and very recently she was hired on full-time as the new Ground Water Program Assistant. Very soon after that, she became Mrs. Sheb Johnson.

She will continue to do what she's been doing as a part-timer. In addition, she will assist with confirming Occupation Tax acres in our data files, entering water meter data for the annual water reports and assist our Secretary, Mary Tidyman, as needed.

Sylvia grew up on her family's ranch in Alma and she continues to help her family with ranching operations. She especially enjoys working and showing cattle. She

was very active with FFA when in school. She came to Curtis to attend NCTA and has completed two programs there: Diversified Agriculture and Ag Business. Sylvia and Sheb are settling down in Curtis. Welcome aboard Sylvia! ♦



## Groundwater Quality Sampling Project Area

### Legend

- County lines
- District boundary
- Rivers and Lakes
- Special Protection Area
- Current sample sites
- New sample sites

## Arapahoe FFA, Imperial FFA both Take Home Purple Ribbons for Area 3 Range Judging

At around 9:30 AM Wednesday, September 21 just north of McCook under questionable skies, the area 3 range judging contest began with over 250 students and 7 adults identifying range plants and evaluating rangeland on pastureland between McCook and Red Willow Reservoir.

Spencer Hartman of Imperial FFA took home the grand champion for the Individual competition in the youth division. Other winners for the senior individual competition in the youth division include the following from Arapahoe: Ryan Gardner took the blue ribbon, Reid Stagemeyer received the red ribbon, and Austin Hyke took the white ribbon.

Junior individual winners are: From S-E-M (Sumner-Eddyville-Miller) Rachel Ibach (first place), also from S-E-M Brayden Smith (Second place), from Arapahoe Jordan Crosley (third place) and Miranda Pierce from S-E-M took fourth place.

Arapahoe FFA took home top honors for the Senior Team competition consisting of Ryan Gardner, Reid Stagemeyer, Jared Crosley, and Joel Stagemeyer. Imperial FFA won second and third place: Spencer Hartman, Michaela Ketter, Callin Ledall, and Steven Fish, Jenna Schilke, Justin German, Chantel Heathers, and Mason Holmes. Arapahoe also took fourth place: Ashley McCoy, Wyatt Anderson, Bradlee Loghry, and Gage Schutz.

S-E-M placed well in the Junior Team competition. First place team winners are Rachel Ibach, Miranda Pierce, Angel Boteo, Aaron Simmons.

Participants examined 24 different rangeland plants and answered questions about their characteristics. They also evaluated soils, slope and range condition during two hours in a pasture land between McCook and Red Willow Reservoir owned by the Board of Education Land and Funds and leased by Todd Koetter. We acknowledge the Koetters and Brian Reynolds, Administrator for the Board of Education Land and Funds for their cooperation and generosity.

West Central and Imperial FFA teams went on to compete in Sidney, Nebraska October 4th for State Range Judging competition.

Agencies responsible for this year's contest include the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Middle Republican Natural Resources District, University of Nebraska Red Willow Co. Extension, Lower Republican NRD, Upper Republican NRD, Twin Platte NRD, and the Nebraska Section of the Range Management Society. ♦

## Jayson Rezek Of West Central FFA Takes Blue Ribbon at State

Jayson Rezek of West Central takes second place with a blue ribbon for the Individual Junior Division of the State Range Judging Competition. West Central FFA is a consolidated chapter consisting of Maywood, Paxton and Sutherland. Rezek attends Sutherland High School. Katy Snyder is the advisor.

Ord High School captured top honors at the Nebraska State Range Judging contest held in Sydney October 4, with half of its four-member team finishing among the top four individuals.

Taylor Hornickel led Ord to the senior division team title by taking top individual honors. Teammate Dusty Staab helped the team's winning effort with a third place individual finish. The pair was teamed with Johnny Ference and Cody Drudik. The team's advisor is Dave Ference.

A senior team from Imperial took home white ribbons and a senior individual.

Hosted by the Nebraska Section Society for Range Management (SRM), the contest brought together almost 400 students from 33 high schools across the state to test themselves in plant identification, range evaluation and other skills necessary for good range management. ♦



To the left: First place team for the Area 3 Range Judging competition held near McCook was a team from Arapahoe FFA: Joel Stagemeyer, Reid Stagemeyer, Ryan Gardner, Jared Crosley



To the right: Green ribbons earned by a senior division team. Back row: Wyatt Anderson, Isaac Watson, Joel Stagemeyer

Front row: Hannah Helms, Ashley McCoy, Jared Crosley