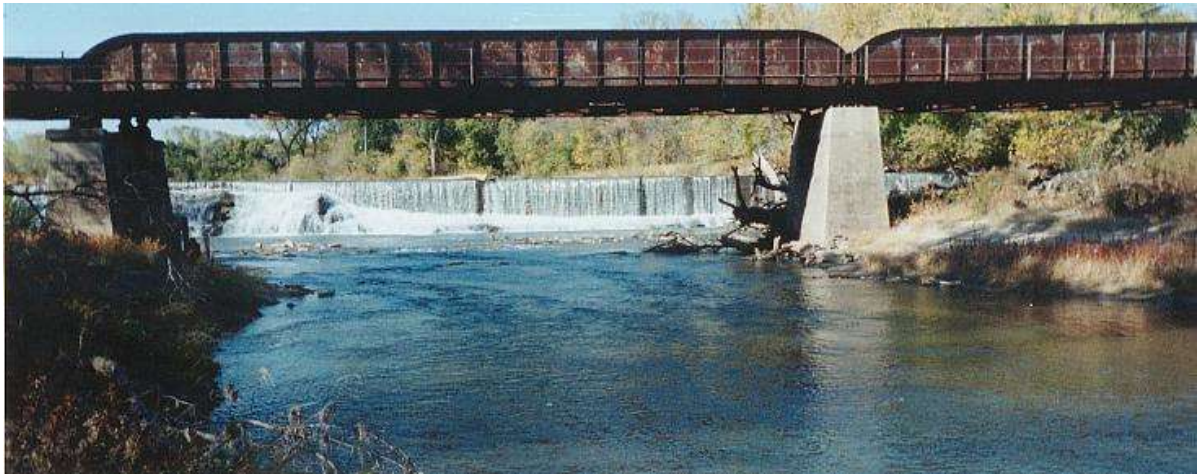


LITTLE BLUE NATURAL RESOURCES DISTRICT INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN



Effective
Date:
DATE

Jointly developed by the Little Blue Natural Resources
District and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

Approved by the Little Blue Board of Directors: DATE

100 E 6th Street,
Davenport, NE 68335
Telephone: 402-364-2145
littlebluenrd.org

Approved by the Department of Natural Resources: DATE

301 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor
P.O. Box 94676
Lincoln, NE 68509
Telephone: 402-471-2363
dnr.nebraska.gov



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Little Blue Natural Resources District Integrated Management Plan

**JOINTLY DEVELOPED BY THE LITTLE BLUE NATURAL
RESOURCES DISTRICT AND THE NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES**

1. AUTHORITY AND EFFECTIVE DATE

This Integrated Management Plan (IMP) was prepared voluntarily and adopted on **DATE** by the Board of Directors of the Little Blue Natural Resources District (District) and on **DATE**, by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (Department) in consultation with the Little Blue Natural Resources District Stakeholder Advisory Committee and in accordance with the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act. The act assigns the responsibilities and the authority to the Department and the District for management of ~~groundwater and~~ hydrologically connected ground and surface waters.

The District has significant legal authority to regulate activities within its boundaries in a way that ensures agriculture remains an important industry to the State of Nebraska in accordance with *Neb. Rev. Stat. §§46-703 and 46-704(3)*.

2. INTRODUCTION

Water resources in the Little Blue River Basin are critical for the long-term viability of the agricultural economy, business and industry, municipalities, fisheries and wildlife and the society of the Basin as a whole. The District's Board of Directors recognized the value for joint management of groundwater and surface water and initiated development of a voluntary IMP with the Department. This plan will serve as a road map for jointly managing hydrologically connected groundwater and surface water in the District for the short term and the long term. It further serves as a framework which enables the District and the Department to coordinate management actions and the monitoring of groundwater and surface water, in order to better protect water resources for future generations.

3. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3.1 Fully Appropriated Basins Evaluation

On January 9, 2004, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 962 which charged the Department to annually evaluate the long-term water balance of hydrologically connected river basins and subbasins. The Department report entitled "Annual Evaluation of Availability of Hydrologically Connected Water Supplies" (Annual Report) conveys the results of this evaluation. Through this Fully Appropriated Basins (FAB) evaluation, a

river basin or subbasin is considered “fully-appropriated” when current uses of hydrologically connected water supplies will, in the reasonably foreseeable future, cause:

- the surface water supply to be insufficient to sustain, over the long term, the beneficial or useful purposes for which existing natural-flow or storage appropriations were granted and the beneficial or useful purposes for which, at the time of approval, any existing instream appropriation was granted;
- the streamflow to be insufficient to sustain over the long term the beneficial uses from wells constructed in aquifers dependent on recharge from the river or stream involved; or
- reduction in the flow of a river or stream sufficient to cause noncompliance by Nebraska with an interstate compact or decree, other formal state contract or agreement, or applicable state or federal laws.

The Department identifies “hydrologically connected areas”, also known as “10/50 areas” as a part of the annual Fully Appropriated Basins evaluation. These are defined as the geographic areas where a groundwater well would deplete river flow by at least 10 percent of the water pumped over a 50-year period. This concept is shown in Figure 1.

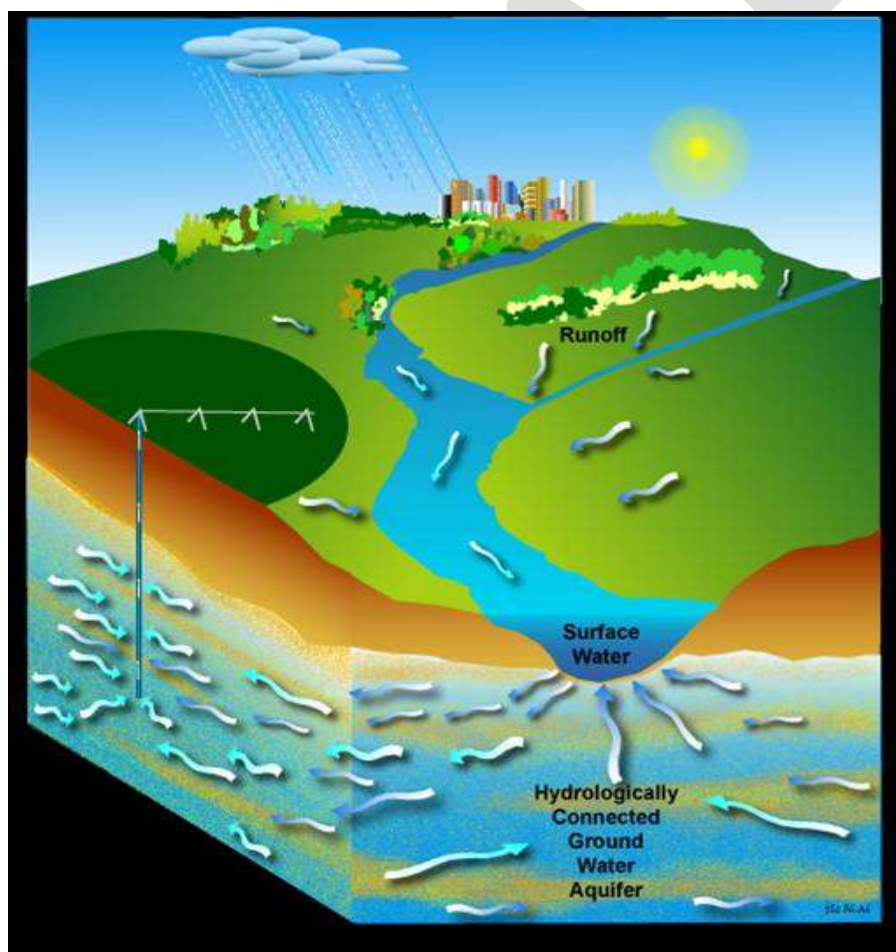


Figure 1. Diagram showing the hydrologically connected concept. The stream supplies a portion of its available flow to the underlying aquifer; the aquifer intersects the stream and contributes groundwater to stream flow.

3.2 Integrated Management Plans

3.2.1 Relation to FAB Evaluation

If the Department has designated or determined a river basin or subbasin to be fully appropriated, the affected NRD(s) must develop an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) with the Department. This is a joint water quantity management plan developed and implemented by the Department (regulators of surface water) and the NRD(s) (regulators of groundwater). The overarching purpose of the IMP is to manage the river basin or subbasin to achieve and sustain balance between water uses and water supplies for the long term. *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §§46-715 to 46-717 and portions of 46-718 describe the process by which the IMP is developed and implemented.

3.2.2 Mandatory Components of an IMP

Nebraska Revised Statute §46-715(2) specifies five mandatory components that are included in each IMP. Together these components enable effective implementation of the IMP in order to fulfill the purpose of maintaining and achieving a balance between hydrologically connected ground and surface water. These components are:

1. Clear goals and objectives with a purpose of sustaining a balance between uses and supplies so that economic viability, social and environmental health, safety and welfare of the basin/subbasin is achieved and maintained,
2. A map clearly delineating the geographic extent of the IMP,
3. One or more groundwater controls that are consistent to reach the goals and objectives of the IMP; these controls must be authorized by the District in accordance with *Neb. Rev. Stat.* § 46-739,
4. One or more surface water controls that are consistent to reach the goals and objectives of the IMP; these must be authorized by the Department in accordance with *Neb. Rev. Stat.* § 46-716,
5. A plan to gather and evaluate data, information and methodologies to implement the IMP, increase understanding of the surface water and hydrologically connected groundwater system, and test the validity of information and conclusions upon which the IMP is based.

Nebraska Revised Statute §46-715(3) outlines additional mandatory IMP components that provide a process for economic development opportunities and economic sustainability. Here, the IMP shall include clear and transparent procedures to track depletions and gains to streamflows resulting from new, retired, or other changes to uses in the river basin or subbasin. *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §46-715(3)(a) through §46-715(3)(g) outlines specifics regarding these procedures. In general, the procedures must be scientifically sound, and must provide a process for making water available for offsets for new water uses¹. In this way, economic development in the river basin or subbasin may continue, so long as the existing surface and groundwater users are not adversely affected by the new uses.

1. It should be noted that in a voluntary IMP area, water supplies are greater than demands over the long-term (i.e., the area is not fully or over-appropriated). As such, methods are not included in this voluntary IMP to identify water supplies to be used as offsets or for mitigation purposes due to new uses.

Nebraska Revised Statute §46-715(4) describes in deeper depth the purpose of the groundwater control(s) and surface control(s) that are to be included in each IMP. In general, the controls should be consistent with the goals and objectives of the plan, should protect existing ground and surface water users in hydrologically connected areas, and should be sufficient to ensure the state will remain in compliance with any applicable interstate water compact or other formal contract or agreement. The allowable surface water controls are listed in *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §46-716, and the allowable groundwater controls are listed in *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §46-739. The groundwater and surface water controls for this voluntary IMP are described in Chapter 7.

3.2.3 Stakeholder Process

Nebraska Revised Statute §46-717(2) outlines the stakeholder process that is an integral part of IMP development. It specifies the specific stakeholder interests that the District and the Department shall consult with during the preparation of the IMP. These interests are: irrigation districts, reclamation districts, public power and irrigation districts, mutual irrigation companies, canal companies, and municipalities that rely on water in the affected river basin or subbasin. Other water users and stakeholders that are deemed appropriate by the District or Department may also be consulted with during IMP development. The District and Department are also required to solicit public comments and opinions through public meetings and other means. The stakeholder process for this voluntary IMP is described in further detail in the following chapter.

3.3 Voluntary Integrated Management Plans

Nebraska Revised Statute §46-715(1)(b) describes the framework for voluntary integrated management planning. This portion of legislation was enacted in 2010 via LB764, and authorized NRDs to voluntarily develop an IMP with the Department to jointly manage groundwater and surface water uses and supplies in areas that have not been designated as fully appropriated. The voluntary IMP process is an opportunity for NRDs and the Department to work together to proactively manage growth of water uses while protecting existing uses.

To initiate the process, the NRD notifies the Department of its intention to develop an integrated management plan. Using the same statutory framework, the IMP is then developed in the same way as a mandated IMP. If, after development of a voluntary IMP, the Department determines that a basin/subbasin becomes fully appropriated, the affected NRD(s) and the Department may amend the IMP to fulfill mandated IMP requirements.

4.0 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The IMP process relies on collaboration between the NRDs (groundwater) and the Department (surface water), in consultation with a diverse stakeholder group. As a part of voluntary IMP development, the District and the Department convened a group of stakeholders that represented a wide array of water interests including agriculture, industry, public water supply, environment, recreation, county and city officials (see Appendix B for a complete list of participants). The stakeholders' input was invaluable to the development of the IMP, and their volunteered time and energy was greatly appreciated by both the District and the Department.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee met five times throughout 2016 and 2017, worked together to identify issues within the Basin, and subsequently developed the goals, objectives, and action items of the IMP. The stakeholder group also helped to prioritize the action items, thus providing a robust set of recommendations for the consideration of the District and Department. The District and the Department carefully evaluated and

considered all recommendations, including the feasibility of each action item over a series of monthly meetings. The final goals, objectives, and action items are a carefully constructed mosaic of stakeholder ideas combined with Department and District knowledge, which provide a path forward for effective, long-term management of ground and surface water.

As a follow up to the stakeholder process, a public meeting was held on DATE to present the final draft IMP to the public and to solicit public comments and feedback. Following the public meeting, the final draft IMP was publicized via public notices and the web, in preparation for a public hearing that was held on DATE. At the public hearing, the District and the Department took testimony on the draft voluntary IMP.

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN AREA

5.1 Geographic Extent of the Integrated Management Plan

When the IMP process was initiated, the District and the Department made the decision to include all District water uses, as opposed to only the uses in the hydrologically connected area, as allowed by statute (*Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-715(3)*). Therefore, the geographic boundaries for the IMP area are the legal boundaries of the District (Figure 2).

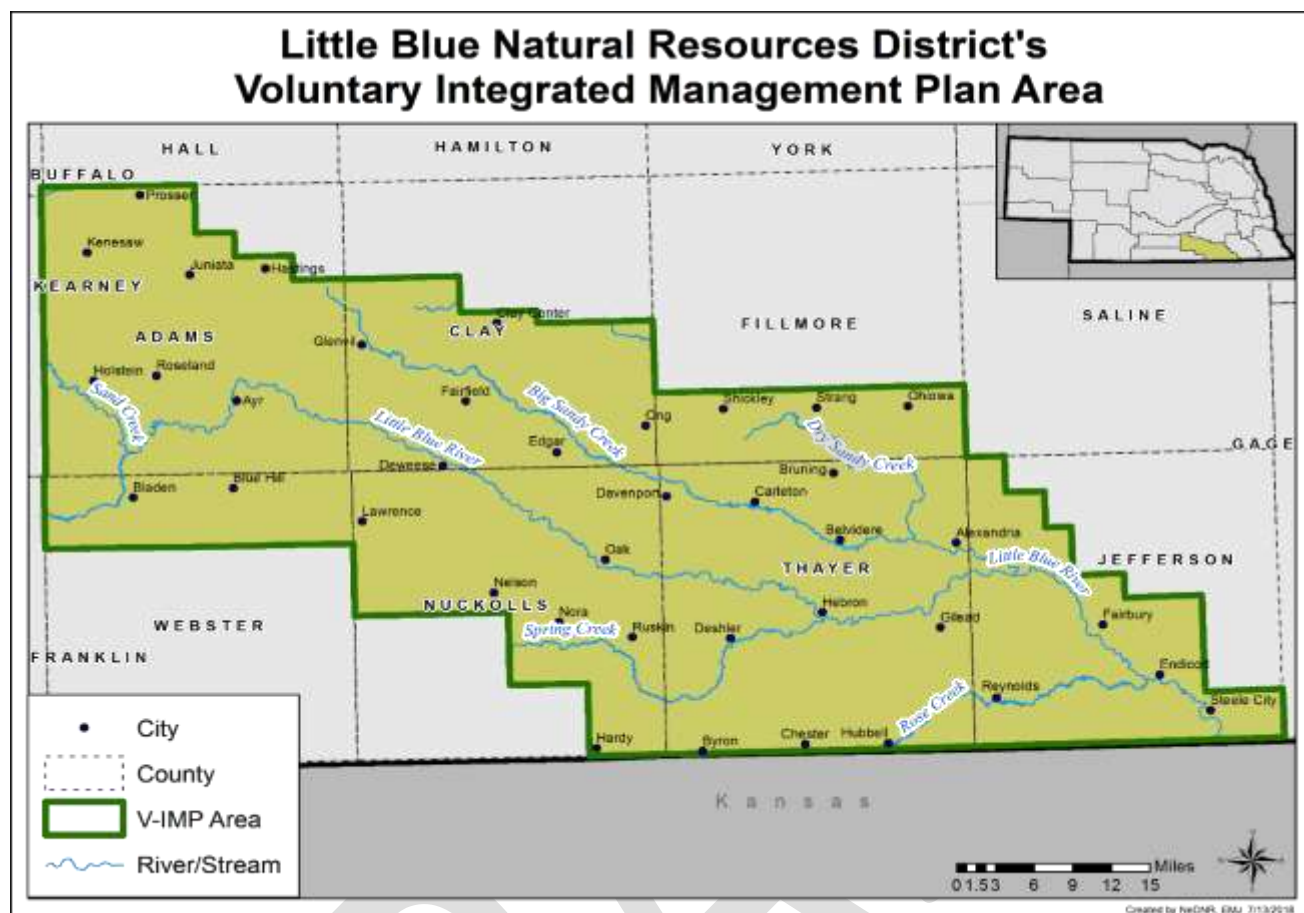


Figure 2. Little Blue NRD Voluntary Integrated Management Plan Area.

5.1.1 Geographic Extent of Hydrologically Connected Area of Platte River

A subarea within the LBNRD IMP Plan Area has been designated as the Platte River Basin Hydrologically Connected Integrated Water Management Area due to the occurrence of stream-flow depletions to the Platte River which exceed the threshold for such designation under the Nebraska New Depletions Plan. This subarea is shown in Figure 3. Additional controls will be implemented for this sub-area as described in Chapter 7.1..

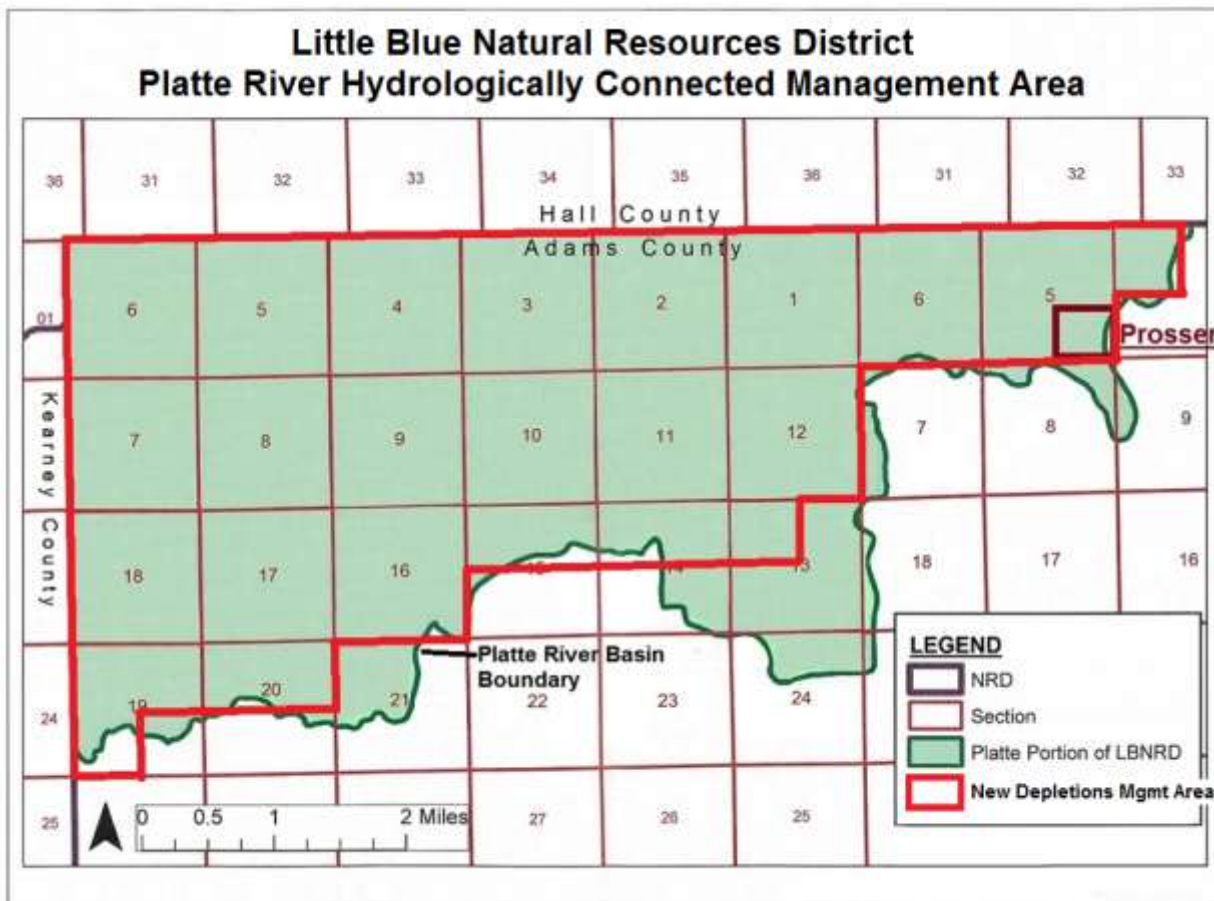


Figure 3. Platte River Hydrologically Connected Management Area Boundaries

5.2 Climate

The climate of the LBNRD is typical of the plains region, with warm summers and cold winters. Temperatures vary widely between seasons with average July temperatures normally ranging between 64° Fahrenheit (F) and 89° F and January range from 12° F to 36° F.

Average annual precipitation ranges from about 26” in western Adams County to about 31” in Jefferson County in the southeastern corner of the District. The District’s average rainfall is approximately 28” overall. On average, about 3,726,000 acre-feet of precipitation falls on the lands of the Little Blue NRD annually with 60% occurring during the growing season from May through September. Precipitation is the primary source of surface water flows and is key in replenishing underground water supplies through recharge.

5.3 Land Use

The Little Blue NRD area covers approximately 1.5 million acres. The distribution of land use and land cover in this area is shown in Figure 3. The land cover is largely agricultural (68 percent) and pasture/grasslands area (22 percent), with small areas of forests, open water, wetlands, and urbanized areas (10 percent). Prominent crop types are corn and soybean at 40 percent and 24 percent respectively. Irrigated lands make up approximately 680,000 acres of the District as shown in Figure 4.

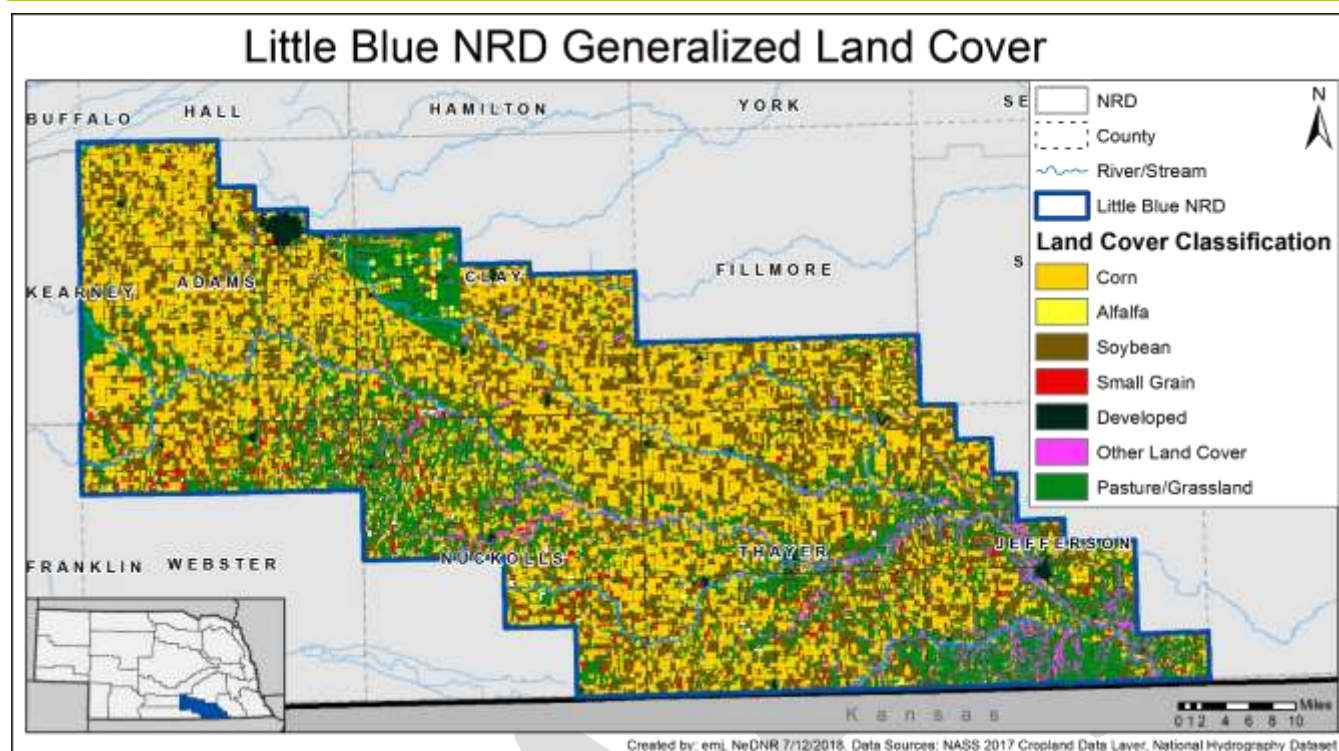


Figure 4. Major Land cover types in the District.

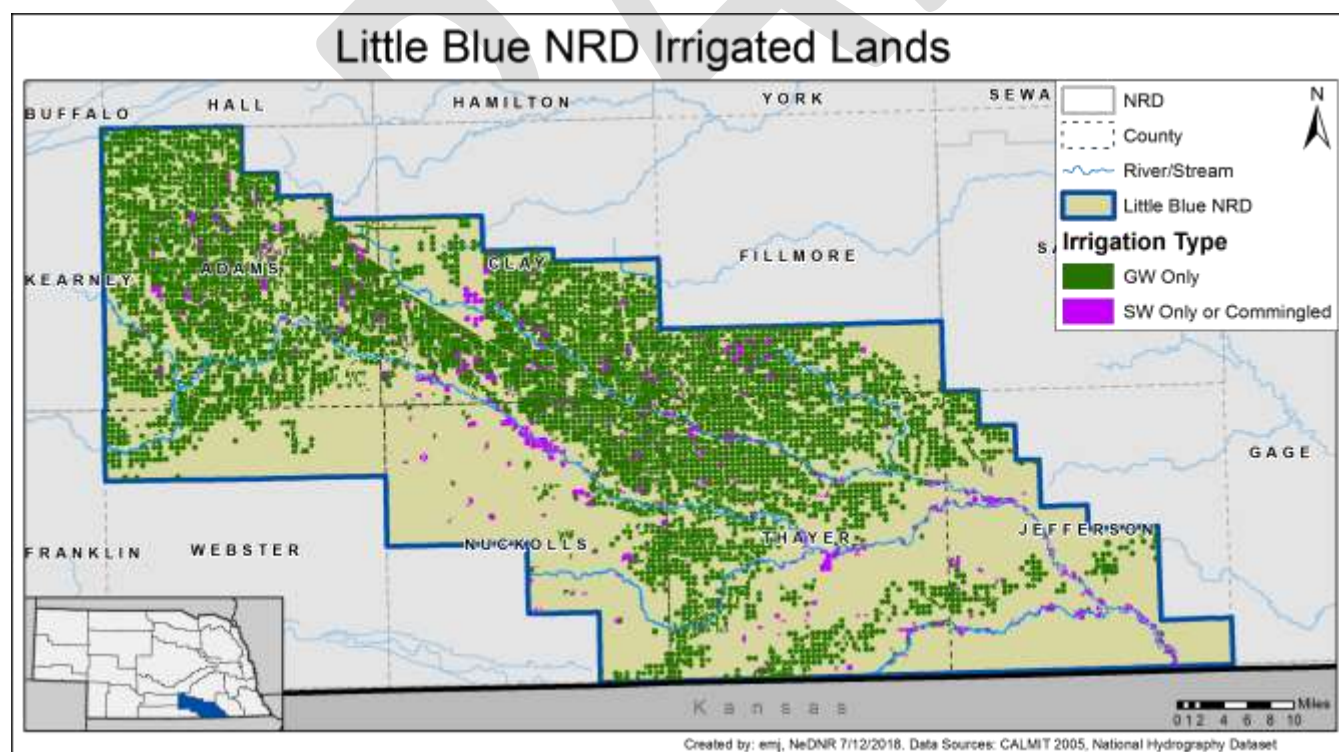


Figure 5. Irrigation Distribution in the District.

5.4 Geology of the District

The Little Blue NRD is underlain by several bedrock formations from the Cretaceous-age to Tertiary-age. They include, from the oldest formations to the youngest, the Dakota sandstones, mudstones, siltstones and shale; Greenhorn/Graneros limestone and shale; Pierre shale; Niobrara chalky shale and shale; Carlile cretaceous rock; and in some isolated locations in the western portion of the District, the Ogallala consolidated sands, silts and sandy clay. Because land elevations increase from east to west, the bedrock formations lie in progressively deeper layers extending westerly with the younger layers above the older layers. Bedrock may be visible in localized outcroppings from the oldest to younger formations are as you move from east to west across the District.

DEPENDING ON THE CONSOLIDATION OR FRACTURING, SOME OF THESE FORMATIONS YIELD GROUNDWATER FOR VARIOUS USES. THE DAKOTA IS AN EXAMPLE WHERE, IN THE EASTERN PORTION OF THE DISTRICT, IT MAY YIELD SUFFICIENT GROUNDWATER FOR IRRIGATION AND DOMESTIC WATER SUPPLY. HOWEVER, THE WATER QUALITY OF THE DAKOTA IS HIGHLY VARIABLE AND TENDS TO BE SALINE. GROUNDWATER IS MOST COMMONLY DERIVED FROM THE RECENT DEPOSITS OF SAND AND GRAVEL LAID DOWN OVER THE SUBSURFACE BEDROCK AS DESCRIBED BELOW.

GROUNDWATER

The District has two main undifferentiated sand and gravel aquifers of alluvial origin. The largest aquifer is the eastern portion of the High Plains Aquifer which lies beneath approximately two thirds of the District's lands. This aquifer is generally unconfined and varies from just feet below land surface in the river valley, to almost 175 feet below land surface in upland locations. The saturated substrata material is generally unconfined and lies over the bedrock formations in ridges, channels and pockets and at thicknesses varying from a few feet to nearly 300 feet (Figure 6). However, in some areas, the continuity of the sands and gravels is commonly interrupted by silt and clay lenses which produce some confined situations.

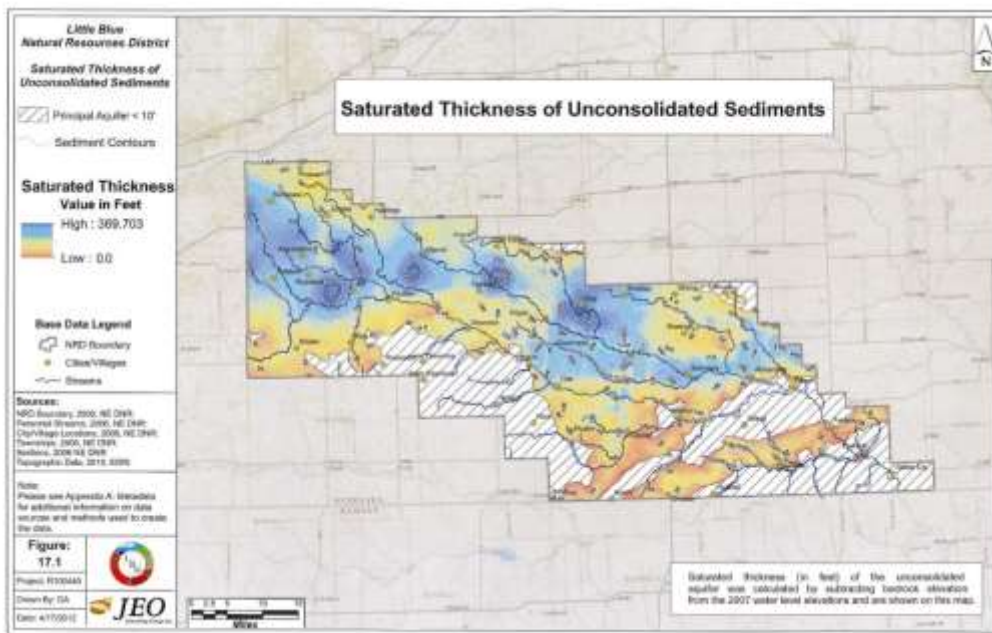


Figure 6. Aquifer Saturation in the Little Blue NRD.

In general, the top of the groundwater aquifer slopes from the higher elevations in northwest Adams County at approximately 2010' AMSL, to lower elevations in to western Jefferson County approximately 1340 AMSL. Thus, natural groundwater movement through the principal aquifer substrata is downgradient from the northwest to the southeast. The productivity of the well in the High Plains Aquifer range from 100 gpm to 2,000 gpm, with 800 to 1,200 gpm wells common.

The smaller aquifer is an ancient alluvial paleovalley aquifer which extends across southern Thayer and Jefferson Counties and lies below about 5.7% of the District's lands. It's sands and gravels are generally less than 100' thick with well productivity varying from 100 gpm to 1,200 gpm. Groundwater in this small paleovalley aquifer generally flows east-northeast with the top of the aquifer at an elevation of approximately 1,500' AMSL near Chester to 1290' AMSL near Fairbury in Central Jefferson County.

Several areas of the District are void of adequate saturated sands and gravels for high-capacity groundwater production. These areas are dominated by windblown silts and clays, and well water is drawn from cracks and fissures in bedrock, or from the clay itself, thus providing for small capacity domestic and livestock uses.

5.6 Surface Water

The drainage area of the entire Little Blue River Watershed totals 2,691 square miles or 1,722,200 acres (Figure 7). The Little Blue NRD boundaries lie in the lower portion of the Basin and account for roughly 90 percent of the total drainage area. The Big Sandy Creek, Spring Creek and Rose Creek are the largest tributaries to the Little Blue River. The Basin is bounded on the north by the Big Blue River, the west by the Platte River and the south by the Republican River.

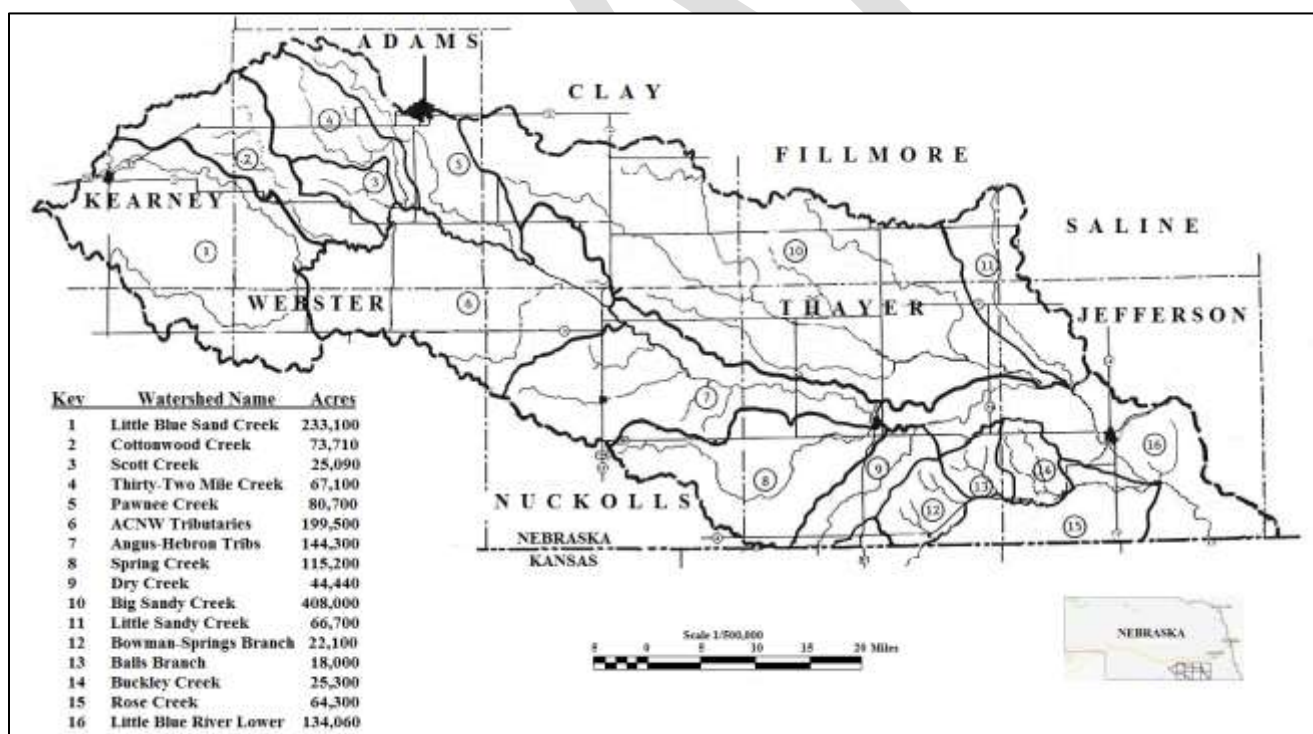


Figure 7. Subbasins located within the Little Blue River Watershed.

The Little Blue River is hydrologically connected to the principal aquifer from central Adams County to its discharge point at the Kansas State Line, however, visual observations have documented gaining and losing sections of the river channel from Adams County into western Thayer County. From Central Thayer County

downstream, Little Blue River flows are perennial. Several other streams in the District are incised into streambed and intersect the groundwater table. These streams may provide intermittent or perennial flows, depending on the location and fluctuations in the groundwater table.

There are no surface water diversion projects which supplement the Basin's water supply so streamflow is dependent on precipitation and groundwater discharge.

Currently, 477 surface water permits have been issued in the District for the diversion of water from a naturally flowing source for irrigation, covering a total area of 26,390 acres. There's an additional seventy-three permits that have been issued to irrigate 8,182 acres by the means of diverting water from a reservoir. For domestic, cooling, and manufacturing uses, one surface water permit has been issued for each. Additionally, 144 reservoir storage permits have been issued, totaling 13,383 acre-feet of water storage. Of these 144 storage permits, 26 are held by the Little Blue NRD (Table 1, Figure 8).

Table 1. Surface water permits in the Little Blue NRD as of July 23, 2018 (numbers in parentheses are not counted in the totals).

ACTIVE SURFACE WATER PERMITS IN THE LITTLE BLUE RIVER BASIN				
Purpose of Permit	Little Blue NRD			
	Number of Permits	Acres approved for Irrigation	Grant in Cubic Feet Per Second	Acre-Feet of Water
(IR) Diversion from naturally flowing source for irrigation	477	26,390	362	NA
(SI) Diversion from a reservoir for irrigation of land that also is approved to receive water from naturally flowing source	7	(568) ¹	NA	343
(SO) Diversion only from a reservoir for irrigation	66	7,614	NA	3,490
(Of the SO permits) diversions from reservoir owned by LBNRD	(11)	(1502)	NA	(1032)
Total Irrigation Permits	550	34,004	362	3,833
(DO) Domestic use	1	2	1	NA
(CO) Cooling	1	NA	17	NA
Total Miscellaneous Permits	2	2	18	NA
(ST) Storage of water in reservoir ²	26	NA	NA	8,496
(ST) Storage of water in reservoir	109	NA	NA	4,432
(SS) Supplemental Storage ³	9	NA	NA	455

ACTIVE SURFACE WATER PERMITS IN THE LITTLE BLUE RIVER BASIN				
Purpose of Permit	Little Blue NRD			
	Number of Permits	Acres approved for Irrigation	Grant in Cubic Feet Per Second	Acre-Feet of Water
Total Storage Permits	144	NA	NA	13,383
Totals	696	34,006	380	17,216

¹ Acres under SI permits have already been counted under the IR permits.

²Reservoirs owned by Little Blue NRD

³An additional permit to store water in a reservoir that has a prior storage appropriation

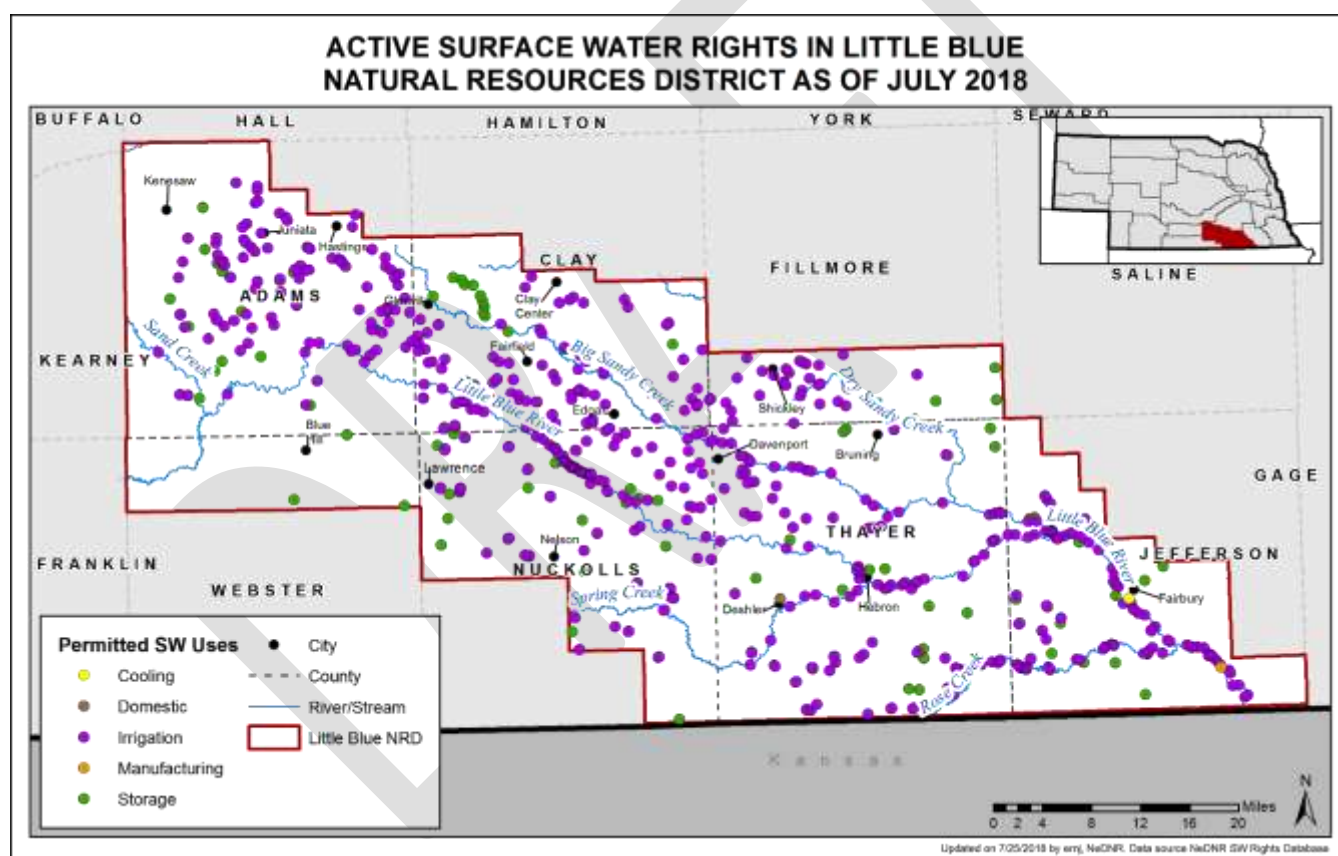


Figure 8. Current active surface water rights in the Little Blue NRD.

5.6.1 Streamgages

There are currently 6 streamgages in the District, 3 operated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and 3 operated by the Department. An additional USGS gage is located on the Little Blue River near Hollenberg, KS. Flows at this gage are used in the administration of the Little Blue River surface water rights for compliance with the Blue River Compact. All seven gages were actively recording streamflow at the time of the writing of this IMP.

5.7 Further Description of Platte River New Depletions Area

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP), also known as the Platte River Program, was developed by the federal government along with basin states of Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming and signed in 2006. Local, state and federal government agencies are working with groups from throughout the basin to build a framework for a long-term Program that will satisfy Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements for water users in the basin. The primary focus of the Program is to enhance, restore and protect habitat lands for the endangered whooping crane, piping plover, least tern and pallid sturgeon.

The Program has been working toward their goals for several years and the lands within the LBNRD were not included in that early work. However, more recent updated modeling has indicated that depletions are occurring to the Platte River from water uses in the northwestern portion of Adams County which lies in the LBNRD. As a result, the LBNRD has designated an area for additional management actions to help protect the species in question and preserve flows in the Platte River to meet these species needs.

Key objectives of the Program are to prevent further stream flow depletions. Such actions may include a moratorium on the development of new groundwater uses through the drilling of new wells or expansion of irrigated acres, unless offsets for such new uses can be achieved. The LBNRD may grant a variance from the moratorium if an offset is provided for such new or expanded use, or if there will be no increase in consumptive use due to the new or expanded use. Offsets may be accomplished through various transfer options provided for in the LBNRD Rules and Regulations.

6.0 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION ITEMS

The District and Department in consultation with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee developed goals, objectives and action items for this IMP. The Stakeholders also articulated several bullet points as visionary measures for the management and protection of the resources as follows:

- Reverse groundwater declines;
- Manage water consumption to a level which allows the aquifer to stabilize and rebound naturally;
- Make sure that rules are strong enough and proactive enough to insure that the aquifer and surface water will be sustainable for the foreseeable future, while minimizing impacts for profitability of irrigated agriculture;
- Ensure that all management actions support efforts to comply with the Blue River Compact with Kansas.

As an initial step in the process, the following definitions were discussed and agreed upon:

- Goals are general statements of what will be accomplished.
- Objectives are incremental steps within a goal and ideally have measurable results

- Actions items are the specific tasks that the Little Blue NRD and the Department will undertake

Throughout the goals and objectives, the term “water supply” refers to water, both surface water and groundwater, which is available for use within the District. While this is primarily a water quantity plan due to authorities, it is recognized that water quality also plays a key role in the water supply.

The goals are presented as a table; that is, one table for each goal to describe the associated objectives and action items for that goal. The responsible party (District, Department, or both) is denoted in parenthesis following each action item. It should be noted that the amount of responsibility for each action item denoted as “both” may vary between action items; for example, one or the other entity may take more of a lead or the bulk of work. The exact make-up of responsibilities will be discussed and decided on as a part of the annual review.

6.1 Goal 1

Goals and Objectives

The first goal established by the Little Blue NRD Stakeholders addresses the need for high-quality scientific data collection, thorough analysis and evaluation, and the prudent application of the data in making holistic and defensible decisions for management of the water resources.

Table 2. Goal 1 of the voluntary IMP.

Goal 1: Better and more scientific data and methods to support wise management of interconnected ground and surface water	
Objective	Action Item
1.1. Increase groundwater and surface water monitoring to build a more comprehensive database on supplies and uses	1.1.1 <i>Improve and expand collection of groundwater and surface water levels (Both)</i>
	1.1.2. <i>More dedicated monitoring wells equipped with data loggers to fill data gaps (NRD)</i>
	1.1.3 <i>Acquire additional information about total groundwater, surface water crop water use to better understand impacts on aquifer and streamflow dynamics (Both)</i>
	1.1.4 <i>Continue to develop certified acres database, including information on irrigation system type (NRD)</i>
	1.1.5 <i>Implement and maintain a water use reporting and monitoring system for groundwater and surface water users (Both)</i>

	1.1.6 Continue to assist DNR in collecting pumpage data from surface water reservoirs in which the NRD has storage rights (NRD)
	1.1.7 Continued collection of stream gaging data to monitor streamflow (Department)
	1.1.8 Continued administration of surface water rights and monitoring of surface water use according to State law (Department)
1.2. Improve understanding of water supplies and uses through research and studies	1.2.1. Conducts research to resolve discrepancies in aquifer mapping between LBNRD and TBNRD (NRD)
	1.2.2 Use the best available data and science to develop and/or refine a scientifically sound water budget for the Blue River Basin (Both)
	1.2.3 Use the best available data and science (modeling tools, data analysis, etc.) to refine delineations of hydrologically connected surface and groundwater (Both)
	1.2.4. Use the best available data and science (modeling tools ,data analysis, etc.) to evaluate how changes in land cover/land use affect groundwater recharge and streamflow (Both)
	1.2.5 Investigate sources and volume of groundwater recharge and discharge (Both)

6.2 Goal 2

Goals and Objectives

The Stakeholders second identified goal focuses on proactive management strategies to conserve the water resources, improve efficiencies of water consumption, eliminate waste of the resource all with a purpose of maintaining groundwater levels and improving natural stream health.

Table 3. Goal 2 of the voluntary IMP.

Goal 2: Scientifically sound, locally-based management actions to protect interconnected ground and surface water	
Objective	Action Item

2.1. Develop proactive management actions to improve water use efficiency, eliminate waste and provide the best opportunities to protect stream health	2.1.1 Continue to provide technical and financial assistance to support efficient best management irrigation practices (Both)
	2.1.2 Establish groundwater management baseline and triggers which prevent further groundwater declines and if possible reverses the groundwater decline trend (NRD)
	<p>2.1.3 Develop an allocation program which ensures aquifer sustainability and protects base stream flows, while minimizing impacts to agricultural profitability (NRD). The following allocation goals were offered for the NRD board's consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a three (3) year initial allocation period which begins in 2018 • Credit each irrigated acre with a beginning balance of 3 acre inches in a water bank account • The bank balance remains with the property if the operator changes • Provide an allocation of an additional 27 acre inches per irrigated acre which could be used over a three-year allocation period at the operator's discretion • Allow any water not used from the 27 acre inches/year allocation to be carried forward into the next allocation period, up to a maximum of 10 acre inches per acre • LBNRD to reassess spring water levels compared to pre-development levels every three years starting in 2021 to determine if changes in the allocation are necessary to ensure sustainability • LBNRD must develop controls for other water users, including municipalities, industry, confined livestock, and fish and wildlife interests. <p>The entire stakeholder approved "Water Sustainability in the Little Blue Natural Resources District" document, the basis for the above recommendations, is attached and is considered part of the goals and objectives.</p>
	2.1.4 It is widely recognized that surface water and groundwater are connected and each influences the other. Because of this relationship, it is imperative that the Department implement complimentary controls (to groundwater) of surface water use within the LBNRD (Department)
2.2. Manage expansion of water uses	2.2.1. Support the activities of the Department related to the Nebraska New Depletions Plan for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program in the extreme northwest corner of Adams Count. (NRD)
	2.2.2 Continue to monitor the development of water uses to prevent a long-term overdraft of the Basin's water budget (Both)

2.3 Identify and utilize new opportunities to increase availability of water	<i>2.3.1 Investigate and develop water storage, groundwater recharge, and augmentation projects in areas where long-term groundwater level declines exist (Both)</i>
	<i>2.3.2 Investigate and develop cost-effective projects which capture and store storm water runoff, increase groundwater recharge, and support stream base flow (NRD)</i>
	<i>2.3.3 Support efforts to prevent invasive species which consume water resources (NRD)</i>
2.4 Improve coordination with other entities to enable more consistent water management	<i>2.4.1 Coordinate management actions as much as possible with Tri-Basin NRD for the Little Blue Basin (NRD)</i>
	<i>2.4.2 Share groundwater level data between other districts of the Blue River Basin (NRD)</i>
	<i>2.4.3 Conduct annual meetings with all Blue Basin Districts to share information, evaluate trends, and compare to goals (Both)</i>
	<i>2.4.4 Coordinate with appropriate agencies to support activities which foster and enhance water quality (Both)</i>

6.3 Goal 3

Goals and Objectives

The third goal of the Stakeholders recognizes that the success of everything we do is dependent on a significant public awareness and thorough understanding of the value of our water resources, the interconnectivity of ground and surface water and how the relationships of these resources plays a critical role in sustaining the economic viability, social health, safety and welfare of our citizens and the environment around us.

Table 4. Goal 3 of the voluntary IMP.

Goal 3: Education efforts to raise the level of awareness about finite, interconnected ground and surface water resources	
Objective	Action Item
3.1. Raise level of awareness that water is a finite resource	<i>3.1.1 Continue operator training about resources, uses, trends, and the need for conservation (NRD)</i>
	<i>3.1.2 Provide learning opportunities, training events, resources, and information to inform the public about water resources (NRD)</i>

3.2. Raise level of awareness about connectivity of groundwater and surface water	3.2.1. <i>Jointly participate in public outreach events and/or dissemination of education materials related to integrated water management (Both)</i>
3.3 Education regarding improved efficiency of irrigation systems and management	3.3.1 <i>Disseminate information about benefits of increased efficiency (NRD)</i>
	3.3.2 <i>Promote best management practices and new technologies which enhance irrigation efficiency (NRD)</i>
3.4 Encourage the use of conservation and best management practices which protect both surface and groundwater quality	3.4.1 <i>Continue to promote, implement, and enforce the LBNRD groundwater quality rules (NRD)</i>
	3.4.2 <i>Educational efforts focused especially in wellhead protection areas (NRD)</i>
	3.4.3 <i>Educational efforts which focus on reducing surface water pollutants (NRD)</i>

7.0 INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN CONTROLS

This chapter describes the controls that the District and the Department have chosen to adopt as a part of this voluntary IMP. These controls were selected from the allowed controls listed in *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §§ 46-739 and 46-717 for groundwater and surface water controls, respectively. Per *Neb. Rev. Stat.* § 46-715 (4), the controls are consistent with the goals and objectives of the IMP and will protect ground and surface water users in hydrologically connected areas.

(INCLUDE DESCRIPTION AND FIGURE IF CONTROLS ONLY APPLY TO SUB-AREAS)

7.1 Groundwater Controls

The District will implement two groundwater controls as a part of this voluntary IMP. The administrative and procedural implementation of the controls are described in the District's Rules and Regulations for the Enforcement of the Groundwater Management Area, which can be obtained by contacting the District. The Little Blue NRD groundwater controls are as follows:

1. *A District-wide mandatory annual groundwater withdrawal reporting of all high-capacity water users;*
2. *A stay on the issuance of new high-capacity water well construction permits, and on any new and expanded use of groundwater in the designated Platte River New Depletions Area of the District.*

7.2 Surface Water Controls

The Department will implement 1 surface water control as a part of this voluntary IMP. The Department's surface water control is as follows:

1. Mandatory water use reporting and metering for all surface water irrigation and industrial (both storage and natural flow appropriations) uses when trigger is met, will be implemented within 5 years.

8.0 MONITORING PLAN

Per Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-715(2)(e), the purpose of the monitoring plan is to gather and evaluate data, information, and methodologies that could be used to implement and evaluate effectiveness of the IMP as well as increase understanding of the hydrologically connected groundwater system. As such, the District and the Department have agreed to complete and report on the following actions:

8.1 Track and Report Water Uses

To the extent feasible, the District will be responsible for collecting, tracking, evaluating, and reporting on the number, location, amount, and timing of the following water use activities:

- a) groundwater level measurements,
- b) certification of groundwater uses and any changes to these certifications,
- c) municipal, commercial, and industrial annual water uses,
- d) irrigation water use data required mandatorily or voluntarily by the District, such as metered high capacity well flow data,
- e) water well construction permits issued,
- f) the number of well permits denied,
- g) variances granted by the District and/or the Department that allow an action contrary to an existing rule or regulation, including the purpose, the location, the length of time for which the variance is applicable, and the reasoning behind approval of the variance,
- h) transfer permits granted by the District and/or the Department allowing the point of withdrawal, location of use, type of use, addition of a type of use, or location of certified irrigated acres to be altered, including all information provided with the application and used in the approval of the transfer.

The Department will be responsible for collecting, tracking, evaluating, and reporting the following activities:

- a) the Department will continue any existing stream gaging in the District and look for new opportunities to enhance the stream gage network.
- b) the Department will continue to administer surface water rights according to State law and monitor use of surface water to make sure that unauthorized irrigation is not occurring.

- c) the Department will continue to map and track surface water irrigated acres. The Department will also continue to require that project maps are submitted and approved prior to obtaining a surface water permit.
- d) the Department will implement a voluntary reporting program for unmetered surface water irrigation diversions that pump more than 50 gallons per minute. The reports will include information about the quantity of water pumped, the acres irrigated, and the type of irrigation system (gravity, pivot, etc.) used.
- e) the Department will continue to evaluate the necessity for mandatory installation of water flow meters on all surface water pumps for irrigation, industrial, and municipal uses.
- f) the Department will continue to implement rules pertaining to transfers of surface water rights according to Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 46-290 to 46-294.04. Should a moratorium be placed on new surface water appropriations in the District, the Department may grant a variance from the moratorium on a case-by-case basis, following the Department rules and regulations.
- g) The FAB evaluation methodology used by the Department to assess the available supplies and uses will be used to track depletions and gains to streamflow from changes in availability and use.

The Department has developed a methodology, in conjunction with several NRDs across the state, to quantitatively assess the hydrologically connected groundwater and surface water balance over time. This methodology will be used to monitor the balance of water supplies within the IMP area. This methodology will be updated with the best available data and analysis as provided by the District and the Department.

The District and the Department will jointly evaluate the data and information gathered for accuracy, identify data anomalies and probable causes for them, and flag data and information that may require closer inspection and review. In addition, the District and the Department will use the Department's Integrated Network of Scientific Information and GeoHydrologic Tools (INSIGHT) system to compare annual water use data to historically reported water use data and information, and perform analyses to determine the impacts of new water uses on existing water users within the District.

8.2 Increase Understanding of Hydrologically Connected Groundwater

(Blue Basin Groundwater Model, if necessary)

9.0 FUNDING OPTIONS

Many of the identified goals, objectives, and action items will be implemented utilizing existing staff time and funding sources. There will be occasions when alternative funding sources will be necessary to move forward with identified action items in either the primary or long-term goals of this V-IMP. Sources of alternative funding that could be utilized include the NRCS, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET), NE Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), the Natural Resources Commission, and others. Synopses of the general criteria and applicability of several funding resources are provided below. It should be noted that information presented here is subject to change as funding sources may change their terms and criteria, or as new funding sources become available.

9.1 Federal Funding Options

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).** Through EQIP, technical assistance, cost share and incentive payments are available to agricultural producers to implement conservation practices that improve water quality, enhance grazing lands, and/or increase water conservation.
- **Conservation Security Program (CSP).** The CSP is available in selected watersheds across the nation. The program is designed to reward farmers and ranchers who are implementing conservation on working lands and encourage them to do more.
- **Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP).** Through WHIP, technical and financial assistance is provided to landowners and others to develop and improve wildlife habitat on private lands.
- **Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).** Eligible landowners may receive technical and financial assistance through the WRP to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water and related natural resource concerns on private lands.
- **Grassland Reserve Program (GRP).** This program emphasizes support for grazing operations, plant and animal biodiversity, and grassland and land containing shrubs and forbs under the greatest threat of conservation.
- **Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP).** The program is designed to help farmers and ranchers keep their land in agriculture. It provides matching funds to State, Tribal or local governments and non-governmental organizations with existing farm and ranch land protection programs to purchase conservation easements.
- **Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D).** Nebraska's RC&D areas assist communities by promoting conservation, development, and use of natural resources; improving the general level of economic activity; and enhancing the environmental standard of living for residents of those communities.

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

- **WaterSMART Program.** The BOR's WaterSMART program is focused on improving water conservation and helping water and resource managers make wise decisions about water use. This is achieved through administration of grants, scientific studies, technical assistance, and scientific expertise.

9.2 State Funding Options

The Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET). The Nebraska Environmental Trust was established in 1992 to conserve, enhance and restore the natural environments of Nebraska. The Trust especially seeks projects that bring public and private partners together collaboratively to implement high-quality, cost-effective projects.

Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ)

- **Nonpoint Source Water Quality Grants (Section 319).** Under Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act, the federal government awards funds to the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to provide financial assistance for the prevention and abatement of nonpoint source water pollution. This funding is passed through to units of government, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations, for projects that facilitate implementation of the state Nonpoint Source Management Plan.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)

- **Nebraska Wildlife Conservation Fund.** The purpose of this fund acts to conserve nongame species, and species determined to be endangered or threatened, for human enjoyment, for scientific purposes, and to ensure their continued existence as a part of our natural world.

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR)

- **Water Well Decommissioning Fund.** The objective of the Water Well Decommissioning Fund is to encourage proper decommissioning of illegal water wells in the State. This is accomplished through providing financial incentives in the form of cost-share assistance.
- **Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Fund.** This fund provides state financial assistance to Nebraska landowners for installation of approved soil and water conservation measures that improve water quality, conserve water, and help control erosion and sedimentation.
- **Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund.** The purpose of this fund is to assist local sponsors with the acquisition of land rights for flood control projects. Local sponsors use the fund to acquire easements or fee title to tracts that are needed to implement a project.
- **Natural Resources Water Quality Fund.** This fund was created to provide state funds to natural resources districts for their water quality programs.
- **Water Sustainability Fund.** LB 1098 was signed into law during the 2014 Legislative Session. This bill created the Water Sustainability Fund which will be used to address multiple water management and quality issues across the state of Nebraska. This fund will act to improve water quality and usage, supply water management goals, evaluate flood control, and comply with existing interstate agreements and compacts. NRDs are only eligible to apply to the Water Sustainability Fund if they have developed or are in development of an IMP.

9.3 Local Funding Options Most of the identified goals, objectives and action items will be implemented utilizing existing staff and financial resources. Occasionally alternate funding sources will be tapped to assure that identified action items can be accomplished. Funding sources available to the District include:

General NRD Taxing Authorities

The NRDs have been giving broad taxing authority under Neb. Rev. Stat. 2-3225 to accomplish various natural resources and water management objectives. Section 2-3226 also identifies an additional funding option available to NRDs through the issuance of revenue bonds for the purpose of financing the construction of authorized facilities. Repayment of such bonds may be accomplished by funds granted by the State or Federal government, the occupation tax or the general levy authority of the NRD. Following the protocol and hearings outlined in statutes, an occupation tax would only be used if other funding options available to the District are insufficient to address the resources problem.

Nebraska Environmental Trust

The Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) is funded from the proceeds of the Nebraska Lottery. Each year, grants are awarded to applications for various projects focused on the conservation, enhancement and preservation of natural resources, including surface and groundwater. The NRD and/or Department will apply for NET funds when suitable projects or studies associated with this plan warrant.

Water Sustainability Fund

The Water Sustainability Fund was created as a financial source to help that State and its agencies achieve water sustainability goals identified in Neb. Rev. Stat. 2-1506, and Rules (Title 261) adopted by the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission. One key goal of the Fund to provide financial support for the implementation of groundwater management plans and integrated water management plans. As such, the District may apply for funds when suitable projects or studies are identified.

Statutory Taxing Authorities

Other funding sources may become available to the District or Department in the future. Such sources will be evaluated and utilized, when appropriate and feasible, to accomplish actions identified in the IMP.

10.0 INFORMATION CONSIDERED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS IMP

Information used in the preparation of this IMP and to be used in the subsequent implementation of this IMP, can be found in the following:

- Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act
- The Department's Rules for Surface Water
- U.S. Geological Survey stream gage records
- Department's registered wells database
- Department's surface water administrative records
- Little Blue NRD's Groundwater Management Plan
- *Model data?*
- *Other LBNRD data sources (ex: Rules and Regulations, well records, groundwater supplies and uses, data on recharge rates, climate or precipitation trend records, land use data, Stakeholder Involvement Plan , and/ or studies that have occurred in the NRD)*

11.0 REVIEW PROCESS AND MODIFICATIONS TO THE INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN

The IMP implementation utilizes an adaptive management approach. Thus, it is a work in progress for attaining or maintaining the desired balance of the hydrologic system. As an affected area or subarea of the District changes or more data become available, the IMP implementation may be reassessed and modified to accommodate changing circumstances such as hydrology, economics, water demands, and supplies.

The District and Department will hold an annual review to evaluate the IMP. Action items undertaken by the District and Department will be reviewed to determine if these items are fulfilling the goals and objectives of the IMP. The District and Department will jointly determine if amendments to the IMP are necessary and will require an agreement by both parties, in consultation with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. If amendments to the IMP are necessary, the District and Department will hold a joint hearing and issue the pertinent orders to formally adopt the revised IMP.

12.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Integrated Management Plan (IMP)—A plan cooperatively developed by NeDNR and individual NRDs for a specific area. The objective of an integrated management plan is to manage such river basin, subbasin, or reach to achieve and sustain a balance between water uses and water supplies for the long term.

NeDNR—The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources; a State Agency

Natural Resources District (NRD)—A political subdivision of the State that governs the natural resources within the subdivision.

Groundwater—Water which occurs in or moves, seeps, filters, or percolates through ground under the surface of the land, and shall include groundwater which becomes commingled with waters from surface sources.

Hydrologically connected—Describes a geographic area designated by the NeDNR where the existing amount of groundwater and surface water each has significant influence on the other and where appropriate regulations exist. ***something about this being the 10/50 area***

Surface water—Water which occurs or moves on the surface of the planet such as in a stream, river, lake, wetland, or ocean.

LB 962—A bill passed by Nebraska Legislature in 2004 that allows leases of surface water, changes administration of surface water rights, establishes a proactive approach to the integrated management of hydrologically connected groundwater and surface water and creates funds to direct money towards data gathering, research, conservation and implementation of integrated management plans in fully and overappropriated basins.

Fully appropriated—From 46-713, subsection (3): A river basin, subbasin, or reach shall be deemed fully appropriated if NeDNR determines based upon its evaluation conducted pursuant to subsection (1) of this section and information presented at the hearing pursuant to subsection (4) of section 46-714 that then current uses of hydrologically connected surface water and groundwater in the river basin, subbasin, or reach cause or will in the reasonably foreseeable future cause (a) the surface water supply to be insufficient to sustain over the long term the beneficial or useful purposes for which existing natural-flow or storage appropriations were granted and the beneficial or useful purposes for which, at the time of approval, any existing instream appropriation was granted, (b) the streamflow to be insufficient to sustain over the long term the beneficial uses from wells constructed in aquifers dependent on recharge from the river or stream involved, or (c) reduction in the flow of a river or stream sufficient to cause noncompliance by Nebraska with an interstate compact or decree, other formal state contract or agreement, or applicable state or federal laws.

Appropriation—A permit granted by NeDNR to use surface water for a beneficial use in a specific amount, purpose and location, and is based on first-in-time, first-in-right.

Aquifer—A geological formation or structure of permeable rock or unconsolidated materials that stores and/or transmits water, such as to wells and springs.

Use—The legally accepted use of a well or water appropriation.

Alluvial aquifers—Buried paleovalley aquifers in ancient stream valleys, aquifers created by modern streams, and aquifers of other origins.

Acre-Feet—A unit of volume, commonly used to measure quantities of water used or stored equivalent to the volume of water required to cover 1 acre to a depth of 1 foot and equivalent to 43,560 cubic feet, 325,851 gallons, or 1,233 cubic meters.

Grant in CFS—This refers to the approved amount of cubic feet per second of water legally allowed to be pumped from a surface water source, as long as all other conditions are met.

Grant in AF—This refers to the approved amount of acre-feet of water legally allowed to be pumped from a surface water source, as long as all other conditions are met.

Cubic Foot Per Second—The rate of discharge representing a volume of 1 cubic foot passing a given point during 1 second. It is equivalent to 7.48 gallons per second, or 448.8 gallons per minute.

Depletion—Reduction to streamflow that results from a new use of either groundwater or surface water.

Watershed—The area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place.

INSIGHT—Developed and maintained by NeDNR, INSIGHT stands for an Integrated Network of Scientific Information and GeoHydrologic Tools. The purpose of INSIGHT is to provide an annual snapshot of water conditions across the state. Hydrologic data are consolidated from several different sources, including the NeDNR,

U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and local natural resources districts and presented in charts for the following categories: water supplies, water demands, nature and extent of use, and water balance. These data are presented in a consistent format and become more local as the user drills down from the statewide level to the basin-wide and subbasin levels using the database interface.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee — Representatives of various interest groups and professional fields who provided comments and suggestions on various aspects of the Integrated Management Plan.

13.0 APPENDICES

13.1 APPENDIX A: Letters Initiating the IMP Process

DRAFT



"Serving The Public Since 1972"

July 30, 2015

Jim Schnieder, Acting Director
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
100 Centennial Mall South, 4th Floor
P. O. Box 94676
Lincoln, NE 68509-4676

RE: Voluntary Integrated Management Plan

Dear Jim:

The Little Blue NRD Board of Directors took action on June 9, 2015 to request the initiation of a voluntary integrated management plan for our district in accordance with State Statute 46-715(b). This letter will serve as notice of our intent to enter into the formal process for development of the voluntary IMP with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. We understand that this will be a joint planning effort between the Department and the Little Blue NRD, with the objective of the plan to achieve and sustain a balance between water uses and water supplies for the long term in our district.

The District has already given notice of our action to the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors and anticipate that we may coordinate the planning process with their district because of our shared interest in the water resources of the Blue River Basin.

We look forward to meeting with you soon to kick off the effort and discuss the next steps for the VIMP process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Onnen".

Michael Onnen
Manager

cc. Dean Edson
Dustin Wilcox
John Thorburn

RECEIVED
AUG 03 2015
DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

P.O. Box 100
Davenport, NE 68335
E-mail: monnen@littlebluenrd.org

"Protecting Lives, Protecting Property, Protecting the Future"

Phone: (402) 364-2145
Fax: (402) 364-2484
<http://www.littlebluenrd.org>



Pete Ricketts
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Gordon W. "Jeff" Fassett, P.E.
Director

August 20, 2015

IN REPLY TO:

Michael Onnen, General Manager
Little Blue Natural Resources District
P.O. Box 100
Davenport, NE 68335


Dear Mr. Onnen,

Thank you for informing us of your intent to jointly develop a Voluntary Integrated Management Plan (IMP). The Department appreciates this opportunity to work collaboratively with the District in proactive management of our water resources. Our past experience with other natural resource districts indicates that it would be beneficial to discuss your District's overarching goals early in the process to ensure that we lay a solid foundation for our joint planning efforts.

I have assigned Amy Zoller as the Department's Point of Contact for this important planning initiative. Please contact Amy at your earliest convenience to initiate activities related to developing our joint IMP. Amy can be reached by phone at (402) 471-0625, or by e-mail at amy.zoller@nebraska.gov.

We look forward to working with you on this important planning initiative, as well as furthering our relationship between the District and the Department.

Sincerely,


Gordon W. Fassett, P. E.
Director

cc: Charles Rainforth, Chairman

13.2 APPENDIX B: Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The public involvement process for the Little Blue Natural Resources District (District) Integrated Management Plan (IMP) development process was designed to encompass broad stakeholder values, interests, future needs and priorities, and raise awareness to encourage broad community support for water management within the basin. The public involvement process was guided by the principles outlined in the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Public Participation. This document summarizes public involvement efforts during the development process.

In developing the IMP for the Little Blue River Basin, the District worked collaboratively with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (Department), a Stakeholder Advisory Committee, and JEO Consulting Group, Inc. to meet the requirements of the IMP set forth by the Department. The Stakeholder Advisory Committee was formed through local solicitations and nominations. The District submitted a news release in February 2016 to several area newspapers (*any other sources the notice was published in?*) seeking interested persons to serve on the Advisory Stakeholder Committee.

In addition, the District sent out letters to individuals who were nominated as potential members of the Advisory Committee through District contacts. XX interested individuals contacted the District and were appointed to the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The XX-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee included diverse representation from agriculture, well drillers, public power producers, industry/business, recreation, environmental groups, and educators.

Joint Little Blue NRD and Tri-Basin Stakeholder Meetings. Meetings were held in Hastings, Nebraska at Adams County Fairground located at 947 South Baltimore Ave.

- Meeting #1: March 29, 2016 | 6:30-8:30 p.m. *Meeting Recap*
- *Meeting #2: Date: TBD; Anticipated in early 2017. Meeting Recap*

Little Blue NRD Stakeholder Meetings. Meetings were held in Davenport, Nebraska at the Davenport Community Center located at 110 S Lincoln Ave.

- Meeting # 1: May 19, 2016 | 7-9 p.m. *Meeting Recap*
- Meeting # 2: September 15, 2016 | 6:30-8:30 p.m. *Meeting Recap*
- Meeting # 3: December 5, 2016 | 6:30-8:30 p.m. *Meeting Recap*

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Final list of participants (Emailed JEO)



Figure 9. First stakeholder meeting in 2016.



Figure 10. LBNRD and TBNRD joint kick-off stakeholder meeting.