

Tri-Basin NRD Receives 2009 NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award

HOLDREGE - Tri-Basin Natural Resources District won the 2009 National NACD/NRCS Earth Team Award for sharing their summer interns' time and talents with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other partners. The award was presented at the National Association of Conservation Districts annual meeting on Tuesday, February 2. Dave White, Chief of NRCS presented the award, which was accepted on Tri-Basin NRD's behalf by Mary Ann Wortmann, President of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts.

Each summer, Tri-Basin NRD hires college students who are interested in the field of natural resources. The interns help TBNRD staff with irrigation well sampling, chemigation inspections and summer maintenance projects. While working at the NRD, the interns are introduced to all aspects of the agency's conservation work, from field work to office projects. Many of the interns return to work additional summers with Tri-Basin NRD.

The interns also work part of the time with Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and NRCS on their irrigation projects. At the Holdrege NRCS office, the interns work closely with Curtis Scheele, Irrigation Water Management Specialist, on projects such as EQIP field checks, equipment installation for irrigation demonstration sites and collection of quality assurance data for Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) surveying.

"Year in and year out, the interns have been very good employees," said Scheele, who wrote and submitted the application for the Earth Team Award. "The interns provide tremendous help which allows me the time to work on the Tri-Basin Irrigator newsletter and address producer requests during the irrigation season."

"The students provide us with invaluable service," said Kevin Breece, NRCS District Conservationist from Holdrege. "They take care of many of the time taking tasks that must be done in our field offices."

But according to Breece, the agencies involved with the internship program are not the only ones who benefit from it. Some of the interns use the knowledge of natural resources conservation that they learn through the program to pursue careers in the field.

"The most rewarding thing to me is when I attend a state function or meeting and see how many of these young people are now employed by an NRD or the NRCS," said Breece. "We sparked their interest in conservation and showed them what we do and what we are about."