

NEWS RELEASE

Little Blue Natural Resources District

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LBNRD Approves Stay on Wells and Irrigated Acres

A steadily declining water table has prompted the Little Blue Natural Resources District Board of Directors to take action to stop well drilling and new irrigation developments in a portion of their district. The area covers an approximate 194 square mile area of southern Thayer and west central Jefferson Counties and lies southwest of the Little Blue River. The area possesses an isolated aquifer identified by the NRD as Hydrologic Unit # 8.

Kevin Orvis, Project Manager of the district, says, "Water levels in this aquifer in the southern Little Blue NRD have shown steady declines over the years, even in times of adequate rainfall. It appears that development may have exceeded the areas potential to retain a balance with natural recharge."

Action taken by the Little Blue NRD Board place a stay on new high capacity wells and the expansion of irrigated acres in the area at least until a study being conducted by the Conservation and Survey Division is completed late this year. "CSD has been mapping the aquifer for the past two years, trying to determine existing water quality and quantity and calculating the consumption of the resources present," says Orvis. "It is our hope that once the study is complete, we will have a better understanding of the management practices needed to stabilize the aquifer for long-term productivity." Although the management practices have not been decided yet, they may include the allocation of water, required crop rotations or other practices.

A group of about 2 dozen farmers were present to listen to the board's deliberation on the matter. The board also provided guidance for farmers who are in the middle of irrigation project construction. "Those projects where the well has been constructed and the irrigation system's installation are in mid-stream will be allowed to be finished," said Orvis. "We recognize the potential hardship created if those projects were to be halted."

Farmers in the area will be required to certify their irrigated acres before March of 2007 and are asked to try monitoring water consumption through the 2006 cropping season. That data will be helpful in determining the demands on the aquifer.

The stays placed on the area will expire on December 31, 2006 unless extended by action of the Board, however, an extension is almost certain to remain in effect for two to three years.

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Area of well and new irrigated acres stay.

