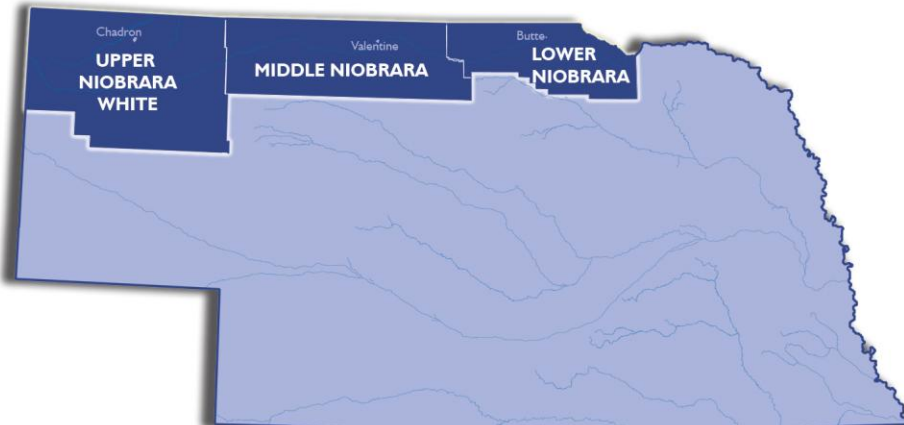


YOUR NRD BASIN

NIOBRARA RIVER

Summer-Fall 2009

Nebraska's Natural Resources Districts
Making the Good Life Better Since 1972



NIOBRARA RIVER BASIN

BASIN FACTS:

Starting in Wyoming, the Niobrara River is the longest river in Nebraska at 535 miles long with over 90 waterfalls.

2,578 Total chemigation permits

1,418 Total chemigation inspections

1,435 Monitoring wells

Nearly 9 Million trees sold since 1985

Over 1,500 Nitrate samples

Your Local Leaders in Ground Water Management

Protecting the Future

The Niobrara River begins 50 miles inside eastern Wyoming in Niobrara County. It empties into the Missouri River in Nebraska some 486 miles later. The NRDs in the Niobrara Basin, which includes the Upper Niobrara White NRD (UNWNRD), the Middle Niobrara NRD (MNNRD) and the Lower Niobrara NRD (LNNRD), strive to protect both the quality and quantity of the river and the associated water supply.

The Niobrara River plays a large role in agriculture, hydroelectric power and recreation. The NRDs, along with their partners, make every effort to maintain the balance between the supply and demand of water.

In 2004, the UNWNRD put a moratorium on new high capacity wells to prevent over-appropriation in their entire district. On January 25th, 2008 the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) determined that the majority of the Niobrara

River Basin between the Mirage Flats diversion dam in Dawes County and Nebraska Public Power District's Spencer Hydropower facility near Spencer is fully appropriated.

This means the balance between water supply and demand is met. Since ground water and surface water are connected, no new high capacity wells or surface water rights are allowed in this area. Also, no new irrigated acres can be added.



Enforcing decisions like these protect not only the scenic Niobrara River, but also the valuable ground water that Nebraskans will continue to rely on for generations to come.

Protecting Lives

All three NRDs in the Niobrara Basin closely monitor both the quality and quantity of the ground water in their districts. Both MNNRD and LNNRD implemented a district-wide Ground Water Management Area (GWMA) in 1996. In 1998, the UNWNRD followed suit and designated their district as a GWMA.

The NRDs' efforts ensure that there is an abundance of safe drinking water for the future. Each NRD conducts ground water studies and samples the water for contaminants such as nitrates.

To help protect public water supplies, the Niobrara Basin NRDs often work in conjunction with city managers and other agencies. Wellhead protection, rural water systems and surface water sampling are all examples of NRD partnership projects.

Monitoring the water quality in a GWMA means your health, safety and family are protected.

Projects and Programs

Tree Planting

To encourage tree planting, the UNWNRD, MNNRD and LNNRD make low-cost tree and shrub seedlings available to district residents. Last year over 325,000 trees were planted in the Niobrara Basin. Trees are planted for livestock and homestead protection, soil erosion prevention, wildlife habitat, as a “living snow fence” and for aesthetic value. Please check with your local NRD for pricing and available species of trees and shrubs.



Education

To help educate our youth about natural resources issues, staff members from the NRDs participate in many local events such as Range Judging, Land Judging, the Envirothon and local conservation festivals. Teaching youth how to be excellent stewards of the land is an important goal of the NRD system.



The NRDs in the Niobrara Basin also sponsor and co-sponsor workshops and low cost or free educational opportunities for landowners and other district residents. Carbon credit sequestration programs, no-till and nitrogen certification are only a few of the opportunities that residents may take advantage of.

Recreation on the Niobrara River

Recreation and tourism has a large impact on the NRDs in the Niobrara River Basin. The river is a sought-after vacation spot and provides families with the opportunity to canoe, tube or raft down the river.

The Niobrara Basin NRDs strive to ensure that there will be plenty of water in the river during irrigation months in the summer for rafters. The UNWNRD, MNNRD and LNNRD protect both the livelihood of the producers and the recreational quality of the Niobrara.



In May of 1991, a 76-mile stretch of the river was added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System to preserve its unique biological features. From Valentine to 30 miles east, you will encounter more than 90 waterfalls along the south bank, including the state’s highest, Smith Falls, which plunges more than 70 feet from a cliff. Look for elk, bison and deer, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, minx, trout, catfish and over 200 species of birds that rely on the Niobrara.

The river is truly a natural treasure for the state of Nebraska, and the Niobrara Basin NRDs are working together to preserve it for generations to come.

photo credits of river: www.nps.gov

Your NRD

- Uses taxpayer dollars efficiently
- Protects lives through water testing
- Protects property through soil conservation

Find out more about the Niobrara Basin NRDs:

Upper Niobrara
White NRD
www.unwnrd.org

Middle Niobrara NRD
www.mnnrd.org

Lower Niobrara NRD
www.lnnrd.org

The Natural Resources District system is unique to the State of Nebraska. In 1972, 23 districts were developed according to watershed basins, instead of by political boundaries. This system provided a more efficient management strategy because it solved the issues of overlapping authorities and lack of funds.

Each District is governed by a locally elected Board of Directors, which ensures that local issues and concerns are addressed.

Find out more about Nebraska’s NRDs at
www.nrdnet.org