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UNWNRD Press Release
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NRD Board Votes to Allow Additional Wells in Southern Sheridan County

The Upper Niobrara White Natural Resources District (UNWNRD) Board of Directors voted to accept applications for 2021 to allow irrigation wells and additional irrigated acres in groundwater management sub-area 3, or southern Sheridan County, for the third year.

In 2018, the UNWNRD Board of Directors began the process of amending the Groundwater Rules and Regulations due to increasing groundwater levels and other concerns raised by the residents of southern Sheridan County. "When ranchers begin to lose hay meadows due to excess water, it makes sense to allow for additional wells and irrigated acres so producers are able to meet the needs for a successful operation," stated Mike Strasburger, UNWNRD Director and Sheridan County Resident. The UNWNRD Board held a series of public meetings to discuss the issues and options to correct this problem. In December of 2018, the Board voted to make an exception to the well moratorium in sub-area 3, that has been in effect since 2003, based on rising groundwater levels in southern Sheridan County.

Between 2019 and 2020, the UNWNRD Board received four applications to expand irrigated acres in southern Sheridan County. "With groundwater static levels increasing and the encroachment of surface water still posing problems for the residents of southern Sheridan County, the Board voted to accept additional applications for the 2021 irrigation season," explained Lynn Webster, Assistant Manager of the UNWNRD.

According to the rules and regulations the UNWNRD Board will allow for up to 1,300 total additional irrigated acres in sub-area 3, with a maximum of 130 acres per application. A list of criteria will be used to rank each application in order to ensure a prime location for each of these expansion sites. NRD staff will be available to work with any landowner interested in submitting an application. Applications will be accepted through April 1st, 2021. Approvals will be made no later than July.

For additional information or to begin the application process please contact Lynn Webster, UNWNRD Assistant Manager, at 308-432-6190 or webster@unwnrd.org.