STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH
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Boy, it sure seems like Spring is here or at the very least just around the corner. But believe me I am very cognizant of the fact that we do live in Nebraska and things can change in a hurry. March of course is always unpredictable, but what is predictable is that we are getting closer and closer to the time that the Quonset doors will be opened and equipment readied for the planting season and trailers will be going down the roads carrying cows and their calves possibly to the local veterinarian and eventually out to pasture. You have got to love this time of year and the anticipation it brings.

Talking about anticipation - there is quite a bit of confusion out there on the Little Blue NRD mandated classes that are being held across the LBNRD area. I have tried to ascertain some answers to questions that have arisen. I did find out a little history on the edit. The LBNRD Board passed a regulation in 2014 that all operators within the Little Blue District has to attend an approved NRD training event by April 1, 2018. This includes irrigation and dry land farmers. I found a copy of the “Rules and Regulations for the Enforcement of the Little Blue NRD Groundwater Management Area”. The effective date of this rule adopted by the LBNRD in April 8, 2014 was May 12 of that same year. You can read for yourself at: http://www.littlebluenrd.org/pdf's/groundwater/groundwater_rules_2014.pdf. I have taken the liberty to copy the portion of the rules that pertain to this effort from Section G on page 11. It is worded as follows:

**Operator Certification:** All persons engaged in the use, application and storage of nitrogen fertilizers and irrigation management in the District are required to participate in a mandatory operator certification. Persons required to complete the certification are those that make the management decisions on the land including but not limited to operators of agricultural lands of ten (10) acres or more, farm managers, commercial applicators, operators of lawn service companies, operators of golf courses, operators of sod farms, and anyone engaged in the application of manure/bio-solids/bio-liquids on five (5) acres or more. The initial certification will require physical attendance of the person at a resources management class provided by the District. Subsequent certifications may be secured by class attendance, as an on-line training and test, or by alternative management training events approved by the District. The District will accept certification in nitrogen management and irrigation management obtained from adjoining natural resources districts. The operator shall provide proof of such certification to the District. Certification class will be scheduled each year from January through March. Recertification is required every four years. All operators must obtaining certification by April 1, 2018. The District will contact each certified person one year prior to the certification expiration date to verify if they are required to be re-certified. The District will notify landowners when person(s) have completed management certification requirements.

So, as I understand it, operators of both dryland and irrigated cropland located in the Little Blue NRD District's Water Quality Management Areas are required to obtain or renew their LBNRD Operator’s Certificate. It must then be renewed every four years after obtaining your certificate, either by attending a class/seminar or on-line. One of the questions that is not clear to me is the penalty for producers if they do not attend these meetings or obtain a certificate. There is a section in the same document that I provided a link to above, starting on page 26 that is entitled: “Section E – Enforcement of Violations”. I will let you decipher and decide. If you don’t have access to the internet, please feel free to contact me and I can provide a copy for you. If you are not sure if you are in an area of concern, simply go to www.littlebluenrd.org or contact the NRD office at 402-364-2145 with your legal land description. When in doubt – ask!

The Little Blue district includes all of Thayer County and portions of Adams, Webster, Clay, Nuckolls, Fillmore and Jefferson counties. They have put on several meetings and will keep putting on programs throughout the District every year. Irrigated and dryland farmers in certain Little Blue Natural Resources District water areas are to fulfill their four-year training requirement for water quality management certification by attending a meeting like the one that will be held in Bladen at the Webster County Fairgrounds on March 10 from 8:30-11:30 am.

**Nebraska Governor’s Ag Conference:** I had the opportunity to attend this past week the Nebraska Governor’s Agriculture Conference. It was a tremendous conference with great speakers from across the country. One thing that impressed me is that our Governor, Pete Ricketts, was in attendance at all the sessions and took an active part in the proceedings. One of the speakers that had participated in several of these venues across the Nation even commented that seldom does he see a Governor at one of these conferences, let alone be an active participant. One thing that came out very strong was the need for agricultural literacy and dealing with the issues that arise from people being two or three generations removed from the farm, which effects all kinds of issues including the Governor’s main thrust – property tax reform. We need to do a better job of understanding the challenges facing us beyond moisture and commodity prices! We are facing a world that we have never experienced before and must be equipped with the information to tell our story! It is in that light that I will be presenting, with permission of the LBNRD, a session on the “Issues and Challenges Facing Agriculture – What Can a Producer Do?” We spend a lot of time on conservation – we may need to find a way to conserve our farms! I for one am looking forward to sharing with producers this presentation to help protect Nebraska agriculture!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer, which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or Nebraska Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, Nebraska Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email: dlienemann2@unl.edu or on the web at: http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster