

## NEMAHA NRD OFFERS COST SHARE FOR WATER MANAGEMENT TOOLS

In 2006 we initiated a pilot project in Nemaha County to provide tools to assist with irrigation scheduling. We installed ETGages® and Watermark Sensors to use to estimate evapotranspiration rates and water use so we could improve irrigation scheduling. Since the first set of instruments was installed, there have been other producers in Nemaha County that are utilizing this equipment as tools for their irrigation scheduling. With the Nemaha NRD providing cost-share, several other producers within the Nemaha NRD have taken advantage of this excellent program. With concern of drought and the availability of quality water for irrigation in the future, it is important to have the tools in place to be as efficient as possible in managing our water. The Nebraska Agricultural Water Management Network (NAWMN), a partnership between Nebraska Extension and Nebraska NRDs has lead to the adoption of these irrigation management tools.

In some of the NRDs where there is heavy reliance on irrigation, there is very high participation in this program. In all of the NRDs across the state, including the different NRDs of the Big and Little Blue Rivers, there are over 1050 participants in the Nebraska AgWater Management Network statewide and more joining the program each year.

Ninety-three percent of participants indicated the Nebraska Ag Water Management Network equipment or information influenced them on the amount of irrigation water applied.

Several other NRDs have been reporting water savings benefits of this program and providing costshare to producers. The Nemaha NRD is continuing participation in this program and is offering 50% cost-share, up to \$300 for equipment. Some of the equipment that qualifies for this cost share includes: soil moisture sensors, a handheld reader and ETgages. There will be a minor investment for producers with the potential savings in water and fuel from less irrigation and fewer trips around the fields. Participants indicated they reduced water application by 2.4” on corn and 2.2” per acre for soybeans. With continuing high energy prices and the ever present threat of drought in Nebraska, it is always a good idea to be prepared to efficiently manage irrigation water. For information about this cost-share program, contact the Nemaha NRD at (402) 335-3325 or if you are in another NRD, check to see if they are participating in this cost-share program to manage irrigation water. For information about the Nebraska Agricultural Water Management Network go to <http://water.unl.edu/web/cropswater/nawmdn> to learn about this program or contact the Nemaha County Extension office at (402) 274-4755.

Gary Lesoing  
Extension Educator  
Nemaha County  
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