

Sixth Annual Report for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan

Data and Progress Updates, 2023

Presented at the Annual Meeting

November 13, 2024



Jointly prepared by
Upper Republican Natural Resources District
Middle Republican Natural Resources District
Lower Republican Natural Resources District
Tri-Basin Natural Resources District
&
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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Introduction

The *Republican River Basin-Wide Plan* (basin-wide plan) was developed by Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR) and Upper Republican, Middle Republican, Lower Republican, and Tri-Basin Natural Resources Districts (NRDs), in consultation and collaboration with a Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The time frame to implement the basin-wide plan is approximately 25 years, spanning from the effective date of the basin-wide plan (March 1, 2019) to April 17, 2044, which is 30 years after the operative date of LB 1098 (2014), as specified in *Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-755*.

Action Item 3.2.2 of the basin-wide plan specifies that NeDNR and the NRDs will annually exchange reports containing data and information about water supplies and uses in the Republican River Basin, management activities, and progress toward the goals and objectives of the basin-wide plan. This report contains the data and information about plan implementation progress for the 2023 calendar year, to be exchanged by NeDNR and the NRDs at the following year’s annual meeting.

Water Supplies and Uses in the Basin

In accordance with the requirements of *Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 46-755 (5)(a) and 46-755 (5)(b)*, the basin-wide plan contains a monitoring plan, which includes a process to gather and evaluate data, information, and methodologies to increase understanding of the surface water and hydrologically connected groundwater system within the basin and to test the validity of the conclusions, information, and assumptions upon which the plan is based.

One component of the monitoring plan is a list of data on water supplies and uses in the Republican River Basin that will be reported annually by NeDNR and the NRDs (Table 3.1 of the basin-wide plan). As stated in the basin-wide plan's Monitoring section, it will take time for NeDNR and the NRDs to prepare each category of data for distribution; some of the listed data are readily available within existing data sets, while others will take significantly longer for methodology development. As a result, NeDNR and the NRDs will gradually increase the number of data items that will be reported on each year as they are able. In addition, as also noted in the plan, the list of data reported is subject to change as data needs and resources change over time.

This annual report contains data for the year 2023. The following data are included in this annual report:

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Groundwater Levels and Observation Well Locations

The locations of wells used to monitor groundwater levels for all NRDs in the District are shown in Figure 1. Groundwater level data are provided to NeDNR by each NRD as part of the analysis of Measurable Hydrologic Objective (MHO) C for the basin-wide plan. Groundwater level data are available from the NRD upon request.

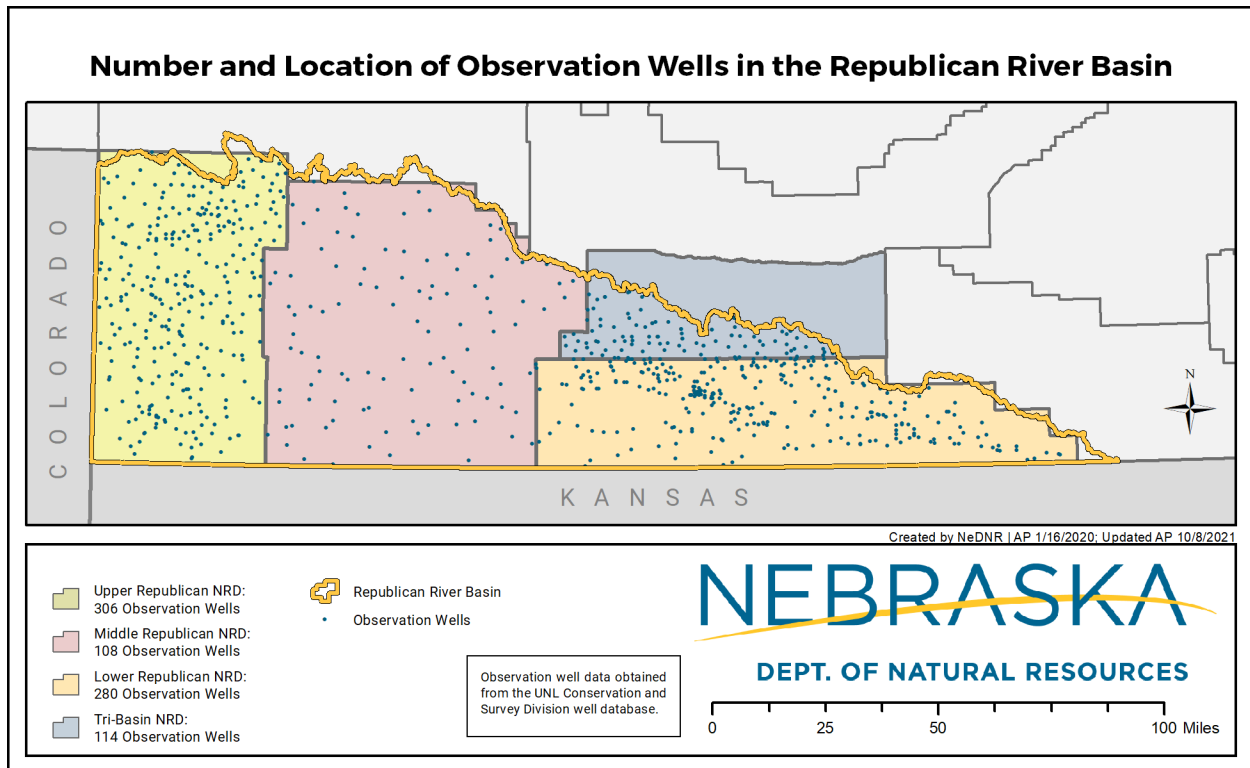


Figure 1. Location and number of groundwater observation wells within the Republican River Basin, by NRD, according to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) Conservation and Survey Division well database.

Upper Republican Natural Resources District

Current Allocations

Upper Republican NRD's allocations and related rules for the 2023–2027 allocation period are summarized in Table 1. In this context, an allocation is a regulatory measure that stipulates the amount of water available to be used for irrigation.

Table 1. Summary of current allocation for groundwater irrigation use in Upper Republican NRD, 2023–2027 allocation period.

Total Allocation	62.5 Inches/Acre/5 Years
Annual or Base Allocation	Allocation is over 5 Years, not annual
Maximum Annual Use	62.5 Inches/Acre
Carry over amount that can be used in the following allocation period	7.5 Inches/Acre (Max)
Hard Cap	None
Pooling allowed?	Yes
How are the allocations affected by surface water use?	Allocations are not affected by surface water use. Irrigators may use their full groundwater allocation, regardless of any surface water use.
Special allocations for designated groundwater management areas? Or subbasins?	None
Rapid Response Area Allocations?	Rapid Response Area allocations will not be needed unless augmentation projects are insufficient to meet Republican River Compact obligations. Rapid Response Area allocations would depend upon projected Compact shortfalls.
Penalty for exceeding allocation	For every inch of excess use, 2 inches of allocation lost for next allocation period.
Penalty for exceeding carry over	2 inches carry-over deducted for every inch of carry-over used above 7.5 inches

Annual Groundwater Use for Irrigation

Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Upper Republican NRD, for 2023, is summarized in Table 2. This summary includes:

- The total number of certified acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, certified acres are those on which the NRD allows irrigation with groundwater.
- The total number of effective acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, effective acres are acres where groundwater irrigation was possible (i.e., certified acres minus acres enrolled in a conservation program prohibiting irrigation).
- The total volume of groundwater pumped for irrigation within the district.
- The average depth of water applied for irrigation on effective acres within the district.

Table 2. Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Upper Republican NRD, 2023. The difference between certified and effective acres is described in the body of the report.

Year	Certified Acres	Effective Acres	Volume Pumped (acre-feet)	Average Depth (inches/effective acre)
2023	429,920.1	429,920.1	420,951	11.75

Conservation and Irrigation Decertification Programs

Irrigation water cannot be used on acres enrolled in a permanent or temporary irrigation decertification program. Table 3 summarizes the number of acres within Upper Republican NRD that were enrolled in decertification programs in 2023. During 2023, decertification programs in effect in this NRD included the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and a permanent irrigation decertification program jointly funded by Upper Republican NRD and the state of Nebraska's Water Resources Cash Fund (WRCF), which is administered by NeDNR. Contracts to decertify a total of 582.5 acres were signed in 2023. Approximately 454.5 of those acres were permanently decertified beginning in 2023; the remaining 128 acres are currently enrolled in CREP and will be permanently decertified when the CREP contract associated with them ends.

Table 3. Acres within Upper Republican NRD that will no longer be irrigated due to enrollment in a permanent or temporary decertification program. During 2023, decertification programs in effect in this NRD included CREP and the NRD's own decertification program, partially funded by the state's WRCF. *CREP data are as of September 30, 2023.

Year	Acres Enrolled in CREP*	Acres Enrolled in WRCF programs	Acres Enrolled in Other Decertification Programs
2023	8,205.1	3,378	0

Groundwater Levels and Observation Well Locations

The locations of wells used to monitor groundwater levels for all NRDs in the District are shown in Figure 1 (page 5). Groundwater level data are provided to NeDNR by this NRD as part of the analysis of MHO C for the basin-wide plan. A summary of the analysis is in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>. Groundwater level data are available from the NRD upon request.

Curtailment of Groundwater Pumping for Compact Compliance

Under the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) jointly developed by Upper Republican NRD and NeDNR, curtailment of groundwater pumping in an area called the "Rapid Response Area" may be required by the NRD if necessary for compliance with Nebraska's obligations under the Compact. During 2023, Upper Republican NRD did not curtail groundwater pumping in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance at any time.

Middle Republican Natural Resources District

Current Allocations

Middle Republican NRD's allocations and related rules for the 2023–2027 allocation period are summarized in Table 4. In this context, an allocation is a regulatory measure that stipulates the amount of water available to be used for irrigation.

Table 4. Summary of current allocations for groundwater irrigation use in Middle Republican NRD, 2023–2027 allocation period.

Total Allocation	60 Inches/Acre/5 Years
Annual or Base Allocation	12 Inches/Acre/Year
Maximum Annual Use	60 Inches/Acre (15 Inches/Acre in a Compact Call Year)
Carry over amount that can be used in the following allocation period	12 Inches/Acre (Max)
Hard Cap	15 Inches/Acre/Year
Pooling allowed?	Yes
How are the allocations affected by surface water use?	Allocations are not affected by surface water use. Irrigators may use their full groundwater allocation, regardless of any surface water use.
Special allocations for designated groundwater management areas? Or subbasins?	None
Rapid Response Area Allocations?	None
Allocation adjustment based on overuse	See explanation below*

***Middle Republican NRD Penalty for exceeding allocation:**

1.1 Allocation adjustments based on overuse, irrigation and acres

- 1.1.1 If an Owner or Operator has exceeded the Owner or Operator's base Groundwater Allocation, the Groundwater Allocation for the next Groundwater Allocation period shall be reduced by the number of acre inches, by which said Groundwater Allocation was exceeded in the prior period. Plus, an adjustment**

of one (1) inch for every inch over the first three (3) inches and two (2) inches or every inch over three (3) inches of overuse will be applied. These allocation adjustments will be on top of what the producer has already used.

- 1.1.2 Overuse of the adjusted base allocation during a Compact Call Year shall result in a reduction of two (2) inches for every inch over the first three (3) inches and three (3) inches for every inch over three (3) inches of overuse will be applied. This adjustment will result in a correction to the remaining Groundwater Allocation following the Compact Call Year. This adjustment shall be in addition to the adjustments made by Rule 1.9.1 if the Compact Call Year is the last year of a Groundwater Allocation Period. These allocation adjustments will be on top of what the producer has already used.**

Annual Groundwater Use for Irrigation

Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Middle Republican NRD, for 2023, is summarized in Table 5. This summary includes:

- The total number of certified acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, certified acres are those on which the NRD allows irrigation with groundwater.
- The total number of effective acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, effective acres are acres where groundwater irrigation was possible (i.e., certified acres minus acres enrolled in a conservation program prohibiting irrigation).
- The total volume of groundwater pumped for irrigation within the district.
- The average depth of water applied for irrigation on effective acres within the district.

Table 5. Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Middle Republican NRD, 2023. The difference between certified and effective acres is described in the body of the report.

Year	Certified Acres	Effective Acres	Volume Pumped (acre-feet)	Average Depth (inches/effective acre)
2023	298,156.97	284,460.67	284,555.43	10.22

Conservation and Irrigation Decertification Programs

Irrigation water cannot be used on acres enrolled in a permanent or temporary irrigation decertification program. Table 6 summarizes the number of acres within Middle Republican NRD that were enrolled in decertification programs in 2023. During 2023, decertification programs in effect in this NRD included CREP and a permanent irrigation decertification program jointly funded by Middle Republican NRD and the State's WRCF. In 2023, Middle Republican NRD entered into a contract with one landowner to permanently decertify 40 acres from groundwater irrigation and 20 acres from surface water irrigation.

Table 6. Acres within Middle Republican NRD that will no longer be irrigated due to enrollment in a permanent or temporary decertification program. During 2023, decertification programs in effect in this NRD included CREP and the NRD’s own permanent decertification program, which is partially funded by the state’s WRCF. *CREP data are as of September 30, 2023.

Year	Acres Enrolled in CREP *	Acres Enrolled in WRCF programs	Acres Enrolled in Other Decertification Programs
2023	14,024.3	60	0

Groundwater Levels and Observation Well Locations

The locations of wells used to monitor groundwater levels for all NRDs in the District are shown in Figure 1 (page 5). Groundwater level data are provided to NeDNR by this NRD as part of the analysis of MHO C for the basin-wide plan. A summary of the analysis is in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>. Groundwater level data are available from the NRD upon request.

Curtailment of Groundwater Pumping for Compact Compliance

Under the IMP jointly developed by Middle Republican NRD and NeDNR, curtailment of groundwater pumping in an area called the “Rapid Response Area” may be required by the NRD if necessary for compliance with Nebraska’s obligations under the Compact. During 2023, Middle Republican NRD did not curtail groundwater pumping in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance at any time.

Lower Republican Natural Resources District

Current Allocations

Lower Republican NRD's allocations and related rules for the 2023–2027 allocation period are summarized in Table 7. In this context, an allocation is a regulatory measure that stipulates the amount of water available to be used for irrigation.

Table 7. Summary of current allocations for groundwater irrigation use in Lower Republican NRD, 2023–2027 allocation period.

Total Allocation	45 Inches/Acre/5 Years
Annual or Base Allocation	9 Inches/Acre/Year
Maximum Annual Use	45 Inches/Acre (13 Inches/Acre in a Compact Call Year)
Carry over amount that can be used in the following allocation period	9 Inches/Acre (Max)
Hard Cap	13 Inches/Acre/Year (in a Compact Call Year)
Pooling allowed?	Yes
How are the allocations affected by surface water use?	Allocations are not affected by surface water use. Irrigators may use their full groundwater allocation, regardless of any surface water use.
Special allocations for designated groundwater management areas? Or subbasins?	None
Rapid Response Area Allocations?	See explanation below**
Penalty for exceeding allocation	See penalty explanation below***
Penalty for exceeding carry over	See penalty explanation below***

****Lower Republican NRD Rapid Response Area Allocations:**

During Non-Compact Call years, the Rapid Response Area has the same Allocation as the rest of the District. During a Compact Call Year, the Allocation shall be set at the maximum allowable that would not cause the District's depletions to streamflow to exceed the District's allowable Ground Water depletions after taking into consideration other actions and controls that the District would implement. As set forth in the IMP, NeDNR will perform all calculations relating to the District's forecasted allowable Ground Water depletions, forecasted depletions, and potential yield from implementing actions and controls.

*****Lower Republican NRD Rule 3-2 Penalties:**

3-2.1. Unless otherwise provided, imposition of penalties shall be at the discretion of the Board and may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) A reduction (in whole or in part) of a Person's Allocation of Ground Water;
- (b) A reduction (in whole or in part) of a Person's Certified Irrigated Acres; and
- (c) Decommissioning of Water Wells.

3-2.2. Where penalties are enumerated in the Rules and Regulations, the Board may impose additional penalties, up to and including a permanent forfeiture of Certified Irrigated Acres, and/or a permanent forfeiture of all future Allocations, under the following circumstances: (1) previous violations of any Rule or Regulation, (2) multiple violations of these Rules and Regulations, (3) engaging in willful and wanton misconduct, or (4) certification by the record owner to the District of the non-irrigation status of certain Certified Irrigated Acres in order to opt-out of an Occupation Tax levied by the District, which status is later found to be false in whole or in part.

3-2.3. Any Person who violates a cease and desist order issued by the District pursuant to *Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-707(h)* may be subject to a civil penalty assessed pursuant to *Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-745*.

Annual Groundwater Use for Irrigation

Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Lower Republican NRD, for 2023, is summarized in Table 8. This summary includes:

- The total number of certified acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, certified acres are those on which the NRD allows irrigation with groundwater.
- The total number of effective acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, effective acres are acres where groundwater irrigation was possible (i.e., certified acres minus acres enrolled in a conservation program prohibiting irrigation).
- The total volume of groundwater pumped for irrigation within the district.
- The average depth of water applied for irrigation on effective acres within the district.

Table 8. Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Lower Republican NRD, 2023. The difference between certified and effective acres is described in the body of the report.

Year	Certified Acres	Effective Acres	Volume Pumped (acre-feet)	Average Depth (inches/effective acre)
2023	318,927.16	310,493.17	199,015.48	7.69

Conservation and Irrigation Decertification Programs

Irrigation water cannot be used on acres enrolled in permanent or temporary irrigation decertification program. Table 9 summarizes the number of acres within Lower Republican NRD that were enrolled in decertification programs in 2023. During 2023, decertification programs in effect in this NRD included CREP.

Table 9. Acres within Lower Republican NRD that will no longer be irrigated due to enrollment in a permanent or temporary decertification program. During 2023, decertification programs in effect in this NRD included CREP and other decertification programs. *CREP data are as of September 30, 2023.

Year	Acres Enrolled in CREP *	Acres Enrolled in WRCF programs	Acres Enrolled in Other Decertification Programs
2023	6,556.4	0	2,651.43

Groundwater Levels and Observation Well Locations

The locations of wells used to monitor groundwater levels for all NRDs in the District are shown in Figure 1 (page 5). Groundwater level data are provided to NeDNR by this NRD as part of the analysis of MHO C for the basin-wide plan. A summary of the analysis is in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>. Groundwater level data are available from the NRD upon request.

Curtailment of Groundwater Pumping for Compact Compliance

Under the IMP jointly developed by Lower Republican NRD and NeDNR, curtailment of groundwater pumping in an area called the "Rapid Response Area" may be required by the NRD if necessary for compliance with Nebraska's obligations under the Compact. During 2023, Lower Republican NRD did not curtail groundwater pumping in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance at any time.

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District

Current Allocations

Tri-Basin NRD's allocations and related rules for the 2023-2025 allocation period are summarized in Table 10. In this context, an allocation is a regulatory measure that stipulates the amount of water available to be used for irrigation.

Table 10. Summary of current allocations for groundwater irrigation use in the Tri-Basin NRD, 2023-2025 allocation period.

Total Allocation	27 Inches/Acre/3 Years
Annual or Base Allocation	9 Inches/Acre/Year
Maximum Annual Use	27 Inches/Acre
Carry over amount that can be used in the following allocation period	9 Inches/Acre (Max)
Hard Cap	None
Pooling allowed?	Yes
How are the allocations affected by surface water use?	Allocations are not affected by surface water use. Irrigators may use their full groundwater allocation, regardless of any surface water use.
Special allocations for designated groundwater management areas? Or subbasins?	Allocation only required in Phase 3 groundwater quantity management areas. Current Phase 3 area is Township 5 North, Range 22 West (Union Twp.) in Gosper County.
Rapid Response Area Allocations?	None
Penalty for exceeding allocation	1.5 times the overuse amount
Penalty for exceeding carry over	1.5 times the overuse amount

Annual Groundwater Use for Irrigation

Annual groundwater use for irrigation in Tri-Basin NRD, for 2023, is summarized in Table 11. This summary includes:

- The total number of certified acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, certified acres are those on which the NRD allows irrigation with groundwater.
- The total number of effective acres within the district. For the purposes of this report, effective acres are acres where groundwater irrigation was possible (i.e., certified acres) and on which irrigators reported applying water. Certified irrigated acres enrolled in a conservation program prohibiting irrigation were deducted from the total of effective acres.
- The total volume of groundwater pumped for irrigation (including pumping for wetland habitat by US Fish and Wildlife Service and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission) within the district.
- The average depth of water applied for irrigation on effective acres within the district.

Table 11. Annual groundwater use for irrigation in the Republican River Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD, 2023. The difference between certified and effective acres is described in the body of the report.

Year	Certified Acres	Effective Acres	Volume Pumped (acre-feet)	Average Depth (inches/effective acre)
2023	190,104.91	177,966.98	146,246.117	9.86

Conservation and Irrigation Decertification Programs

Irrigation water cannot be used on acres enrolled in a permanent or temporary irrigation decertification program. Table 12 summarizes the number of acres within the Republican River Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD that were enrolled in decertification programs in 2023. During 2023, the decertification program in effect in the Republican River Basin portion of this NRD included CREP.

Table 12. Acres within the Republican River Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD that will no longer be irrigated due to enrollment in a permanent or temporary decertification program. During 2023, the decertification program in effect in this NRD included CREP. *CREP data are as of September 30, 2023.

Year	Acres Enrolled in CREP *	Acres Enrolled in WRCF programs	Acres Enrolled in Other Decertification Programs
2023	1,626.1	0	33.2

Tri-Basin NRD Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP) is intended to address two natural resources management issues: ensuring sustainability of groundwater supplies and protecting streamflows from diminishment due to groundwater pumping. The goal of this voluntary program is to reduce groundwater pumping and increase irrigation water use efficiency in Tri-Basin NRD. Acres enrolled in the WCIP program in 2023 are listed in Table 13.

Tri-Basin will allow landowners to enroll up to 8000 NRD-certified irrigated acres in the program. Any parcel enrolled is subject to a voluntary five-year allocation of groundwater pumping for irrigation. The allocation is equivalent to the average corn irrigation requirement, as determined by the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Once the enrollment limit is reached, water savings to the district are expected to reach at least 650 acre-feet per year. Incentives in this program will likely be most attractive to landowners in phase two and phase three groundwater quantity management areas, so the water-use reductions should be greatest where the need is greatest (there are approximately 30,000 certified irrigated acres in Tri-Basin NRD’s phase two and phase three townships).

In exchange for their participation, if landowners use less than their full allocation, they will be paid for the equivalent of one acre-inch of water credit per acre per year, with the opportunity to sell additional unused credits to the NRD at a set price. In addition to NRD purchases, landowners will have the opportunity to sell water credits on the open market at any agreed-upon price (private transactions require NRD board approval). Landowners will also be granted flexibility to irrigate any acres within enrolled parcels and to share (pool) allocations between parcels. Pooling agreements will be required to enable sharing allocations between parcels under different ownership.

Table 13. Acres in the Republican River Basin enrolled in the Tri-Basin NRD’s WCIP in 2023. The “New Acres Enrolled” column indicates the number of acres that were added to the program in the year indicated. The “Total Acres Enrolled” column indicates the total number of acres enrolled as of the year indicated.

Year	New Acres Enrolled	Total Acres Enrolled
2023	402.36	1,970.05

Groundwater Levels and Observation Well Locations

The locations of wells used to monitor groundwater levels for all NRDs in the District are shown in Figure 1 (page 5). Groundwater level data are provided to NeDNR by this NRD as part of the analysis of MHO C for the basin-wide plan. A summary of the analysis is in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>. Groundwater level data are available from the NRD upon request.

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

The Republican River Basin is located at the intersection of Nebraska, Colorado, and Kansas (Table 14 and Figure 2). The Compact, administered by the Republican River Compact Administration (RRCA) is an interstate agreement that allocates consumption of the waters of the Republican River Basin among the three states. Unless otherwise indicated, the data reported in the NeDNR section of this report are from the RRCA's approved accounting data, data Nebraska provided to Colorado and Kansas as part of the RRCA's annual data exchange, or calculations using the RRCA groundwater model.

Table 14. Area of Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado within the Republican River Basin (United States Geological Survey (USGS) Hydrologic Unit Code: 102500).

State	Republican River Basin Area (mi ²)
Colorado	7,816
Kansas	7,551
Nebraska	9,546

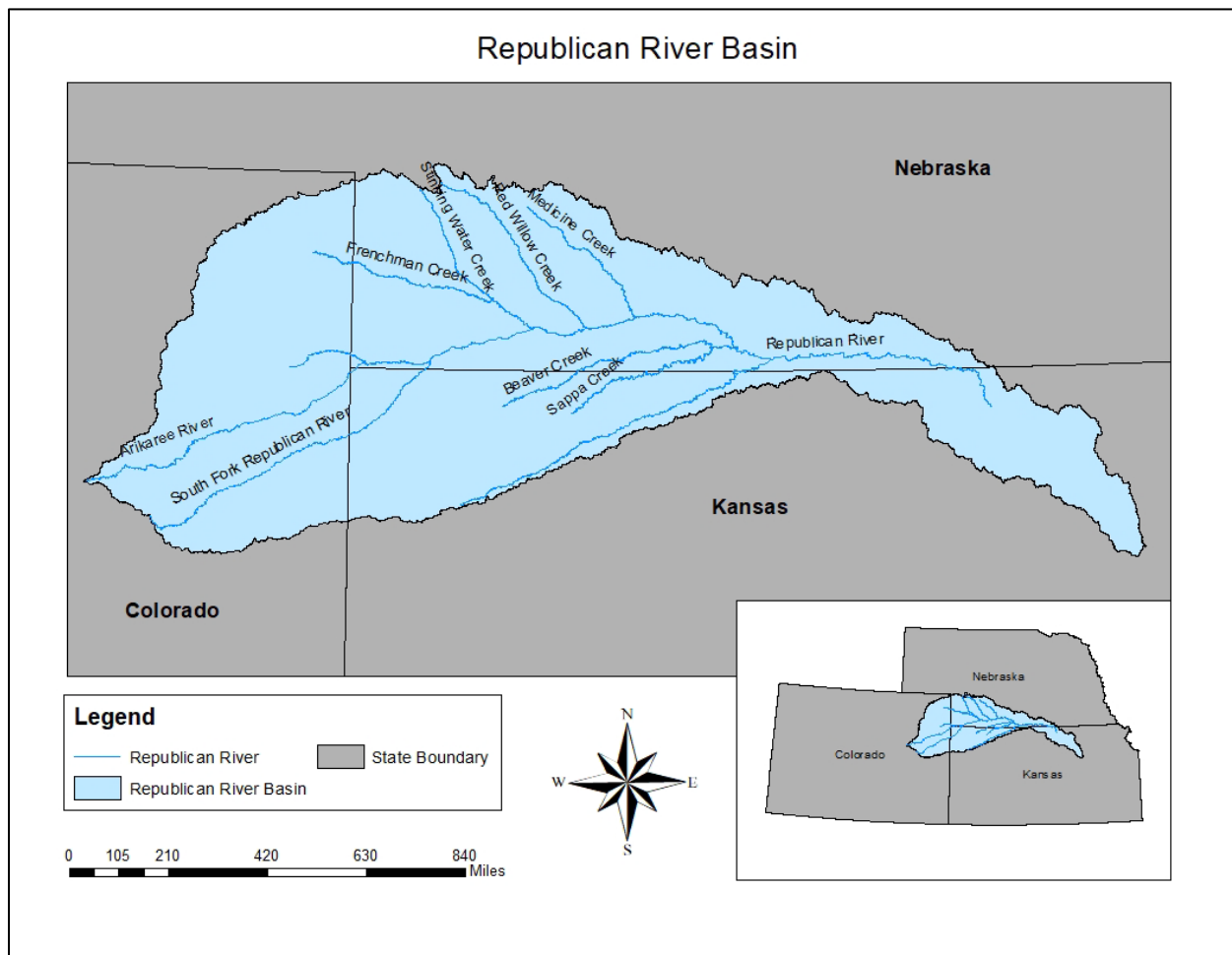


Figure 2. Extent of Republican River Basin within Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado (USGS Hydrologic Unit Code: 102500).

Precipitation

Annual precipitation data used in RRCA analyses is measured at National Weather Service cooperative stations across the Republican River Basin in Nebraska, quality-controlled, and filled in with PRISM (Parameter-Elevation Regressions on Independent Slopes Model) data by the RRCA, as necessary. In 2023, annual precipitation data used in RRCA analyses ranged from 18.15 inches to 29.48 inches. Figure 3 displays 2023 precipitation data at each of the cooperative stations used by the RRCA; additional stations outside of Nebraska and the basin are used by the RRCA to interpolate precipitation across the whole RRCA model area which extends beyond the basin boundary.

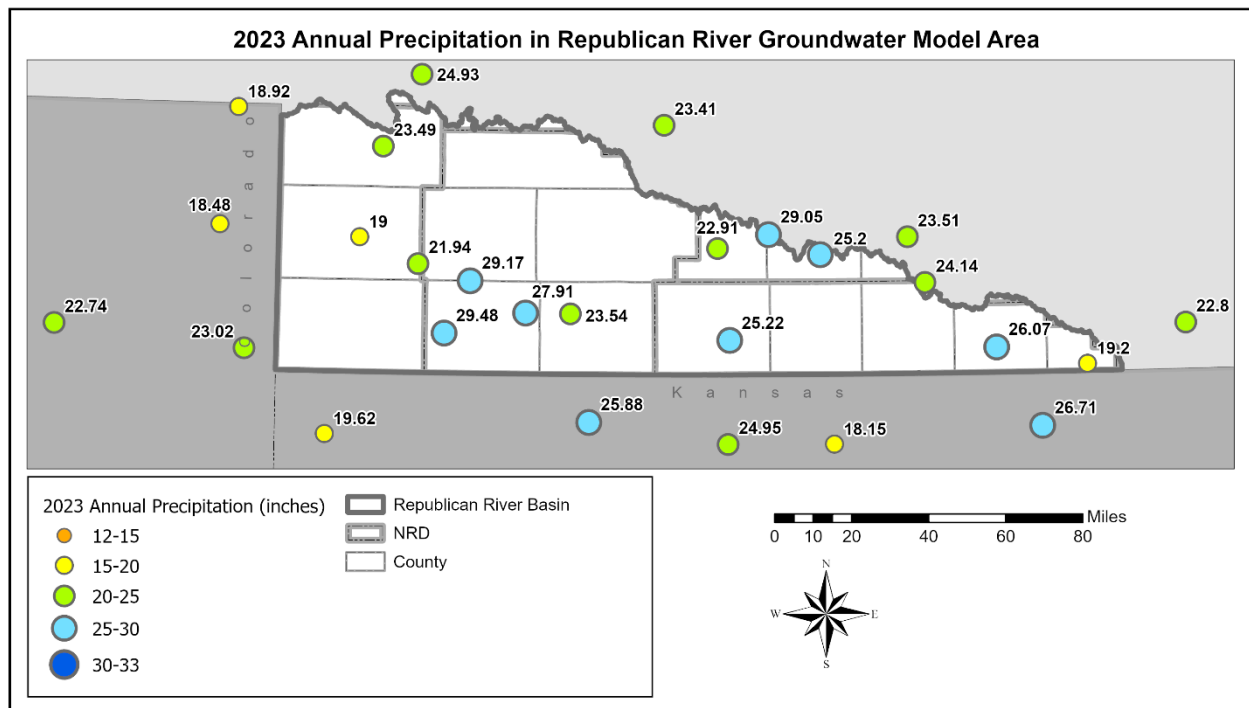


Figure 3. 2023 annual precipitation in inches from National Weather Service cooperative stations, as used in RRCA groundwater model processing.

Streamflow

Under the Republican River Compact, allocations within each Republican River subbasin include the streamflow at the downstream end of the subbasin. Subbasin streamflow is measured for the Compact by 13 USGS streamgages and one NeDNR streamgage (Figure 4 and Table 15). The most downstream streamgages in Nebraska are on the Main Stem of the Republican River at Guide Rock and Hardy. Table 15 presents the total amount of water in acre-feet measured past each of the streamgages in 2023. For more details and to obtain continuous stream and reservoir, partial year, canal, canal return flow, and miscellaneous spot measurement data from over 250 gaging sites visit the NeDNR website:

<https://nednr.nebraska.gov/RealTime/>.

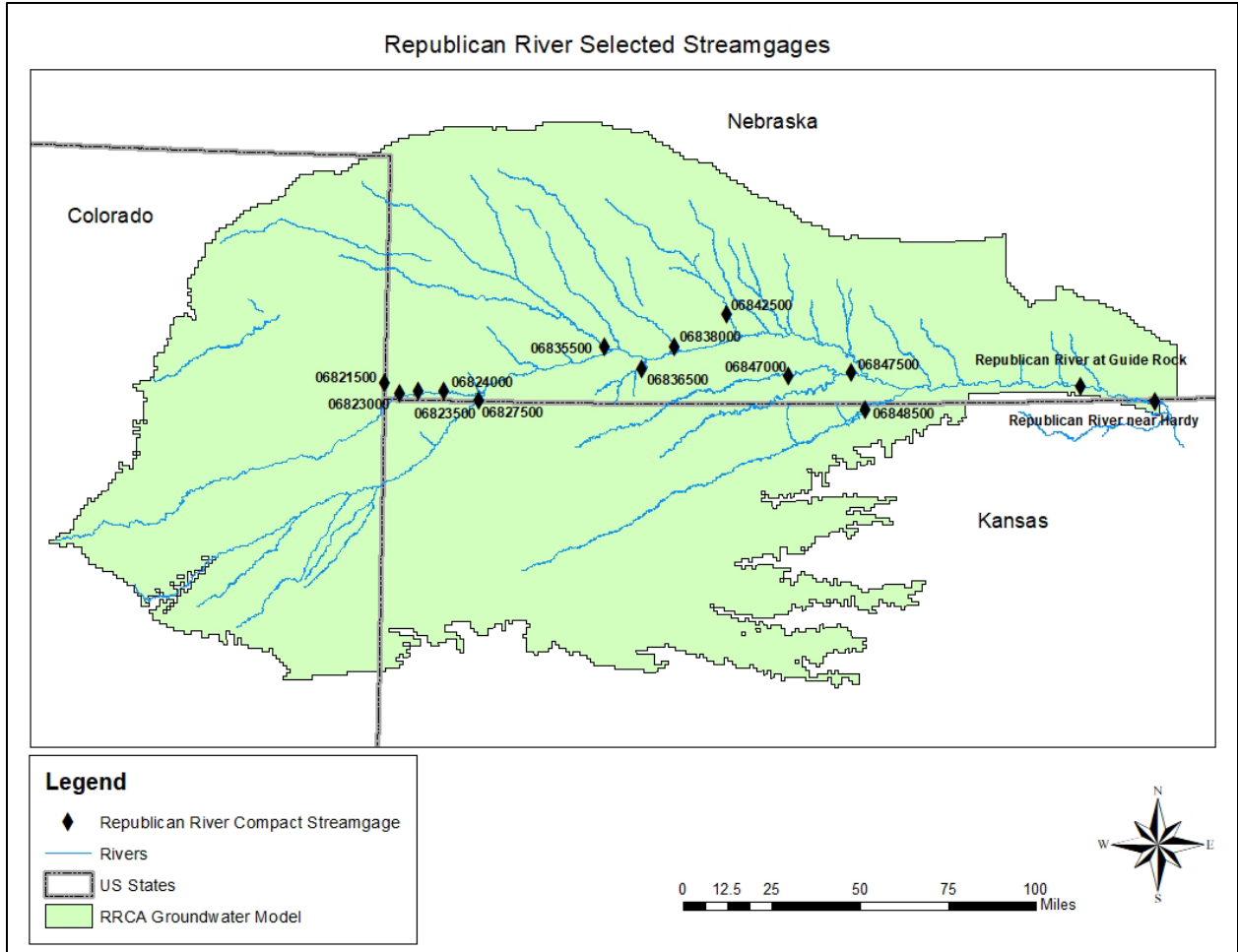


Figure 4. Location of subbasin streamgages within the Republican River Basin.

Table 15. Annual streamflow volumes in acre-feet from Republican River subbasin streamgages used in the Republican River Compact accounting.

Annual Streamflow (acre-feet)	
Streamgage	2023
USGS 06823000 - North Fork of the Republican River at Colorado-Nebraska State Line	28,618
USGS 06821500 - Arikaree River at Haigler	1,678
USGS 06823500 - Buffalo Creek near Haigler	1,601
USGS 06824000 - Rock Creek at Parks	3,963
USGS 06827500 - South Fork Republican River near Benkelman	48
USGS 06835500 - Frenchman Creek at Culbertson	30,628
USGS 06836500 - Driftwood Creek near McCook	7,130
USGS 06838000 - Red Willow Creek near Red Willow	4,653
NeDNR 06842500 - Medicine Creek below Harry Strunk Lake	17,440
USGS 06847000 - Beaver Creek near Beaver City	648
USGS 06847500 - Sappa Creek near Stamford	4,923
USGS 06848500 - Prairie Dog Creek near Woodruff, Kansas	4,178
USGS 06853020 - Republican River at Guide Rock	14,677
USGS 06853500 - Republican River near Hardy	34,861

Irrigated Acres

For the Republican River Compact Administration Groundwater Model, Nebraska currently reports irrigated acres as one of the following:

1. Groundwater-only irrigated acres.
2. Surface water-only irrigated acres or surface water and groundwater (commingled) irrigated acres.

Acres irrigated with groundwater are reported with metered pumping annually by the NRDs to NeDNR or are estimated for the portions of the RRCA model area that are in NRDs without metered pumping. Acres irrigated with surface water and commingled water are flagged annually based on use from a master database developed from water right information. Annual irrigated acres within the RRCA model from 2023 have been divided into the two reporting methods and groundwater acres have been delineated by the NRD that the model cells primarily overlay (Figure 5). Nebraska annual total surface water and commingled, and groundwater irrigated acres are also presented in Table 16. The groundwater-irrigated acres shown in Figure 5 and Table 16 for Tri-Basin NRD include acres that are in the Platte, Little Blue, and Republican River Basins because all of Tri-Basin NRD is included in the RRCA groundwater model area.

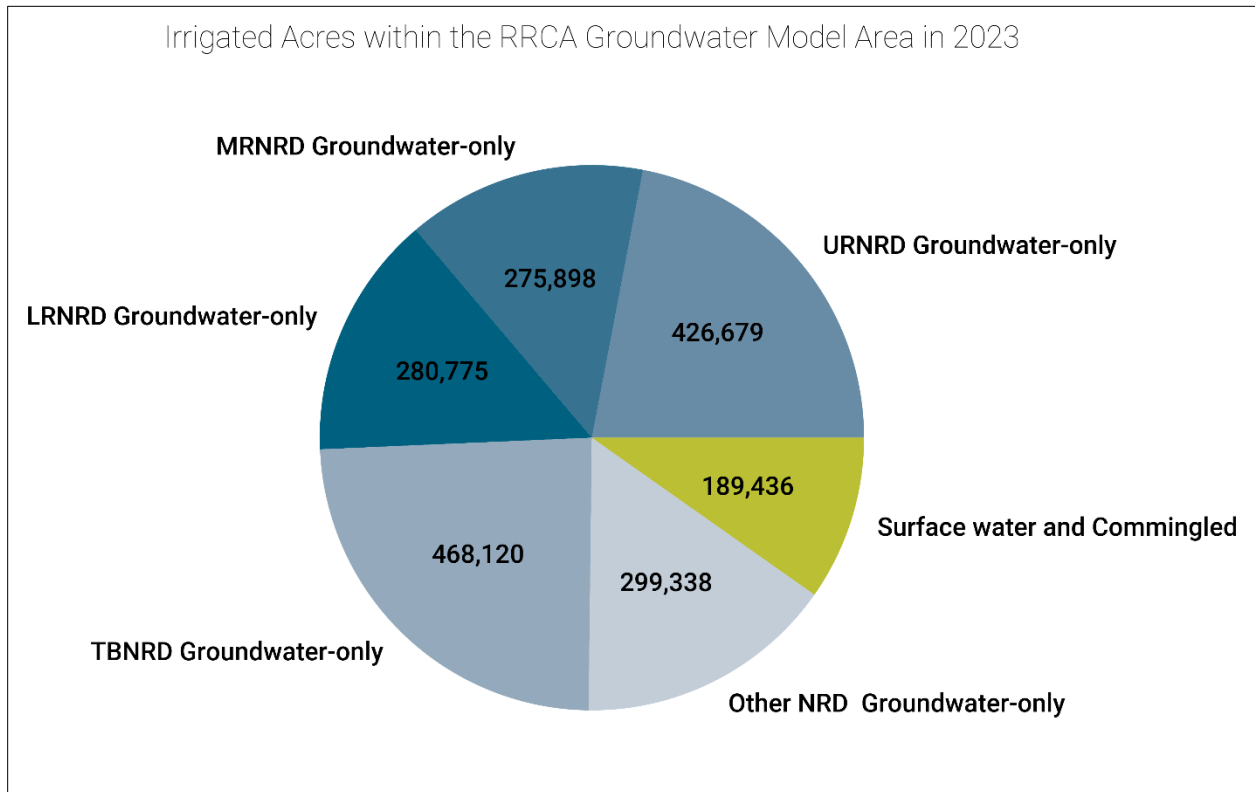


Figure 5. Irrigated Acres within the RRCA Groundwater Model Area in 2023.

Table 16. Annual division of acres irrigated by surface water and commingled, or acres irrigated by only groundwater in the Nebraska portion of the RRCA groundwater model.

Area and Irrigation Type	2023
Nebraska Model Area – Surface Water and Commingled	189,436
Upper Republican NRD – Groundwater-only	426,679
Middle Republican NRD – Groundwater-only	275,898
Lower Republican NRD – Groundwater-only	280,775
Tri-Basin NRD – Groundwater-only	468,120
Other – Groundwater-only	299,338

Allocation and Computed Beneficial Consumptive Use (CBCU)

Under the Republican River Compact, the total water supply and how much of the total supply each state is entitled to beneficially use is referred to as “allocation.” The allocations are calculated from the water supply of the basin if it had been undepleted by the activities of man. Each state is allotted a fixed percentage of the undepleted water supply in each of the Republican River subbasins to obtain the states’ allocations. The calculated uses of the water supplies are referred to as “Computed Beneficial Consumptive Use” (CBCU). The CBCU in the Republican River Basin includes direct surface water uses, such as reservoir evaporation and consumption of diverted water, and withdrawal or interception of streamflow by groundwater pumping (groundwater depletions to streamflow). Groundwater pumping can have a lagged effect on streamflow. The RRCA groundwater model considers the effects of pumping since early well development in the 1940s, therefore, the groundwater consumptive use of streamflow in each year is impacted by pumping in that year and all previous years. Table 17 presents total CBCU in Colorado, total CBCU in Kansas, and the breakdown of total CBCU as surface water or groundwater CBCU from Nebraska.

Nebraska groundwater CBCU are presented for the effects of pumping from each NRD’s portion of the basin separately (Upper Republican, Middle Republican, Lower Republican, and Tri-Basin NRDs) and all other NRDs within the model area collectively (Other NRD) in Table 17. Each NRD’s groundwater CBCU is equivalent to the net depletions to streamflow due to groundwater pumping within that NRD.

Table 17. Annual total CBCU by Kansas and Colorado and annual Nebraska total surface water CBCU and division of groundwater CBCU (i.e., net depletions to streamflow) by each NRD. The sum of Nebraska CBCU presented in this table may vary slightly from the statewide CBCU in Nebraska's Compact compliance tables due to rounding.

CBCU (acre-feet)	
	2023
Colorado	38,420
Kansas	62,370
Nebraska Surface Water	43,078
Lower Republican NRD Groundwater	51,369
Middle Republican NRD Groundwater	57,439
Upper Republican NRD Groundwater	79,891
Tri-Basin NRD Groundwater	13,013
Other NRD Groundwater	2,781

Reservoir Storage and Evaporation

Federal Reservoir Storage

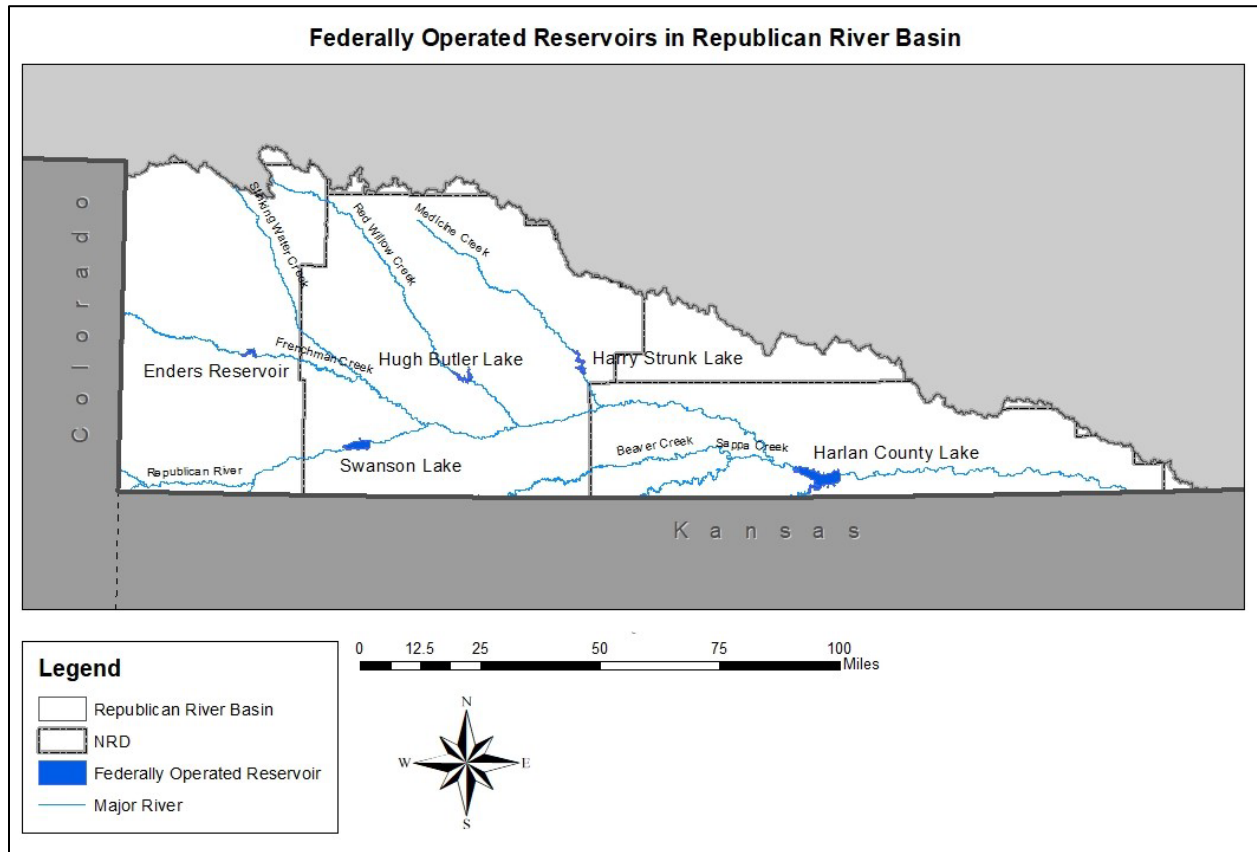


Figure 6. Location of federal reservoirs located in Nebraska portion of the Republican River Basin.

There are five federally operated reservoirs within the Republican River Basin in Nebraska: Enders Reservoir on Frenchman Creek, Hugh Butler Reservoir on Red Willow Creek, Harry Strunk Reservoir on Medicine Creek, and Swanson Lake and Harlan County Lake on the Republican River (Figure 6). Annual end of year storage volumes for 2023 for each Republican River Basin reservoir in Nebraska are shown in Figure 7. Storage data were obtained from the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), which are available on the USBR's automated data system HydroMet at <https://www.usbr.gov/gp/hydromet/>.

Federal Reservoir Total Storage at End of Year

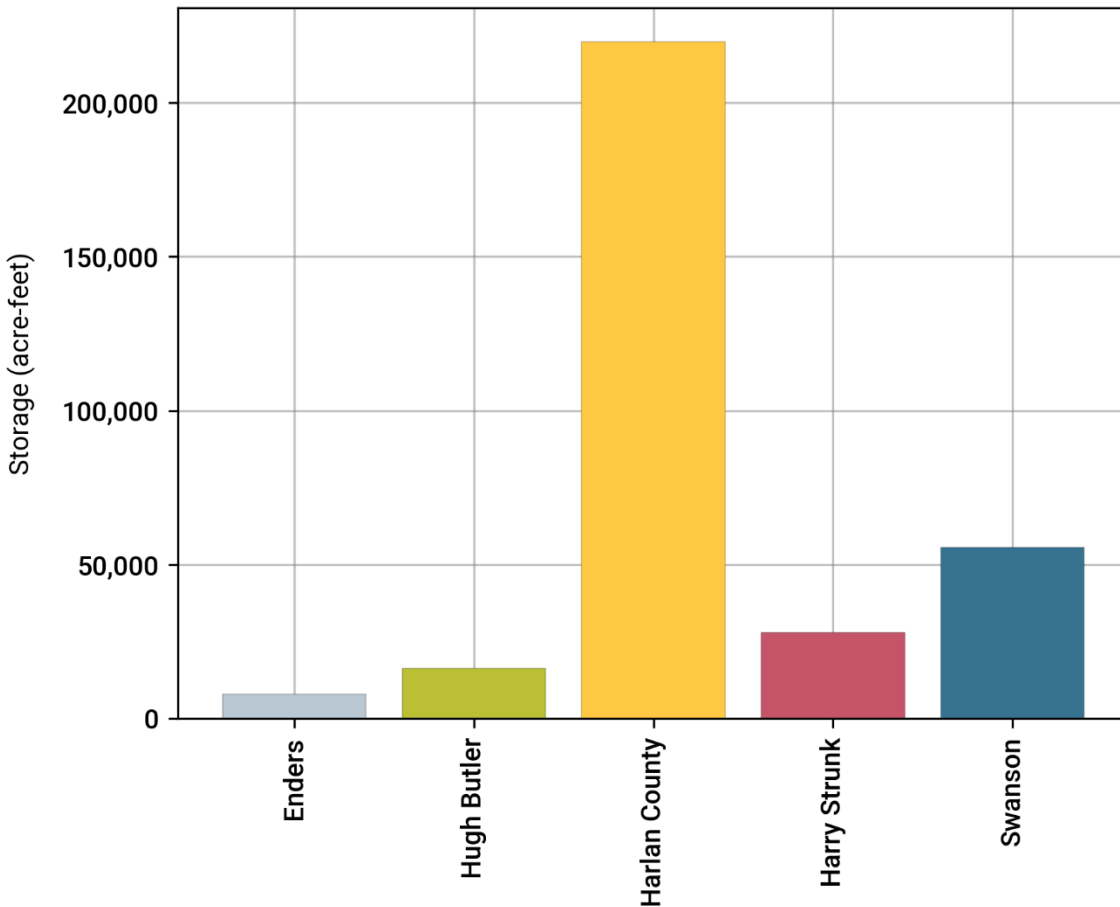


Figure 7. 2023 end-of-year reservoir contents for the federally operated reservoirs within the Republican River Basin in Nebraska: Enders Reservoir on Frenchman Creek, Hugh Butler Reservoir on Red Willow Creek, Harry Strunk Reservoir on Medicine Creek, and Swanson Lake and Harlan County Lake on the Republican River.

Reservoir Evaporation

Net evaporation from Republican River Basin reservoirs in Nebraska in 2023 was 17,042 acre-feet from the five federal reservoirs and 1,322 acre-feet from non-federal reservoirs. Federal and non-federal reservoir evaporation are beneficial consumptive uses of surface water. For the RRCA, federal and non-federal reservoir CBCU are calculated as net evaporation, which is evaporation from the reservoir minus precipitation directly intercepted by the reservoir.

Surface Water Municipal and Industrial CBCU

During the reporting year, there were no permitted municipal nor industrial uses of surface water in the Republican River Basin. For more information on surface water permitting, visit NeDNR's Surface Water Permitting and Data website at: <https://dnr.nebraska.gov/surface-water>.

Surface Water Administration for Compact Compliance

Under the IMPs jointly developed by NeDNR and Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs, NeDNR may administer and regulate surface water, if necessary, to ensure compliance with Nebraska's obligations under the Compact during Compact Call Years. Compact Call Years are years in which NeDNR's analysis following the forecast procedures contained in the IMPs for Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs indicate the potential for noncompliance with the Compact if sufficient management actions are not taken. 2023 was a Compact Call Year.

In October 2023, Kansas requested administration of 1,860 acre-feet of Remaining Compact Compliance Volume (RCCV) from 2016. The water was administered into the Kansas irrigation supply in Harlan County Lake in late 2023 during the non-irrigation season. The RCCV balance was zero at the end of 2023. MHO E was achieved in 2023 because surface water was not administered for Compact Compliance (no irrigators were shut down during irrigation season), and the RCCV was water generated through NRD management actions.

Surface water is also administered under the Water-Short Year provisions of the Final Settlement Stipulation (FSS) for the Compact. This type of water administration is triggered automatically under the terms of the FSS: whenever the projected or actual irrigation supply available in Harlan County Lake is less than 130,000 acre-feet and water is needed for direct diversion at Guide Rock, Nebraska must close appropriations downstream of Harlan County Lake that are junior to February 26, 1948. Because this type of water administration is triggered automatically, it is not considered a management action for the purposes of evaluating the basin-wide plan's MHO E.

Qualitative Evaluation of Net Effect of Management Actions for Compact Compliance

Action Item 1.2.1 of the basin-wide plan is to qualitatively evaluate the net effect on water supplies of any management actions that are taken for Compact compliance. As described in the previous subsection, "Surface Water Administration for Compact Compliance," and in the subsection titled "Curtailement of Groundwater Pumping for Compact Compliance" within each NRD's section for reporting water supplies and uses (pages 8, 11, 14), neither surface water administration nor curtailement of groundwater pumping occurred in 2023. In addition, as stated in the progress summary for Action Item 1.1.2 (page 39) no management actions were necessary as offsets in 2023.

Some actions were taken in 2023 that will help with Compact compliance in future years. NeDNR and all four NRDs worked to enroll or reenroll landowners in temporary or permanent irrigation decertification programs (pages 7, 10, 14, and 16). Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs specify district-wide allocations on groundwater usage (pages 6, 9, and 12). Tri-Basin NRD specifies allocations on groundwater usage within Phase 3 groundwater quantity management areas (page 15), and other landowners within Tri-Basin NRD are enrolled in their Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP) to incentivize water conservation (page 16). Both decertification programs and allocation programs are expected to have a positive effect on water supplies by reducing consumptive use of water.

See the text explaining administration of RCCV in Surface Water Administration for Compact Compliance (above).

Augmentation Pumping

This section contains a summary of pumping data for the augmentation projects in the basin.

NeDNR annually evaluates the net impacts of augmentation pumping for the Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement project (N-CORPE) and Rock Creek Augmentation projects, to fulfill a requirement of the IMPs jointly developed by NeDNR and Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs. The IMPs state that "...NeDNR will annually evaluate whether offsets are necessary to mitigate new net depletions resulting from augmentation pumping or other management actions." The most recent analysis is available in the report *Net Impacts Analysis for the Republican River Basin* (November 13, 2024), which is available on NeDNR's website (<https://dnr.nebraska.gov>).

N-CORPE Augmentation Project

The N-CORPE Augmentation Project is operated through an interlocal cooperative agreement formed in 2012 by Upper Republican NRD, Middle Republican NRD, Lower Republican NRD, and Twin Platte NRD. A summary of N-CORPE pumping for 2023 is provided in Table 18.

Table 18. Summary of N-CORPE Augmentation Project pumping. The "Days Pumped for Compact Compliance" column indicates the number of days the project was pumped to augment streamflow for Republican River Compact compliance purposes. The "Total Pumped Volume" column provides the volume of water pumped in that year for all other purposes, including augmentation for the Platte Basin and maintenance pumping.

Year	Days Pumped for Compact Compliance	Volume Pumped for Compact Compliance (acre-feet)	Total Pumped Volume (acre-feet)
2023	0	n/a	3203.54

Rock Creek Augmentation Project

The Rock Creek augmentation project is operated by Upper Republican NRD. A summary of Rock Creek augmentation project pumping for 2023 is provided in Table 19.

Table 19. Summary of Rock Creek augmentation project pumping. The "Days Pumped for Compact Compliance" column indicates the number of days the project was pumped to augment streamflow for Compact compliance purposes. The "Total Pumped Volume" column provides the volume of water pumped in that year for all other purposes, including augmentation and maintenance pumping.

Year	Days Pumped for Compact Compliance	Volume Pumped for Compact Compliance (acre-feet)	Total Pumped Volume (acre-feet)
2023	0	n/a	58.41

Turkey Creek Augmentation Well

The Turkey Creek augmentation well is operated by Tri-Basin NRD as part of the NRD's Republican Basin Streamflow Augmentation Project. Since construction was completed in 2016, this well has not been operated for augmentation purposes.



Figure 8. Headwaters of Turkey Creek, Gosper County; courtesy of Tri-Basin NRD.

Progress toward Goals, Objectives, and Action Items

Progress toward the basin-wide plan’s goals, objectives, and action items is described below, in two subsections. The “Management Activities” subsection summarizes progress toward the plan’s goals, objectives, and action items. The “Assessment of Measurable Hydrologic Objectives (MHOs)” subsection contains the results of the MHO assessments used to evaluate overall plan progress. Specific progress report details can be found on the following pages:

Management Activities	30
Progress Snapshot	32
Progress Summaries	39
Assessment of Measurable Hydrologic Objectives (MHOs)	65
MHO A Evaluation	65
MHO A Assessment Criteria	65
MHO A Evaluation Results for 2023	66
Tri-Basin NRD Hydrologically Balanced Assessment Results for 2023	67
MHO B Evaluation	69
MHO C Evaluation	69
MHO D Evaluation	69
MHO D Assessment Criteria	69
MHO D Evaluation Results for 2023	70
MHO E Evaluation	70
MHO E Assessment Criteria	70
MHO E Evaluation Results for 2023	71

Management Activities

Under *Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-755 (4)*, the basin-wide plan was required to include a timeline of up to 30 years after April 17, 2014, to meet the plan’s goals and objectives. The basin-wide plan took effect on March 1, 2019. This section summarizes progress toward the basin-wide plan’s goals, objectives, and action items during the 2023 calendar year, first as a visual snapshot of overall plan progress (beginning on page 32) followed by summaries describing progress on individual action items (beginning on page 39).

Two icons are displayed beside each action item in both the visual progress snapshot and the progress summaries. One symbol indicates when the action item is to be completed, according to the implementation schedule in the basin-wide plan. The other symbol indicates progress made on that action item during 2023. Figure 9 is a key describing the meanings of the symbols used throughout the “Management Activities” section.











<h2 style="text-align: center;">Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Progress Summary Key</h2>					
<h3 style="text-align: center;">Symbols indicating when action item is to be completed, per plan schedule</h3>					
<p>When Appropriate</p> 	<p>Annually</p> 	<p>Annually When Appropriate</p> 	<p>By This Year</p> 	<p>Every Five Years</p> 	
<p>To be completed when beneficial, feasible, and economically viable; at NeDNR and NRDs' discretion</p>	<p>To be completed every year</p>	<p>To be completed in every year that the triggering circumstances described in the plan occur</p>	<p>To be completed by a certain year; likely can be "completed indefinitely"</p>	<p>To be completed every five years, either corresponding with the five-year analysis or in the following year, as specified in the basin-wide plan</p>	
<h3 style="text-align: center;">Symbols indicating progress during report year</h3>					
<p>Completed Indefinitely</p> 	<p>Completed</p> 	<p>Ongoing Progress</p> 	<p>Not Completed</p> 	<p>Not Started</p> 	<p>Not Applicable This Year</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Fully complete and no longer able to be worked on in the future</p>	<p>Recurring task completed during report year</p>	<p>Work on this action item is ongoing, generally progressing</p>	<p>Not completed as planned during report year</p>	<p>Not started as planned during report year</p>	<p>Did not need to be completed during report year</p>

Figure 9. Key to symbols used throughout the "Management Activities" section. The report year for this report is 2023.








Progress Snapshot

This section contains a snapshot of overall progress on the basin-wide plan's goals and objectives. Visual summaries of progress on each goal can be found in the following locations:

- Goal 1 visual summary: Table 20, beginning on page 32;
- Goal 2 visual summary: Table 21, beginning on page 34;
- Goal 3 visual summary: Table 22, beginning on page 37; and
- Goal 4 visual summary: Table 23, beginning on page 38.

Each of these four tables spans multiple pages.

Table 20. Visual summary of progress on Goal 1 during 2023. The "Time-Frame" column indicates the expected timeframe for each action item, as indicated in the basin-wide plan. The "Action Taken" column refers to whether the action item was worked on in 2023, and the "Progress" column contains more information about progress during 2023. For details about the progress on each action item, see the page number indicated in the rightmost column.

Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
Goal 1	Maintain Nebraska's compliance with the Republican River Compact and applicable laws				
Obj. 1.1	Coordinate basin-wide management actions with Compact compliance efforts and adherence to state laws				
1.1.1	<i>Review each basin-wide plan management action prior to implementation to ensure it does not negatively impact efforts to achieve Compact compliance in the most efficient and cost-effective way practicable while adhering to state laws.</i>		Yes		39
1.1.2	<i>Implement appropriate offsets for any basin-wide plan action that would exceed Nebraska's allocation under the Compact</i>		No	N/A	39
Obj. 1.2	Understand effects of management actions for compact compliance on water supplies for State's water users				
1.2.1	<i>Qualitatively evaluate the net effect on water supplies of any management actions that are taken for Compact compliance</i>		Yes		40
Obj. 1.3	Assess progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the Plan, and share the results of this assessment with the Public and the Nebraska Legislature				
1.3.1	<i>Within five years after the adoption of this Plan, and every five years thereafter, conduct a technical analysis of the actions taken to determine the progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the Plan</i>		Yes		41

Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31










































Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
1.3.2	<i>Evaluate progress toward each of the Plan's measurable hydrologic objectives at the intermediate dates specified in the Plan for each one.</i>				
MHO A:	<i>Maintain each NRD's net groundwater depletions to streamflow within its portion of Nebraska's allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow.</i>		Yes		41
MHO B:	<i>Limit groundwater depletions to streamflow to a relatively constant level over the long-term both across the basin as a whole and within each NRD</i>		Yes	N/A	41
MHO C:	<i>Ensure there is always enough groundwater for all groundwater uses within the timeframe of this plan, either by stabilizing groundwater levels or managing declining groundwater levels</i>		Yes		42
MHO D:	<i>Continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for special regulations in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance</i>		Yes		42
MHO E:	<i>Continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for administration of surface water use for Compact compliance</i>		Yes		43
1.3.3	<i>Following each five-year technical analysis (Action Item 1.3.1), share the results of the analysis and any recommended Plan modifications with the public</i>		Yes		43
1.3.4	<i>Following each five-year technical analysis (Action Item 1.3.1) and any resulting modifications to the Plan, submit a report to the Legislature of the results of the analysis and progress made under the Plan</i>		Yes		43







Table 21. Visual summary of progress on Goal 2 during 2023. The “Time-Frame” column indicates the expected timeframe for each action item, as indicated in the basin-wide plan. The “Action Taken” column refers to whether the action item was worked on in 2023, and the “Progress” column contains more information about progress during 2023. For details about the progress on each action item, see the page number indicated in the rightmost column.

Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
Goal 2	Maximize Nebraska’s efficient and beneficial consumptive use of its water, increase certainty for long-range planning of water supplies to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and increase collaborative efforts among water management entities and stakeholders across the Basin				
Obj. 2.1	Understand potential impacts of actions and establish standard procedure for projects				
2.1.1	<i>For each planned new water management project in the Plan, evaluate hydrologic and regulatory feasibility and potential economic and environmental impacts</i>		Yes		44
2.1.2	<i>For each project evaluated in accordance with Action Item 2.1.1 in a given year, include a summary of the evaluation in the annual report of that year’s activities</i>		Yes		44
2.1.3	<i>For projects that are feasible and beneficial, apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, then begin operations</i>		Yes		45
Obj. 2.2	Improve the efficiency of use, availability, and reliability of water supplies for current irrigators				
2.2.1	<i>Work with irrigation districts and individual groundwater and surface water irrigators to improve the efficiency of the Basin’s surface water delivery systems and irrigation water use, when it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska’s Compact accounting balance</i>		Yes		46
2.2.2	<i>Participate in projects to improve the reliability, availability, and sustainability of water supplies in the Basin, which may include but are not limited to</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary reduction of irrigated acres (temporary or permanent) • Interbasin transfers • Conjunctive management projects such as aquifer recharge or streamflow augmentation 		Yes		47
Obj. 2.3	Provide opportunities for collaboration among Basin’s water users				
2.3.1	<i>Hold an annual public meeting to discuss Plan implementation and exchange information about the Basin</i>		Yes		49

Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31
















Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
2.3.2	Work cooperatively to investigate and address conflicts between water users resulting from implementation of this Plan by following the procedures for addressing conflicts that are outlined in this Plan		No	N/A	49
Obj. 2.4 Promote conservation programs available to the water users in the Basin					
2.4.1	Work together to identify, investigate, and discuss existing and potential new water conservation programs		Yes		49
2.4.2	Collaborate to promote conservation program opportunities to the Basin's water users		Yes		50
Obj. 2.5 Understand how management activities of independent decision-makers affect water supplies					
2.5.1	Study the effects of conservation practices on streamflow, if feasible		Yes		51
2.5.2	As part of each five-year technical analysis, analyze the future impacts to streamflow of past pumping to determine the lag time of these residual impacts		Yes		51
2.5.3	Examine and attempt to estimate the quantity of all inputs and outputs affecting the water supply balance in a small watershed, and consider using the results of this pilot study to create water use and land use guidelines for producers and other land managers, incentivize participation in recommended practices, and determine the value of completing similar studies across the Basin		Yes		52
Obj. 2.6 Evaluate the feasibility and potential outcomes of establishing water markets in the Basin					
2.6.1	Cooperate in determining the feasibility of water markets in the Basin		Yes		53
2.6.2	Following the water markets feasibility analysis (Action Item 2.6.1), test conclusions through implementation of a water market program in a pilot area, if feasible		No	N/A	54
Obj. 2.7 Support the NRDs in management of allocations for irrigation purposes and surface water irrigation districts in management of the allotment of their water supply					
2.7.1	Periodically evaluate, as part of each five-year technical analysis, the impact of the groundwater allocation and surface water allotment systems as a whole		Yes		54

Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31

Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
2.7.2	<i>As needed, based on the evaluation described in Action Item 2.7.1, recommend changes or improvements to the groundwater allocation and/or surface water allotment systems</i>		Yes		55
Obj. 2.8 Conserve water for future use during a drought					
2.8.1	<i>Organize and participate in a Basin-wide drought planning exercise</i>		Yes		55
2.8.2	<i>Following the drought planning exercise (Action Item 2.8.1) evaluate whether to recommend any changes to the IMPs or this Plan related to conservation of water for future use during a drought</i>		No		56









Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31

Table 22. Visual summary of progress on Goal 3 during 2023. The “Time-Frame” column indicates the expected timeframe for each action item, as indicated in the basin-wide plan. The “Action Taken” column refers to whether the action item was worked on in 2023, and the “Progress” column contains more information about progress during 2023. For details about the progress on each action item, see the page number indicated in the rightmost column.

Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
Goal 3 Positive public relations, including information sharing, within and outside the Basin					
Obj. 3.1 Improve information sharing with decision-makers and public about solutions within the Basin					
3.1.1	<i>Use existing resources to share information about Basin progress and activities with outside entities</i>		Yes		57
3.1.2	<i>Educate civic leaders and the public on implementation efforts within the Basin</i>		Yes		57
3.1.3	<i>Educate civic leaders and the public about the policies and institutional infrastructure that contribute to the development and implementation of solutions</i>		Yes		58
3.1.4	<i>Propose and support changes to laws, policies, and rules that would incentivize reduced water consumption</i>		No	N/A	59
Obj. 3.2 Improve information sharing with water users who are reliant on the Basin’s water supplies					
3.2.1	<i>Share data and information related to the Republican River Compact with the public in an easily accessible, user-friendly format</i>		Yes		59
3.2.2	<i>Annually prepare and exchange reports containing data and information about water supplies and uses in the Basin, and make these reports publicly known</i>		Yes		60
3.2.3	<i>Regularly communicate with the Plan’s former Stakeholder Advisory Committee about implementation progress and potential Plan revisions</i>		Yes		60
3.2.4	<i>Encourage and support water users to share information about their management practice improvements with other water users and the public</i>		Yes		61

Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31

Table 23. Visual summary of progress on Goal 4 during 2023. The “Time-Frame” column indicates the expected timeframe for each action item, as indicated in the basin-wide plan. The “Action Taken” column refers to whether the action item was worked on in 2023, and the “Progress” column contains more information about progress during 2023. For details about the progress on each action item, see the page number indicated in the rightmost column.

Action Item	Description	Time Frame	Action Taken	Progress	Page
Goal 4	When possible, pursue projects that not only benefit water supplies and uses, but also create benefits for fish, wildlife, recreation and conveyance within the Republican River Basin				
Obj. 4.1	Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities				
4.1.1	<i>Partner with wildlife-focused organizations on projects that benefit the organizations’ habitat and wildlife interests while also helping to fulfill other goals of the Plan</i>		Yes		63
4.1.2	<i>Promote public recreation on the river, when doing so can also help to fulfill other goals of the Plan</i>		Yes		63
4.1.3	<i>Cooperate in projects to assess and restore riparian wetlands while also helping to fulfill other goals of the Plan</i>		Yes		64
Obj. 4.2	Where feasible and beneficial, reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance				
4.2.1	<i>Cooperate in removing undesirable vegetation impacting water conveyance and managing reinfestation</i>		Yes		64

Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31

Progress Summaries

This section contains descriptions summarizing 2023 progress on each action item. For actions marked as not applicable (“N/A”) the summaries include explanations of why progress did not need to be taken on those action items in 2023. For a copy of any reference materials mentioned in these summaries, please contact NeDNR or one of the Republican Basin NRDs.

Goal 1 Maintain Nebraska’s compliance with the Republican River Compact and applicable laws

Obj. 1.1 Coordinate basin-wide plan management actions with Nebraska’s Compact compliance efforts and adherence to applicable state laws

- 1.1.1** *Review each basin-wide plan management action prior to implementation to ensure it does not negatively impact efforts to achieve Compact compliance in the most efficient and cost-effective way practicable while adhering to state laws.*



In 2023, all basin-wide plan management actions were reviewed in accordance with Action Item 1.1.1. The Republican Basin NRDs and NeDNR do not expect any 2023 basin-wide plan management actions to negatively impact efforts to achieve Compact compliance in the most efficient and cost-effective way under state law.

Based on our review of the potential future basin-wide plan management actions outlined in the basin-wide plan, we do not expect any will negatively impact Compact compliance efforts or adherence to state laws. As new management actions are proposed, we will thoroughly analyze them at that time.

- 1.1.2** *Implement appropriate offsets for any basin-wide plan action that would exceed Nebraska’s allocation under the Compact*



N/A

For this action item, the basin-wide plan defines offsets as actions that either reduce water use or increase water supply for the purpose of staying within Nebraska’s Compact allocation. Nebraska complied with the Compact in 2023 without the need for any offsets by NeDNR or the Republican Basin NRDs. Because no offsets were necessary, this action item is not applicable for 2023.

In years when offsets are required, the volume of water that each NRD needs to make up through management actions is determined through procedures described in the *Monitoring & Studies Technical Memorandum for the URNRD, MRNRD, and LRNRD IMPs* (effective 9/27/2021). The IMPs for Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs require each district’s computed beneficial consumptive water use to remain within its share of Nebraska’s Compact allocation. The IMP for the Republican Basin portions of Tri-Basin NRD states that the district will incrementally achieve and sustain a hydrologically balanced condition so that, in combination with imported water contributions from the Platte Basin, streamflow augmentation, and other management

actions, Tri-Basin NRD water users will not cause a net depletion to streamflow. Through implementation of the IMPs, NeDNR and the Republican Basin NRDs will take any necessary offsetting actions to ensure that Nebraska remains in compliance with the Compact.

In October 2023, Kansas requested administration of 1,860 acre-feet of Remaining Compact Compliance Volume (RCCV) from 2016. The water was administered into the Kansas irrigation supply in Harlan County Lake in late 2023 during the non-irrigation season. The RCCV balance was zero at the end of 2023. MHO E was achieved in 2023 because surface water was not administered for Compact Compliance (no irrigators were shut down during irrigation season), and the RCCV was water generated through NRD management actions.

Obj. 1.2 Understand the effects of management actions for Compact compliance on water supplies for Nebraska's water users

1.2.1 Qualitatively evaluate the net effect on water supplies of any management actions that are taken for Compact compliance



This action item was completed during 2023. A qualitative evaluation of the net effect on water supplies of any management actions that were taken for Compact compliance during 2022 was presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. The qualitative evaluation can be found on page 27 of the *Fifth Annual Report for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Data and Progress Updates, 2022 (November 15, 2023)* and can be downloaded from the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

The current year's qualitative evaluation of the net effect of 2023 management actions for Compact compliance on water supplies can be found under "Qualitative Evaluation of Net Effect of Management Actions for Compact Compliance" on page 27 of this report.

Upper Republican NRD evaluated offers from landowners to permanently decertify irrigated land to aid in Compact compliance. The district, in conjunction with WRCF cost share from NeDNR, decertified approximately 583 groundwater-irrigated acres near and adjacent to the Republican River.

Middle Republican NRD entered into one contract with a landowner to permanently decertify 40 groundwater-irrigated acres and 20 surface water-irrigated acres.

Upon evaluation of the net effect on water supplies for management actions that have been taken for Compact compliance, Lower Republican NRD believes they have been effective and helped keep the state of Nebraska in compliance. Also, actions during full water supply have a residual effect during subsequent years. For example, crop-rotation along with no-till farming maintains moisture in the ground and reduces evaporation.

Each NRD reports on decertifications in the “Conservation and Irrigation Decertification Programs” section of the NRD summary under “[Water Supplies and Uses in the Basin.](#)”

Obj. 1.3 Assess progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the Plan, and share the results of this assessment with the Public and the Nebraska Legislature

1.3.1 *Within five years after the adoption of this Plan, and every five years thereafter, conduct a technical analysis of the actions taken to determine the progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of the Plan*



NeDNR and the Republican Basin NRDs completed the first five-year technical analysis in 2023. Results of this analysis were presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. The report was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

1.3.2 *Evaluate progress toward each of the Plan’s measurable hydrologic objectives at the intermediate dates specified in the Plan for each one.*

MHO A: *Maintain each NRD’s net groundwater depletions to streamflow within its portion of Nebraska’s allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow.*



MHO A was evaluated for 2022, and the results were presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. The analysis and results are described beginning on page 63 of the *Fifth Annual Report for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Data and Progress Updates, 2022 (November 15, 2023)*, which can be downloaded from the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

The current year’s (2023) evaluation of MHO A can be found under “MHO A Evaluation” on page 65 of this report.

MHO B: *Limit groundwater depletions to streamflow to a relatively constant level over the long-term both across the basin as a whole and within each NRD*



N/A

An assessment of MHO B was completed in 2023 as a subset of the five-year technical analysis, and the results were presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. The analysis methods and results can be found in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan

website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>. The next five-year technical analysis will be completed in 2028.

MHO C: *Ensure there is always enough groundwater for all groundwater uses within the timeframe of this plan, either by stabilizing groundwater levels or managing declining groundwater levels*



The first screening phase of the MHO C analysis (Phase I) was completed in 2023 as a subset of the five-year technical analysis, and the results were presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. The analysis methods and results can be found in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

In Phase I, spring groundwater levels of basin wells were statistically analyzed using the Mann-Kendall Trend Test to identify any areas containing wells with groundwater levels declining at such a rate that there will not be enough groundwater available for all groundwater uses within the timeframe of the Plan. Wells identified in Phase I as having a decreasing trend in average spring groundwater levels will be further analyzed in Phase II and III to determine if the NRDs will need to implement additional management actions. As described in the Plan, Phase II and III will be conducted in upcoming years.

The next five-year technical analysis will be completed in 2028.

MHO D: *Continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for special regulations in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance*



MHO D assesses whether groundwater pumping within the Rapid Response Area of Upper Republican, Middle Republican, or Lower Republican NRD was curtailed to ensure Compact compliance during the previous year. There is no Rapid Response Area designated within Tri-Basin NRD.

MHO D was evaluated for 2022 to review progress on the basin-wide plan. Results were presented at the fifth annual meeting, which took place in November 2023. The analysis and results can be found on page 68 of the *Fifth Annual Report for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Data and Progress Updates, 2022 (November 15, 2023)*. The report can be downloaded from the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

The current year's evaluation of MHO D can be found under "MHO D Evaluation" on page 69 of this report.

The Republican Basin NRDs and NeDNR have undertaken many projects that reduce the potential future need for special regulations in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance. Examples of new and existing projects can be found in this report, within the summaries of progress on other plan action items.

MHO E: *Continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for administration of surface water use for Compact compliance*



MHO E assesses whether surface water administration was needed during the previous year to ensure Compact compliance. Note that any administration that is automatically triggered under terms of the FSS is not evaluated as part of MHO E.

MHO E was evaluated for 2022 to review progress on the basin-wide plan. Results were presented at the fifth annual meeting, which took place in November 2023. The analysis and results can be found on page 69 of the *Fifth Annual Report for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Data and Progress Updates, 2022 (November 15, 2023)*, which can be downloaded from the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

The current year's evaluation of MHO E can be found under "MHO E Evaluation" on page 70 of this report.

NeDNR and the Republican Basin NRDs have undertaken many projects that reduce the potential future need for surface water administration for Compact compliance. Some examples are included in this report, within the summaries of progress on other plan action items.

1.3.3 *Following each five-year technical analysis (Action Item 1.3.1), share the results of the analysis and any recommended Plan modifications with the public*



The first five-year technical analysis was conducted in 2023. Results of the analysis were shared with the public at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. No modifications to the Plan were proposed by NeDNR or the Basin NRDs after consideration of the analysis results.

1.3.4 *Following each five-year technical analysis (Action Item 1.3.1) and any resulting modifications to the Plan, submit a report to the Legislature of the results of the analysis and progress made under the Plan*



A report entitled *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* which includes descriptions of analysis methods and results was completed in 2023 and submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024. This report is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

Goal 2 Maximize Nebraska’s efficient and beneficial consumptive use of its water, increase certainty for long-range planning of water supplies to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and increase collaborative efforts among water management entities and stakeholders across the Basin

Obj. 2.1 Understand the feasibility and potential impacts of Plan actions and establish a standard procedure for projects

2.1.1 For each planned new water management project in the Plan, evaluate hydrologic and regulatory feasibility and potential economic and environmental impacts

2.1.2 For each project evaluated in accordance with Action Item 2.1.1 in a given year, include a summary of the evaluation in the annual report of that year’s activities



Upper Republican NRD utilized a newly developed groundwater model of the URNRD to evaluate hydrologic impacts of proposed water-use relocations. The information was used conjunctively with regulations designed to prevent such transfers from causing an increase in groundwater use. Evaluation of groundwater levels under different regulatory and transfer scenarios occurred but not for the purposes of new water-management projects in the Plan.

In March 2023, Upper Republican NRD executed an agreement with NeDNR that obligates \$1,112,067 in state WRCF money for automation of flow meters and installation of soil-moisture probes in the district. The five-year contract will help Upper Republican NRD complete its conversion of all flow meters from mechanical units that must be read manually to automated, telemetry-enabled ones that transmit water-usage data hourly via a radio network. The project is intended to improve district-wide water-management efforts and farmers’ irrigation scheduling. WRCF funds obligated in the contract may also be used by Upper Republican NRD to provide cost-share to irrigators for use of soil-moisture probes that help eliminate unnecessary irrigation applications.

Lower Republican NRD utilizes a model specific for proposed new water management projects. The NRD is evaluating proposed locations for potential water storage and streamflow augmentation. These efforts initiated the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), analyzing all the components relevant to such projects. Lower Republican NRD received funding through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program (WFPO) and hired a consultant to further evaluate the proposed sites for water storage, streamflow augmentation, and other beneficial uses. The WFPO grants that the district received for two of the proposed sites will be completed by December 2024.

In 2023, Lower Republican NRD signed a contract with NeDNR for automation of flow meters and development of an augmentation project on Flag Creek (Figure 10). Work on those projects started in 2024.



Figure 10. Construction of Flag Creek augmentation project

Middle Republican NRD plans on completing the district’s telemetry irrigation meter project by the end of 2025. Over 2000 meters have been installed utilizing the WaterSMART Program and the NeDNR WRCF. These telemetry meters will provide real time irrigation usage data to all irrigators in the MRNRD providing the means for improved application efficiency and reduced water usage.

In 2023, Tri-Basin NRD signed a contract with NeDNR to use WRCF funds to enable cost-sharing on remote-read flowmeters and soil moisture sensors.

2.1.3 *For projects that are feasible and beneficial, apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, then begin operations*



For future projects that are feasible and beneficial, basin NRDs will apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, and then begin operations.

In 2020, Tri-Basin and Lower Republican NRDs resubmitted their application (permit number A-19594) for a water right to divert excess flows from the Platte River for delivery to a diversion that would send water down Turkey Creek, a tributary of the Republican River. Evaluation of the permit application by NeDNR is ongoing. All ongoing and future projects will be developed in compliance with local, state, and federal permitting requirements.

Obj. 2.2 Improve the efficiency of use, availability, and reliability of water supplies for current irrigators

Symbol Legend – See Figure 9 on page 31

2.2.1 *Work with irrigation districts and individual groundwater and surface water irrigators to improve the efficiency of the Basin's surface water delivery systems and irrigation water use, when it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska's Compact accounting balance*



Upper Republican NRD, Middle Republican NRD, Lower Republican NRD, and NeDNR each made progress on this action item in 2023.

Upper Republican NRD continued to provide tools to improve irrigation scheduling including daily evapotranspiration data for all crops grown in the district through use of district-owned weather stations and those operated in partnership with the University of Nebraska's Water for Food Institute. The District also incentivized the use of 125 soil-moisture probes on approximately 16,000 acres by providing cost share for probes utilizing district and state Water Sustainability Fund funds.

Irrigators who requested it were provided up-to-date water usage data and remaining allocation from telemetry-equipped flow meters that have been installed in the District (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Two different mounting systems for Upper Republican NRD telemetry project.

Middle Republican continued to support Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation District (FCID) on their efficiency efforts.

Middle Republican NRD has an ongoing project with the Frenchman Valley Irrigation District (FVID) to conduct recharge through their surface delivery system and use the water for Compact compliance if necessary.

Lower Republican NRD has an agreement with the Nebraska Bostwick Irrigation District (NBID) that establishes water savings through the placement of automated gates.

Additional information about telemetry meter and soil moisture probe projects by basin NRDs is reported under Action Item 2.1.1 and Action Item 2.1.2.

In 2021, NeDNR signed a contract with NBID to provide matching funds for a large scale WaterSMART Grant from the USBR, which LRNRD and NeDNR provided letters of support for. NBID was awarded a two and a half million-dollar contract through WaterSmart, which combined with NeDNR WRCF funds will build and install a diversion site on the Republican River on the east side of Superior. When this project is operational, it will save approximately 3,500 to 4,000 acre feet of water from being released from Harlan County Reservoir. In 2023, progress was made on project design and securing an easement agreement. The project is expected to be operational by the 2025 water season.

NeDNR signed a contract with the Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District (FCID) in 2020 to install upgraded flow measurement and control gates on the Meeker-Driftwood Canal and integrate them into a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) radio telemetry network (Figure 12). No work was done on this project in 2023 because there was no water in the canal (due to drought conditions).



Figure 12. New Rubicon gates on canal operated by Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District.

2.2.2 *Participate in projects to improve the reliability, availability, and sustainability of water supplies in the Basin, which may include but are not limited to:*

- *Voluntary reduction of irrigated acres (temporary or permanent)*
- *Interbasin transfers*
- *Conjunctive management projects such as aquifer recharge or streamflow augmentation*



All four Republican River Basin NRDs participate in CREP, which provides federal funding for the temporary removal of environmentally sensitive land from production. Summaries of acres enrolled in CREP within each NRD can be found on pages 8, (Upper Republican NRD), page 11 (Middle Republican NRD), page 14 (Lower Republican NRD), and page 16 (Tri-Basin NRD).

Upper Republican NRD executed agreements with two landowners that will permanently decertify approximately 583 acres. One of the decertification's affects 130 acres where pumping has a stream-depletion factor of 34% and average, annual water usage had been about 12 inches per acres. The land is enrolled in CREP. The second permanent decertification is comprised of 453 acres where pumping has an average stream-depletion factor of 84% and average annual water usage has been approximately 12.5 inches per acre. That land is not enrolled in CREP. The decertifications were completed using district and NeDNR WRCF funds.

Middle Republican NRD has a program to decertify irrigation rights or appropriations on cropland. This program is funded by Middle Republican NRD and NeDNR's WRCF. In the fall of 2023, Middle Republican NRD entered into two new decertification projects on 60 acres, 20 acres of surface water and 40 acres of groundwater. The surface water acres had a stream-depletion factor of 100%. The groundwater acres had a stream depletion factor of 81% and an average annual water usage of 12.8 inches per acre.

Lower Republican and Tri-Basin NRD submitted an application to NeDNR for an interbasin transfer permit to divert excess flows from the Platte Basin to the Republican Basin as the Platte to Republican Basin High Flow Diversion (PRD) project (permit number A-19594, Figure 13). As filed, it was proposed to always be junior in priority to existing and future Platte River water uses. Evaluation of the permit application by NeDNR is ongoing. Permitting aspects of this project are described under action item 2.1.3.



Figure 13. Prescribed burn on Platte-Republican Diversion land, April 20, 2020, courtesy of Tri-Basin NRD.

Lower Republican NRD has agreements with NBID to use water stored in Harlan County Lake for Compact compliance. The stored water is a result of water savings derived from automated gate installations, which received a million dollars from Lower Republican NRD.

Upper, Middle, and Lower Republican NRDs continue to support the N-CORPE Augmentation Project.

Additional potential conjunctive management projects NeDNR and the NRDs were involved in with the basin’s irrigation districts are described under action item 2.2.1.

Obj. 2.3 Provide opportunities for collaboration among Basin’s water users

2.3.1 *Hold an annual public meeting to discuss Plan implementation and exchange information about the Basin*



The first basin-wide plan annual meeting was held in February 2020, which was within the first year of plan implementation.

The second through fifth basin-wide plan annual meetings were held in November 2020, November 2021, November 2022 and November 2023, respectively, in fulfillment of the IMPs for Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs. The main purpose of these meetings is to present to the public progress by NRDs and NeDNR on Plan implementation in the Basin in the previous year.

2.3.2 *Work cooperatively to investigate and address conflicts between water users resulting from implementation of this Plan by following the procedures for addressing conflicts that are outlined in this Plan*



N/A

The Republican River NRDs and NeDNR intend to work cooperatively to investigate and address conflicts between water users resulting from implementation of the Basin-Wide Plan by following the procedures for addressing conflicts that are outlined in the Plan. In 2023, no conflicts resulting from implementation of the basin-wide plan were brought to the attention of NeDNR or the NRDs to address.

Obj. 2.4 Promote conservation programs available to the water users in the Basin

2.4.1 *Work together to identify, investigate, and discuss existing and potential new water conservation programs*



Throughout 2023, the Republican Basin NRDs and NeDNR discussed and shared information with each other about existing and potential new water conservation programs as new information became available or new questions were raised by one of the parties. Recent examples include information exchange on federal water conservation

grants, flow meter telemetry, stream flow augmentation operations, and water use regulations. The NRDs support individual efforts of other NRDs as well as programs for the whole basin.

Upper, Middle, and Lower Republican NRDs are in partnership on streamflow augmentation projects and other water use regulations. The three NRDs jointly presented information about water issues in the basin to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Leadership Education/Action Development (LEAD) program.

For Upper Republican NRD, 2023 was the first year of the district's new 5-year allocation period. The allocation was reduced from a total of 65 inches per acre over the 5-year period to 62.5 inches resulting in an annual, average allocation of 12.5 inches per acre. The previous average was 13 inches per acre.

Lower Republican NRD also has an agreement with NBID to use a portion of water savings from automated gates for Compact compliance. The NRD provided one million dollars for the gates.

Lower Republican NRD supported and provided funding for NBID's Superior Canal WaterSMART project and is utilizing a WaterSMART grant from the USBR to implement a program for telemetry-enabled flowmeters. See the description under Action Item 2.2.1 for details. NeDNR supported the two above mentioned projects by providing funding through the WRCF.

Tri-Basin NRD created the Water Conservation Incentive Program (WCIP) to encourage irrigators to accept limits on their water use in exchange for receiving cash payments if they save water within their allocation period. Landowners also get flexibility to use their limited allocation on uncertified irrigated acres. Agreements last five years. Landowners have 1,444 certified irrigated acres enrolled in the program. This effort is funded by Tri-Basin NRD and NeDNR's WRCF.

Additional information about telemetry meter and soil moisture probe projects by basin NRDs is reported under Action Item 2.1.1 and Action Item 2.1.2.

2.4.2 *Collaborate to promote conservation program opportunities to the Basin's water users*



The Republican River Basin NRDs and NeDNR are open to opportunities to collaborate with neighboring NRDs, state and federal government agencies and constituents on programs and projects that promote and incentivize water conservation. Each of the Republican Basin NRDs is actively involved in CREP. Additionally, the NRDs participate in the Southwest Weed Management District (SWMD), and Lower Republican NRD is an active member of Twin Valley Weed Management Area (TVWMA). SWMD and TVWMA have removed invasive species in stream corridors that consume water and impede stream flow.

Upper Republican NRD worked with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and local stakeholders to identify priorities for water-conservation efforts funded by USDA.

Obj. 2.5 Understand how various water management activities of independent decision-makers affect water supplies

2.5.1 *Study the effects of conservation practices on streamflow, if feasible*



This action item is to be completed by 2028, when and if funding and staff resources allow. NeDNR and the NRDs have some analytical tools available to them to assist with studies of the effects of conservation practices on streamflow, as described below.

Upper Republican NRD continued to be an active participant in the Southwest Weed Management District's efforts to identify areas where grant funds could be used to eradicate non-desirable vegetation that negatively impacts stream flow.

Lower Republican NRD will study the effects of conservation practices on streamflow through the Lower Republican NRD Management Action Opportunity (MAO) model. The RRCA model is run to determine the quantitative effect of a proposed land use change through the MAO model.

Tri-Basin NRD has the most extensive groundwater level monitoring network in Nebraska. Groundwater level data is critical to accurately determining impacts of groundwater pumping on streamflows. Data are shared with state and federal agencies and made available to the public.

A literature review of the effects of select water and soil conservation practices on streamflow was completed as a supplemental report to the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report. The literature review is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

NeDNR uses the RRCA model to estimate stream depletions resulting from groundwater pumping, stream accretions resulting from recharge projects, and other parameters.

2.5.2 *As part of each five-year technical analysis, analyze the future impacts to streamflow of past pumping to determine the lag time of these residual impacts*



An analysis of the future impacts to streamflow of past pumping was completed in 2023 as a subset of the first five-year technical analysis, and the results were presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. Results of this analysis suggest that estimated groundwater depletions from historical groundwater pumping would continue through the end of the timeframe

for implementation of the basin-wide plan (2044) even if pumping were to have completely ceased beginning in 2022. Further details on the analysis methods and results can be found in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

2.5.3 *Examine and attempt to estimate the quantity of all inputs and outputs affecting the water supply balance in a small watershed, and consider using the results of this pilot study to create water use and land use guidelines for producers and other land managers, incentivize participation in recommended practices, and determine the value of completing similar studies across the Basin*



This action item is to be completed by 2028.

Upper Republican NRD continued to collaborate with the Nebraska Water Balance Alliance and the University of Nebraska's Daugherty Water for Food Global Institute to quantify all inputs and outputs within the HUC-12 watershed in Perkins County. Evapotranspiration, recharge, and precipitation data were collected in 2023. Analysis is expected to continue through 2024.

In 2021, Middle Republican NRD received a Water Sustainability Grant to use airborne electromagnetic (AEM) technology to model water supply balance in the whole irrigated portion of Middle Republican NRD (Figure 14). Data collection and analysis are ongoing, and the project is progressing as planned.

Figure 14. Helicopter collecting AEM data in Middle Republican NRD.



Lower Republican NRD will examine the effort required to complete action item 2.5.3 in the coming years, attempting to estimate the quantity of all inputs and outputs affecting the water supply balance in a small watershed and will consider using the results of this pilot study to create water use and land use guidelines for producers and other land managers, incentivize participation in recommended practices, and determine the value of completing similar studies across the Basin.

Obj. 2.6 Evaluate the feasibility and potential outcomes of establishing water markets in the Basin

2.6.1 Cooperate in determining the feasibility of water markets in the Basin



This action item was completed in 2023; it was a collaboration between basin NRDs, NeDNR, and UNL. NeDNR began the Basin-wide water market feasibility analysis with a review of scientific literature on the nature of water markets and analyses of existing water markets throughout the world. In May of 2023, NeDNR and the Basin NRDs, in conjunction with the UNL Public Policy Center, conducted a survey of Basin stakeholders to determine interest in water markets. The survey results indicated there was low interest amongst Basin stakeholders in a potential water market; a majority (55%) of respondents disagreed that they would be willing to buy and/or sell water in a potential water market (40% strongly disagreed). The report by NeDNR, which includes the report on survey results by

the UNL Public Policy Center, is available on the basin-wide plan website <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

- 2.6.2** *Following the water markets feasibility analysis (Action Item 2.6.1), test conclusions through implementation of a water market program in a pilot area, if feasible*



N/A

After conducting the Basin-wide water market feasibility analysis described above, NeDNR and the Basin NRDs do not plan on conducting a water market pilot program. Such a program was determined to be infeasible due to the statutory and Compact compliance barriers, such as limitations on transferring water rights, and limited interest from Basin stakeholders as determined via the interest survey. In addition, it was determined that smaller, local water markets already existed where there was demand.

Obj. 2.7 Support the NRDs in management of allocations for irrigation purposes and surface water irrigation districts in management of the allotment of their water supply

- 2.7.1** *Periodically evaluate, as part of each five-year technical analysis, the impact of the groundwater allocation and surface water allotment systems as a whole*



NeDNR and the Republican Basin NRDs evaluated the impact of the groundwater allocation and surface water allotment systems for the first five-year technical analysis in 2023. Results were presented at the fifth annual meeting to review progress on the basin-wide plan, which took place in November 2023. Results of this evaluation can be found in the *First Five-Year Technical Analysis for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan: Results and Plan Progress Updates, 2019-2022* report which was submitted to the legislature on February 29, 2024, and is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

The NRDs individually review pumping and allocations on a regular basis to comply with the IMPs and groundwater management plans while balancing the allocations so as not to restrict the economic vitality of the NRD or the region, as is consistent with the mission of the *Republican River Basin-Wide Plan*.

Upper Republican NRD used its groundwater model internally to determine the long-term impacts on groundwater levels caused by different allocation scenarios.

Although the Republican River Basin Wide Plan requires a five-year periodic evaluation for the technical analysis to determine the impact of the groundwater allocation, Lower Republican NRD always reviews pumping and allocations to comply with the Integrated Management Plan (IMP) while balancing the allocations so that it does not restrict the economic vitality of the NRD or the region, which is consistent with the mission of the *Republican River Basin-Wide Plan*. Lower Republican NRD does not have authority to manage surface water irrigation district allotments, but

does support the irrigation districts, their sponsors, and their sponsors’ partners in evaluating additional storage of flood water.

Tri-Basin NRD has only one township in the Republican Basin that is subject to allocation. This allocation was imposed to protect groundwater levels in the local area from diminishment. The allocation requirement is tied to local groundwater levels. If a three-year average of groundwater levels rises above the 1981–1985 average springtime levels for that township, the allocation will be suspended. The other three NRDs have allocations district-wide.

- 2.7.2** *As needed, based on the evaluation described in Action Item 2.7.1, recommend changes or improvements to the groundwater allocation and/or surface water allotment systems*



At this time, no changes are recommended to either system. Both allow for efficient utilization of the existing water supply, and appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure continued protection of existing water uses and administration of water rights as necessary to maintain Compact compliance.

A reduction in Upper Republican NRD’s 5-year allocation was recommended by a subcommittee of the Board of Directors and approved by the Board in 2023. The reduction is intended to slow the rate of groundwater declines that occurs in the district. Lower Republican NRD would support the irrigation districts, their sponsors, and their sponsors’ partners in evaluating additional storage of flood water within existing facilities that could be reserved for irrigation supply, aquatic habitat, and recreation. Lower Republican NRD supports NBID and the USBR’s effort to develop a lake level management plan with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The USACE Kansas City District reservoirs have this implemented. For example, the lake level management plan at Lovewell Reservoir supports the operation of KBID.

Obj. 2.8 Conserve water for future use during a drought

- 2.8.1** *Organize and participate in a Basin-wide drought planning exercise*



Preparation for the drought-planning exercise began in 2020 with the hiring of a graduate research assistant (GRA), working out of the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC). Research conducted in 2021 by the GRA and NeDNR staff was used to determine the type of exercise to hold, how to prioritize specific drought impacts, and the types of management actions that might be used to maintain Compact compliance.

The Basin-wide drought planning exercise took place in May 2022 and the drought planning exercise report was completed in 2023. Details about the drought planning exercise outcomes are found in the *Report on the Republican River Basin Drought Planning Exercise* (November 15, 2023), which is available for download on the basin-wide plan website, <https://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>.

The Lower Republican NRD participated in the drought planning exercise with NeDNR and the other Republican basin NRDs. Additionally, the Lower Republican NRD believes that reserving flood water for irrigation use within existing structures would be beneficial for water supplies during drought periods. Many reservoirs in the USACE Kansas City District have lake management plans that allow additional water to be held back above conservation pools. Additionally, regulatory changes that allow for the modification or change in a reservoir operating plan allowing flood water retention above current levels would conserve water for future use.

- 2.8.2** *Following the drought planning exercise (Action Item 2.8.1) evaluate whether to recommend any changes to the IMPs or this Plan related to conservation of water for future use during a drought*



This action item will be completed by the year following completion of the drought planning exercise, and no later than 2024.

Basin NRDs and NeDNR determined that a drought plan for the basin is needed and discussed working collaboratively to complete such a plan. Components of the drought plan may include a communication plan, a drought dashboard, and a list of projects and initiatives to prevent or minimize damage caused by drought. It is unknown whether that effort will lead to changes in the IMPs or Basin-wide Plan.

Goal 3 Positive public relations, including information sharing, within and outside the Basin**Obj. 3.1 Improve information sharing with decision-makers and public about solutions within the Basin****3.1.1** *Use existing resources to share information about Basin progress and activities with outside entities*

The Republican River Basin NRDs and NeDNR use existing information dissemination resources such as newsletters, radio programs, public meetings, websites, social media, and education/outreach events. Some of these resources were used in 2023 to share information about Basin progress and activities with outside entities. Examples are described under Action Item 3.1.2 and 3.1.3.

3.1.2 *Educate civic leaders and the public on implementation efforts within the Basin*

NeDNR and the Republican Basin NRDs participated in education and outreach about plan implementation efforts in 2023. The basin-wide plan identifies some examples of potential outreach topics related to this objective such as efficiency improvements, the NRDs' allocation systems and resulting successes, other management activities and successes, factors that have contributed to streamflow reduction in the Basin, variations in groundwater management that reflect natural wet/dry cycles, realistic expectations for outcomes of projects and policy changes. The following paragraphs provide specific examples of 2023 education and outreach activities related to implementation efforts within the basin.

NeDNR hosts a website about the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan, <http://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>. The website is a tool for conveying information about basin-wide plan implementation and includes background information about the plan and plan implementation resources such as data, annual meeting materials, and annual reports. Plan development meeting materials are also available on the website. NeDNR plans to update the website when staff and other resources are available.

Upper Republican NRD directly engaged with the University of Nebraska's Water for Food Institute about water-conservation and conducted interviews with media outlets including statewide news sources focused on progress and activities within the district. The district also actively updated its website to keep residents informed of activities. Civic leaders including mayors and managers of towns and villages within the district were informed of the district's use of a groundwater model to make water-use relocation decisions. The NRD described augmentation and other water management programs to members of the Legislature's Natural Resources Committee and University of Nebraska officials.

Middle Republican NRD shared information through its website and *Irrigation Leader* magazine.

Lower Republican NRD co-hosts the South-Central Nebraska Water Conference with Tri-Basin NRD and the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District to inform the

public on the happenings of the water world within South Central Nebraska. NeDNR hosted a booth at this conference. All four NRDs produce newsletters for the public containing information about their activities, including water management activities in the Republican Basin. Lower Republican NRD also provides articles and radio publications on a regular basis to keep constituents informed. Lower Republican NRD conducted seven public meetings across the district where constituents were updated on plan progress, and the district held public meetings, called "Coffee with the NRD" throughout the district. Tri-Basin NRD also promotes its programs and policies through radio features on KRVN and promotes the NRD with a booth at county fairs and farm shows.

Each fall, NeDNR publishes an annual report to the Governor and Legislature, titled Annual Report and Plan of Work for the State Water Planning and Review Process. The report includes a section summarizing activities in the Republican River Basin for the prior fiscal year, as well as a four-year work projection for the basin. The report is available on NeDNR's website, <https://dnr.nebraska.gov>. NeDNR also annually submits a report to the Legislature each fall summarizing WRCF expenditures and accomplishments. Many of the projects described in the report are in the Republican River Basin.

3.1.3 *Educate civic leaders and the public about the policies and institutional infrastructure that contribute to the development and implementation of solutions*



NeDNR and the Republican Basin NRDs participated in education and outreach about policies and institutional infrastructure in 2023. The basin-wide plan identifies some examples of potential outreach topics related to this objective as correlative groundwater rights; integrated management plans; the *Republican River Basin-Wide Plan*; the Republican River Compact; other aspects of Nebraska's surface water and groundwater statutes; and other NRD rules, regulations, and plans. The following paragraphs provide specific examples of 2023 education and outreach activities related to the policies and institutional infrastructure that contribute to the development and implementation of solutions.

The NRDs and NeDNR communicate regularly with their legislative representatives and other state senators, as needed. Additionally, the Republican NRDs take turns hosting a basin focused banquet each January at the annual NARD Legislative Conference. The banquet is attended by state senators representing districts in the Republican Basin, NeDNR as well as NRD staff and board members.

The NRDs and NeDNR work to educate civic leaders and the public about the policies and institutional infrastructure that contribute to the development and implementation of solutions, through public outreach such as articles, conferences, radio news briefs, and public meetings. All four NRDs produce newsletters for the public containing information about their activities, some of which included articles about policies and institutional infrastructure in 2023. NeDNR produces a monthly podcast that is available on multiple platforms, and drought was the focus of the June 2023 episode.

Upper Republican NRD held multiple conversations with members of the public during consideration and approval of the allocation reduction that included explanations of how policy is developed to achieve long-term district goals related to water conservation.

NeDNR and colleagues from Kansas and Colorado maintain a website with information about the Republican River Compact (<http://republicanriver.org/>), which includes background information about the RRCA, annual reports, and other RRCA meeting materials. Upper Republican NRD website is updated with Compact developments and provides a layman's explanation of the Compact and compliance efforts. Both Upper Republican NRD and NeDNR's websites include links to the Compact, the FSS, and other important Compact-related documents.

NeDNR and the NRDs also addressed these topics in 2023 at some of the other outreach events described under action item 3.1.2.

3.1.4 *Propose and support changes to laws, policies, and rules that would incentivize reduced water consumption*



N/A

In 2023 there were no proposed changes to laws, policies, and rules that would incentivize reduced water consumption within the Basin. NeDNR and the Republican River Basin NRDs are committed to evaluating all proposals that offer incentives to reduce groundwater use, with the intention of supporting any changes that do not reduce the economic vitality of the region in accordance with the mission of the Basin-Wide Plan.

A subcommittee of the Upper Republican NRD Board of Directors recommended a reduction in the 5-year allocation to conserve water, and the Board approved the reduction.

Obj. 3.2 Improve information sharing with water users who are reliant on the Basin's water supplies

3.2.1 *Share data and information related to the Republican River Compact with the public in an easily accessible, user-friendly format*



All four NRDs and NeDNR exchange water use and groundwater level data annually for RRCA accounting purposes. RRCA annual reports and final RRCA accounting data are available at <http://republicanriver.org/>, and RRCA groundwater model information is available at the RRCA's data site, <https://www.republicanrivercompact.org/>. Information about the Republican River Compact is also available on NeDNR's website and Upper Republican NRD's website. Resources available on Upper Republican NRD's website include the Compact itself, the 2002 Compact compliance settlement agreement, Compact accounting and reporting requirements, the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling on Compact compliance, and information about projects designed to maintain Compact compliance. Some RRCA data are also available on NeDNR's INSIGHT (Integrated Network of Scientific Information & GeoHydrologic Tools) website (<http://nednr.nebraska.gov/INSIGHT/>).

Middle Republican NRD shared data and information related to the Compact during a NRCS local work group meeting.

NeDNR and the NRDs have worked to make some data from the RRCA annual accounting and groundwater model more easily accessible and user-friendly by including data from these sources each year in the basin-wide plan annual report. NeDNR continues to work to improve the availability and format of RRCA data on this website.

3.2.2 *Annually prepare and exchange reports containing data and information about water supplies and uses in the Basin, and make these reports publicly accessible*



All four NRDs and NeDNR share data and information about water supplies and uses in the basin as part of the annual report for the basin-wide plan. This information is shared with the public at the basin-wide plan's annual meeting and through the *Republican River Basin-Wide Plan* website (<http://rrbwp.nebraska.gov>). NeDNR and the NRDs published the first and second annual reports in 2020, the third annual report in 2021, and the fourth report in 2022. Reports were first presented at the annual meeting (February 2020, November 2020, November 2021, and November 2022, respectively) and then published on the basin-wide plan website.

Lower Republican NRD also supports gathering information such as groundwater measurements with the United States Geological Survey and Nebraska Conservation and Survey Division. Information is publicized in annual reports. Lower Republican NRD further provides relevant water balance information at the South-Central Nebraska Water Conference.

Tri-Basin NRD and NeDNR also exchange information about water supplies and uses annually in fulfillment of the IMP for the Republican Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD. These reports can be downloaded from the NeDNR website (<https://dnr.nebraska.gov>).

3.2.3 *Regularly communicate with the Plan's former Stakeholder Advisory Committee about implementation progress and potential Plan revisions*



All four NRDs and NeDNR work to keep former Stakeholder Advisory Committee members informed about implementation progress and potential plan revisions. This information is primarily shared at the annual meeting for the basin-wide plan.

Information about plan implementation is also shared via email through a GovDelivery contact list for people interested in receiving updates about the basin-wide plan. All stakeholders from the plan development process were added to the list when it was created. One former stakeholder does not have an email account, so printed copies of updates posted to the GovDelivery list are mailed to that individual.

Fifth generation IMPs for Upper, Middle, and Lower Republican NRDs became effective on September 27, 2021. Significant changes to the IMPs included an update to the in-state

accounting equation used to assess NRD compliance, changes related to the Basin-Wide Plan (including a new goal), and updates related to changes in RRCA procedures.

At the time this report was published, Tri-Basin NRD and NeDNR are working on updating Tri-Basin NRD's IMP for those portions of Tri-Basin NRD located within the Republican River Basin.

Notification about the Basin-wide Plan annual meetings is provided on the NRDs' and NeDNR's websites, as well as the basin-wide plan website.

3.2.4 *Encourage and support water users to share information about their management practice improvements with other water users and the public*



All four NRDs and NeDNR encourage and support water users to share information about their management practice improvements with other water users and the public. In 2023, Upper Republican NRD, Middle Republican NRD and Lower Republican NRD provided annual water usage data to UNL from wells within the District. UNL aggregates the data and shares it with neighboring landowners so they understand how their water usage compares to usage in the immediate area.

Information sharing about water user management practice improvements is a standing agenda item for the basin-wide plan annual meeting.

NeDNR and the NRDs also supported and participated in UNL's Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) program, an annual competition that provides teams from all over the state with an opportunity to learn from each other about irrigation water management practices and other aspects of crop production. A substantial portion of past TAPS award winners has been from the Republican River Basin. All the NRDs have had district representation on TAPS teams who've won or placed in the top three of various categories across multiple TAPS competitions. A summary of Republican River Basin TAPS teams and winning TAPS teams from 2017 through 2023 is provided in Table 24.

Table 24. Summary of Republican River Basin TAPS teams and Winning TAPS teams from 2017 through 2023.

NRD or other	Number of Teams	Number of Winning Teams
TBNRD	17	5
URNRD	12	5
MRNRD	45	12
LRNRD	27	4
Basin (NRD not specified)	2	1

Goal 4 When possible, pursue projects that not only benefit water supplies and uses, but also create benefits for fish, wildlife, recreation and conveyance within the Republican River Basin

Obj. 4.1 Where feasible and beneficial, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and public outdoor recreational opportunities

4.1.1 *Partner with wildlife-focused organizations on projects that benefit the organizations' habitat and wildlife interests while also helping to fulfill other goals of this Plan*



The Republican Basin NRDs continued to partner with wildlife-focused organizations on projects to benefit habitat and wildlife interests in the Basin in 2023. Upper, Middle, and Lower Republican NRDs conducted efforts through the N-CORPE Augmentation Project (N-CORPE) including public outreach, habitat improvement, and funding opportunities for improvements. N-CORPE partnered with UNL on a bat study and wildlife occupancy study. The NRDs also conduct tours of the N-CORPE property.

“Planting for Pheasants Forever” plantings are provided by Middle Republican NRD, and the District also participates in the NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Nebraska Forest Service Project.

Lower Republican NRD continues to support Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) through the lease of office space. Lower Republican NRD provides cost sharing on corners for wildlife.

Upper Republican NRD encouraged Southwest Weed Management District to fund tree, weed and brush removal at the Rock Creek Fish hatchery in Dundy County that is owned and operated by NGPC. The district worked cooperatively with NGPC to define the project scope. The project is intended to improve hatchery operations flow within Rock Creek, a tributary of the Republican River. The NRDs also provide support to the Twin Valley Weed Management and Southwest Weed Management Districts for the removal of invasive vegetation throughout the Basin, as described under Action Items 4.1.3 and 4.2.1.

4.1.2 *Promote public recreation on the river, when doing so can also help to fulfill other goals of the Plan*



In 2023 N-CORPE partnered with NGPC, Pheasants Forever, Visit North Platte, and North Platte Trails Committee to provide opportunities for public hunting; youth hunting; hiking, biking, and horse trails; and a seasonal Prairie Chicken blind. In addition, N-CORPE partnered with NRCS to provide outdoor safety training.

Lower Republican NRD supports NGPC through lease of office space. Through the Lower Republican NRD office, the NGPC provides public information regarding public recreation on open lands for recreation.

4.1.3 *Cooperate in projects to assess and restore riparian wetlands while also helping to fulfill other goals of the Plan*



The NRDs provide financial support to weed management districts for the removal of invasive vegetation and noxious weeds throughout the Basin, including for restoration of riparian wetlands. Upper Republican NRD and Middle Republican NRD financially support the Southwest Weed Management District, and Upper Republican NRD is a board member of the Southwest Weed Management District and actively engaged in selection of projects to clear riparian areas of undesirable vegetation. Lower Republican NRD financially supports the Twin Valley Weed Management District. The NRDs have also worked with the weed management districts on projects across the basin to restore riparian areas, providing funding and time toward the projects.

Through Lower Republican NRD's financial support of the Twin Valley Weed Management district which eradicates invasive and noxious weeds along the Republican River, both native and desirable species are provided restoration opportunity to succeed as riparian wetlands rather than forested, shrubbed, or palustrine wetlands.

Obj. 4.2 **Where feasible and beneficial, reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance**

4.2.1 *Cooperate in removing undesirable vegetation impacting water conveyance and managing reinfestation*



As described under Action Item 4.1.3, the NRDs provide financial support to the Southwest and Twin Valley Weed management districts for the removal of invasive vegetation and noxious weeds throughout the Basin. Upper Republican NRD has a representative on the board of the Southwest Weed Management District and is actively engaged in selection of projects to remove undesirable vegetation to improve streamflow. Lower Republican NRD financially supports the Twin Valley Weed Management district which eradicates invasive and noxious weeds in the Republican River Basin.

Assessment of Measurable Hydrologic Objectives (MHOs)

Under *Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-755 (4)(b)*, this basin-wide plan is required to include measurable hydrologic objectives (MHOs) to ensure that reasonable progress is being made toward achieving the goals and objectives of the plan. The basin-wide plan includes five MHOs, which are each evaluated either annually or every five years, as specified in the basin-wide plan. The MHOs and their assessment schedules are summarized in Table 25. Results of the MHO evaluations are described beginning on page 65.

In the table summarizing the results of each MHO, possible results of the assessment are described, including whether the results indicate that further discussion is required or not. If a result indicates that discussion of next steps is required, this means that NeDNR and the NRDs will discuss the test results and determine what actions will be taken to achieve the MHO in the future, as described in the basin-wide plan.

Table 25. Measurable Hydrologic Objectives (MHOs) agreed to during plan development and adoption. During plan implementation, each MHO is to be evaluated either annually or every 5 years, as specified in the basin-wide plan.

Measurable Hydrologic Objective (MHO)	Evaluation Frequency
MHO A: Maintain each NRD's net groundwater depletions to streamflow within its portion of Nebraska's allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow	Annually
MHO B: Limit groundwater depletions to streamflow to a relatively constant level over the long-term both across the basin as a whole and within each NRD	Every 5 years, beginning in 2023
MHO C: Ensure there is always enough groundwater for all groundwater uses within the timeframe of this plan, either by stabilizing groundwater levels or managing declining groundwater levels	Every 5 years, beginning in 2023
MHO D: Continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for special regulations in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance	Annually
MHO E: Continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for administration of surface water use for Compact compliance	Annually

MHO A Evaluation

MHO A Assessment Criteria

MHO A is to maintain each NRD's net groundwater depletions to streamflow within its portion of Nebraska's allowable depletions to streamflow. For the purposes of MHO A, "net groundwater depletions to streamflow" includes augmentation and other management actions.

The basin-wide plan defines the MHO A assessment as follows: for the previous Compact averaging period (2 or 5 years, as determined by Compact accounting procedures), has each NRD's net groundwater depletions to streamflow for the RRCA model area remained within its portion of Nebraska's allowable






groundwater depletions to streamflow, as specified in the IMPs? This MHO is being achieved if the answer to that question is yes for each NRD. The results of this assessment are described in the next subsection.

The MHO A assessment as described above applies only to Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs, because these are the three NRDs that receive a portion of Nebraska’s allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow as defined and under the terms of their IMPs. The equivalent test from the IMP for the Republican Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD is the hydrologically balanced assessment, which evaluates whether Tri-Basin NRD’s depletions from groundwater pumping exceeded accretions from the groundwater mound caused by seepage from Platte River canals within in the district, when calculated on a three-year rolling average basis. The results from that analysis are included below, beginning on page 66.

MHO A Evaluation Results for 2023

MHO A evaluation results are summarized in Table 26. For 2023, MHO A is being achieved for Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs. Each NRD’s groundwater net depletions to streamflow remained within its portion of Nebraska’s allowable depletions to streamflow, as specified in the IMPs. The evaluation and results for each NRD are described below the summary table.

Table 26. Summary of MHO A results for 2023.

Key to Possible Test Results	 MHO is being achieved. NRD’s actual depletions were within its allowable depletions. No further discussion is needed.		
	 MHO is not being achieved. NRD’s actual depletions exceeded its allowable depletions. Discussion of next steps is required.		
NRD	Upper Republican	Middle Republican	Lower Republican
NRD’s Results for 2023			

According to the Compact accounting procedures, the averaging period applicable to 2023 is five-year averaging.

Allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow for each NRD are defined in the *Monitoring & Studies Technical Memorandum for the URNRD, MRNRD, and LRNRD IMPs*. Each NRD’s groundwater depletions to streamflow is calculated using the RRCA groundwater model. An NRD’s net depletions are the sum of groundwater depletions and the impacts to Nebraska’s Compact balance from management actions taken.

Altogether, the difference between an NRD’s allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow and the NRD’s groundwater net depletions to streamflow is equivalent to the average of the NRD’s annual balances over the appropriate averaging period where an annual balance is calculated as:

*(Nebraska Allocation + Nebraska Credits – SWCBCU_{NE} – Other NRD CBCU – All NRD Management Actions) * NRD's Applicable Baseline Depletion Percentage – NRD GwCBCU + NRD Management Actions*

The results of the five-year average evaluation for MHO A for 2023 for each NRD are shown in Table 27. Two-year averaging was not evaluated this year as part of MHO A because, under RRCA Accounting Procedures, two-year averaging does not apply for 2023.

Table 27. MHO A evaluation results for 2023, with five-year averaging. Positive values indicate that allowable groundwater depletions to streamflow exceeded actual groundwater net depletions to streamflow. The five-year averaging period for MHO A is evaluated based on the average of the evaluation year (2023) and the previous four years, in conformance with RRCA Accounting Procedures.





Year	Difference between allowable depletions and actual groundwater net depletions (acre-feet)		
	Lower Republican NRD	Middle Republican NRD	Upper Republican NRD
2019	40,262	46,951	65,758
2020	14,844	28,487	26,335
2021	2,229	12,180	12,577
2022	-6,947	2,063	-7,059
2023	-9,364	-2,802	-5,702
5-year average (2019–2023)	8,205	17,376	18,382
5-year average positive?	Yes	Yes	Yes

Tri-Basin NRD Hydrologically Balanced Assessment Results for 2023

The hydrologically balanced assessment from the IMP for the Republican Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD evaluates whether Tri-Basin NRD's depletions from groundwater pumping and accretions from the mound are hydrologically balanced when calculated on a three-year rolling average basis. This assessment is performed by NeDNR each fall, following finalization of RRCA data for the prior calendar year.

Hydrologically balanced assessment results for 2023 are summarized in Table 28. The analysis and results are explained below the summary table.

Table 28. Summary of results of hydrologically balanced assessment for Tri-Basin NRD for 2023.

<p>Key to Possible Test Results</p>	<p> In compliance with IMP. On a three-year rolling average basis, depletions from groundwater pumping did not exceed accretions from the mound. Also, sufficient management actions were taken in 2023 to offset net depletions from previous year's test, if any. No further discussion is needed.</p> <p> Caution. On a three-year rolling average basis, depletions from groundwater pumping exceeded accretions from the mound. Under the terms of the IMP, management actions are required to maintain a hydrologically balanced condition. Discussion of next steps is required.</p> <p> Insufficient management actions were taken in 2023 to offset net depletions from previous year's assessment. Discussion of next steps is required.</p>
<p>Tri-Basin NRD's Results for 2023</p>	<p></p>

Full details of the hydrologically balanced assessment for 2023 are included in NeDNR's report for the IMP for the Republican Basin portion of Tri-Basin NRD, titled *2023 Annual Report of 2022 Data by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to Meet the Requirements of the Integrated Management Plan for Those Portions of the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District within the Republican River Basin*. The three-year average net effect is positive for 2023 (Figure 15), meaning that mound accretions exceeded groundwater depletions from pumping on a three-year average basis; therefore, no offsets are required in the future as a result of the 2023 test. In addition, no management actions were required to be taken by Tri-Basin NRD in 2023 to offset the results of a previous year's test.

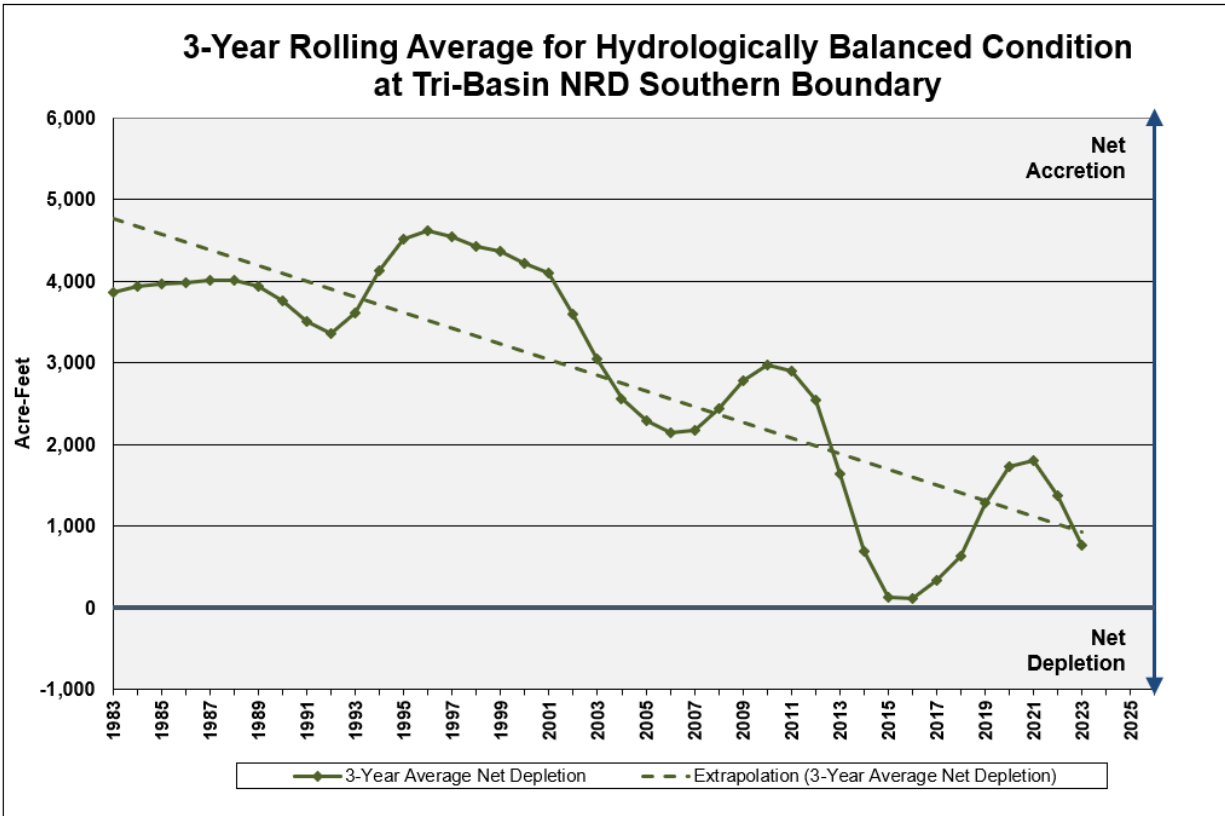


Figure 15. Rolling three-year average net effect to baseflow as the total of modeled values of streamflow depletion and mound accretions, using the August 2020 RRCA Accounting Procedures and the RRCA groundwater model.

MHO B Evaluation

MHO B is evaluated every five years as part of the basin-wide plan’s five-year technical review. No MHO B evaluation is required this year. The next five-year technical analysis will be completed in 2028.

MHO C Evaluation

MHO C is evaluated every five years as part of the basin-wide plan’s five-year technical review. No MHO C evaluation is required this year. The next five-year technical analysis will be completed in 2028.

For additional information about the next phase of evaluation for MHO C, see the text in this report under Action Item 1.3.2, **MHO C**.

MHO D Evaluation

MHO D Assessment Criteria

MHO D is to continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for special regulations in the Rapid Response Area for Compact compliance.






The basin-wide plan defines the MHO D assessment as follows: during the previous year, has groundwater pumping within the Rapid Response Area of any NRD been curtailed to ensure Compact compliance? This MHO is being achieved if the answer to that question is no for each NRD. The results of this assessment are described in the next subsection.

Note that this assessment only applies to Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs. The IMPs for those NRDs state that in Compact Call Years, if management actions taken by the NRD are insufficient to ensure compliance, the NRD will implement additional ground water controls and regulations to make up for any expected shortfall, which will include curtailment of groundwater pumping within the Rapid Response Area (10 Percent/5-Year Area) of the NRD. The purpose of this MHO is to ascertain whether such curtailment occurred.

MHO D Evaluation Results for 2023

MHO D evaluation results are summarized in Table 29. For 2023, MHO D is being achieved for Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs, as none of the NRDs curtailed pumping within the Rapid Response Area in 2023 to ensure Compact Compliance.

Table 29. Summary of MHO D results for 2023.

Key to Possible Test Results	 MHO is being achieved. NRD did not curtail groundwater pumping within the Rapid Response Area to ensure Compact compliance. No further discussion needed.		
	 MHO is not being achieved. NRD curtailed groundwater pumping within the Rapid Response Area to ensure Compact Compliance. Discussion of next steps is required.		
NRD	Upper Republican	Middle Republican	Lower Republican
NRD's Results for 2023			

MHO E Evaluation

MHO E Assessment Criteria

MHO E is to continue existing and initiate new actions that reduce the need for administration of surface water use for Compact compliance.

The basin-wide plan defines the MHO E assessment as follows: During the previous year, has surface water use within the basin been administered to reduce surface water use to ensure Compact compliance? This MHO is being achieved if the answer to that question is no. The results of this assessment are described in the next subsection.

Note that for the purposes of MHO E, only surface water administration that occurs to fulfill Nebraska's Compact obligations as described in the IMPs for Upper Republican, Middle Republican, and Lower Republican NRDs is included. Surface water administration that is required by the terms of the FSS is

excluded from MHO E. For more information, see "Surface Water Administration for Compact Compliance."

MHO E Evaluation Results for 2023

MHO E evaluation results are summarized in Table 30. For 2023, MHO E is being achieved, as surface water use within the basin has not been administered for Compact Compliance. For further details, see "Surface Water Administration for Compact Compliance."

In October 2023, Kansas requested administration of 1,860 acre-feet of Remaining Compact Compliance Volume (RCCV) from 2016. The water was administered into the Kansas irrigation supply in Harlan County Lake in late 2023 during the non-irrigation season. The RCCV balance was zero at the end of 2023. MHO E was achieved in 2023 because surface water was not administered for Compact Compliance (no irrigators were shut down during irrigation season), and the RCCV was water generated through NRD management actions.

Table 30. Summary of MHO E results for 2023.




<p>Key to Possible Test Results</p>	<p> MHO is being achieved. NeDNR did not administer surface water to ensure Compact compliance, except as required under the FSS. No further discussion needed.</p> <p> MHO is not being achieved. NeDNR administered surface water to ensure Compact Compliance. Discussion of next steps is required.</p>
<p>Results for 2023</p>	<p></p>



Figure 16. Republican River, photo courtesy of Tri-Basin NRD.