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Natural Resources District

NEWS RELEASE

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NRD Limits Groundwater Use to Protect Aquifers

At their regular board meeting Tuesday night in Minden, the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors voted to change the groundwater quantity management designations of Union and Elk Creek Townships in Gosper County, effective January 1, 2009, according to NRD manager John Thorburn. The NRD board voted to designate Union Township as Phase 3 and Elk Creek Township as Phase 2 groundwater quantity management areas. The board voted not to designate May Township in Kearney County as Phase 2 for 2009.

As of January 1, 2009, irrigators in Union Township will have an irrigation allocation of 27 inches over three years. For the past three years, Union Township has been in Phase 2 of the groundwater quantity management plan, in hope that the groundwater levels there would rise to equal or exceed the average groundwater level during 1981 to 1985. Because groundwater levels haven't returned to 1980s average levels, TBNRD directors determined that pumping limits are needed to arrest groundwater declines.

Elk Creek Township will move into Phase 2 for groundwater quantity management, because this township has been below the 1981-85 average of groundwater levels for three consecutive years. It will remain in Phase 2 for three years.

The NRD board will discuss detailed policies needed to implement the allocation system at their October board meeting. Thorburn said the board still needs to determine whether to allow irrigators to "carry over" unused portions of their groundwater allocation at the end of the initial three-year allocation period.

Anyone with questions regarding the new groundwater quantity designations of Union and Elk Creek Townships can call the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District office at 1-877-995-6688.