

# Blair Field Office Monthly Newsletter

TWENTY-FIRST EDITION - SEPTEMBER 2022



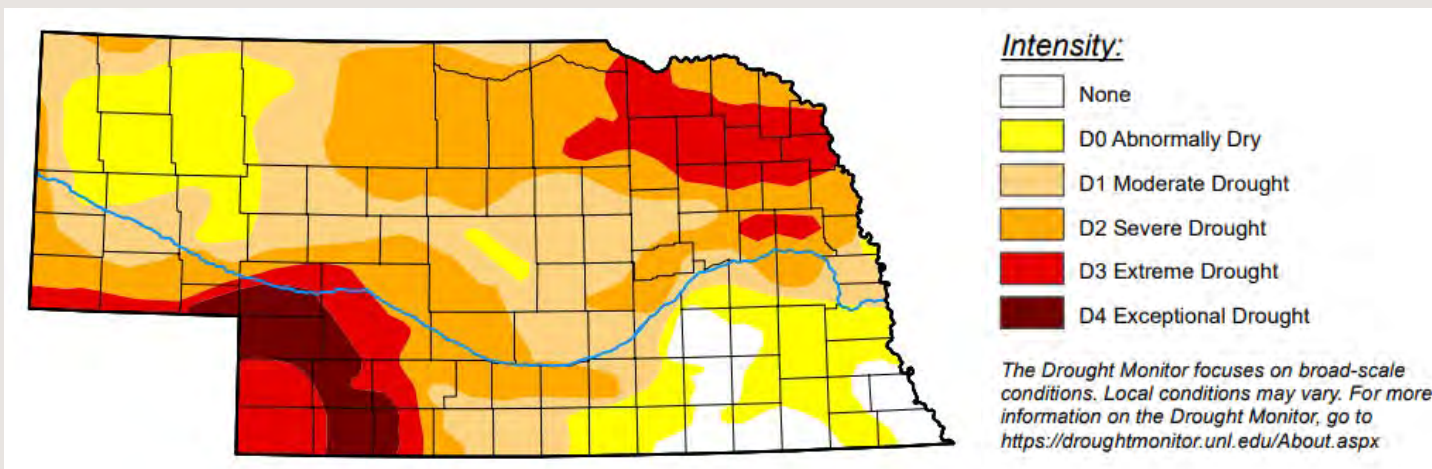
## DROUGHT IMPACTING FALL CONSERVATION WORK

While many farmers are expecting early harvests, there is an added impact to the recent drought conditions throughout Nebraska: a delay in conservation work scheduled for this Fall. "The biggest concern is a lack of soil compaction," says Terry Schumacher, Papio NRD Land and Water Programs Coordinator. "If we don't get substantial moisture, we won't be building terraces, waterways or basins that were planned for this Fall."

According to the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, the 30-year average annual precipitation in Blair is 31.69 inches. As of August 29th, we are totaling 13.36 inches for 2022.

A delay in contracted work due to drought conditions happened in the Papio NRD in 2012. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides the official decision on whether or not construction can move forward on existing contracts. Testing to determine moisture content consists of soil sampling in the field. Andy Bohnenkamp, NRCS District Conservationist, stated that moisture testing for clay and silt soil includes digging and forming clumps, being sure that the soil does not crack or separate when struck sharply and will easily ribbon out between thumb and finger.

If work is officially delayed, construction will be pushed to either Spring or Fall of 2023. "This isn't something we want," says Schumacher, "but we need to make sure that the projects we're utilizing tax dollars to cost-share on meet the effective lifespan of the practice." If you have an existing contract and have questions on a potential delay, please call our office at (402) 426-4782.



The U.S. Drought Monitor is jointly produced by the National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Map Updated August 23rd, 2022. Map courtesy of NDMC.

6TH GRADE CONSERVATION DAYS WILL TAKE PLACE SEPTEMBER 20TH AT SUMMIT LAKE!

# Tribute - Terry's

A Word from Terry Schumacher,  
Land & Water Programs Coordinator

The drought of 2022 has revealed the marginal crop production areas of most everyone's farms - even for farmers who do not have all of the modern technology in their farming operations. These marginal areas are good candidates for enrollment in some type of conservation program, such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) or Pollinator Safety Corners.

The maximum rental rate for CRP is \$300/acre while the annual rental rate for Pollinator Safety Corners is \$250/acre. If the land is within the Papillion Creek 319 Water Quality Watershed, there are additional incentives of \$50/acre to \$150/acre. This makes a CRP practice, such as a buffer strip along a stream, worth up to \$450/acre. Pollinator Safety Corners could qualify for an additional \$100/acre for a total annual payment of \$350/acre.

Quite simply, farm the best and conserve the rest!

## FIELD NOTE:



Photo by Armando Zarco

A Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP) contract in Washington County. Through this program, landowners receive up to \$150/acre to establish wildlife or pollinator habitat. Following establishment, participants receive \$100/acre annually for 5 years for maintenance of the site.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**If all of the water from Nebraska's aquifers was spread out over the state, the water would have a depth of 37.9 feet!**

Source: Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Feb 2022.

## Money Doesn't Grow on Trees, However...

by Armando Zarco, Papio NRD Papillion Creek Watershed Coordinator

2022 has certainly been an unpredictable year with supply shortages, fuel increases, lack of rain, and other rising concerns. One constant in this world is that humanity needs food, and farmers are the backbone that ensure that happens year to year. Some years seem easier than others, but this year has had its challenges. While the Papio NRD cannot predicate the future, we can help ease some of the burden to you and your families by offering assistance to apply for cost-share for practices you may or may not be currently implementing.

The District at large has a cohesive list of opportunities for various cost-share assistance to include construction of terraces, fencing, water wells, windbreaks, and other practices. Should your land be in the northern regions of the Papillion Creek Watershed, you could be eligible for additional cost-share incentives by incorporating new practices that may assist in the reduction of high E. coli levels in the creek. Practices such as cover crops, cropland conversion, buffer strips, waterways, or septic system upgrades can provide even further assistance back into your pockets.

In June 2020, the Papio NRD and Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (NDEE) were approved with grant funding through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for improving the Papillion Creek. However, the deadline for those funds is approaching quickly - Dec. 31. There is another grant under review for more funding starting in 2023 but nothing has been approved at this time. There is still funding available to claim this year so please don't hesitate to give us a call about applying for cost-share and improving your land and the Papillion Creek.