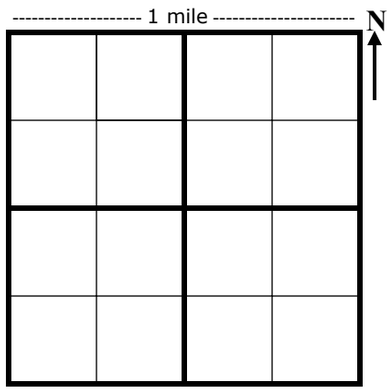
Upper Elkhorn NRD Criteria Ranking for Adding New Groundwater Irrigated Acres – 2027 Growing Season

Form No. _____I.D. #._____(for office use)
Date Received: _____(for office use)

Applicant: _____
(Must be landowner or Power of Attorney)
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone Number: _____
Cell Phone: _____
Contact Person: _____
Phone: _____



Draw the corresponding quarter and denote the location of new acre expansion with hash marks. Example Below:



Expansion of Acres (Flowmeter Required) for an:
☐Existing Well Registration #: _____
☐New Well
Flowmeter Placed on: ☐New Pivot ☐Source Pivot
Location of acre expansion map

_____¼_____¼_____Sec_____Tshp_____Rge

New Acre Expansion Description:
☐___ Corner(s) ☐New
☐Extending Pivot ☐Partial Pie
☐Historical ☐Completing Pie

☐Phase I ☐Phase II ☐Phase III

Criteria and Point Ranking (All points are associated with legal on application)

	Scoring	For Office Use Only
1. Section Stream Depletion Factor _____ (see map): a. ≤ 40.0% stream depletion b. 40.01% - 50.0% stream depletion c. 50.01% - 60.0% stream depletion d. 60.01% - 70.0% stream depletion e. 70.01% - 80.0% stream depletion f. 80.01% - 90.0% stream depletion g. ≥ 90.01% stream depletion	 +40 +35 +20 +15 +10 +5 +0	
2. Groundwater Nitrate Area Contamination (see township map): a. Nitrates in the township ≤ 5.00 ppm b. Nitrates in the township 5.01 – 9.00 ppm c. Nitrates in the township > 9.01ppm	 +20 +5 +0	
3. Static Water Level (SWL)/Depth to Groundwater for the Sub-district (Basin) (see map): a. 20 year Trendline for Subdistrict is increasing b. 20 year Trendline for Subdistrict is level or declining 0 - 12” c. 20 year Trendline for Subdistrict is declining > 12”	 +20 +5 +0	
4. Irrigation Plan: Irrigation method (Flowmeter required, see Guideline #4 below): a. Drip Irrigation b. Pivot/Sprinklers c. Flood, Gated, or Other	 +10 +5 DQ	
5. Irrigation Plan: New Acres to be Irrigated _____ (best estimate): Certification of new acres required, see Guideline #5 below. a. New acres total ≤ 15 acres to complete an irrigation distribution system (finish center pivot) b. New acres total > 15 to 35 acres to complete an irrigation distribution system (finish center pivot) c. New acres total > 35 to 65 acres to complete an irrigation distribution system (finish center pivot) d. All other new expansion acres Finish IDS? Y / N	 +100 +40 +0 +0	
6. Will an obstacle (building, homestead, grain bins, other) be removed to complete this expansion?	Y / N	
Total Points Page 1:		

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	Scoring	For Office Use Only
7. Do you make the fertilizer decisions, purchase fertilizer, or apply more than 50 pounds of nitrogen fertilizer per acre within the Upper Elkhorn NRD? If any apply, are you… (If you are out of compliance these acres are automatically **disqualified**.) a. Certified in Nitrogen Management by NRD – in compliance b. Not Certified in Nitrogen Management by NRD – out of compliance c. Not required to be certified in Nitrogen Management	Y / N +0 DQ +0	
8. Phase II Management Area: If you own or operate acres within the Phase II management area you are required to fill out Phase II reports annually. If you have not submitted Phase II reports these Expansion acres are automatically **disqualified.** a. Acres fall outside Phase II area – not required to report b. Acres fall within Phase II area, reports filed – in compliance c. Acres fall within Phase II area, reports not filed – out of compliance	+0 +0 DQ	
9. Acre certification (If your acres within UENRD are not certified these Expansion acres are automatically **disqualified**.) a. Your acres are not irrigated and therefore not required to be certified b. Your irrigated acres are certified with UENRD – in compliance c. Your irrigated acres are not certified with UENRD – out of compliance	+0 +0 DQ	
10. Web Soil Survey Classification Points – Irrigation capability class will be determined on an area weighted average of each land classification by utilizing the USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey Program. a. Land Classification 1 _____ % X +30 pts = _____ b. Land Classification 2 _____ % X +25 pts = _____ c. Land Classification 3 _____ % X +20 pts = _____ d. Land Classification 4 _____ % X +15 pts = _____ e. Land Classification 5 _____ % X +10 pts = _____ Sub Total f. Land Classification 6-8 _____ % X + 0 pts = _____ _____		
11. Stream drainage data as determined by USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey Program a. Stream drainage b. >1 Stream drainage c. No stream drainage	-5 -10 +0	
12. Bazile Groundwater Management Area (see District or Bazile map) a. Falls outside BGMA b. Falls within BGMA	+10 +0	
13. East Branch Verdigre Creek (see Hydrologic Unit map): (LISTED AS SOUTH BRANCH) a. Falls outside South Branch Verdigre Creek Hydrologic Unit b. Falls inside South Branch Verdigre Creek Hydrologic Unit	+10 +0	
14. Willow Creek Watershed (see Hydrologic Unit map) a. Falls outside Willow Creek Hydrologic Unit b. Falls within Willow Creek Hydrologic Unit	+10 +0	
15. Niobrara/Missouri River (see 10/50 map) If the proposed acres fall within the 10/50 area AND that basin is labelled "Fully Appropriated," the acres will be automatically **disqualified** from this acre expansion. See 15 in the Guidelines below for more information. a. Falls outside of Niobrara/Missouri River 10/50 area b. Falls within the Niobrara/Missouri River 10/50 area	+10 +0	
16. Proximity to other High-Capacity Wells: a. Well is outside of 1,300 feet of another owner's high-capacity well b. Well is within 1,300 feet of another owner's high-capacity well	+10 +0	
17. Is the well that will be used to irrigate these acres a new well (entirely or helper) or old well? a. Old well (must own) b. New well	+10 +0	
Total Points Page 2:		

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18. Conservation Practices existing for the developed acres (max. 10 points) a. Existing CCRP, SAFE, Corners for Wildlife, NSWCP, or similar program being used on application site (Documentation must be provided by applicant, see Guidelines below) List Practices: _____ b. No addition or removal of conservation practices	+2.5/ Contract +0	
19. Best management practices existing for the developed/adjoining acres (max. 10 points). Please see 19 in the Ranking Criteria Guidelines below; additional signature required. a. New and/or Existing use of soil moisture probe, cover crops, nitrogen inhibitors on application site. (Contract or receipt documentation must be provided by applicant) List BMPs: _____ b. No addition or removal of best management practices	+2.5/ Contract +0	
Total Points Page 3:		
Total Points Page 2:		
Total Points Page 1:		
Total Points (Total Page 1 + Total Page 2 + Total Page 3)		

FEES:
Non-Refundable Application Fee must be submitted prior to application process: $50.00

Non-Refundable Acre Fee must be submitted with Qualifying Application for Expansion of New Groundwater Irrigated Acres:

Less than 25 acres = $125

Greater than 25 Acres (Acres_____X $5 per acre = $_____

The addition of irrigated acres will be rated by the following criteria, which is an overall assessment of the conditions on the proposed site for development. Following a review by NRD staff and the Board of Directors, points will be assigned for the qualification of new irrigated acres. The points recorded on this Criteria Ranking Sheet DO NOT GUARANTEE approval of new groundwater irrigated acres. Expansion of groundwater irrigated acres must meet all District and State rules and regulations. Application time period runs during the month of October 2026. A Non-refundable Application Fee of $50.00 is required to complete the New Groundwater Irrigated Acre Expansion Criteria Ranking Sheet. A qualifying acre fee of $5/acre with a minimum of $125 is required in order to be considered for the expansion of new irrigated acres. Applicants will be notified of their application status within 60 days after the application deadline. Upon approval of this application the expansion of all irrigated acres will have until October 1, 2027 to be completed.

Criteria Ranking Guidelines:

1. Stream depletion factor is based off of the Elkhorn-Loup and CENEB Modeling studies which gives numerical impacts of each section within the UENRD to the Elkhorn River based on proximity and hydroconnectivity. Normally, the farther a section is from the stream and less connected it is, the less the impact.
2. Groundwater Nitrate Area Contamination will be assessed based on area contaminants of Nitrates determined by the NRD sampling conducted annually during the irrigation season. Those areas which have high contaminants will be penalized if the 2025 average nitrates in that area are over 5 ppm (see nitrate township map).
3. Static Water Level (SWL)/Depth to Groundwater review will be conducted by NRD personnel to determine the overall characteristics of the groundwater levels in the area. Area static water levels will be assessed to determine if there is a decline, of spring static water levels, over 20 years with spring of 2026 being the most recent measurement year. Shallow depths to groundwater are more susceptible to flooding and contamination and will be determined by comparing area wells.
4. **Installation of a flowmeter will be required on all new expansion of irrigated acres and will be inspected by a UENRD staff member**. If using an existing well, the flowmeter must be installed by May 18, 2027. If using a new well, the flowmeter must be installed by October 1, 2027.

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5. Irrigation Plan will list the best estimate of the new acres to be irrigated. This 2027 Growing Season Acre Expansion will focus on completing irrigation distribution systems (finishing center pivots/completing a "pie.") requiring 15 acres or less. Emphasis will be placed on parcels ≤ 15 acres which are finishing a full circle, 360° center pivot irrigation system. Larger "pies" (> 15 acres to 35 acres) which complete an irrigation distribution system will also be given a higher priority, therefore increasing efficiency of the system by allowing for full rotation. Using acres to partially complete or fill a "pie" does not qualify as finishing a pivot.
    a. **Once the expansion is completed the landowner will have until May 18, 2028 to certify with UENRD the actual expanded irrigated acres, not to exceed estimated acres.**
6. Land where an obstacle is removed will be emphasized.
7. Landowners will also be rated as to whether or not they are certified by the NRD in Nitrogen Management.
8. Landowners will also be rated as to whether or not they are meeting the Phase II reporting requirements.
9. Upon the Nebraska DWEE labeling the District as fully-appropriated where the development is to occur, the landowner may be required to offset those acres if acres have not been irrigated by that designation date.
10. The USDA-NRCS Web Soil Survey program will be used to determine the irrigation capability class and the stream/drainage.
11. See Number 10
12. Within the Bazile Groundwater Management Area? See Map
13. Within the East Branch Verdigre Creek Hydrologic Unit? See Map
14. Within the Willow Creek Watershed Hydrologic Unit? See Map
15. Up to 150 acres will be allotted in 2027 growing season throughout the entire Upper Elkhorn NRD as long as they have not been determined "fully appropriated" by the Department of Water, Energy and Environment.
    a. If the new irrigated acres fall within the 10/50 line of a river basin (i.e. the Niobrara River Basin) and that basin is labelled "fully appropriated," they will be automatically disqualified even if they meet the minimum score requirement. The "fully appropriated" designation will not be made until after the deadline for acre expansion application; any applications with acres in this area apply with the risk of being disqualified after the fact.
16. Proximity to other high-capacity wells will be determined based off of the well registration database. This is done to reduce impact on neighboring wells and relieve stress during the high pumping seasons.
17. The new acres are rated as to whether they will be irrigated completely by an old/existing well, or whether an entirely new or helper well will be installed to irrigate the new acres. **Use of an existing well will need to be maintained for a minimum of 5 years.**
18. Conservation practices under contract on the property applying for a new application permit will receive award points. Conservation practices may include but are not limited to; Continuous CRP, SAFE program, EQIP, Corners for Wildlife, and NSWCP. Conservation practices may be inspected by a UENRD staff member for compliance by October 1, 2027.
19. Best management practices on the property will be awarded points. Proof of practices must be provided through contracts with EQIP, contracts with independent crop consultants, or receipts with proof of use of BMP on parcel. BMPs may include, but are not limited to; use of cover crops, nitrogen inhibitors, grass waterways, no-till, and soil moisture probes. BMPs will be inspected by a UENRD staff member for compliance by October 1, 2027. For a full list and descriptions of approved practices please see "Approved BMPs for 2026 Acre Expansion". **Applicants must sign the BMPs form to earn points associated with this question.**
    a. Using BMPs to gain qualifying points requires the submission of an annual report for 5 years after the acres are developed. Failure to submit reports will result in the forfeiture of expanded acres approved under this contract.
20. A minimum score of ___**140**___ is required to be considered for this acre expansion but does not guarantee the approval of the new acres listed on this application.
21. Applications and Approval are transferable between landowners.

I certify to the best of my knowledge that all information submitted on this form is accurate and truthful; and, that I have read the full application. Falsification of information will cause the application to be revoked.

Signature of Landowner or Power of Attorney: _____ Date: _____

Signature of NRD Employee Compiling Rating: _____ Date: _____