

COMPILATION OF STATUTES
REGARDING THE
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

CHAPTER 46, IRRIGATION AND REGULATION OF WATER

**ARTICLE 7, GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT
AND PROTECTION**

JULY 14, 2006

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CHAPTER 46

ARTICLE 7

NEBRASKA GROUND WATER
MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION ACT

46-701. Act, how cited. Sections 46-701 to 46-753 and section 20 of this act shall be known and may be cited as the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 24; Laws 1981, LB 146, § 12; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 22; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 15; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 31; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 8; Laws 1994, LB 480, § 27; R.S.Supp.,1994, § 46-674; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 7; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.01; Laws 2003, LB 619, § 9; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 41; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 19.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

46-702. Declaration of intent and purpose. The Legislature finds that ownership of water is held by the state for the benefit of its citizens, that ground water is one of the most valuable natural resources in the state, and that an adequate supply of ground water is essential to the general welfare of the citizens of this state and to the present and future development of agriculture in the state. The Legislature recognizes its duty to define broad policy goals concerning the utilization and management of ground water and to ensure local implementation of those goals. The Legislature also finds that natural resources districts have the legal authority to regulate certain activities and, except as otherwise specifically provided by statute, as local entities are the preferred regulators of activities which may contribute to ground water depletion.

Every landowner shall be entitled to a reasonable and beneficial use of the ground water underlying his or her land subject to the provisions of Chapter 46, article 6, and the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act and the correlative rights of other landowners when the ground water supply is insufficient for all users. The Legislature determines that the goal shall be to extend ground water reservoir life to the greatest extent practicable consistent with beneficial use of the ground water and best management practices.

The Legislature further recognizes and declares that the management, protection, and conservation of ground water and the beneficial use thereof are essential to the economic prosperity and future well-being of the state and that the public interest demands procedures for the implementation of management practices to conserve and protect ground water supplies and to prevent the contamination or inefficient or improper use thereof. The Legislature recognizes the need to provide for orderly management systems in areas where management of ground

water is necessary to achieve locally determined ground water management objectives and where available data, evidence, or other information indicates that present or potential ground water conditions, including subirrigation conditions, require the designation of areas with special regulation of development and use.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 1; Laws 1981, LB 146, § 4; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 1; Laws 1983, LB 378, § 1; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 1; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 20; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 7; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-656; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 8; Laws 2003, LB 619, § 10; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.02; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 42.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-703. Legislative findings. The Legislature further finds:

(1) The management, conservation, and beneficial use of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water are essential to the continued economic prosperity and well-being of the state, including the present and future development of agriculture in the state;

(2) Hydrologically connected ground water and surface water may need to be managed differently from unconnected ground water and surface water in order to permit equity among water users and to optimize the beneficial use of interrelated ground water and surface water supplies;

(3) Natural resources districts already have significant legal authority to regulate activities which contribute to declines in ground water levels and to nonpoint source contamination of ground water and are the preferred entities to regulate, through ground water management areas, ground water related activities which are contributing to or are, in the reasonably foreseeable future, likely to contribute to conflicts between ground water users and surface water appropriators or to water supply shortages in fully appropriated or overappropriated river basins, subbasins, or reaches;

(4) The Legislature recognizes that ground water use or surface water use in one natural resources district may have adverse affects on water supplies in another district or in an adjoining state. The Legislature intends and expects that each natural resources district within which water use is causing external impacts will accept responsibility for ground water management in accordance with the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act in the same manner and to the same extent as if the impacts were contained within that district;

(5) The Department of Natural Resources is responsible for regulation of surface water resources and local surface water project sponsors are responsible for much of the structured irrigation utilizing surface water supplies, and these entities should be responsible for regulation of surface water related activities which contribute to conflicts between ground water users and surface water appropriators or to water supply shortages in fully appropriated or overappropriated river basins, subbasins, or reaches;

(6) All involved natural resources districts, the department, and surface water project sponsors should cooperate and collaborate on the identification and implementation of management solutions to conflicts between ground water users and surface water appropriators or to water supply shortages in fully appropriated or overappropriated river basins, subbasins, and reaches; and

(7) An Interrelated Water Review Board is needed to resolve any conflicts between the department and the involved natural resources districts concerning the content, implementation, or enforcement of integrated management plans for fully appropriated and overappropriated river basins, subbasins, and reaches.

Source: Laws 1996, LB 108, § 11; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 189; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.05; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 43.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-704. Management area; legislative findings. The Legislature also finds that:

(1) The levels of nitrate nitrogen and other contaminants in ground water in certain areas of the state are increasing;

(2) Long-term solutions should be implemented and efforts should be made to prevent the levels of ground water contaminants from becoming too high and to reduce high levels sufficiently to eliminate health hazards;

(3) Agriculture has been very productive and should continue to be an important industry to the State of Nebraska;

(4) Natural resources districts have the legal authority to regulate certain activities and, as local entities, are the preferred regulators of activities which may contribute to ground water contamination in both urban and rural areas;

(5) The Department of Environmental Quality should be given authority to regulate sources of contamination when necessary to prevent serious deterioration of ground water quality;

(6) The powers given to districts and the Department of Environmental Quality should be used to stabilize, reduce, and prevent the increase or spread of ground water contamination; and

(7) There is a need to provide for the orderly management of ground water quality in areas where available data, evidence, and other information indicate that present or potential ground water conditions require the designation of such areas as management areas.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 1; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 14; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.02; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 9; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.03; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 44.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-705. Act; how construed. Nothing in the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act shall be construed to limit the powers of the Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure provided in the Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act.

Nothing in the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act relating to the contamination of ground water is intended to limit the powers of the Department of Environmental Quality provided in Chapter 81, article 15.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 19; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.20; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 10; Laws 1996, LB 1044, § 261; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.04; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 45.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross Reference

Nebraska Safe Drinking Water Act, see section 71-5313.

46-706. Terms, defined. For purposes of the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act, the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act, and sections 46-601 to 46-613.02, 46-636, 46-637, and 46-651 to 46-655, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) Person means a natural person, a partnership, a limited liability company, an association, a corporation, a municipality, an irrigation district, an agency or a political subdivision of the state, or a department, an agency, or a bureau of the United States;

(2) Ground water means that water which occurs in or moves, seeps, filters, or percolates through ground under the surface of the land;

(3) Contamination or contamination of ground water means nitrate nitrogen or other material which enters the ground water due to action of any person and causes degradation of the quality of ground water sufficient to make such ground water unsuitable for present or reasonably foreseeable beneficial uses;

(4) District means a natural resources district operating pursuant to Chapter 2, article 32;

(5) Illegal water well means (a) any water well operated or constructed without or in violation of a permit required by the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act, (b) any water well not in compliance with rules and regulations adopted and promulgated pursuant to the act, (c) any water well not properly registered in accordance with sections 46-602 to 46-604, or (d) any water well not in compliance with any other applicable laws of the State of Nebraska or with rules and regulations adopted and promulgated pursuant to such laws;

(6) To commence construction of a water well means the beginning of the boring, drilling, jetting, digging, or excavating of the actual water well from which ground water is to be withdrawn;

(7) Management area means any area so designated by a district pursuant to section 46-712 or 46-718, by the Director of Environmental Quality pursuant to section 46-725, or by the Interrelated Water Review Board pursuant to section 46-719. Management area includes a control area or a special ground water quality protection area designated prior to July 19, 1996;

(8) Management plan means a ground water management plan developed by a district and submitted to the Director of Natural Resources for review pursuant to section 46-711;

(9) Ground water reservoir life goal means the finite or infinite period of time which a district establishes as its goal for maintenance of the supply and quality of water in a ground water reservoir at the time a ground water management plan is adopted;

(10) Board means the board of directors of a district;

(11) Acre-inch means the amount of water necessary to cover an acre of land one inch deep;

(12) Subirrigation or subirrigated land means the natural occurrence of a ground water table within the root zone of agricultural vegetation, not exceeding ten feet below the surface of the ground;

(13) Best management practices means schedules of activities, maintenance procedures, and other management practices utilized for purposes of irrigation efficiency, to conserve or effect a savings of ground water, or to prevent or reduce present and future contamination of ground water. Best management practices relating to contamination of ground water may include, but not be limited to, irrigation scheduling, proper rate and timing of fertilizer application, and other fertilizer and pesticide management programs. In determining the rate of fertilizer application, the district shall consult with the University of Nebraska or a certified crop advisor certified by the American Society of Agronomy;

(14) Point source means any discernible, confined, and discrete conveyance, including, but not limited to, any pipe, channel, tunnel, conduit, well, discrete fissure, container, rolling stock, vessel, other floating craft, or other conveyance, over which the Department of Environmental Quality has regulatory authority and from which a substance which can cause or contribute to contamination of ground water is or may be discharged;

(15) Allocation, as it relates to water use for irrigation purposes, means the allotment of a specified total number of acre-inches of irrigation water per irrigated acre per year or an average number of acre-inches of irrigation water per irrigated acre over any reasonable period of time;

(16) Rotation means a recurring series of use and nonuse of irrigation wells on an hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis;

(17) Water well has the same meaning as in section 46-601.01;

(18) Surface water project sponsor means an irrigation district created pursuant to Chapter 46, article 1, a reclamation district created pursuant to Chapter 46, article 5, or a public power and irrigation district created pursuant to Chapter 70, article 6;

(19) Beneficial use means that use by which water may be put to use to the benefit of humans or other species;

(20) Consumptive use means the amount of water that is consumed under appropriate and reasonably efficient practices to accomplish without waste the purposes for which the appropriation or other legally permitted use is lawfully made;

(21) Dewatering well means a well constructed and used solely for the purpose of lowering the ground water table elevation;

(22) Emergency situation means any set of circumstances that requires the use of water from any source that might otherwise be regulated or prohibited and the agency, district, or organization responsible for regulating water use from such source reasonably and in good faith believes that such use is necessary to protect the public health, safety, and welfare, including, if applicable, compliance with federal or state water quality standards;

(23) Good cause shown means a reasonable justification for granting a variance for a consumptive use of water that would otherwise be prohibited by rule or regulation and which the granting agency, district, or organization reasonably and in good faith believes will provide an economic, environmental, social, or public health and safety benefit that is equal to or greater than the benefit resulting from the rule or regulation from which a variance is sought;

(24) Historic consumptive use means the amount of water that has previously been consumed under appropriate and reasonably efficient practices to accomplish without waste the purposes for which the appropriation or other legally permitted use was lawfully made;

(25) Monitoring well means a water well that is designed and constructed to provide ongoing hydrologic or water quality information and is not intended for consumptive use;

(26) Order, except as otherwise specifically provided, includes any order required by the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act, by rule or regulation, or by a decision adopted by a district by vote of the board of directors of the district taken at any regularly scheduled or specially scheduled meeting of the board;

(27) Overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development means the extent to which existing uses of hydrologically connected surface water and ground water and conservation activities result in the water supply available for purposes identified in subsection (3) of section 46-713 to be less than the water supply available if the river basin,

subbasin, or reach had been determined to be fully appropriated in accordance with section 46-714;

(28) Test hole means a hole designed solely for the purposes of obtaining information on hydrologic or geologic conditions; and

(29) Variance means (a) an approval to deviate from a restriction imposed under subsection (1), (2), (9), or (10) of section 46-714 or (b) the approval to act in a manner contrary to existing rules or regulations from a governing body whose rule or regulation is otherwise applicable.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 2; Laws 1980, LB 643, § 9; Laws 1981, LB 146, § 5; Laws 1981, LB 325, § 1; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 2; Laws 1983, LB 378, § 2; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 2; Laws 1986, LB 886, § 5; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 21; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 1; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 8; Laws 1993, LB 121, § 279; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 24; Laws 1993, LB 439, § 1; Laws 1993, LB 789, § 5; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-657; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 13; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 190; Laws 2001, LB 135, § 1; Laws 2003, LB 93, § 1; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.07; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 46; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 21.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

Cross Reference

Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act, see section 46-650.

46-707. Natural resources district; powers; enumerated. Regardless of whether or not any portion of a district has been designated as a management area, in order to administer and enforce the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act and to effectuate the policy of the state to conserve ground water resources, a district may:

(1) Adopt and promulgate rules and regulations necessary to discharge the administrative duties assigned in the act;

(2) Require such reports from ground water users as may be necessary;

(3) Require meters to be placed on any water wells for the purpose of acquiring water use data;

(4) Require decommissioning of water wells that are not properly classified as active status water wells as defined in section 46-1204.02 or inactive status water wells as defined in section 46-1207.02;

(5) Conduct investigations and cooperate or contract with agencies of the United States, agencies or political subdivisions of this state, public or private corporations, or any association or individual on any matter relevant to the administration of the act;

(6) Report to and consult with the Department of Environmental Quality on all matters concerning the entry of contamination or contaminating materials into ground water supplies; and

(7) Issue cease and desist orders, following ten days' notice to the person affected stating the contemplated action and in general the grounds for the action and following reasonable opportunity to be heard, to enforce any of the provisions of the act or of orders or permits issued pursuant to the act, to initiate suits to enforce the provisions of orders issued pursuant to the act, and to restrain the construction of illegal water wells or the withdrawal or use of water from illegal water wells.

Before any rule or regulation is adopted pursuant to this section, a public hearing shall be held within the district. Notice of the hearing shall be given as provided in section 46-743.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 8; Laws 1979, LB 26, § 2; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 18; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 6; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 24; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 10; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 29; Laws 1995, LB 871, § 6; R.S.Supp.,1995, § 46-663; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 14; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.08; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 47.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-708. Action to control or prevent runoff of water; natural resources district; rules and regulations; power to issue cease and desist orders; notice; hearing.

(1) In order to conserve ground water supplies and to prevent the inefficient or improper runoff of such ground water, each person who uses ground water irrigation in the state shall take action to control or prevent the runoff of water used in such irrigation.

(2) Each district shall adopt, following public hearing, notice of which shall be given in the manner provided in section 46-743, rules and regulations necessary to control or prohibit surface runoff of water derived from ground water irrigation. Such rules and regulations shall prescribe (a) standards and criteria delineating what constitutes the inefficient or improper runoff of ground water used in irrigation, (b) procedures to prevent, control, and abate such runoff, (c) measures for the construction, modification, extension, or operation of remedial measures to prevent, control, or abate runoff of ground water used in irrigation, and (d) procedures for the enforcement of this section.

(3) Each district may, upon ten days' notice to the person affected, stating the contemplated action and in general the grounds therefor, and upon reasonable opportunity to be heard, issue cease and desist orders to enforce any of the provisions of this section or rules and regulations issued pursuant to this section.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 9; Laws 1978, LB 217, § 1; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-664; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 17; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.11; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 48.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-709. Ground water management plan; required; contents. Each district shall maintain a ground water management plan based upon the best available information and shall submit amendments to such plan to the Director of Natural Resources for review and approval.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to, the identification to the extent possible of:

(1) Ground water supplies within the district including transmissivity, saturated thickness maps, and other ground water reservoir information, if available;

(2) Local recharge characteristics and rates from any sources, if available;

(3) Average annual precipitation and the variations within the district;

(4) Crop water needs within the district;

(5) Current ground water data-collection programs;

(6) Past, present, and potential ground water use within the district;

(7) Ground water quality concerns within the district;

(8) Proposed water conservation and supply augmentation programs for the district;

(9) The availability of supplemental water supplies, including the opportunity for ground water recharge;

(10) The opportunity to integrate and coordinate the use of water from different sources of supply;

(11) Ground water management objectives, including a proposed ground water reservoir life goal for the district. For management plans adopted or revised after July 19, 1996, the ground water management objectives may include any proposed integrated management objectives for hydrologically connected ground water and surface water supplies but a management plan does not have to be revised prior to the adoption or implementation of an integrated management plan pursuant to section 46-718 or 46-719;

(12) Existing subirrigation uses within the district;

(13) The relative economic value of different uses of ground water proposed or existing within the district; and

(14) The geographic and stratigraphic boundaries of any proposed management area.

If the expenses incurred by a district preparing or amending a ground water management plan exceed twenty-five percent of the district's current budget, the district may make application to the Nebraska Resources Development Fund for assistance.

Each district's ground water management plan shall also identify, to the extent possible, the levels and sources of ground water contamination within the district, ground water quality goals, long-term solutions necessary to prevent the levels of ground water contaminants from becoming too high and to reduce high levels sufficiently to eliminate health hazards, and practices recommended to stabilize, reduce, and prevent the occurrence, increase, or spread of ground water contamination.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 3; Laws 1983, LB 378, § 3; Laws 1984, LB 1106, § 37; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.01; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 18; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 191; Laws 2003, LB 619, § 12; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.12; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 49.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-710. Ground water management plan preparation or modification; district; solicit and utilize information. During preparation or modification of a ground water management plan, the district shall actively solicit public comments and opinions and shall utilize and draw upon existing research, data, studies, or any other information which has been compiled by or is in the possession of state or federal agencies, natural resources districts, or any other subdivision of the state. State agencies, districts, and other subdivisions shall furnish information or data upon the request of any district preparing or modifying such a plan. A district shall not be required to initiate new studies or data-collection efforts or to develop computer models in order to prepare or modify a plan.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 4; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.02; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 19; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.13; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 50.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-711. Ground water management plan; director; review; duties. (1) The Director of Natural Resources shall review any ground water management plan or plan modification submitted by a district to ensure that the best available studies, data, and information, whether previously existing or newly initiated, were utilized and considered and that such plan is supported by and is a reasonable application of such information. If a management area is proposed and the primary purpose of the proposed management area is protection of water quality, the director shall consult with the Department of Environmental Quality regarding approval or denial of the management plan. The director shall consult with the Conservation and Survey Division of the University of Nebraska and such other state or federal agencies the director shall deem necessary when reviewing plans. Within ninety days after receipt of a plan, the director shall transmit his or her specific findings, conclusions, and reasons for approval or disapproval to the district submitting the plan.

(2) If the Director of Natural Resources disapproves a ground water management plan, the district which submitted the plan shall, in order to establish a management area, submit to the director either the original or a revised plan with an explanation of how the original or revised plan addresses the issues raised by the director in his or her reasons for disapproval. Once a district has submitted an explanation pursuant to this section, such district may proceed to schedule a hearing pursuant to section 46-712.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 5; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 27; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 12; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.03; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 20; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 192; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.14; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 51.

Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-712. Management area; establishment; when; hearing; notice; procedure. (1) A natural resources district may establish a ground water management area in accordance with this section to accomplish any one or more of the following objectives: (a) Protection of ground water quantity; (b) protection of ground water quality; or (c) prevention or resolution of conflicts between users of ground water and appropriators of surface water, which ground water and surface water are hydrologically connected.

(2) Prior to establishment by a district of a management area other than a management area being established in accordance with section 46-718, the district's management plan shall have been approved by the Director of Natural Resources or the district shall have completed the requirements of subsection (2) of section 46-711. If necessary to determine whether a management area should be designated, the district may initiate new studies and data-collection efforts and develop computer models. In order to establish a management area, the district shall fix a time and place for a public hearing to consider the management plan information supplied by the director and to hear any other evidence. The hearing shall be located within or in reasonable proximity to the area proposed for designation as a management area. Notice of the hearing shall be published as provided in section 46-743, and the hearing shall be conducted in accordance with such section.

(3)(a) Within ninety days after the hearing, the district shall determine whether a management area shall be designated. If the district determines that no management area shall be established, the district shall issue an order to that effect.

(b) If the district determines that a management area shall be established, the district shall by order designate the area as a management area and shall adopt one or more controls authorized by section 46-739 to be utilized within the area in order to achieve the ground water management objectives specified in the plan. Such an order shall include a geographic and stratigraphic definition of the area. The boundaries and controls shall take into account any considerations brought forth at the hearing and administrative factors directly affecting the ability of the district to implement and carry out local ground water management.

(c) The controls adopted shall not include controls substantially different from those set forth in the notice of the hearing. The area designated by the order shall not include any area not included in the notice of the hearing.

(4) Modification of the boundaries of a district-designated management area or dissolution of such an area shall be in accordance with the procedures established in this section. Hearings for such modifications or for dissolution may not be initiated more often than once a year. Hearings for modification of controls may be initiated as often as deemed necessary by the district, and such modifications may be accomplished using the procedure in this section.

(5) A district shall, prior to adopting or amending any rules or regulations for a management area, consult with any holders of permits for intentional or incidental underground water storage and recovery issued pursuant to section 46-226.02, 46-233, 46-240, 46-241, 46-242, or 46-297.

(6) If a ground water management area has been adopted by a district under this section that includes one or more controls authorized by subdivisions (1)(f) or (1)(m) of section 46-739, the district may request the Department of Natural Resources to conduct an evaluation to determine if an immediate stay should be placed on the issuance of new surface water natural-flow appropriations in the area, river basin, subbasin, or reach of the management area, and the department may determine that the stay is in the public interest. The stay may include provisions for exceptions to be granted for beneficial uses as described in subsection (3) of section 46-714 or for a project that provides hydrological benefit to the area of the stay and may include provisions that the stay may be rescinded based on new or additional information that may become available.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 7; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 28; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 2; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 13; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.05; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 25; Laws 1997, LB 188, § 1; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 195; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.19; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 52; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 22.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

46-713. Department of Natural Resources; hydrologically connected water supplies; evaluation; report; determinations. (1)(a) By January 1 of each year beginning in 2006 and except as otherwise provided in this section and section 46-720, the Department of Natural Resources shall complete an evaluation of the expected long-term availability of hydrologically connected water supplies for both existing and new surface water uses and existing and new ground water uses in each of the state's river basins and shall issue a report that describes the results of the evaluation. For purposes of the evaluation and the report, a river basin may be divided into two or more subbasins or reaches. A river basin, subbasin, or reach for which an integrated management plan has been or is being developed pursuant to sections 46-715 to 46-717 or pursuant to section 46-719 shall not be evaluated unless it is being reevaluated as provided in subsection (2) of this section. For each river basin, subbasin, or reach evaluated, the report shall describe (i) the nature and extent of use of both surface water and ground water in each river basin, subbasin, or reach, (ii) the geographic area within which the department

preliminarily considers surface water and ground water to be hydrologically connected and the criteria used for that determination, and (iii) the extent to which the then-current uses affect available near-term and long-term water supplies. River basins, subbasins, and reaches designated as overappropriated in accordance with subsection (4) of this section shall not be evaluated by the department.

(b) Based on the information reviewed in the evaluation process, the department shall arrive at a preliminary conclusion for each river basin, subbasin, and reach evaluated as to whether such river basin, subbasin, or reach presently is fully appropriated without the initiation of additional uses. The department shall also determine if and how such preliminary conclusion would change if no additional legal constraints were imposed on future development of hydrologically connected surface water and ground water and reasonable projections are made about the extent and location of future development in such river basin, subbasin, or reach.

(c) In addition to the conclusion about whether a river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated, the department shall include in the report, for informational purposes only, a summary of relevant data provided by any interested party concerning the social, economic, and environmental impacts of additional hydrologically connected surface water and ground water uses on resources that are dependent on streamflow or ground water levels but are not protected by appropriations or regulations.

(d) In preparing the report, the department shall rely on the best scientific data, information, and methodologies readily available to ensure that the conclusions and results contained in the report are reliable. In its report, the department shall provide sufficient documentation to allow these data, information, methodologies, and conclusions to be independently replicated and assessed. Upon request by the department, state agencies, natural resources districts, irrigation districts, reclamation districts, public power and irrigation districts, mutual irrigation companies, canal companies, municipalities, and other water users and stakeholders shall provide relevant data and information in their possession. The Department of Natural Resources shall specify by rule and regulation the types of scientific data and other information that will be considered for making the preliminary determinations required by this section.

(2) The department shall complete a reevaluation of a river basin, subbasin, or reach for which an integrated management plan has been or is being prepared if the department has reason to believe that a reevaluation might lead to a different determination about whether such river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated or overappropriated. A decision to reevaluate may be reached by the department on its own or in response to a petition filed with the department by any interested person. To be considered sufficient to justify a reevaluation, a petition shall be accompanied by supporting information showing that (a) new scientific data or other information relevant to the determination of whether the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated or overappropriated has become available since the last evaluation of such river basin, subbasin, or reach, (b) the department relied on incorrect or incomplete information when the river basin, subbasin, or reach was last evaluated, or (c) the department erred in its interpretation or application of the information available when the river basin, subbasin, or reach was last evaluated. If a petition determined by the department to be sufficient is filed before March 1 of

any year, the reevaluation of the river basin, subbasin, or reach involved shall be included in the next annual report prepared in accordance with subsection (1) of this section. If any such petition is filed on or after March 1 of any year, the department may defer the reevaluation of the river basin, subbasin, or reach involved until the second annual report after such filing.

(3) A river basin, subbasin, or reach shall be deemed fully appropriated if the department determines based upon its evaluation conducted pursuant to subsection (1) of this section and information presented at the hearing pursuant to subsection (4) of section 46-714 that then-current uses of hydrologically connected surface water and ground water in the river basin, subbasin, or reach cause or will in the reasonably foreseeable future cause (a) the surface water supply to be insufficient to sustain over the long term the beneficial or useful purposes for which existing natural-flow or storage appropriations were granted and the beneficial or useful purposes for which, at the time of approval, any existing instream appropriation was granted, (b) the streamflow to be insufficient to sustain over the long term the beneficial uses from wells constructed in aquifers dependent on recharge from the river or stream involved, or (c) reduction in the flow of a river or stream sufficient to cause noncompliance by Nebraska with an interstate compact or decree, other formal state contract or agreement, or applicable state or federal laws.

(4)(a) A river basin, subbasin, or reach shall be deemed overappropriated if, on July 16, 2004, the river basin, subbasin, or reach is subject to an interstate cooperative agreement among three or more states and if, prior to such date, the department has declared a moratorium on the issuance of new surface water appropriations in such river basin, subbasin, or reach and has requested each natural resources district with jurisdiction in the affected area in such river basin, subbasin, or reach either (i) to close or to continue in effect a previously adopted closure of all or part of such river basin, subbasin, or reach to the issuance of additional water well permits in accordance with subdivision (1)(k) of section 46-656.25 as such section existed prior to July 16, 2004, or (ii) to temporarily suspend or to continue in effect a temporary suspension, previously adopted pursuant to section 46-656.28 as such section existed prior to July 16, 2004, on the drilling of new water wells in all or part of such river basin, subbasin, or reach.

(b) Within sixty days after July 16, 2004, the department shall designate which river basins, subbasins, or reaches are overappropriated. The designation shall include a description of the geographic area within which the department has determined that surface water and ground water are hydrologically connected and the criteria used to make such determination.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 53; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 23.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

46-714. River basin, subbasin, or reach; stay on new appropriations; notifications required; hearing; natural resources district; duties. (1) Whenever the Department of Natural Resources makes a preliminary determination that a river basin, subbasin, or reach not previously designated as overappropriated and not previously determined to be fully appropriated has become fully appropriated, the department shall place an immediate stay on the issuance of any new natural-flow, storage, or storage-use appropriations in such river basin, subbasin, or reach. The department shall also provide prompt notice of such preliminary determination to all licensed water well contractors in the state and to each natural resources

district that encompasses any of the geographic area involved. Such notice to natural resources districts shall be by certified mail. The notice shall be addressed to the manager of the natural resources district or his or her designee and shall include the signature of the Director of Natural Resources. Immediately upon receipt of such notice by the natural resources district, there shall be a stay on issuance of water well construction permits in the geographic area preliminarily determined by the department to include hydrologically connected surface water and ground water in such river basin, subbasin, or reach. The department shall also notify the public of the preliminary determination that the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated and of the affected geographic area. Such notice shall be provided by publication once each week for three consecutive weeks in at least one newspaper of statewide circulation and in such other newspaper or newspapers as are deemed appropriate by the department to provide general circulation in the river basin, subbasin, or reach.

(2) If the department preliminarily determines a river basin, subbasin, or reach to be fully appropriated and has identified the existence of hydrologically connected surface water and ground water in such river basin, subbasin, or reach, stays shall also be imposed:

(a) On the construction of any new water well in the area covered by the determination unless a permit with conditions imposed by the natural resources district has been issued prior to the determination. Such conditions shall meet the objectives of subsection (3) of section 46-715 and may include, but are not limited to, conditions in accordance with subsection (6) of section 46-739. Any well construction pursuant to such permit shall be completed in accordance with section 46-738; and

(b) On the use of an existing water well or an existing surface water appropriation in the affected area to increase the number of acres historically irrigated.

Such additional stays shall begin ten days after the first publication, in a newspaper of statewide circulation, of the notice of the preliminary determination that the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated.

(3) Exceptions to the stays imposed pursuant to subsection (1), (2), (9), or (10) of this section shall exist for (a) test holes, (b) dewatering wells with an intended use of one year or less, (c) monitoring wells, (d) wells constructed pursuant to a ground water remediation plan under the Environmental Protection Act, (e) water wells designed and constructed to pump fifty gallons per minute or less, except that no two or more water wells that each pump fifty gallons per minute or less may be connected or otherwise combined to serve a single project such that the collective pumping would exceed fifty gallons per minute, (f) water wells for range livestock, (g) new surface water uses or water wells that are necessary to alleviate an emergency situation involving the provision of water for human consumption or public health and safety, (h) water wells defined by the applicable natural resources district as replacement water wells, but the consumptive use of any such replacement water well can be no greater than the historic consumptive use of the water well it is to replace or, if applicable, the historic consumptive use of the surface water use it is to replace, (i) new surface water uses and water wells to which a right or permit is transferred in accordance with state law, but the consumptive use of any such new use can be no greater than the historic consumptive use of the surface water use or water

well from which the right or permit is being transferred, (j) water wells and increases in ground water irrigated acres for which a variance is granted by the applicable natural resources district for good cause shown, (k) subject to any conditions imposed by the applicable natural resources district, to the extent permitted by the applicable natural resources district, increases in ground water irrigated acres that result from the use of water wells that were permitted prior to the effective date of the determination made in subsection (1) of this section and completed in accordance with section 46-738 but were not used for irrigation prior to that effective date, (l) to the extent permitted by the applicable natural resources district, increases in ground water irrigated acres that result from the use of water wells that are constructed after the effective date of the stay in accordance with a permit granted by that natural resources district prior to the effective date of the stay, (m) surface water uses for which temporary public-use construction permits are issued pursuant to subsection (8) of section 46-233, (n) surface water uses and increases in surface water irrigated acres for which a variance is granted by the department for good cause shown, and (o) water wells for which permits have been approved by the Department of Natural Resources pursuant to the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act prior to the effective date of the stay.

(4) Except as otherwise provided in this section, any stay imposed pursuant to subsections (1) and (2) of this section shall remain in effect for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach until the department has made a final determination regarding whether the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated and, if the department's final determination is that the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated, shall remain in effect as provided in subsection (12) of this section. Within the time period between the dates of the preliminary and final determinations, the department and the affected natural resources districts shall consult with any irrigation district, reclamation district, public power and irrigation district, mutual irrigation company, canal company, or municipality that relies on water from the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach and with other water users and stakeholders as deemed appropriate by the department or the natural resources districts. The department shall also hold one or more public hearings not more than ninety days after the first publication of the notice required by subsection (1) of this section. Notice of the hearings shall be provided in the same manner as the notice required by such subsection. Any interested person may appear at such hearing and present written or oral testimony and evidence concerning the appropriation status of the river basin, subbasin, or reach, the department's preliminary conclusions about the extent of the area within which the surface water and ground water supplies for the river basin, subbasin, or reach are determined to be hydrologically connected, and whether the stays on new uses should be terminated.

(5) Within thirty days after the final hearing under subsection (4) of this section, the department shall notify the appropriate natural resources districts of the department's final determination with respect to the appropriation status of the river basin, subbasin, or reach. If the final determination is that the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated, the department, at the same time, shall (a) decide whether to continue or to terminate the stays on new surface water uses and on increases in the number of surface water irrigated acres and (b) designate the geographic area within which the department considers surface water and ground water to be hydrologically connected in the river basin, subbasin, or reach and describe the methods and criteria used in making that determination. The department shall provide notice

of its decision to continue or terminate the stays in the same manner as the notice required by subsection (1) of this section.

(6) If the department's final determination is that the river basin, subbasin, or reach is not fully appropriated, the department shall provide notice of such determination as provided in subsection (1) of this section, the stays imposed pursuant to subsections (1) and (2) of this section shall terminate immediately, and no further action pursuant to subsections (7) through (12) of this section and sections 46-715 to 46-719 shall be required.

(7) Within ninety days after a final determination by the department that a river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated, an affected natural resources district may hold one or more public hearings on the question of whether the stays on the issuance of new water well permits, on the construction of new water wells, or on increases in ground water irrigated acres should be terminated. Notice of the hearings shall be published as provided in section 46-743.

(8) Within forty-five days after a natural resources district's final hearing pursuant to subsection (7) of this section, the natural resources district shall decide (a) whether to terminate the stay on new water wells in all or part of the natural resources district subject to the stay and (b) whether to terminate the stay on increases in ground water irrigated acres. If the natural resources district decides not to terminate the stay on new water wells in any geographic area, it shall also decide whether to exempt from such stay the construction of water wells for which permits were issued prior to the issuance of the stay but for which construction had not begun prior to issuance of the stay. If construction of water wells for which permits were issued prior to the stay is allowed, all permits that were valid when the stay went into effect shall be extended by a time period equal to the length of the stay.

(9) Whenever the department designates a river basin, subbasin, or reach as overappropriated, each previously declared moratorium on the issuance of new surface water appropriations in the river basin, subbasin, or reach shall continue in effect. The department shall also provide prompt notice of such designation to all licensed water well contractors in the state and to each natural resources district that encompasses any of the geographic area involved. Immediately upon receipt of such notice by a natural resources district, there shall be a stay on the issuance of new water well construction permits in any portion of such natural resources district that is within the hydrologically connected area designated by the department. The department shall also notify the public of its designation of such river basin, subbasin, or reach as overappropriated and of the geographic area involved in such designation. Such notice shall be published once each week for three consecutive weeks in at least one newspaper of statewide circulation and in such other newspapers as are deemed appropriate by the department to provide general notice in the river basin, subbasin, or reach.

(10) Beginning ten days after the first publication of notice under subsection (9) of this section in a newspaper of statewide circulation, there shall also be stays (a) on the construction of any new water well in the hydrologically connected area if such construction has not commenced prior to such date and if no permit for construction of the water well has been issued previously by either the department or the natural resources district, (b) on the use of an existing water well in the hydrologically connected area to increase the number of acres historically

irrigated, and (c) on the use of an existing surface water appropriation to increase the number of acres historically irrigated in the affected area.

(11) Within ninety days after a designation by the department of a river basin, subbasin, or reach as overappropriated, a natural resources district that encompasses any of the hydrologically connected area designated by the department may hold one or more public hearings on the question of whether to terminate the stays on (a) the construction of new water wells within all or part of its portion of the hydrologically connected area, (b) the issuance of new water well construction permits in such area, or (c) the increase in ground water irrigated acres in such area. Notice of any hearing for such purpose shall be provided pursuant to section 46-743. Prior to the scheduling of a natural resources district hearing on the question of whether to terminate any such stay, the department and the affected natural resources district shall consult with any irrigation district, reclamation district, public power and irrigation district, mutual irrigation company, canal company, or municipality that relies on water from the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach and with other water users and stakeholders as deemed appropriate by the department or the natural resources district.

(12) Any stay issued pursuant to this section shall remain in effect until (a) the stay has been terminated pursuant to subsection (5), (6), (8), or (11) of this section, (b) an integrated management plan for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach has been adopted by the department and the affected natural resources districts and has taken effect, (c) an integrated management plan for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach has been adopted by the Interrelated Water Review Board and has taken effect, (d) the department has completed a reevaluation pursuant to subsection (2) of section 46-713 and has determined that the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach is not fully appropriated or overappropriated, or (e) the stay expires pursuant to this subsection. Such stay may be imposed initially for not more than three years following the department's designation of the river basin, subbasin, or reach as overappropriated or the department's final determination that a river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated and may be extended thereafter on an annual basis by agreement of the department and the affected natural resources district for not more than two additional years if necessary to allow the development, adoption, and implementation of an integrated management plan pursuant to sections 46-715 to 46-719.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 54; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 24.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

Cross References

Environmental Protection Act, see section 81-1532.

Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act, see section 46-650.

46-715. River basin, subbasin, or reach; integrated management plan; considerations; contents; amendment; technical analysis. (1) Whenever the Department of Natural Resources has designated a river basin, subbasin, or reach as overappropriated or has made a final determination that a river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated, the natural resources districts encompassing such river basin, subbasin, or reach and the department shall jointly develop an integrated management plan for such river basin, subbasin, or reach. The plan

shall be completed, adopted, and take effect within three years after such designation or final determination unless the department and the natural resources districts jointly agree to an extension of not more than two additional years.

(2) In developing an integrated management plan, the effects of existing and potential new water uses on existing surface water appropriators and ground water users shall be considered. An integrated management plan shall include the following: (a) Clear goals and objectives with a purpose of sustaining a balance between water uses and water supplies so that the economic viability, social and environmental health, safety, and welfare of the river basin, subbasin, or reach can be achieved and maintained for both the near term and the long term; (b) a map clearly delineating the geographic area subject to the integrated management plan; (c) one or more of the ground water controls authorized for adoption by natural resources districts pursuant to section 46-739; (d) one or more of the surface water controls authorized for adoption by the department pursuant to section 46-716; and (e) a plan to gather and evaluate data, information, and methodologies that could be used to implement sections 46-715 to 46-717, increase understanding of the surface water and hydrologically connected ground water system, and test the validity of the conclusions and information upon which the integrated management plan is based. The plan may also provide for utilization of any applicable incentive programs authorized by law. Nothing in the integrated management plan for a fully appropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach shall require a natural resources district to regulate ground water uses in place at the time of the department's preliminary determination that the river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated, but a natural resources district may voluntarily adopt such regulations. The applicable natural resources district may decide to include all water users within the district boundary in an integrated management plan.

(3) The ground water and surface water controls proposed for adoption in the integrated management plan pursuant to subsection (1) of this section shall, when considered together and with any applicable incentive programs, (a) be consistent with the goals and objectives of the plan, (b) be sufficient to ensure that the state will remain in compliance with applicable state and federal laws and with any applicable interstate water compact or decree or other formal state contract or agreement pertaining to surface water or ground water use or supplies, and (c) protect the ground water users whose water wells are dependent on recharge from the river or stream involved and the surface water appropriators on such river or stream from streamflow depletion caused by surface water uses and ground water uses begun after the date the river basin, subbasin, or reach was designated as overappropriated or was preliminarily determined to be fully appropriated in accordance with section 46-713.

(4)(a) In any river basin, subbasin, or reach that is designated as overappropriated, when the designated area lies within two or more natural resources districts, the department and the affected natural resources districts shall jointly develop a basin-wide plan for the area designated as overappropriated. Such plan shall be developed using the consultation and collaboration process described in subdivision (b) of this subsection, shall be developed concurrently with the development of the integrated management plan required pursuant to subsections (1) through (3) of this section, and shall be designed to achieve, in the incremental manner described in subdivision (d) of this subsection, the goals and objectives described in subsection (2) of this

section. The basin-wide plan shall be adopted after hearings by the department and the affected natural resources districts.

(b) In any river basin, subbasin, or reach designated as overappropriated and subject to this subsection, the department and each natural resources district encompassing such river basin, subbasin, or reach shall jointly develop an integrated management plan for such river basin, subbasin, or reach pursuant to subsections (1) through (3) of this section. Each integrated management plan for a river basin, subbasin, or reach subject to this subsection shall be consistent with any basin-wide plan developed pursuant to subdivision (a) of this subsection. Such integrated management plan shall be developed after consultation and collaboration with irrigation districts, reclamation districts, public power and irrigation districts, mutual irrigation companies, canal companies, and municipalities that rely on water from within the affected area and that, after being notified of the commencement of the plan development process, indicate in writing their desire to participate in such process. In addition, the department or the affected natural resources districts may include designated representatives of other stakeholders. If agreement is reached by all parties involved in such consultation and collaboration process, the department and each natural resources district shall adopt the agreed-upon integrated management plan. If agreement cannot be reached by all parties involved, the integrated management plan shall be developed and adopted by the department and the affected natural resources district pursuant to sections 46-715 to 46-718 or by the Interrelated Water Review Board pursuant to section 46-719.

(c) Any integrated management plan developed under this subsection shall identify the overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development. Such determination shall take into account cyclical supply, including drought, identify the portion of the overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development that is due to conservation measures, and identify the portions of the overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development that are due to water use initiated prior to July 1, 1997, and to water use initiated on or after such date.

(d) Any integrated management plan developed under this subsection shall adopt an incremental approach to achieve the goals and objectives identified under subdivision (2)(a) of this section using the following steps:

(i) The first incremental goals shall be to address the impact of streamflow depletions to (A) surface water appropriations and (B) water wells constructed in aquifers dependent upon recharge from streamflow, to the extent those depletions are due to water use initiated after July 1, 1997, and, unless an interstate cooperative agreement for such river basin, subbasin, or reach is no longer in effect, to prevent streamflow depletions that would cause noncompliance by Nebraska with such interstate cooperative agreement. During the first increment, the department and the affected natural resources districts shall also pursue voluntary efforts, subject to the availability of funds, to offset any increase in streamflow depletive effects that occur after July 1, 1997, but are caused by ground water uses initiated prior to such date. The department and the affected natural resources districts may also use other appropriate and authorized measures for such purpose;

(ii) The department and the affected natural resources districts may amend an integrated management plan subject to this subsection (4) as necessary based on an annual review of the progress being made toward achieving the goals for that increment;

(iii) During the ten years following adoption of an integrated management plan developed under this subsection (4) or during the ten years after the adoption of any subsequent increment of the integrated management plan pursuant to subdivision (d)(iv) of this subsection, the department and the affected natural resources district shall conduct a technical analysis of the actions taken in such increment to determine the progress towards meeting the goals and objectives adopted pursuant to subsection (2) of this section. The analysis shall include an examination of (A) available supplies and changes in long-term availability, (B) the effects of conservation practices and natural causes, including, but not limited to, drought, and (C) the effects of the plan on reducing the overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development identified in subdivision (4)(c) of this section. The analysis shall determine whether a subsequent increment is necessary in the integrated management plan to meet the goals and objectives adopted pursuant to subsection (2) of this section and reduce the overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development identified in subdivision (4)(c) of this section;

(iv) Based on the determination made in subdivision (d)(iii) of this subsection, the department and the affected natural resources districts, utilizing the consultative and collaborative process described in subdivision (b) of this subsection, shall if necessary identify goals for a subsequent increment of the integrated management plan. Subsequent increments shall be completed, adopted, and take effect not more than ten years after adoption of the previous increment; and

(v) If necessary, the steps described in subdivisions (d)(ii) through (iv) of this subsection shall be repeated until the department and the affected natural resources districts agree that the goals and objectives identified pursuant to subsection (2) of this section have been met and the overall difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development identified in subdivision (4)(c) of this section has been addressed so that the river basin, subbasin, or reach has returned to a fully appropriated condition.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 55; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 25.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

46-716. Integrated management plan; surface water controls. (1) The surface water controls that may be included in an integrated management plan and may be adopted by the Department of Natural Resources are: (a) Increased monitoring and enforcement of surface water diversion rates and amounts diverted annually; (b) the prohibition or limitation of additional surface water appropriations; (c) requirements for surface water appropriators to apply or utilize reasonable conservation measures consistent with good husbandry and other requirements of section 46-231 and consistent with reasonable reliance by other surface water or ground water users on return flows or on seepage to the aquifer; and (d) other reasonable restrictions on surface water use which are consistent with the intent of section 46-715 and the requirements of section 46-231.

(2) If during the development of the integrated management plan the department determines that surface water appropriators should be required to apply or utilize conservation

measures or that other reasonable restrictions on surface water use need to be imposed, the department's portion of the integrated management plan shall allow the affected surface water appropriators and surface water project sponsors a reasonable amount of time, not to exceed one hundred eighty days unless extended by the department, to identify the conservation measures to be applied or utilized, to develop a schedule for such application and utilization, and to comment on any other proposed restrictions.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 56.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-717. Integrated management plan; scientific data and other information; department; natural resources district; duties. (1) In developing an integrated management plan, the Department of Natural Resources and the affected natural resources districts shall utilize the best scientific data and other information available and shall review and consider any rules and regulations in effect in any existing ground water management area that encompasses all or part of the geographic area to be encompassed by the plan. Consideration shall be given to the applicable scientific data and other information relied upon by the department in preparing the annual report required by section 46-713 and to other types of data and information that may be deemed appropriate by the department. The department, after seeking input from the affected natural resources districts, shall specify by rule and regulation the types of scientific data and other information that will be considered in developing an integrated management plan. The natural resources districts shall adopt similar rules and regulations specifying the types of scientific data and other information necessary for purposes of this section. Existing research, data, studies, or any other relevant information which has been compiled by or is in possession of other state or federal agencies, other natural resources districts, and other political subdivisions within the State of Nebraska shall be utilized. State agencies and political subdivisions shall furnish information or data upon request of the department or any affected natural resources district. Neither the department nor the natural resources districts shall be required to conduct new research or to develop new computer models to prepare an integrated management plan, but such new research may be conducted or new computer models developed within the limits of available funding if the additional information is desired by the department or the affected natural resources districts.

(2) During preparation of an integrated management plan for a fully appropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach, the department and the affected natural resources districts shall consult with any irrigation district, reclamation district, public power and irrigation district, mutual irrigation company, canal company, or municipality that relies on water from the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach and with other water users and stakeholders as deemed appropriate by the department or by the affected natural resources districts. They shall also actively solicit public comments and opinions through public meetings and other means.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 57.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-718. Integrated management plan; hearings; implementation order; dispute; procedure. (1) If the Department of Natural Resources and the affected natural resources districts preparing an integrated management plan reach agreement on (a) the proposed goals and objectives of the plan for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach, (b) the proposed geographic area to be subject to controls, and (c) the surface water and ground water controls and any incentive programs that are proposed for adoption and implementation in the river basin, subbasin, or reach, they shall schedule one or more public hearings to take testimony on the proposed integrated management plan and the proposed controls. Such hearings shall be held within forty-five days after reaching agreement and within or in reasonable proximity to the area to be affected by implementation of the integrated management plan. Notice of such hearings shall be published as provided in section 46-743. The costs of publishing the notice shall be shared between the department and the affected natural resources districts. All interested persons may appear at the hearings and present testimony or provide other evidence relevant to the issues being considered.

(2) Within sixty days after the final hearing under this section, the department and the affected natural resources districts shall jointly decide whether to implement the plan proposed, with or without modifications, and whether to adopt and implement the surface water and ground water controls and incentive programs proposed in the plan. If the department and the natural resources districts agree to implement the plan and to adopt and implement the proposed controls, the natural resources districts shall by order designate a ground water management area for integrated management or, if the geographic area subject to the integrated management plan is already in a ground water management area, the order shall designate an integrated management subarea for that area. The order shall include a geographic and stratigraphic definition of the ground water management area or integrated management subarea and shall adopt the controls in the integrated management plan that are authorized for adoption by the natural resources district pursuant to section 46-739. The department shall by order adopt the controls in the integrated management plan that are authorized for adoption by the department pursuant to section 46-716. Neither the controls adopted by the district nor those adopted by the department shall include controls substantially different from those set forth in the notice of hearing. The area designated as a ground water management area or an integrated management subarea by the natural resources district shall not include any area that was not identified in the notice of the hearing as within the area proposed to be subject to the controls in the plan. The department and the natural resources district shall each cause a copy of its order to be published in the manner provided in section 46-744.

(3) If at any time during the development of a basin-wide plan or an integrated management plan either the department or the affected natural resources districts conclude that the parties will be unable to reach a timely agreement on the basin-wide plan or on (a) the goals and objectives of the integrated management plan for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach, (b) the geographic area to be subject to controls, or (c) the surface water or ground water controls or any incentive programs to be proposed for adoption and implementation in the affected river

basin, subbasin, or reach, the Governor shall be notified and the dispute shall be submitted to the Interrelated Water Review Board as provided in subsection (2) of section 46-719.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 58.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-719. Interrelated Water Review Board; created; members; powers and duties.
(1)(a) The Interrelated Water Review Board is created for the purposes stated in subsections (2) through (5) of this section. The board shall consist of five members. The board, when appointed and convened, shall continue in existence only until it has resolved a dispute referred to it pursuant to such subsections. The Governor shall appoint and convene the board within forty-five days of being notified of the need to resolve a dispute. The board shall be chaired by the Governor or his or her designee, which designee shall be knowledgeable concerning surface water and ground water issues. The Governor shall appoint one additional member of his or her choosing and shall appoint the other three members of the board from a list of no fewer than six nominees provided by the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission within twenty days after request by the Governor for a list of nominees.

(b) Not more than two members of the board shall reside in the geographic area involved in the dispute. A person is not eligible for membership on the board if the decisions to be made by the board would or could cause financial benefit or detriment to the person, a member of his or her immediate family, or a business with which the person is associated, unless such benefit or detriment is indistinguishable from the effects of such action on the public generally or a broad segment of the public. The board shall be subject to the Open Meetings Act.

(c) For purposes of subsections (2) and (3) of this section, action may be taken by a vote of three of the board's five members. For purposes of subsections (4) and (5) of this section, action may be taken only by a vote of at least four of the board's five members.

(2)(a) If the Department of Natural Resources and the affected natural resources districts cannot resolve disputes over the content of a basin-wide plan or an integrated management plan by utilizing the process described in sections 46-715 to 46-718, the Governor shall be notified and the dispute submitted to the Interrelated Water Review Board. When the board has been appointed and convened to resolve disputes over a basin-wide plan, the department and each affected district shall present their proposed basin-wide plans to the board. When the board has been convened to resolve disputes over an integrated management plan, the department and each affected natural resources district shall present their (i) proposed goals and objectives for the integrated management plan, (ii) proposed geographic area to be subject to controls, and (iii) proposed surface water and ground water controls and any proposed incentive program for adoption and implementation in the river basin, subbasin, or reach involved. The department and each affected natural resources district shall also be given adequate opportunity to comment on the proposals made by the other parties to the dispute.

(b) When the Interrelated Water Review Board concludes that the issues in dispute have been fully presented and commented upon by the parties to the dispute, which conclusion shall be made not more than forty-five days after the board is convened, the board shall select the

proposals or portions of proposals that the board will consider for adoption and shall schedule one or more public hearings to take testimony on the selected proposals. The hearings shall be held within forty-five days after the board's selection of proposals to consider for adoption and shall be within or in reasonable proximity to the area that would be affected by implementation of any of the proposals to be considered at the hearings. Notice of the hearings shall be published as provided in section 46-743. The cost of publishing the notice shall be shared by the department and the affected natural resources districts. All interested persons may appear at the hearings and present testimony or provide other evidence relevant to the issues being considered.

(c) Within forty-five days after the final hearing pursuant to subdivision (b) of this subsection, the Interrelated Water Review Board shall by order, as applicable, adopt a basin-wide plan or an integrated management plan for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach and, in the case of an integrated management plan, shall designate a ground water management area for integrated management or an integrated management subarea for such river basin, subbasin, or reach. An integrated management plan shall be consistent with subsection (2) of section 46-715, and the surface water and ground water controls and any applicable incentive programs adopted as part of that plan shall be consistent with subsection (3) of section 46-715. The controls adopted by the board shall not be substantially different from those described in the notice of hearing. The area designated as a ground water management area or an integrated management subarea shall not include any area that was not identified in the notice of the hearing as within the area proposed to be subject to the controls in the plan.

(d) The order adopted under this subsection shall be published in the manner prescribed in section 46-744.

(e) Surface water controls adopted by the Interrelated Water Review Board shall be implemented and enforced by the department. Ground water controls adopted by the Interrelated Water Review Board shall be implemented and enforced by the affected natural resources districts.

(3) Whether an integrated management plan is adopted pursuant to section 46-718 or by the Interrelated Water Review Board pursuant to subsection (2) of this section, the department or a natural resources district responsible in part for implementation and enforcement of an integrated management plan may propose modification of the goals or objectives of that plan, of the area subject to the plan, or of the surface water controls, ground water controls, or incentive programs adopted to implement the plan. The department and the affected natural resources districts shall utilize the procedures in sections 46-715 to 46-718 in an attempt to reach agreement on and to adopt and implement proposed modifications. If agreement on such modifications cannot be achieved utilizing those procedures, either the department or an affected natural resources district may notify the Governor of the dispute. The Interrelated Water Review Board shall be appointed and convened in accordance with subsection (1) of this section to resolve the dispute and, if applicable, to adopt any modifications utilizing the procedures in subsection (2) of this section.

(4) The department and the affected natural resources districts may also raise objections concerning the implementation or enforcement of previously adopted surface water or ground

water controls. The department and the affected natural resources districts shall utilize the procedures in sections 46-715 to 46-718 in an attempt to reach agreement on such implementation or enforcement issues. If agreement on such issues cannot be achieved utilizing such procedures, either the department or an affected natural resources district may notify the Governor of the dispute. The Interrelated Water Review Board shall be appointed and convened in accordance with subsection (1) of this section. After permitting each party to fully express its reasons for its position on the disputed issues, the board may either take no action or conclude (a) that one or more parties needs to modify its approach to implementation or enforcement and direct that such modifications take place or (b) that one or more parties either has not made a good faith effort to implement or enforce the portion of the plan or controls for which it is responsible or is unable to fully implement and enforce such portion and that such party's jurisdiction with respect to implementation and enforcement of the plan and controls shall be terminated and reassigned to one or more of the other parties responsible for implementation and enforcement. A decision by the Interrelated Water Review Board to terminate and reassign jurisdiction of any portion of the plan or controls shall take effect immediately upon that decision. Notice of such reassignment shall be published at least once in one or more newspapers as necessary to provide general circulation in the area affected by such reassignment.

(5) The board may be reconvened in accordance with subsection (1) of this section at a later date upon request to the Governor by the party for which jurisdiction for implementation and enforcement was terminated if such party desires to have its jurisdiction reinstated, but no such request shall be honored until at least one year after the termination and not more than once per year thereafter. The board may reinstate jurisdiction to that party only upon a clear showing by such party that it is willing and able to fully implement and enforce the plan and any applicable controls. Notice that a party's jurisdiction has been reinstated shall be provided in the same manner that notice of the earlier termination was given.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 59; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 26.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

Cross Reference

Open Meetings Act, see section 84-1407.

46-720. Proceedings under prior law; transitional provisions. (1) The Legislature finds that, prior to July 16, 2004, actions were taken by the Department of Natural Resources and by one or more natural resources districts pursuant to section 46-656.28, as such section existed immediately prior to such date, for the purpose of addressing circumstances that are, after such date, to be addressed in accordance with sections 46-713 to 46-719. It is the intent of the Legislature that actions taken pursuant to section 46-656.28, as such section existed immediately prior to July 16, 2004, should not be negated and that transition from the authorities and responsibilities granted by such section to those granted by sections 46-713 to 46-719 should occur in as efficient a manner as possible. Such transition shall be therefor governed by subsections (2) through (5) of this section, and all references in such subsections to section 46-656.28 shall be construed to mean section 46-656.28 as such section existed immediately prior to July 16, 2004.

(2) If, prior to July 16, 2004, (a) a natural resources district requested pursuant to subsection (1) of section 46-656.28 that affected appropriators, affected surface water project sponsors, and the department consult and that studies and a hearing be held but (b) the Director of Natural Resources has not made a preliminary determination relative to that request pursuant to subsection (2) of section 46-656.28, no further action on the district's request shall be required of the department. If under the same circumstances a temporary suspension in the drilling of certain water wells has been imposed by the district pursuant to subsection (16) of section 46-656.28 and remains in effect immediately prior to July 16, 2004, such temporary suspension shall remain in effect for thirty days after the department issues its first annual report under section 46-713, except that (i) such temporary suspension shall not apply to water wells for which a permit has been obtained pursuant to the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act and (ii) to the extent any such temporary suspension is in effect for all or part of a hydrologically connected area for a river basin, subbasin, or reach designated as overappropriated by the department, such temporary suspension shall remain in effect only until it is superseded by the stays imposed pursuant to subsections (9) and (10) of section 46-714. To the extent that any such temporary suspension applies to a geographic area preliminarily considered by the department to have ground water hydrologically connected to the surface water of a fully appropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach, such temporary suspension shall be superseded by the stays imposed pursuant to subsections (1) and (2) of section 46-714.

(3)(a) If prior to July 16, 2004, (i) the director has made a preliminary determination pursuant to subsection (2) of section 46-656.28 that there is reason to believe that the use of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water in a specific geographic area is contributing to or is in the reasonably foreseeable future likely to contribute to any conflict, dispute, or difficulty listed in such subsection, (ii) the director has not made a determination pursuant to subsection (4) of section 46-656.28 that a joint action plan should not be prepared, and (iii) preparation of a joint action plan pursuant to subsections (5) through (9) of such section has not been completed, the geographic area involved shall become subject to sections 46-713 to 46-719 on July 16, 2004, and the department need not evaluate such geographic area in its first annual report issued pursuant to section 46-713.

(b) For purposes of this subsection and section 46-714 and except as otherwise provided in this section, (i) July 16, 2004, shall result in the imposition in any geographic area subject to this subsection of the stays required by subsections (1) and (2) of section 46-714, (ii) such stays shall be imposed in the manner required by such section, and (iii) July 16, 2004, shall be treated as if it were the date of a departmental preliminary determination pursuant to section 46-713 that such area is a geographic area within which ground water and surface water of a fully appropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach are hydrologically connected. Notwithstanding the other provisions of this subsection, if a temporary suspension in the drilling of certain new water wells has previously been imposed by the affected natural resources district, (A) the stays on construction of new water wells and on the increase in ground water irrigated acres shall be limited in geographic extent to only that part of the affected area within which the temporary suspension was in effect unless the director determines that inclusion of additional area is necessary because ground water and surface water are hydrologically connected in such additional area and (B) the stays on construction of certain new water wells shall not apply to a water well constructed in accordance with the terms of a water well construction permit

approved by the district prior to July 16, 2004, unless such well was subject to the district's temporary suspension. If, prior to July 16, 2004, the director has held a hearing on a report issued pursuant to subsection (3) of section 46-656.28 but has not yet determined whether a joint action plan should be prepared, no departmental hearing shall be required pursuant to subsection (4) of section 46-714 before a final determination is made about whether the river basin, subbasin, or reach involved is fully appropriated. If, prior to July 16, 2004, the director has determined pursuant to subsection (4) of section 46-656.28 that a joint action plan should be prepared, such determination shall have the same effect as a final departmental determination pursuant to subsection (5) of section 46-714 that the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach is fully appropriated and no separate determination to that effect shall be required. If, after July 16, 2004, the department determines that all or part of the area subject to this subsection is in an overappropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach, that portion of the area shall thereafter be subject to the provisions of the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act applicable to an overappropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach and stays that have previously taken effect in accordance with this subsection shall continue in effect as stays for an overappropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach without additional action or publication of notice by the department. Any temporary suspension in the drilling of certain water wells that has been imposed in the geographic area involved by a natural resources district pursuant to subsection (16) of section 46-656.28 prior to July 16, 2004, shall remain in effect until superseded by the stays imposed pursuant to subsections (1) and (2) of section 46-714.

(4) If, prior to July 16, 2004, preparation of a joint action plan has been completed pursuant to subsections (5) through (9) of section 46-656.28 but the plan has not yet been adopted pursuant to subsection (11) of such section, the department need not evaluate the affected geographic area in its first annual report issued pursuant to section 46-713. The department and the affected natural resources district shall review the completed joint action plan for its compliance with sections 46-715 to 46-717. If the joint action plan is determined to be in compliance with sections 46-715 to 46-717 or if agreement is reached on the revisions necessary to bring it into such compliance, the department and the district shall adopt the plan and implement the controls as provided in section 46-718. If the joint action plan is determined not to be in compliance with sections 46-715 to 46-717 and agreement on the proposed plan or the proposed controls cannot be reached pursuant to section 46-718, section 46-719 shall apply. Except to the extent that any portion of the affected area is designated as all or part of an overappropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach, any temporary suspension in the drilling of certain water wells imposed in the affected geographic area by a natural resources district pursuant to subsection (16) of section 46-656.28 shall remain in effect until (a) the department and the affected district have jointly decided to implement the plan, with or without modifications, and controls have been adopted and taken effect or (b) the Interrelated Water Review Board, pursuant to section 46-719, has adopted an integrated management plan for the affected river basin, subbasin, or reach and the controls adopted by the board have taken effect. To the extent that any portion of the affected area is designated as all or part of an overappropriated river basin, subbasin, or reach, any temporary suspension in the drilling of water wells shall be superseded by the stays imposed pursuant to subsections (9) and (10) of section 46-714.

(5) If, before July 16, 2004, a joint action plan has been adopted and implemented pursuant to subsections (10) through (12) of section 46-656.28 and is in effect immediately prior to such date, the department need not evaluate the geographic area subject to the plan in the department's first annual report issued pursuant to section 46-713. For purposes of the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act, (a) the plan adopted shall be considered an integrated management plan adopted pursuant to section 46-718, (b) the management area designated shall be considered an integrated management area or subarea designated pursuant to section 46-718, and (c) the controls adopted shall be considered controls adopted pursuant to section 46-718 and shall remain in effect until amended or repealed pursuant to section 46-718 or 46-719.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 60.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross Reference

Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act, see section 46-650.

46-721. Management area; reports required. Each state agency and political subdivision shall promptly report to the Department of Environmental Quality any information which indicates that contamination is occurring.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 2; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 15; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.03; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 41; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.35; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 61.
Operative date July 16, 2004.

46-722. Management area; Department of Environmental Quality; conduct study; when; report. If, as a result of information provided pursuant to section 46-721 or studies conducted by or otherwise available to the Department of Environmental Quality and following preliminary investigation, the Director of Environmental Quality makes a preliminary determination (1) that there is reason to believe that contamination of ground water is occurring or likely to occur in an area of the state in the reasonably foreseeable future and (2) that the natural resources district or districts in which the area is located have not designated a management area or have not implemented adequate controls to prevent such contamination from occurring, the department shall, in cooperation with any appropriate state agency and district, conduct a study to determine the source or sources of the contamination and the area affected by such contamination and shall issue a written report within one year of the initiation of the study. During the study, the department shall consider the relevant water quality portions of the management plan developed by each district pursuant to sections 46-709 to 46-711, whether the district has designated a management area encompassing the area studied, and whether the district has adopted any controls for the area.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 3; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 16; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.04; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 42; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.36; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 62.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-723. Management area; contamination; point source; Director of Environmental Quality; duties. If the Director of Environmental Quality determines from the study conducted pursuant to section 46-722 that one or more sources of contamination are point sources, he or she shall expeditiously use the procedures authorized in the Environmental Protection Act to stabilize or reduce the level and prevent the increase or spread of such contamination.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 4; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 17; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.05; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 43; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.37; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 63.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross Reference

Environmental Protection Act, see section 81-1532.

46-724. Management area; contamination; not point source; Director of Environmental Quality; duties; hearing; notice. If the Director of Environmental Quality determines from the study conducted pursuant to section 46-722 that one or more sources of contamination are not point sources and if a management area, a purpose of which is protection of water quality, has been established which includes the affected area, the Director of Environmental Quality shall consider whether to require the district which established the management area to adopt an action plan as provided in sections 46-725 to 46-729.

If the Director of Environmental Quality determines that one or more of the sources are not point sources and if such a management area has not been established or does not include all the affected area, he or she shall, within thirty days after completion of the report required by section 46-722, consult with the district within whose boundaries the area affected by such contamination is located and fix a time and place for a public hearing to consider the report, hear any other evidence, and secure testimony on whether a management area should be designated or whether an existing area should be modified. The hearing shall be held within one hundred twenty days after completion of the report. Notice of the hearing shall be given as provided in section 46-743, and the hearing shall be conducted in accordance with such section.

At the hearing, all interested persons shall be allowed to appear and present testimony. The Conservation and Survey Division of the University of Nebraska, the Department of Health and Human Services Regulation and Licensure, the Department of Natural Resources, and the appropriate district may offer as evidence any information in their possession which they deem relevant to the purpose of the hearing. After the hearing and after any studies or investigations conducted by or on behalf of the Director of Environmental Quality as he or she deems necessary, the director shall determine whether a management area shall be designated.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 5; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 9; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 18; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.06; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 44; Laws 1996, LB 1044, § 260; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 201; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.38; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 64.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-725. Management area; designation or modification of boundaries; adoption of action plan; considerations; procedures; order. (1) When determining whether to designate or modify the boundaries of a management area or to require a district which has established a management area, a purpose of which is protection of water quality, to adopt an action plan for the affected area, the Director of Environmental Quality shall consider:

(a) Whether contamination of ground water has occurred or is likely to occur in the reasonably foreseeable future;

(b) Whether ground water users, including, but not limited to, domestic, municipal, industrial, and agricultural users, are experiencing or will experience within the foreseeable future substantial economic hardships as a direct result of current or reasonably anticipated activities which cause or contribute to contamination of ground water;

(c) Whether methods are available to stabilize or reduce the level of contamination;

(d) Whether, if a management area has been established which includes the affected area, the controls adopted by the district pursuant to section 46-739 as administered and enforced by the district are sufficient to address the ground water quality issues in the management area; and

(e) Administrative factors directly affecting the ability to implement and carry out regulatory activities.

(2) If the Director of Environmental Quality determines that no such area should be established, he or she shall issue an order declaring that no management area shall be designated.

(3) If the Director of Environmental Quality determines that a management area shall be established, that the boundaries of an existing management area shall be modified, or that the district shall be required to adopt an action plan, he or she shall consult with relevant state agencies and with the district or districts affected and determine the boundaries of the area, taking into account the effect on political subdivisions and the socioeconomic and administrative factors directly affecting the ability to implement and carry out local ground water management, control, and protection. The report by the Director of Environmental Quality shall include the specific reasons for the creation of the management area or the requirement of such an action plan and a full disclosure of the possible causes.

(4) When the boundaries of an area have been determined or modified, the Director of Environmental Quality shall issue an order designating the area as a management area, specifying the modified boundaries of the management area, or requiring such an action plan. Such an order shall include a geographic and stratigraphic definition of the area. Such order shall be published in the manner provided in section 46-744.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 6; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 10; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 19; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.07; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 45; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.39; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 65.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-726. Management area; action plan; preparation by district; when; hearing; notice; publication. (1) Within one hundred eighty days after the designation of a management area or the requiring of an action plan for a management area, a purpose of which is protection of

water quality, the district or districts within whose boundaries the area is located shall prepare an action plan designed to stabilize or reduce the level and prevent the increase or spread of ground water contamination. Whenever a management area or the affected area of such a management area encompasses portions of two or more districts, the responsibilities and authorities delegated in this section shall be exercised jointly and uniformly by agreement of the respective boards of all districts so affected.

(2) Within thirty days after an action plan has been prepared, a public hearing on such plan shall be held by the district. Notice of the hearing shall be given as provided in section 46-743, and the hearing shall be conducted in accordance with such section.

(3) Within thirty days after the hearing, the district shall adopt and submit an action plan to the Department of Environmental Quality. Notice of the district's order adopting an action plan shall be published as required by section 46-744.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 7; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 11; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.08; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 46; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 202; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.40; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 66.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-727. Management area; action plan; contents. An action plan filed by a district pursuant to section 46-726 shall include the specifics of an educational program to be instituted by the district to inform persons of methods available to stabilize or reduce the level or prevent the increase or spread of ground water contamination. The action plan shall include one or more of the controls authorized by section 46-739.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 8; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 12; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.09; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 47; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.41; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 67.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-728. Management area; adoption or amendment of action plan; considerations; procedures. (1) In adopting or amending an action plan authorized by subsection (2) of this section, the district's considerations shall include, but not be limited to, whether it reasonably appears that such action will mitigate or eliminate the condition which led to designation of the management area or the requirement of an action plan for a management area or will improve the administration of the area.

(2) The Director of Environmental Quality shall approve or deny the adoption or amendment of an action plan within one hundred twenty days after the date the plan is submitted by the district. He or she may hold a public hearing to consider testimony regarding the action plan prior to the issuance of an order approving or disapproving the adoption or amendment. In approving the adoption or amendment of the plan in such an area, considerations shall include, but not be limited to, those enumerated in subsection (1) of this section.

(3) If the director denies approval of an action plan by the district, the order shall list the reason the action plan was not approved. A district may submit a revised action plan within sixty days after denial of its original action plan to the director for approval subject to section 46-731.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 9; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 13; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 20; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.10; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 48; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.42; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 68.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-729. Management area; district publish order adopted. Following approval of the action plan by the Director of Environmental Quality, the district shall cause a copy of the order adopted pursuant to section 46-728 to be published in the manner provided in section 46-744.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 10; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 21; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.11; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 49; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.43; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 69.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-730. Management area; district; duties. Each district in which a management area has been designated or an action plan for a management area has been required pursuant to section 46-725 shall, in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Quality, establish a program to monitor the quality of the ground water in the area and shall if appropriate provide each landowner or operator of an irrigation system with current information available with respect to fertilizer and chemical usage for the specific soil types present and cropping patterns used.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 17; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 16; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 27; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.18; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 50; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.44; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 70.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-731. Management area; director specify controls; when; powers and duties; hearing. (1) The power to specify controls authorized by section 46-739 shall vest in the Director of Environmental Quality if (a) at the end of one hundred eighty days following the designation of a management area or the requiring of an action plan for a management area pursuant to section 46-725, a district encompassed in whole or in part by the management area has not completed and adopted an action plan, (b) a district does not submit a revised action plan within sixty days after denial of its original action plan, or (c) the district submits a revised action plan which is not approved by the director.

(2) If the power to specify controls in such a management area is vested in the Director of Environmental Quality, he or she shall within ninety days adopt and promulgate by rule and regulation such measures as he or she deems necessary for carrying out the intent of the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act. He or she shall conduct one or more public hearings prior to the adoption of controls. Notice of any such additional hearings shall be

given in the manner provided in section 46-743. The enforcement of controls adopted pursuant to this section shall be the responsibility of the Department of Environmental Quality.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 11; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 14; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 22; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.12; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 51; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.45; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 71.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-732. Management area; controls; duration; amendment of plan. The controls in the action plan approved by the Director of Environmental Quality pursuant to section 46-728 shall be exercised by the district for the period of time necessary to stabilize or reduce the level of contamination and prevent the increase or spread of ground water contamination. An action plan may be amended by the same method utilized in the adoption of the action plan.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 13; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 15; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 24; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.14; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 53; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.46; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 73.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-733. Management area; removal of designation or requirement of action plan; modification of boundaries; when. A district may petition the Director of Environmental Quality to remove the director's designation of the area as a management area or the requirement of an action plan for a management area or to modify the boundaries of a management area designated pursuant to section 46-725. If the director determines that the level of contamination in a management area has stabilized at or been reduced to a level which is not detrimental to beneficial uses of ground water, he or she may remove the designation or action plan requirement or modify the boundaries of the management area.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 13; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 15; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 24; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.14; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 53; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.47; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 73.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-734. Management area; Environmental Quality Council; adopt rules and regulations. The Environmental Quality Council shall adopt and promulgate, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, such rules and regulations as are necessary to the discharge of duties under sections 46-721 to 46-733.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 15; Laws 1993, LB 3, § 26; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.16; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 54; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.48; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 74.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross Reference

Administrative Procedure Act, see section 84-920.

46-735. Construct water well in a management area; permit required; application; form; fee; contents; late permit application; fee. (1) Any person who intends to construct a water well in a management area in this state on land which he or she owns or controls shall, before commencing construction, apply with the district in which the water well will be located for a permit on forms provided by the district, except that (a) no permit shall be required for test holes or dewatering wells with an intended use of ninety days or less, (b) no permit shall be required for a single water well designed and constructed to pump fifty gallons per minute or less, and (c) a district may provide by rule and regulation that a permit need not be obtained for water wells defined by the district to be replacement water wells. A district may require a permit for a water well designed and constructed to pump fifty gallons per minute or less if such water well is commingled, combined, clustered, or joined with any other water well or wells or other water source, other than a water source used to water range livestock. Such wells shall be considered one water well and the combined capacity shall be used as the rated capacity. A district may by rule and regulation require that a permit be obtained for each water well or for one or more categories of water wells designed and constructed to pump fifty gallons per minute or less, other than a water source required for human needs as it relates to health, fire control, and sanitation or used to water range livestock, in ground water management areas in which regulations have been imposed to control declining ground water levels. Forms shall be made available at each district in which a management area is located, in whole or in part, and at such other places as may be deemed appropriate. The district shall review such application and issue or deny the permit within thirty days after the application is filed.

(2) A person shall apply for a permit under this section before he or she modifies a water well for which a permit was not required under subsection (1) of this section into one for which a permit would otherwise be required under such subsection.

(3) The application shall be accompanied by a fifty-dollar filing fee payable to the district and shall contain (a) the name and post office address of the applicant or applicants, (b) the nature of the proposed use, (c) the intended location of the proposed water well or other means of obtaining ground water, (d) the intended size, type, and description of the proposed water well and the estimated depth, if known, (e) the estimated capacity in gallons per minute, (f) the acreage and location by legal description of the land involved if the water is to be used for irrigation, (g) a description of the proposed use if other than for irrigation purposes, (h) the registration number of the water well being replaced if applicable, and (i) such other information as the district requires.

(4) Any person who has failed or in the future fails to obtain a permit required by subsection (1) or (2) of this section shall make application for a late permit on forms provided by the district.

(5) The application for a late permit shall be accompanied by a two-hundred-fifty-dollar fee payable to the district and shall contain the same information required in subsection (3) of this section.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 4; Laws 1980, LB 643, § 10; Laws 1981, LB 325, § 2; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 16; Laws 1983, LB 23, § 3; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 3; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 23; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 25; Laws 1994, LB 981, § 8; Laws 1995, LB 145, § 2; R.S.Supp.,1994, § 46-659; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 35; Laws 1998, LB 1161, § 13; Laws 1999, LB 870, § 1; Laws 2003, LB 34, § 1; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.29; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 75.

Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-736. Permit; when denied; corrections allowed; fees nonrefundable. An application for a permit or late permit for a water well in a management area shall be denied only if the district in which the water well is to be located finds (1) that the location or operation of the proposed water well or other work would conflict with any regulations or controls adopted by the district, (2) that the proposed use would not be a beneficial use of water, or (3) in the case of a late permit only, that the applicant did not act in good faith in failing to obtain a timely permit.

If the district finds that the application is incomplete or defective, it shall return the application for correction. If the correction is not made within sixty days, the application shall be canceled. All permits shall be issued with or without conditions attached or denied not later than thirty days after receipt by the district of a complete and properly prepared application.

A permit issued shall specify all regulations and controls adopted by a district relevant to the construction or utilization of the proposed water well. No refund of any application fees shall be made regardless of whether the permit is issued, canceled, or denied. The district shall transmit one copy of each permit issued to the Director of Natural Resources.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 5; Laws 1980, LB 643, § 11; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 17; Laws 1983, LB 23, § 4; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 4; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 26; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-660; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 36; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 198; Laws 2003, LB 35, § 1; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.30; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 76.

Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-737. Issuance of permit; no right to violate rules, regulations, or controls. The issuance by the district of a permit pursuant to section 46-736 or registration of a water well by the Director of Natural Resources pursuant to section 46-602 shall not vest in any person the right to violate any district rule, regulation, or control in effect on the date of issuance of the

permit or the registration of the water well or to violate any rule, regulation, or control properly adopted after such date.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 6; Laws 1983, LB 23, § 5; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 5; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 27; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-661; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 37; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 199; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.31; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 77.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-738. Issuance of permit; commence construction and complete water well within one year; failure; effect. When any permit is approved pursuant to section 46-736, the applicant shall commence construction as soon as possible after the date of approval and shall complete the construction and equip the water well prior to the date specified in the conditions of approval, which date shall be not more than one year after the date of approval, unless it is clearly demonstrated in the application that one year is an insufficient period of time for such construction. If the applicant fails to complete the project under the terms of the permit, the district may withdraw the permit.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 7; Laws 1983, LB 23, § 6; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 28; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-662; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 38; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.32; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 78.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-739. Management area; controls authorized; procedure. (1) A district in which a management area has been designated shall by order adopt one or more of the following controls for the management area:

(a) It may allocate the amount of ground water that may be withdrawn by ground water users;

(b) It may adopt a system of rotation for use of ground water;

(c) It may adopt well-spacing requirements more restrictive than those found in sections 46-609 and 46-651;

(d) It may require the installation of devices for measuring ground water withdrawals from water wells;

(e) It may adopt a system which requires reduction of irrigated acres pursuant to subsection (2) of section 46-740;

(f) It may limit or prevent the expansion of irrigated acres or otherwise limit or prevent increases in the consumptive use of ground water withdrawals from water wells used for irrigation or other beneficial purposes;

(g) It may require the use of best management practices;

(h) It may require the analysis of water or deep soils for fertilizer and chemical content;

(i) It may impose mandatory educational requirements designed to protect water quality or to stabilize or reduce the incidence of ground water depletion, conflicts between ground water users and surface water appropriators, disputes over interstate compacts or decrees, or difficulties fulfilling the provisions of other formal state contracts or agreements;

(j) It may require water quality monitoring and reporting of results to the district for all water wells within all or part of the management area;

(k) It may require district approval of (i) transfers of ground water off the land where the water is withdrawn or (ii) transfers of rights to use ground water that result from district allocations imposed pursuant to subdivision (1)(a) of this section or from other restrictions on use that are imposed by the district in accordance with this section. Such approval may be required whether the transfer is within the management area, from inside to outside the management area, or from outside to inside the management area, except that transfers for which permits have been obtained from the Department of Natural Resources prior to July 16, 2004, or pursuant to the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act shall not be subject to district approval pursuant to this subdivision. If the district adopts rules and regulations pursuant to this subdivision, such regulations shall require that the district deny or condition the approval of any such transfer when and to the extent such action is necessary to (A) ensure the consistency of the transfer with the purpose or purposes for which the management area was designated, (B) prevent adverse effects on other ground water users or on surface water appropriators, (C) prevent adverse effects on the state's ability to comply with an interstate compact or decree or to fulfill the provisions of any other formal state contract or agreement, and (D) otherwise protect the public interest and prevent detriment to the public welfare;

(l) It may require, when conditions so permit, that new or replacement water wells to be used for domestic or other purposes shall be constructed to such a depth that they are less likely to be affected by seasonal water level declines caused by other water wells in the same area;

(m) It may close all or a portion of the management area to the issuance of additional permits or may condition the issuance of additional permits on compliance with other rules and regulations adopted and promulgated by the district to achieve the purpose or purposes for which the management area was designated; and

(n) It may adopt and promulgate such other reasonable rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the purpose for which a management area was designated.

(2) In adopting, amending, or repealing any control authorized by subsection (1) of this section or sections 46-740 and 46-741, the district's considerations shall include, but not be limited to, whether it reasonably appears that such action will mitigate or eliminate the condition which led to designation of the management area or will improve the administration of the area.

(3) Upon request by the district or when any of the controls being proposed are for the purpose of integrated management of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water, the Director of Natural Resources shall review and comment on the adoption, amendment, or repeal of any authorized control in a management area. The director may hold a public hearing to consider testimony regarding the control prior to commenting on the adoption, amendment, or repeal of the control. The director shall consult with the district and fix a time, place, and date for such hearing. In reviewing and commenting on an authorized control in a management area, the director's considerations shall include, but not be limited to, those enumerated in subsection (2) of this section.

(4) If because of varying ground water uses, varying surface water uses, different irrigation distribution systems, or varying climatic, hydrologic, geologic, or soil conditions existing within a management area the uniform application throughout such area of one or more controls would fail to carry out the intent of the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act in a reasonably effective and equitable manner, the controls adopted by the district pursuant to this section may contain different provisions for different categories of ground water use or portions of the management area which differ from each other because of varying climatic, hydrologic, geologic, or soil conditions. Any differences in such provisions shall recognize and be directed toward such varying ground water uses or varying conditions. Except as otherwise provided in this section, if the district adopts different controls for different categories of ground water use, those controls shall be consistent with section 46-613 and shall, for each such category, be uniform for all portions of the area which have substantially similar climatic, hydrologic, geologic, and soil conditions.

(5) The district may establish different water allocations for different irrigation distribution systems.

(6)(a) The district may establish different provisions for different hydrologic relationships between ground water and surface water.

(b) For management areas a purpose of which is the integrated management of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water, the district may establish different provisions for water wells either permitted or constructed before the designation of a management area for integrated management of hydrologically connected ground water and surface water and for water wells either permitted or constructed on or after the designation date or any other later date or dates established by the district. Permits for construction of new wells not completed by the date of the determination of fully appropriated shall be subject to any conditions imposed by the applicable natural resources district.

(c) For a management area in a river basin or part of a river basin that is or was the subject of litigation over an interstate water compact or decree in which the State of Nebraska is a named defendant, the district may establish different provisions for restriction of water wells constructed after January 1, 2001, if such litigation was commenced before or on May 22, 2001. If such litigation is commenced after May 22, 2001, the district may establish different provisions for restriction of water wells constructed after the date on which such litigation is commenced in federal court. An appeal from a decision of the district under this subdivision

shall be in accordance with the hearing procedures established in the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act.

(d) Except as otherwise authorized by law, the district shall make a replacement water well as defined in section 46-602, or as further defined in district rules and regulations, subject to the same provisions as the water well it replaces.

(7) If the district has included controls delineated in subdivision (1)(m) of this section in its management plan, but has not implemented such controls within two years after the initial public hearing on the controls, the district shall hold a public hearing, as provided in section 46-712, regarding the controls before implementing them.

(8) In addition to the controls listed in subsection (1) of this section, a district in which a management area has been designated may also adopt and implement one or more of the following measures if it determines that any such measures would help the district and water users achieve the goals and objectives of the management area: (a) It may sponsor nonmandatory educational programs; and (b) it may establish and implement financial or other incentive programs. As a condition for participation in an incentive program, the district may require water users or landowners to enter into and perform such agreements or covenants concerning the use of land or water as are necessary to produce the benefits for which the incentive program is established.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 11; Laws 1978, LB 217, § 2; Laws 1979, LB 26, § 4; Laws 1980, LB 643, § 13; Laws 1981, LB 146, § 9; Laws 1982, LB 375, § 19; Laws 1983, LB 506, § 1; Laws 1983, LB 23, § 7; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 8; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 25; Laws 1993, LB 131, § 30; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-666; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 31; Laws 1997, LB 877, § 6; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 196; Laws 2001, LB 135, § 2; Laws 2001, LB 667, § 9; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.25; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 79; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 27.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

Cross Reference

Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act, see section 46-650.

46-740. Ground water allocation; limitations and conditions. (1) If allocation is adopted for use of ground water for irrigation purposes in a management area, the permissible withdrawal of ground water shall be allocated equally per irrigated acre except as permitted by subsections (4) through (6) of section 46-739. Such allocation shall specify the total number of acre-inches that are allocated per irrigated acre per year, except that the district may allow a ground water user to average his or her allocation over any reasonable period of time. A ground water user may use his or her allocation on all or any part of the irrigated acres to which the allocation applies or in any other manner approved by the district.

(2) Except as permitted pursuant to subsections (4) through (6) of section 46-739, if annual rotation or reduction of irrigated acres is adopted for use of ground water for irrigation

purposes in a management area, the nonuse of irrigated acres shall be a uniform percentage reduction of each landowner's irrigated acres within the management area or a subarea of the management area. Such uniform reduction may be adjusted for each landowner based upon crops grown on his or her land to reflect the varying consumptive requirements between crops.

(3) Unless an integrated management plan, a rule, or an order is established, adopted, or issued prior to November 1, 2005, no integrated management plan, rule, or order shall limit the use of ground water by a municipality, within an area determined by the Department of Natural Resources to be fully appropriated pursuant to section 46-714 or designated as overappropriated pursuant to section 46-713, until January 1, 2026, except that:

(a) Any allocations to a municipality that have been made as of November 1, 2005, shall remain in full force and effect unless changed by the appropriate natural resources district;

(b)(i) For any municipality that has not received an allocation as of November 1, 2005, the minimum annual allocation may be the greater of either the amount of ground water authorized by a permit issued pursuant to the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act or the governmental, commercial, and industrial uses of the municipality plus a per capita allowance. Water for commercial and industrial uses may be limited as specified in subdivision (b)(iii) of this subsection.

(ii) The per capita allowance shall be based on the location of the municipality, increasing in equal increments from east to west, and shall not be less than two hundred gallons per person per day at 95 degrees, 19 minutes, 00 seconds longitude and not less than two hundred fifty gallons per person per day at 104 degrees, 04 minutes, 00 seconds longitude. Persons served by a municipality outside of its corporate limits shall be considered part of the municipality's population if such service begins prior to January 1, 2026.

(iii) Prior to January 1, 2026, any new or expanded single commercial or single industrial development served by any municipality within the fully appropriated or overappropriated area which, after the operative date of this section, commences water use resulting in the consumptive use of water in amounts greater than twenty-five million gallons annually may be subject to controls adopted pursuant to section 46-715;

(c) Prior to January 1, 2026, increases in the consumptive use of water by a municipality that result in a decrease in streamflow shall be addressed by the integrated management plan pursuant to controls or incentive programs adopted pursuant to section 46-715 and shall not affect the municipal allocations outlined in subdivisions (3)(a) and (b) of this section. Any permanent reduction in consumptive use of water associated with municipal growth, including governmental, industrial, and commercial growth, during the period between the operative date of this section and January 1, 2026, shall accrue to the benefit of the natural resources district within which such municipality is located; and

(d) To qualify for the exemption specified in subsection (3) of this section, any city of the metropolitan class, city of the primary class, city of the first class, or city of the second class shall file a conservation plan with the natural resources district, if required by the integrated management plan. Villages and other municipalities smaller than a city of the second class shall not be required to submit a conservation plan to qualify for such exemption.

(4) On and after January 1, 2026, the base amount for an annual allocation to a municipality shall be determined as the greater of either (a) the amount of water authorized by a permit issued pursuant to the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act

or (b) the greatest annual use prior to January 1, 2026, for uses specified in subdivision (3)(b) of this section plus the per capita allowance described in subdivision (3)(b)(ii) of this section. On and after January 1, 2026, increases in the consumptive use of water by a municipality that result in a decrease in streamflow shall be addressed by the integrated management plan pursuant to controls or incentive programs adopted pursuant to section 46-715. Each municipality may be subject to controls adopted pursuant to such section for amounts in excess of the allocations.

(5) Unless an integrated management plan, rule, or order is established, adopted, or issued prior to November 1, 2005, no integrated management plan, rule, or order shall limit the use of ground water by a nonmunicipal commercial or industrial water user within an area determined by the department to be fully appropriated pursuant to section 46-714 or designated as overappropriated pursuant to section 46-713, until January 1, 2026, except that:

(a) Prior to January 1, 2026, the minimum annual allocation for a nonmunicipal commercial or industrial user shall be the greater of either (i) the amount specified in a permit issued pursuant to the Industrial Ground Water Regulatory Act or (ii) the amount necessary to achieve the commercial or industrial use, including all new or expanded uses that consume less than twenty-five million gallons annually. Any increases in the consumptive use of water by a nonmunicipal commercial or industrial water user that result in a decrease in streamflow shall be addressed by the integrated management plan pursuant to controls or incentive programs adopted pursuant to section 46-715;

(b) Prior to January 1, 2026, any new or expanded single commercial or industrial development served by a nonmunicipal well within an area determined by the department to be fully appropriated pursuant to section 46-714 or designated as overappropriated pursuant to section 46-713 which, after the operative date of this section, commences water use resulting in the consumptive use of water in amounts greater than twenty-five million gallons annually may be subject to controls adopted pursuant to section 46-715. This subdivision does not apply to a water user described in this subdivision that is regulated by the Industrial Ground Water Regulatory Act and the United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission;

(c) On and after January 1, 2026, the base amount for an annual allocation to a nonmunicipal commercial or industrial user within an area determined by the department to be fully appropriated pursuant to section 46-714 or designated as overappropriated pursuant to section 46-713 shall be the amount specified in subdivision (5)(a) or (b) of this section;

(d) On and after January 1, 2026, increases in the consumptive use of water by a nonmunicipal commercial or industrial water user that result in a decrease in streamflow shall be addressed by the integrated management plan pursuant to controls or incentive programs adopted pursuant to section 46-715; and

(e) Any reduction in consumptive use associated with new nonmunicipal industrial or commercial uses of less than twenty-five million gallons, during the period between the operative date of this section and January 1, 2026, shall accrue to the benefit of the natural resources district within which such nonmunicipal industrial or commercial user is located.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 12; Laws 1991, LB 51, § 5; Laws 1993, LB 439, § 3; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.10; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 32; Laws 2001, LB 135, § 3; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.26; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 80; Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 28.

Operative date: July 14, 2006.

46-741. District; review controls. A district may review any allocation, rotation, or reduction control imposed in a management area and shall adjust allocations, rotations, or reductions to accommodate new or additional uses or otherwise reflect findings of such review, consistent with the ground water management objectives. Such review shall consider new development or additional ground water uses within the area, more accurate data or information that was not available at the time of the allocation, rotation, or reduction order, the availability of supplemental water supplies, any changes in ground water recharge, and such other factors as the district deems appropriate.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 13; Laws 1993, LB 439, § 4; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.11; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 33; Laws 2001, LB 135, § 4; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.27; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 81.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-742. Transport of ground water; prohibited; when. (1) Whenever the drilling of new wells has been stayed pursuant to section 46-714, ground water withdrawn outside the affected area shall not be transported for use inside such area unless (a) such withdrawal and transport began before the stay took effect, (b) the water is used solely for domestic purposes, or (c) such withdrawal and transport is approved in advance by the district in which the stay is in effect and, if the water is withdrawn in another natural resources district, by the other district.

(2) Whenever a natural resources district pursuant to subdivision (1)(m) of section 46-739 has closed all or part of the district to the issuance of additional well permits, ground water withdrawn outside the affected area shall not be transported for use inside such area unless (a) such withdrawal and transport began before the affected area was closed to the issuance of additional well permits, (b) the water is used solely for domestic purposes, or (c) such withdrawal and transport is approved in advance by the district that closed the affected area to additional well permits and, if the water is withdrawn in another natural resources district, by the other district.

(3) If a proposed withdrawal and transport of water under subsection (1) or (2) of this section is intended for municipal purposes, the natural resources district shall approve the withdrawal and transport of ground water into the affected area when a public water supplier providing water for municipal purposes receives a permit from the Department of Natural Resources pursuant to the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act.

Source: Laws 2003, LB 619, § 11; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.24; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 82.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-743. Public hearing; requirements. Any public hearing required under the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act shall comply with the following requirements:

(1) The hearing shall be located within or in reasonable proximity to the area proposed for designation as a management area or affected by the proposed rule or regulation;

(2) Notice of the hearing shall be published in a newspaper published or of general circulation in the affected area at least once each week for three consecutive weeks, the last publication of which shall be not less than seven days prior to the hearing;

(3) As to the designation of a management area, adoption or amendment of an action plan or integrated management plan, or adoption or amendment of controls, the notice shall provide, as applicable, a general description of (a) the contents of the plan, (b) the geographic area which will be considered for inclusion in the management area, and (c) a general description of all controls proposed for adoption or amendment and shall identify all locations where a copy of the full text of the proposed plan or controls may be obtained;

(4) For all other rules and regulations, the notice shall provide a general description of the contents of the rules and regulations proposed for adoption or amendment and shall identify all locations where a copy of the full text of the proposed rules and regulations may be obtained;

(5) The full text of all controls, rules, or regulations shall be available to the public upon request not later than the date of first publication;

(6) All interested persons shall be allowed to appear and present testimony; and

(7) The hearing shall include testimony of a representative of the Department of Natural Resources and, if the primary purpose of the proposed management area is protection of water quality, testimony of a representative of the Department of Environmental Quality and shall include the results of any relevant water quality studies or investigations conducted by the district.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 83.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-744. Order; publication; effective; when. Any order adopted pursuant to section 46-712, 46-718, 46-719, 46-725, or 46-726 shall be published once each week for three consecutive weeks in a local newspaper published or of general circulation in the area involved, the last publication of which shall be not less than seven days prior to the date set for the effective date of the order. The publication shall provide a general description of the text of all controls adopted or amended and shall identify all locations where a copy of the full text of the proposed controls may be obtained. The full text of all controls adopted shall be available to the public upon request at least thirty days prior to the effective date of the controls. Such order shall

become effective on the date specified by the adopting district, department, or board, as applicable.

Source: Laws 1982, LB 375, § 9; Laws 1986, LB 894, § 29; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-673.07; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 27; Laws 1997, LB 188, § 2; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.21; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 84.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-745. Natural resources district; cease and desist order; violation; penalty; Attorney General; duties; Department of Justice Natural Resources Enforcement Fund; created; use; investment. (1) Any person who violates a cease and desist order issued by a district pursuant to section 46-707 shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than one thousand dollars and not more than five thousand dollars for each day an intentional violation occurs. In assessing the amount of the civil penalty, the court shall consider the degree and extent of the violation, the size of the operation, whether the violator has been previously convicted or subjected to a civil penalty under this section, and any economic benefit derived from noncompliance. Any civil penalty assessed and unpaid shall constitute a debt to the state which may be collected in the manner of a lien foreclosure or sued for and recovered in a proper form of action in the name of the state in the district court of the county in which the violator resides or owns property. The court shall, within thirty days after receipt, remit the civil penalty to the State Treasurer for credit to the permanent school fund.

(2)(a) Prior to issuing a cease and desist order against a public water supplier as defined in section 46-638, the district shall consult with the Attorney General. If the Attorney General determines that the district does not have sufficient grounds to issue a cease and desist order, the district shall abide by such determination and shall not issue a cease and desist order. The Attorney General shall have exclusive authority to enforce actions under this subsection.

(b) Any determination as to whether a water well is properly registered under sections 46-602 to 46-604 or whether a water well is properly permitted under the Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act shall be made by the Department of Natural Resources.

(3) When the Attorney General, a county attorney, or a private attorney brings an action on behalf of a district to recover a civil penalty under this section, the district shall recover the costs of the action if a civil penalty is awarded. Any recovered costs of the action shall be: (a) Remitted to the State Treasurer for credit to the Department of Justice Natural Resources Enforcement Fund if the action is brought by the Attorney General; (b) credited to the applicable county fund if the action is brought by the county attorney; and (c) remitted to the district if the action is brought by the district's private attorney.

(4) The Department of Justice Natural Resources Enforcement Fund is created. The fund shall consist of money credited pursuant to subsection (3) of this section. Money in the fund shall be used to reimburse the office of the Attorney General for the costs incurred in enforcing this section. Any money in the fund available for investment shall be invested by the state investment

officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

Source: Laws 1981, LB 146, § 8; R.S.Supp.,1981, § 46-674.01; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 16; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-663.02; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 16; Laws 2003, LB 30, § 1; R.S.Supp.,2003, § 46-656.10; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 85.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross References

Municipal and Rural Domestic Ground Water Transfers Permit Act, see section 46-650.

Nebraska Capital Expansion Act, see section 72-1269.

Nebraska State Funds Investment Act, see section 72-1260.

46-746. Violations; civil penalty. (1) Any person who violates any cease and desist order issued by a district pursuant to section 46-707 or any controls, rules, or regulations adopted by a natural resources district relating to a management area shall be subject to the imposition of penalties imposed through the controls adopted by the district, including, but not limited to, having any allocation of water granted or irrigated acres certified by the district reduced in whole or in part. Before a district takes any action, notice and hearing shall be provided to such person.

(2) Any person who violates any of the provisions of sections 46-721 to 46-733 for which a penalty is not otherwise provided, other than the requirements imposed on a district, the Director of Natural Resources, or the Department of Natural Resources, shall be subject to a civil penalty of not more than five hundred dollars. Each day of continued violation shall constitute a separate offense.

Source: Laws 1986, LB 894, § 16; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-674.17; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 69; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 216; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.63; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 86.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-747. Hearings; subject to review. All hearings conducted pursuant to the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act shall be of record and available for review.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 13; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 10; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-668; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 70; R.S.1943, (1998), § 46-656.64; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 87.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-748. Rules and regulations. The Director of Natural Resources shall adopt and promulgate, in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, such rules and regulations as are necessary to the discharge of duties assigned to the director or the Department of Natural Resources by the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act.

Source: Laws 1996, LB 108, § 68; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 215; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.62; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 88.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross Reference

Administrative Procedure Act, see section 84-920.

46-749. Administration of act; compliance with other laws. In the administration of the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act, all actions of the Director of Environmental Quality, the Director of Natural Resources, and the districts shall be consistent with the provisions of section 46-613.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 16; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 13; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-671; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 71; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 217; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.65; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 89.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-750. Appeal; procedure. Any person aggrieved by any order of the district, the Director of Environmental Quality, or the Director of Natural Resources issued pursuant to the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act may appeal the order. The appeal shall be in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 14; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 11; Laws 1988, LB 352, § 78; R.S.1943, (1993), § 46-669; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 72; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 218; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.66; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 90.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross Reference

Administrative Procedure Act, see section 84-920.

46-751. Ground Water Management Fund; created; use; investment. All fees paid to the Director of Natural Resources pursuant to the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act shall be remitted to the State Treasurer for credit to the Ground Water Management Fund which is hereby created and which shall be administered by the director. Any money credited to the fund may be utilized by the director for payments of expenses incurred in the administration of the act. Any money in the fund available for investment shall be invested

by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

Source: Laws 1975, LB 577, § 15; Laws 1984, LB 1071, § 12; Laws 1995, LB 7, § 42; R.S.Supp.,1995, § 46-670; Laws 1996, LB 108, § 39; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 200; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.33; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 91.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross References

Nebraska Capital Expansion Act, see section 72-1269.

Nebraska State Funds Investment Act, see section 72-1260.

46-752. Interrelated Water Management Fund; created; use; investment. The Interrelated Water Management Fund is created. The State Treasurer shall credit to the fund, for the purpose of conducting studies to determine the cause of current or potential conflicts between ground water users and surface water appropriators, disputes over interstate compacts or decrees, or difficulties fulfilling the provisions of other formal state contracts and agreements, such money as is specifically appropriated and such funds, fees, donations, gifts, or services or devises or bequests of real or personal property received by the Department of Natural Resources from any federal, state, public, or private source, to be used by the department for the purpose of funding studies as described in this section. The department may use its budget authority to request appropriations specifically for the purpose of funding studies described in this section. The department shall allocate money from the fund for use by the department, by any state agency, board, or commission, or by any political subdivision of the state, by agreement, or by private organizations or firms as may be contracted with by the department. Any money in the fund available for investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

Source: Laws 1996, LB 108, § 73; Laws 2000, LB 900, § 219; R.S.Supp.,2002, § 46-656.67; Laws 2004, LB 962, § 92.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

Cross References

Nebraska Capital Expansion Act, see section 72-1269.

Nebraska State Funds Investment Act, see section 72-1260.

46-753. Water Resources Trust Fund; created; use; investment; matching funds required; when. (1) The Water Resources Trust Fund is created. The State Treasurer shall credit to the fund such money as is specifically appropriated thereto by the Legislature and such funds, fees, donations, gifts, or bequests received by the Department of Natural Resources from any federal, state, public, or private source for expenditure for the purposes described in the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act. Money in the fund shall not be subject to any fiscal-year limitation or lapse provision of unexpended balance at the end of any fiscal year or biennium. Any money in the fund available for investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act.

(2) The fund shall be administered by the department. The department shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations regarding the allocation and expenditure of money from the fund.

(3) Money in the fund may be expended by the department for costs incurred by the department, by natural resources districts, or by other political subdivisions in (a) determining whether river basins, subbasins, or reaches are fully appropriated in accordance with section 46-713, (b) developing or implementing integrated management plans for such fully appropriated river basins, subbasins, or reaches or for river basins, subbasins, or reaches designated as overappropriated in accordance with section 46-713, (c) developing or implementing integrated management plans in river basins, subbasins, or reaches which have not yet become either fully appropriated or overappropriated, or (d) attaining state compliance with an interstate water compact or decree or other formal state contract or agreement.

(4) Except for funds paid to a political subdivision for forgoing or reducing its own water use or for implementing projects or programs intended to aid the state in complying with an interstate water compact or decree or other formal state contract or agreement, a political subdivision that receives funds from the fund shall provide, or cause to be provided, matching funds in an amount at least equal to twenty percent of the amount received from the fund by that natural resources district or political subdivision. The department shall monitor programs and activities funded by the fund to ensure that the required match is being provided.

Source: Laws 2004, LB 962, § 93.
Operative date: July 16, 2004.

46-754. Interrelated Water Management Plan Program; created; grants; commission; duties; use. The Interrelated Water Management Plan Program is created for the purpose of facilitating and funding the duties of districts arising under the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act. The program shall function as a grant program administered by the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission and the Department of Natural Resources upon recommendations of the commission using funds appropriated for the program. The commission shall develop guidelines and limitations for grant requests for funding such district's duties, including studies required to carry out those duties. Grant requests shall be made to the commission for review in a manner and form prescribed by the commission. The amounts requested and approved shall be supported by a minimum local revenue match comprising twenty percent of the total project cost. The Director of Natural Resources shall expend funds to implement the commission's recommendations for fiscal support under the program only upon the commission's approval.

Source: Laws 2006, LB 1226, § 20.
Operative date: July 14, 2006.

*Footnotes: Class I misdemeanor: Maximum – not more than one year imprisonment, or one thousand dollars fine, or both.

Minimum – none.

Class II misdemeanor: Maximum – six months imprisonment, or one thousand dollars fine, or both.

Minimum – none.

Class III misdemeanor: Maximum – three months imprisonment, or five hundred dollars fine, or both.

Minimum – none.

Class IV misdemeanor: Maximum – no imprisonment, five hundred dollars fine.

Minimum – one hundred dollars.

Class V misdemeanor: Maximum – no imprisonment, one hundred dollars fine.

Minimum – none.