

8.0 BASIN SUMMARIES AND RESULTS

8.1 Blue River Basins

The Blue River Basins are located in south-central Nebraska and consist of all of the surface water areas that drain into the Big Blue River and the Little Blue River and all aquifers that impact surface water flows of the basins.

The basins can be divided into two distinct areas based on the presence or absence of glacial deposits (CSD, 2005). No sufficient numerical groundwater model is available in the Blue River Basins at this time. Therefore, the Hunt methodology was used to determine the 10/50 area and lag impacts due to current and projected future well development. The Hunt methodology was applied to the western portion of the basins to determine the 10/50 area and to estimate lag impacts due to current and projected future well development. At the present time, the Department cannot determine the 10/50 area or the lag effects due to current and projected future well development for the eastern portions of the Big Blue River and Little Blue River Basins due to the glaciated nature of the area and that the principal aquifer is absent or very thin (CSD, 2005).

The Department was able to reach a preliminary conclusion that no portion of the basins is currently fully appropriated. The Department determined that the near-term and long-term availability of surface water for diversion for each basin exceeds the number of days necessary to meet 65% and 85% of the net corn crop irrigation requirement for the applicable time periods. The Department has also determined that, if no additional legal constraints are imposed on future development of hydrologically connected surface water and groundwater and reasonable projections are made about the extent and location of future development, this preliminary conclusion would not change to a conclusion that the basin is fully appropriated, based on current information.

8.2 Lower Niobrara Basin

The Lower Niobrara River Basin is located in the northeast portion of Nebraska and consists of all of the surface water areas that drain into the Niobrara River that had not previously been

determined to be fully appropriated, from the Spencer Hydropower facility downstream to the confluence of the Niobrara River and the Missouri River, and all aquifers that impact surface water flows of the basin.

No sufficient numerical groundwater model is available in the Lower Niobrara River Basin. Therefore, the stream depletion factor (SDF) methodology was used to determine the 10/50 area and lag impacts due to current and projected future well development. The analysis of lag effects of current development for the Lower Niobrara Basin indicates a reduction in streamflows of 10 cfs in twenty-five years. The analysis of the impacts of future development on the Lower Niobrara Basin based on current development trends indicates an additional reduction in streamflows of 101 cfs in twenty-five years.

The Department has reached a preliminary conclusion that no portion of the basin is fully appropriated. Estimates of future water supplies for junior irrigators could not be estimated due to minimal surface water administration during the past twenty years. Even though the future water supplies were not estimated, the current number of days in which surface water was available for diversion far exceeds the number of days necessary to meet the 65/85 rule.

8.3 Missouri Tributary Basins

The Missouri Tributary Basins are located in the north-central and eastern portions of Nebraska and consist of all of the surface water areas that drain directly into the Missouri River, with the exception of the Niobrara River and Platte River Basins, and all aquifers that impact surface water flows of the basins.

No sufficient numerical groundwater model is available in the Missouri Tributary Basins to determine the 10/50 area. Much of the basins were glaciated and in those areas, the lack of sufficient data and appropriate hydrogeologic conditions does not allow for the use of the existing methodologies. Therefore, the Department was unable to delineate the 10/50 area for the glaciated portions of the basins. The non-glaciated area surrounding the headwaters of Bazile Creek is the only portion of the basins where the principal aquifer is both present and in

hydrologic connection with the streams; therefore, the 10/50 area was delineated using SDF methodology.

The analysis of lag effects of current and potential future development was only conducted in the Bazile Creek Sub-Basin due to a lack of sufficient data and appropriated hydrogeologic conditions in all other areas. The analysis of the Bazile Creek Sub-Basin indicates a reduction in streamflows by 14 cfs in twenty-five years. The analysis of the impacts of future development on the Bazile Creek Sub-Basin based on current development trends indicates an additional reduction in streamflows of 15 cfs in twenty-five years.

The Department has reached a preliminary conclusion that no portion of the Missouri River Tributary Basins is fully appropriated. The near-term availability of surface water for diversion exceeds the number of days necessary to meet 65% and 85% of the net corn crop irrigation requirement for the applicable time periods. Estimates of future water supplies for junior irrigators in the Bazile Creek Sub-Basin could not be estimated due to minimal surface water administration during the past twenty years. For all other sub-basins, the inability to calculate the lag effects of existing and future groundwater development prohibited determination of future water supplies for junior irrigators at this time. Even though the long-term water supplies were not estimated, the current number of days in which surface water was available for diversion far exceeds the number of days necessary to meet the 65/85 rule.

8.4 Results of Analyses

Tables 8-1 and 8-2 summarize the results of the analysis for sufficiency of water availability for irrigation in each basin.

Table 8-1. Summary of comparison between the number of days required to meet 65% of the net corn crop irrigation requirement and number of days in which surface water is available for diversion, July 1 – August 31.

	Days Necessary to Meet 65% of Net Corn Crop Irrigation Requirement	Average Number of Days Available for Diversion at Current Development	Average Number of Days Available for Diversion at Current Development with Twenty-Five Years of Lag Impacts	Average Number of Days Available for Diversion with Future Development and Twenty-Five Years of Lag Impacts
Big Blue River Basin	23.9	54.5	51.5	51.5
Little Blue River Basin	25.7	55.4	53.0	53.0
Lower Niobrara River Basin downstream of Spencer Hydropower	23.6 – 25.5	61.9	Not Calculated ¹	Not Calculated ¹
Missouri Tributary Basins	14.1 – 26.6	58.8	Not Calculated ¹	Not Calculated ¹

¹ This number could not be calculated due to a lack of geologic data, hydrologic data, or surface water administration.

Table 8-2. Summary of comparison between the number of days required to meet 85% of the net corn crop irrigation requirement and number of days in which surface water is available for diversion, May 1 – September 30.

	Days Necessary to Meet 85% of Net Corn Crop Irrigation Requirement	Average Number of Days Available for Diversion at Current Development	Average Number of Days Available for Diversion at Current Development with Twenty-Five Years of Lag Impacts	Average Number of Days Available for Diversion with Future Development and Twenty-Five Years of Lag Impacts
Big Blue River Basin	31.3	145.3	141.6	141.6
Little Blue River Basin	33.6	143.7	137.7	137.7
Lower Niobrara River Basin downstream of Spencer Hydropower	30.9 – 33.4	152.9	Not Calculated ¹	Not Calculated ¹
Missouri Tributary Basins	18.4 – 34.7	149.8	Not Calculated ¹	Not Calculated ¹

¹ This number could not be calculated due to a lack of geologic data, hydrologic data, or surface water administration.