

Written Testimony  
of  
Richard Burke  
916 Pacific  
Cambridge, NE 69022

representing  
Myself  
and  
My Family

concerning  
Ground Water Management Areas  
and  
Integrated Management Plan

submitted to  
MRNRD Board of Directors  
and  
Staff

From:  
Richard Burke  
916 Pacific  
Cambridge, NE 69022

MRNRD Board of Directors and Staff,

My name is Richard Burke, I am from the Cambridge area where I have lived my entire life. I am a farmer-rancher, and a landowner in southeastern Frontier county and I am also an irrigator. I am representing myself, my wife and four children, my mom and her operation, my way of life, and my means of supporting those who depend on me.

In the spring of 2001 I purchased a sizeable parcel of land. This farm has approximately 250 acres of irrigated land and two irrigation wells. The 250 irrigated acres represent 31% of the total acres that I purchased but they represent almost 60% of the total amount paid for this tract of land. This farm has the potential to be further developed, with a little time to pay down some debt, I could have developed more acres by adding additional well(s). Because of restrictions already in place, I am afraid I will not ever be able to do that even if I can afford to in the future, and furthermore I am very concerned I will not be able to meet the monetary obligations that I have already committed to if this board elects to implement the proposed Ground Water Management Areas and Integrated Management Plan. I would think most of you are aware of the dry land crops that we have, or a better way to put it is, have not raised the last two years. If the dry land crops were all I could count on, I would probably not even have been farming in 2004. I hope your board has a plan to compensate me for the water that I can no longer use. It is hard enough to pay for irrigated land with all the water you can pump. I challenge each of you board members to tell me how I am supposed to do this with 13 inches (which is less water than I am currently using), or less water? I say less because your proposed Ground Water Management Areas and Integrated Management Plan does little to guarantee anything in a water short year, except that we will have less, or possibly no water. I don't know how anyone who irrigates can agree to these terms. I know that they would certainly be very detrimental to me and many others who irrigate, as well as the people we do business with.

I have installed meters on my wells as I have been told that I had to do. It has cost me some money out of my pocket which is one more additional cost for the producer to pay. I do think we can gain some valuable information from these meters as far as how much water we do use to raise a crop and compare that to how good that crop was. I have had one meter on since 2002 and the other meter was just installed prior to this growing season. I don't know how this board can make an informed decision on water use and what is fair when you have not even seen any data on wells that have just had meters installed prior to this growing season? My meters both show readings of over 13 inches of water. I also have some rented ground with center pivot systems and they also show that I have used more than 13 inches of water this past season. I am also involved in an irrigated farming operation with my mother, and once again her meters show a use of greater than 13 inches, some substantially more and we were very fortunate to receive up to 10 inches of rain on these farms in the month of July. I cannot accept an offer of maybe 13 inches or less water a year.

My neighbors two miles away in the Tri Basin NRD are still developing irrigated land and have no restrictions on their water. Your proposed Ground Water Management Areas and Integrated Management Plan also puts no restrictions on some in the MRNRD to the north of me. I don't think this is right or fair. I didn't sign any agreement with Kansas, the state of Nebraska did. I want to know why you as an elected board representing other irrigators and myself in the MRNRD are willing to pay the states debt with our water while letting others in the state get by without it costing them anything? It seems very foolish to me, but I think some back in the eastern part of the state think we are foolish enough to do it. I hope you as a board really take time and think about what you are doing. I think in time you will see that these water restriction will harm each and every one of us in southwest Nebraska.

In closing I would like to thank you for reading this letter. I would prefer no restrictions at all, however if and when the state as a whole agrees to pay equally , statewide, farmer, rancher, cities ,and towns alike with their water, should you as our elected board agree to any restrictions at all. I think maybe that might be some incentive for the state of Nebraska to fight Kansas a little harder than they have in the past. The streams didn't dry up in a years time and they won't be flowing any more next year just because you have taken away the very means by which your constituents earn their living. I think the MRNRD should set back and wait and see what develops in the next few month(s). Adopting the proposed Ground Water Management Areas and Integrated Management Plan as it is worded, will be very hard on the economy of southwest Nebraska , I think. It may mean losing my farm that I am purchasing right now, and quite possibly mean me leaving this area with my wife and four kids to move elsewhere in search of a job that will support my family of six. I don't want that to happen and I don't think our towns, businesses , or schools want to see that happen. I would not think the MRNRD board of directors and staff would like to see this happen either, one of the jobs lost in this part of the state could very easily be mine it could also be yours.

Thank You

Richard Burke

