

By Nate Jenkins

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Farmers interested in using soil-moisture probes during the upcoming irrigation season can now apply for cost-share under a program administered by the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD).

The program is possible because of a new grant the URNRD received this year from the Nebraska Environmental Trust to provide cost share on soil-moisture probes. A grant received last year from the Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Program will also help fund the program.

Under the program, farmers can be reimbursed for up to 2/3 of the costs of soil-moisture probes used in 2013. Reimbursement will be capped at \$3,000 per probe that is purchased, and \$1,500 per probe that is leased.

There was strong interest in a similar program last year. The goal of the grant is to increase the number of new farmers using the probes.

As a result, enrollees in this year's grant-funded program must not have participated in the URNRD's program launched last year or receiving cost share for probes under Natural Resources Conservation Services programs.

Reimbursement under the new program will be limited to two probes per person for 2013. There are no restrictions on what types of soil-moisture probes can be used. The probes must be used within the URNRD.

The NRD is now taking applications for the program with an application deadline of May 15. Application forms are available on the NRD website at www.urnrd.org or can be picked up at the NRD office at 511 East Fifth St. in Imperial.

Completed forms can be dropped off at the office, mailed to the office at Upper Republican NRD, PO Box 1140, Imperial, NE 69033, scanned and e-mailed to natejenkins@urnrd.org, or faxed to 308-882-4521.