



Over the past decade, Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District has been upgrading its canal system with cutting-edge technology to improve efficiency and water conservation. Thanks to collaboration with experts from Australia, approximately 83% of the district's canal acres now operate under Rubicon's Total Channel Control system.

This advanced automation has eliminated canal spills and conserves an estimated 6,000 to 8,000 acre-feet of water annually.

In addition to canal automation, FCID has implemented a fully connected online account system. Producers can now log in to check their water balance in real-time, place water orders, and schedule irrigation deliveries—available seven days a week.

As we prepare for the 2025 season, we encourage all producers to call or visit our office to set up their login credentials. Take advantage of these modern tools to manage your water more efficiently!



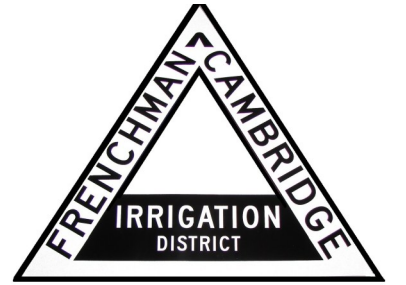
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Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation District

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# FCID Newsletter



After an extraordinary 47-year career serving multiple generations of ditch irrigators in the Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District, Jerry has decided to hang up his weed fork and embrace a well-earned retirement.

Jerry's dedication to delivering irrigation water has been unwavering—riding the ditch, ensuring smooth operations, and keeping the water flowing year after year. His wealth of knowledge is irreplaceable, from knowing the precise locations of buried pipe laterals and turnouts to recalling the history of countless repairs.

His expertise, work ethic, and commitment to the district will be deeply missed.

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## FCID's 2025 Water Supply Update

On January 16, 2025, Reclamation released its Estimated Water Supply for the Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District (FCID) for the upcoming irrigation season. Below is the projected storage water available for release from FCID reservoirs:

- **Swanson Reservoir:** 40,800 acre-feet
- **Hugh Butler Reservoir:** 4,200 acre-feet
- **Harry Strunk Reservoir:** 30,300 acre-feet

Based on these projections, FCID has made the following allocations for the 2025 irrigation season:

- **Meeker-Driftwood Canal:** 7 inches per acre.
- **Cambridge Canal:** 9 inches per acre. Harry Strunk Reservoir will fill and is currently down 1.5 feet
- The **Red Willow Canal** will not operate in 2025, and no releases will be made from Hugh Butler Reservoir.
- The **Bartley Canal** will divert river water starting in May and will continue as long as river flows are sufficient. However, no releases will be made from Swanson or Hugh Butler Reservoirs to support Bartley Canal. For acres below the pump station discharge on Bartley Canal, an allocation of 6 inches per acre will apply.

These allocations reflect FCID's commitment to managing water resources effectively under the current supply conditions. The cost for water in 2025 will be \$10.00 per acre for all the canals plus \$4.75 per inch allocated.

Example for Meeker-Driftwood Canal: 7 inches per Acre X 4.75 = \$33.25 plus \$10.00 per acre = \$43.25 Note: River Water will also be sold for \$4.75 per inch delivered.

## Annual Water Users Meeting

FCID's annual water users meeting will be held on March 20, 2025. The event will begin at 6:00 PM with a meal, followed by an informational meeting. It will take place at the Cambridge Community Center, 722 Patterson Street Cambridge Nebraska.

## Reclamation Reform Act of 1982

Since the passage of the Reclamation Reform Act (RRA) in 1982, the agricultural landscape has undergone significant changes. Farming operations have expanded, and what was once considered a large family farm in 1982 is no longer the reality in 2025. Today, family farms are much larger, yet profit margins are tighter due to rising costs and evolving market conditions. Despite these changes, water users within the Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District (FCID) are still required to comply with the RRA's regulations, which remain based on the farming conditions of the early 1980s.

A key provision of the RRA pertains to land ownership and water eligibility. Under these rules, any individual or entity farming more than 240 acres of "Project Acres"—land designated as part of a Bureau of Reclamation project—is subject to additional reporting and compliance requirements. Furthermore, no single operator can receive federally subsidized irrigation water for more than 960 irrigated project acres. While it is possible to irrigate beyond this limit, any acreage exceeding 960 acres must be irrigated at "full cost" rates, as determined by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Within FCID, the full-cost rate for irrigation water on acres exceeding the 960-acre threshold ranges between \$60 and \$70 per acre above the district's standard assessed fee. This additional payment is made directly to the Bureau of Reclamation and does not provide any financial benefit to the irrigation district itself. As a result, farmers operating larger-scale operations must carefully navigate these regulations to ensure compliance while managing the economic challenges of modern agriculture.

Compounding these challenges, water supply issues in the Republican River Basin have significantly impacted FCID's ability to provide a full allocation of irrigation water. Over the years, Nebraska's portion of the Republican River Basin has been overdeveloped, leading to increased strain on both surface and groundwater resources. Since approximately 1998, FCID has not received a full water supply, forcing farmers to adjust their operations and rely more heavily on alternative water sources, including groundwater wells.

That same year, in 1998, Kansas filed a lawsuit against Nebraska, alleging that Nebraska's overdevelopment of groundwater resources within the Republican River Basin was depleting flows in the river and reducing the water available to Kansas, in violation of the Republican River Compact. This legal dispute ultimately led to a 2002 settlement and continued litigation, resulting in regulatory changes and water-use restrictions for Nebraska's irrigators.

The combination of limited surface water supplies, increasing regulatory pressure, and ongoing legal and interstate compact obligations has made water management in FCID increasingly complex. Farmers in the district must navigate not only the constraints of the RRA but also the broader challenges of securing sufficient water in an over-appropriated and legally contested river basin.