"Nebraska irrigators are certainly concerned about water availability, conserving water and making sure future generations do have water," said a University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Educator.

In Nebraska, about 94 percent of our groundwater use is for agriculture, said Alan Corr, Extension Educator focusing on water and cropping systems in West Central Nebraska. About 93 percent of Nebraska land is used for agriculture, so nothing's out of balance, he said. Along with the land ownership comes water rights, but during times of drought and declining water table, agricultural producers and industry, as well as the general public, are faced with the challenge of conserving that natural resource.

A study begun in September, 2007, shows that irrigators' attitude is to use as little water as they can while producing a crop, Corr said.

Asked what is the most important issue facing all Nebraska irrigators, nearly 60 percent of respondents listed ground water availability, ground water depletion and water use restrictions, Corr said. Irrigation cost came in second with about 11 percent calling that the most important problem.

When asked about their own most pressing problem, though, about 40 percent put cost at the top of the list, 16 percent worried about water availability and 14 percent listed water rights and restrictions.

Attitudes toward shortages vary between parts of the state where drilling and pumping are restricted and areas where there are no current restrictions, Corr said. In areas where restrictions are already in place, about 48 percent of respondents said water availability is the most pressing problem. About 31 percent said cost was the most important factor. Conversely, in unrestricted areas, 20 percent were most concerned about water restrictions and 50 percent cited irrigation costs as their biggest problem.

In addition to attitudes toward dealing with water shortages and restrictions, the study focused on management practices like use of new technologies, such as moisture monitoring equipment, sprinkler packages and updated irrigation equipment. The results of that part of the survey will become available as they're tabulated, Corr said.