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Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

Imposing More Water Use Restrictions Not The Answer

Curtis – Imposing more restrictions on ground water use will not make up for the projected 2006 water shortage, concluded the Middle Republican Board of Directors at their Tuesday meeting. The conclusion followed a presentation made by District Manager Dan Smith, who distributed a report generated by the Department of Natural Resources. Data from the report indicated that even significant restrictions on ground water pumping would have little short term effect on reducing consumptive water use.

Smith reviewed options the Basin Districts and DNR have discussed in order to make up the projected water shortage. The board discussed the feasibility of pumping wells directly into the river and other proposals to make up the shortage. Smith indicated that the Basin Districts are investigating local and statewide incentive programs. The question of how such programs will be funded remains unanswered. Individual districts simply do not have the resources to handle the costs associated with incentive programs.

Smith reported that the Nebraska Republican River Basin Management Association (NRRBMA) is looking at setting up a foundation. This would increase the group's eligibility for grants. The issue will be discussed at an upcoming NRRBMA meeting in Holdrege. The board supported forming a foundation within the Association using the same members.

District Conservationist Doug Whisenhunt reviewed NRCS activity. NRCS is still under a hiring freeze. Whisenhunt reported that CREP applications are being completed. EQIP 2006 first sign-up ends November 30. It is still uncertain what funds will be available for the

Special Initiative. Whisenhunt, who serves on a NRCS sub-committee for invasive species, gave an update on what the sub-committee is considering. Maps were circulated showing burns that have already been done and what is being planned for 2006 and 2007 in Lincoln County.

Information & Education Coordinator Kara Gall distributed the final copy of the District's Long Range Implementation Plan to Directors. Gall circulated a draft Community Grant Application for the directors' review. Communities seeking grants from the district may be asked to submit this application before the board considers funding proposals. Gall indicated that the State 4-H Camp Director is requesting that the NRD's support a new natural resources camp by offering scholarships.

Roger Stockton reported on behalf of the Southwest Nebraska RC&D. Stockton reported that the Council would like to add a voting member from each of the Basin NRDs.

Assistant Manager Bob Merrigan reported that meter readings and inspections are ongoing. The overall average of meters that have been read is 9.219 inches. Producers with meters needing repairs will be notified of that requirement in the near future. Merrigan also reported that trees have been ordered for the Districts' Conservation Tree Program. The pricing on trees has changed. The planting will be billed per foot instead of per tree.

The grass drill rental fee has gone up to \$7 per acre in order to cover cost of repairs.

The next regular meeting will be on December 13 at the Middle Republican NRD Office at 1:30 p.m.

Full text of the meeting minutes, kept current, is available during regular business hours at the NRD office in Curtis or on the web at www.mrnrd.org.

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