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Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

Bankers Take Account of Water Issues

McCook – Nearly 30 bankers, insurance professionals, and NRD staff from throughout the Republican River Basin attended a water issues workshop in McCook last Thursday.

The workshop, presented by the Republican River Water Conservation and Education Coalition, with funding from Water for the West, addressed the role that bankers and insurance professionals play in water management for the basin.

Bruce Dodson, of Agri Affiliates Inc., discussed a spreadsheet package developed by the Coalition. The spreadsheet assists agricultural producers in assessing water needs and options and making management decisions. It is available for free download at www.agwaterbudget.com. Dodson spoke specifically to those present, saying, “Many of our producers have the capability of downloading this tool to their own computers. But for those who don’t, all of you here today have the capability of making them aware of this tool and assisting them in using it.”

Mike Clements, Manager of the Lower Republican NRD, John Thorburn, Manager of the Tri-Basin NRD, Dan Smith, Manger of the Middle Republican NRD, and Jasper Fanning, Manager of the Upper Republican NRD, spoke about current and future NRD Rules and Regulations. Smith emphasized that while all of the Republican Basin NRDs have developed similar ground water management policies, there are some important differences in the plans adopted by districts that are necessary to best serve local needs. Smith also remarked that, despite media attention otherwise, groundwater management decisions in the Republican River Basin have very little to do with LB962. Rather, most groundwater management in the basin is targeted to maintain compliance with the Republican River Basin Compact Settlement.

Jeremy Gehle, of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, (DNR) updated those present on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Both are state and federal incentive programs. The Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP will help farmers conserve water quantity of the designated rivers and streams, reduce the consumptive use of surface and subsurface irrigation water, and enhance water quality and wildlife habitat by establishing permanent vegetative cover to reduce agricultural chemical and sediment runoff. This year, DNR offered irrigation farmers in Southwest Nebraska a one-time \$100 per acre payment to convert irrigated cropland to some other land use. EQIP Contracts are for four years. Another signup is likely later this year.

The workshop ended with a presentation by Noel Sylvester, Crop Claims Manager for Farm Bureau Financial Services. Sylvester spoke about crop insurance issues, specifically as they pertain to the drought and allocations. He said that a variety of misconceptions that arise around irrigation and prevented planting.

The mission of the Coalition is to collaborate and address the need for water conservation and education in the Republican basin to provide producers, landowners, and communities the information and resources to make decisions and adopt strategies to conserve water and maintain the economic viability of the region. Coalition members include the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, The Groundwater Foundation, the Lower, Middle, and Upper Republican NRDs, Tri-Basin NRD, Nebraska Bostwick Irrigation District, Agri Affiliates, Inc., and the Nebraska Republican River Management Districts Association.

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