



220 Center Ave.
PO Box 81
Curtis, NE 69025

Phone: 800 -873-5613
Fax: 308 -367 -4285
Email: kgall@mrnr.org

Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

NRD Contributes to Surface Water Purchase

Curtis – The Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors voted unanimously to use \$50,000 to contribute to the purchase of surface water in Hitchcock county.

The resolution, made at the March 14 Board Meeting in McCook, followed discussion about the effects of the project on the district. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has been negotiating with Frenchman Valley Irrigation Districts and Riverside Irrigation Company concerning the purchase of surface water. Riverside has accepted an offer to not use the natural flow. Frenchman Valley is considering the offer. The agreement between the surface water Irrigation Districts and the state will affect 9,292 acres in the Frenchman Valley District and approximately 600 acres in the Riverside District. Director Roberts said, “Keeping this water in the river decreases recharge to the wells in the area of the canals.”

District Manager Dan Smith reported that District staff will assist Southwest Health and Human Services with uranium and arsenic testing in their service area. The district will provide assistance in setting up the program procedures and with informational meetings.

The board approved a water transfer request received from Brian Wright for Jerry Mustion. The transfer requests the allocation for 86 acres be transferred to Jerry Mustion for the 2006 growing season.

Southwest Nebraska RC&D has been working on the formation of the Southwest Weed

Management Area, reported RC&D Coordinator Roger Stockton. "This is the only area of the state that does not currently have a weed board," Stockton said, adding that "Groups like this have a better chance of receiving grant funding." The Weed Management Area will include 8 counties. Stockton asked the board to sign a resolution, which requested NRD support and a NRD representative for the Weed Management Area. NRD Technician Tom Hansen was appointed to the position of representative. Hansen was on the Frontier County Weed Board.

Smith reviewed the Information and Education report. Envirothon scores were circulated. The Hayes Center won the regional contest and had the highest regional competition score throughout the state. Several other schools in the District have the opportunity to go to the State competition, including Medicine Valley and Wauneta-Palisade. Historically, the District has sponsored the winning team at the State competition. The board discussed financially sponsoring these teams to the State Competition near Hastings in May. The board approved a motion to offer full sponsorship to the regional winner at and partial sponsorship for each additional District school attending the state competition.

The Nebraska Republican River Management Districts Association (NRRMDA) meeting was held March 10 in McCook. The Association voted to invite the public power districts to be voting members of the Association instead of just advisors.

Smith reviewed legislation issues. Senator Beutler has filed amendments to LB 1226. These amendments propose either an acre-inch fee or an acre fee on irrigated land. They also impose a fine on NRDs who have over usage of water in their district.

Merrigan reported that funding is still available for buffer strips. Cropland adjacent to seasonal and perennial streams, wetlands or ponds are eligible for the Buffer Strip Program. Two kinds of buffer strips are eligible - filter strips, which are narrow strips of grass; and riparian forest buffer strips containing trees and grass. Rental rates are calculated as follows: For irrigated cropland, rental rates are \$150 per acre minus payments from other programs; For non-irrigated cropland without CRP, the rental rate per acre is equal to 120% of the average CRP soil rental rate plus \$5 per acre, up to a maximum of \$150 per acre; Non-

irrigated cropland enrolled in CRP is no longer eligible. Interested landowners should contact their local Natural Resources District or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service office to begin the application process

Smith circulated a list of candidates for the board. There are six open positions and twelve candidates running, including Jim Roberts (McCook), Duane Dodson (Maywood), Kevin Fornoff (Hayes Center), Mike Peters (McCook), Josh Friesen (Wallace), Dan Nelson (Moorefield), Kelly Wertz (Trenton), Benjie Lomis (Maywood), Marty Schurr (Maywood), Brad Randel (Indianola), William Barger (Culbertson), and Bradford Hock (Culbertson).

The next regular meeting will be on April 11 in Curtis at the NRD Office at 7:30 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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For more information contact: Kara Gall
Information and Education Coordinator