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## **Middle Republican Natural Resources District**

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For Immediate Release

### **NRD Reviews Surface Water Purchase; Groundwater Committee Makes Recommendations to Board**

**Curtis** – Last month, 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 agreement, which will be the same that is being used with the Frenchman and Bostwick Irrigation Districts, was made with Riverside Irrigation Company.

Dave Cookson, Special Counsel to the Nebraska Attorney General, gave an update on this Riverside Project to the Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors at the April 11 meeting. Cookson circulated a draft copy of the agreement. The District will contribute 50% of the \$100,000 payment. The purchase of this water along with other activities in the basin will assist the State of Nebraska in achieving compliance with the Republican River Compact.

NRD Manager Dan Smith reviewed the recommendations from the Ground Water Committee. The committee recommended that the district establish an incentive program funded by local funds that will provide up to a \$50 bonus for irrigated lands in the Quick Response sub area that sign up for the federal EQIP Conversion Crop Rotation practice. The incentive program may help keep 10,000 acres from being irrigated, which would assist with compliance with Kansas. The committee recommended that the district fund this program with an additional 1 cent of levy authority, which would raise \$160,000. Director Joe Anderjaska opposed raising taxes in order to fund an incentive program. Director Mike Peters indicated that the incentive program was needed and increasing the tax levy was the

only way to fund it.

Additional recommendations by the committee include:

- water transfer could be denied based on the inability of the well transferring the acres to pump the water.
- new industrial uses shall be granted a consumptive use of 80.65 acre feet per year. Allocation over and above this amount shall be the responsibility of the user and shall be obtained by discontinuing an existing certified use.
- base allocations for supplemental wells on surface water used instead of surface water delivered.

A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for June for these drafted changes to the Ground Water Rules and Regulations.

NRCS District Conservationist Doug Whisenhunt presented the NRCS report. The District will be losing a technician in McCook. His position will be ending by the end of August. EQIP second signup has been completed, with a priority for funding contracts for retiring irrigated acres. There is some hope that if the District can show a large enough workload that they might bring back the McCook technician position. Whisenhunt reported on the burn north of Curtis. Another burn is scheduled east of Curtis on Wednesday.

Kara Gall presented the Information and Education report. Gall submitted a grant proposal on behalf of the District, in partnership with the Upper Republican NRD, Southwest Public Power District and McCook Public Power District to read meters automatically over power lines. Gall reviewed college scholarship applications. The board approved Kay Kaczor and Matthew Wiest to receive the Middle Republican NRD 2006-2007 Post-High Scholarships.

The directors discussed a proposal made by Tri-Basin NRD Manager John Thorburn to begin a multi-district NRD radio program on KRVN to publicize NRD activities. The board expressed interest in the proposal but requested more information on cost and number of involved districts before making a decision.

Assistant Manager Bob Merrigan reported that there is a hole beside a settlement plate on the District's P-2 Watershed dam. Repairs will begin on Wednesday, April 12, 2006. Water will be sent into the hole to see if the hole goes all the way through. A slurry will be mixed to repair the hole depending on what the water test finds.

District tree planting will start the week of April 17. There has been some difficulty getting trees this year.

The next regular meeting will be on May 9 at 8:00p.m. at the 4-H Building in McCook, Nebraska.

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](http://www.mrnrd.org).

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