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Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

NRD Will Attend Republican River Compact Meeting

Curtis– On August 9 and 10, representatives from the Middle Republican NRD will attend the Republican River Compact Administration (RRCA) meeting in Phillipsburg, Kansas. The RRCA is comprised of one member each from the States of Colorado, Kansas and Nebraska. The purpose of the RRCA is to administer the compact on the Republican River. This compact allocates the waters of the Republican River between the states. At the recent NRD Board meeting, District Manager Dan Smith reviewed some of the issues that will be discussed at the RRCA meeting. Nebraska continues to show a 42,000 acre-foot overuse.

Discussion was held on the revisions to the Groundwater Management Area Rules and Regulations. A public hearing was held in June for the purposes of receiving testimony. The board took no action in June in order to review the testimony. The revisions were approved as presented at the hearing with the deletion of rule revision 5-2.11 and 5-3.3.

Rule 5-2.11 stated that, “The District may deny or condition a request for transfer based upon the capacity to pump the water from the site of transferee’s withdrawal. Transferees must be able to demonstrate that they can pump the base allocation per acre in 49 days. The conditional approval would allow for a lesser amount to be transferred based upon the capacity to pump the transferred amount under the standard above.” This rule was deleted from the revisions with no intention to revisit.

5-3.3 stated that, "New industrial uses shall be granted a consumptive use allocation 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 or method that does not result in an increase in consumptive use for the district." An industrial use committee was formed after the June meeting to meet with representatives from Economic Development groups. The committee discussed a number of possible changes that could address new growth and how to provide for it. It was generally agreed that some type of "industry standard" should be used to certify any new uses. Using the industry standard as a baseline would allow for industrial restrictions to be managed similarly to irrigation allocation restrictions.

New uses have to be offset with the retirement of an old use. The district requires some retirement or reduction of use that the District can claim. This "pool" of water could then be made available to an industry or community needing extra water. The District could also charge a development group for holding an allocation. If they are successful in bringing in a new industry, the district could then refund a portion of that deposit or use the funds to buy new water. Economic Development seemed agreeable to this option. The board intends to revisit this rule at a later time.

The Directors reviewed the proposed FY2006-2007 budget. The district is considering an additional tax levy of 1 cent, which would set the levy at 5.42 and increase the budget by 1.42%. Smith reminded the directors of Senator Baker's comments at the June meeting. Baker expressed concern that if the Directors do not implement this additional taxing authority, the authority will be taken away. Baker had also indicated that the State Legislature would be expecting the Districts to get to the 5.5 levy range to share some of the burden for groundwater management. Haag said, "As much as I hate tax increases, I think the budget is on the right line if the District wants support from the Legislature." Smith said that as the new Senators take office in 2007, one of the district's priorities would be to educate them on what is truly going on in the Republican Basin. The district budget hearing will likely take place in September.

District Technicians will begin taking water samples the week of July 17. They will begin with the Special Protection Area (SPA). They will test twenty additional wells outside the SPA. These are wells that were sampled in 1995 when a District wide study was done. Water samples from the four lakes in the District were submitted to the state.

Assistant Manager Bob Merrigan reported that the district would be making payments for contracts enrolled in the WHIP Program and the Bufferstrip program.

The 2006 tree sales report was handed out to directors. Nearly 32,000 trees were planted under the districts Conservation Tree Program. 23,000 of those were cost-shared by the district and approximately 9,000 were sold as hand plants. 161,213 feet of conservation mulch was laid.

Ben Hardin, NRCS Irrigation Water Management Specialist for the district, presented the NRCS report. Compliance reviews are being completed. Hardin reported that some producers were concerned that their CREP grass seeding isn't germinating. On inspection NRCS has found that the grass seed is germinating. CREP acres are being released for haying but it will decrease the payment on those acres.

Smith reviewed the Information and Education report. Approximately seventy rain gauges have been distributed in the district, for participation in the NeRAIN project. The board authorized the purchase of twenty more gauges to expand coverage of the project into townships that currently have no NeRAIN gauges. If you are willing to spend a few minutes each day recording measurements of precipitation using backyard gauges provided to you, contact Kara at (308) 367-4281. You must have Internet access to participate and be located in a township not yet represented in the project. Please have handy the legal description (township, range, and section) of the proposed location of your gauge.

Roger Stockton, Coordinator for the Southwest Nebraska RC&D, reported on the RC&D's proposed Riparian project. The goal of this project is to clear-cut a half-mile area in each county of the main stem of the Republican River. The project will then measure the impact of this action on the flow of the river.

A report reflecting transfer requests between Don Barger and Lincoln Farms, and Jerry Barger and Lincoln Farms, was handed out to Directors. The requests are all for partial allocations on upland wells. One request is on school land. The Bureau of Educational Lands and Funds (BELF) would have to approve this transfer. The board accepted the transfers, conditional on BELF approval.

The next regular meeting will be on August 8 at 8:00 p.m. at the NRD Office in Curtis, 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.

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For more information contact: Kara Gall
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