



220 Center Ave.
PO Box 81
Curtis, NE 69025

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

Middle Republican Natural Resources District

September 27, 2006
For Immediate Release

NRD Approves Budget, Sets Levy Rate

Curtis– The Middle Republican NRD held a public hearing on Tuesday September 12, 2006 in McCook. The purpose of this hearing was to receive support, opposition, criticism, suggestions, or observations of taxpayers relating to the proposed budget and the setting of the final tax request at a different amount than the prior year tax request. NRD General Manager Dan Smith reviewed the proposed budget. Total requirements are \$1,654,580 with a cash reserve of \$100,000 and a property tax requirement of \$874,061. This would set the levy at 5.3973 cents. The 2005-2006 property tax request was \$633,753 and the tax rate was 4.0760 cents. No testimony was received from the public.

Director Joe Anderjaska (Hayes Center) indicated that he hates to see the taxes increase. In response, Chairman Gayle Haag said, “I agree with Joe in that I don’t want to see taxes increase, but I think the budget increase is needed if the District wants to continue to see funding from the State.”

The board approved both the budget and the final tax request.

An additional public hearing was held to receive testimony concerning proposed amendments to the Integrated Management Plan controls through District’s Ground Water Management Area, Rules and Regulations.

The directors approved the majority of the revisions at the July meeting, after receiving testimony at a June public hearing. Rule revisions 5-2.11 and 5-3.3 were delayed so that a special industrial water use committee could meet with representatives from District Economic Development groups.

Curtis Heapy, Medicine Valley Economic Corporation, presented testimony in favor of the revision, which allows the board more opportunity for consideration when a new request is made. Heapy thought that this would be beneficial for new industry.

In addition, a new definition of replacement well has been adopted that reflects a change in the statutes and several changes relating to the metering program were made in June. No changes were made to allocations and no changes were made to the number of certified acres. They remain the same as they have been for the last two years.

Wayne Madsen, former NRD board member and member of the Nebraska Well Drillers Association, presented comments concerning the revised rule 4-7.3 during the open forum of the regular board meeting. Madsen read this rule concerning additional allocations. Madsen also read rule 4-7.4 concerning water-short years. Madsen said, "I think you should have decreased certified acres instead of approving variances for additional acres. Two bills were presented last year in the legislature to take the authority to control ground water from NRDs and give the authority to the State." Though these bills failed, Madsen is concerned that if the District does not start following the rules that are in place, more bills like these will be presented again.

In response, Chairman Haag reported that the agreement with DNR was that water short years would not be recognized until after the first allocation period.

Jason Kennedy of the NRCS McCook field office presented the NRCS report. Kennedy gave an update on the recent EQIP program that provided for the permanent retirement of irrigated acres. Funding was limited to 2,640 acres basin-wide. Nearly 1,200 of those acres were enrolled in the MRNRD. In this program a conservation easement will be filed to permanently retire irrigated acres for a payment of \$675 per acre over three years.

Federal, state and district funds were used to support this program. The recent budget approved by the board of directors provided for \$110,000 of district funds to be used in this program. Kennedy passed on a comment from NRCS State Conservationist Steve Chick that, "this program was Federal, State, and Local government working together at its best."

Smith reported on the Republican River Compact Administration (RRCA) meeting in Phillipsburg, Kansas that he and Assistant Manager Bob Merrigan attended. 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. At the meeting, Kansas indicated that they recognized Nebraska efforts to comply but that they were still being shorted on water. Nebraska continues to show a 42,000 acre-foot overuse. Smith said that many producers have indicated they pumped almost twice as much water in the 2006 crop year than in 2005. "It is difficult to guess the impact of this situation. Kansas may well go back to the courts and demand that Nebraska comply with the settlement. They may also recognize that Nebraska has tried to comply and do nothing. I imagine their action will be somewhere between these two extremes." The settlement requires arbitration between the states before anyone goes back to the courts. Smith expects the District should know Kansas' intended course of action by May of 2007.

District Technicians finished taking water samples. Annual samples have been done in the Special Protection Area in Hitchcock and Red Willow counties. This year, the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality requested that the sampling area be increased to cover the entire District. Maps showing these samples were handed out to Directors. This information is forwarded on to the State.

Merrigan reported that district technicians Rich Karre, Tom Hanson, and Dennis Peterson will begin reading and servicing meters in the district starting the beginning of October. The flow meters in Hitchcock and Hayes County will be serviced this year. Irrigators who typically remove their meter from the well after irrigation season are asked to let the MRNRD office know where the meter is stored so the meter can be read.

The next regular meeting will be on October 10 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.

#####

For more information contact: Kara Gall
Information and Education Coordinator
(308) 367-4281 or kgall@mrnrd.org