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Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

NRD considers transfers; requests info from DNR

(*Curtis, NE*) – With five new directors in attendance, the Middle Republican NRD board gathered in McCook on January 9 to discuss groundwater management and other district business. Manager Dan Smith reported that he had been contacted by Senator Mark Christensen (District 44). Christensen would like the board to generate a list of compliance concepts and to rank the concepts in importance. He also asked that board present a stance on transfers. Discussion was held on how transfers affect Compact Accounting. Smith indicated that the State needs to be more involved in the transfer process

Supporting the concept of transfers is nothing new for the Middle Republican NRD. The board discussed re-approving the concept with the new directors. The previous position stated that the board supports alternatives to supplement the water supply in the basin. The Middle Republican NRD supports the Nebraska Republican River Management Districts Association (NRRMDA) taking the lead role in any project that has basin-wide impacts. The NRRMDA, which is an association of Natural Resources Districts and Irrigation Districts, can best evaluate the benefits of projects that will assist the State of Nebraska in maintaining compliance with the Republican River Compact.

Any project considered should have short term and long term benefits, be consistent with the Integrated Management Plans adopted by the NRDs and the Department of Natural Resources and must be consistent with the statutory authority of the NRDs. The

allocations and other rules and regulations adopted by the NRDs will benefit the basin. Supplemental supplies, riparian management, purchase of surface water supplies and incentive programs all assist in helping the state maintain compliance. The cost and benefit of all programs must be considered carefully and must be evaluated along with the impact of noncompliance if needed programs are not implemented.

In addition to the Open Letter penned by Smith following the December 15 meeting with the governor, the board discussed a letter Smith plans to send to Ann Bleed at DNR. The letter is requesting that answers need to be received from DNR in order to make any further decisions and is being courtesy copied to the Governor and Dean Edson.

Bleed would like to meet with managers and a few board members January 25 after the legislative conference. Smith would like to put concepts together this spring and hold public meetings. By June, Smith would like to schedule public hearings.

In other district business, new directors were sworn in and new officers were elected. Josh Friesen was elected board chair; Kevin Fornoff, Vice-Chair; Dan Nelsen, Treasurer; Joe Anderjaska, NARD representative; Fornoff NRRMDA delegate; and Nelsen, NRRMDA alternate delegate. Christy Peterson was retained as board secretary.

Chairman Friesen appointed Joe Anderjaska as voting delegate and Stan Moore as alternate voting delegate to the NARD Legislative Conference. The voting delegate votes on behalf of the district at the NARD Legislative Conference. Each district votes to support upcoming natural resources legislation. Director Stan Moore suggested that new directors should consider attending the Director's Responsibilities session at Legislative Conference. Director Joe Anderjaska indicated that the new directors should also attend conflict of interest, accountability and disclosure.

Schurr, Fornoff, Loomis, Moore, and Friesen volunteered for the groundwater committee. A groundwater committee meeting will be scheduled prior to the Legislative Conference in Lincoln.

Marty Gugelman reported on NRCS activities. Gugelman reviewed budget issues and reported that Kim Smith resigned her position as field office secretary.

Roger Stockton discussed RC&D activities. A draft contract for landowners participating in the riparian project has been put together and sent out for approval. The project is for one mile of the stream. The group hopes to do the bulk of the tree removal this spring. It will cost approximately \$200,000 to set up ET equipment for moisture systems per site. Stockton circulated a flyer for an Opening the Door to New Rural Opportunities workshop being held in Curtis at NCTA.

Anderjaska reported on an email he sent to Senator Ben Nelson's office. Loomis, Nelsen, Haag and Anderjaska met with John Berge, a representative of Nelson's office, concerning water issues. Berge requested that the board present four or five proposals to his office, which Senator Nelson could then present at the federal level. Discussion was held concerning CSP being approved for the Republican Basin.

Kara Gall gave the Information & Education report. The Enviroscape has been purchased. The Enviroscape Watershed/Nonpoint Source model teaches the watershed concept in addition to point and nonpoint source pollution. The model tracks pollution from nonpoint sources, including: residential areas, forestry areas, transportation, recreation, agriculture and construction, as well as from industry as a point source. Students learn about best management practices by using felt buffer strips as vegetation, clay to create berms and other methods to show conservation and water pollution prevention measures at work. The model will be available for district teachers and students to check out, and classroom demonstrations will be possible.

A training session for the Envirothon (for students grades 9-12) is scheduled for January 31 in McCook. The Envirothon competition is February 28 in Curtis.

Gall reported that she has received a huge response to Don McCabe's Nebraska Farmer article about the pocket irrigation guide. Calls have come from all over the country showing interest in the guide.

The board approved revisions to the bylaws, personnel policy, and general policy that were presented at the December meeting.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 13, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at the Middle Republican 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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