



220 Center Ave.
PO Box 81
Curtis, NE 69025

Phone: 800 -873-5613
Fax: 308 -367-4285
Email: rlawson@mnrnd.org

Middle Republican Natural Resources District

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For Immediate Release

Weed Project to Increase River Flow to Kansas

Curtis, NE – As part of the ongoing efforts to be in compliance with the Republican River Nebraska-Kansas Compact, the Southwest Nebraska Weed Management Task Force wrote and received a grant for \$814,000.00 to increase surface water flows in the Republican by controlling and removing invasive plant species. The Nebraska Department of Agriculture is funding this and other similar grants supported by the LB701 which allows for “management of vegetation within the banks of a natural stream or within one hundred feet of banks of the channel of any natural stream...to improve stream flow.”

The Southwest Nebraska Weed Management Task Force will use the grant to map the distribution of invasive plant species such as salt cedar, Russian olive and phragmites using aerial photography and GPS along the river in the following counties: Furnas, Red Willow, Hitchcock and Dundee. One or more project coordinators will be hired to manage the many plant removal projects along the river.

The success of this project will depend on landowner education and cooperation. Four informational meetings were held for landowners in July.

The goal of this project is to increase the flow of the Republican River into Kansas through the removal of the thirsty invasive plant species that grow along the banks and riparian zone of the Republican. Salt Cedar or Tamarisk (*Tamarix* spp.) can use 200 gallons per day. Bob Wilson of the Panhandle Research and Extension Center at Scottsbluff has reported that “one acre of infested river bank

can use 9 acre feet of water per year". Native vegetation will be left behind to benefit wildlife and serve as a buffer for river water quality.

The Task Force consists of representatives from the Southwest Resource Conservation and Development Office, NRD offices within the Republican River Basin and the local weed management authorities in the listed counties. Also serving on the task force in advisory positions only are the NRCS offices out of Red Willows and Chase Counties, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission Office and the Nebraska Division of Forestry Office both in North Platte. The Chairman of the Task Force is Rich Hedke of Hitchcock County Weed Management District.

For more information: Roger Lawson,
Information and Education Coordinator
Middle Republican NRD
220 Center Ave.
Curtis, NE 69025
308-367-4281
rlawson@mrnr.org