

December 21, 2011 KRVN Resource Report

I'm Jo Siel, Information and Education Coordinator of the Lower Republican Natural Resources District in Alma, NE, and this is the Natural Resources Report.

Recently the Nebraska Supreme Court upheld a 2007 Occupation Tax implemented by the NRDs in the Republican Basin. That ruling has cleared the way for the Lower Republican NRD to implement the tax this year. Nobody likes taxes, but the LRNRD Board doesn't like the alternative of doing nothing and forcing wells to be shut off in water short years. The Legislature and the State have made it perfectly clear that no State money will be directed to the Republican Basin for compliance related activities.

The reason for the tax this year is to allow the LRNRD to be proactive in seeking programs and projects that will either reduce our consumptive use of groundwater or increase the supply during times of shortage. What we don't want to ever see happen is a shortfall that can only be made up by shutting off wells. Just this year the LRNRD has committed \$1,000,000 to the AWEP program which has permanently retired over 1,700 acres in the first year of a five year program. We are presently working on two Augmentation Projects in the District that would either retime or enhance our water supply. There are things that we can do in times of shortage other than shut off wells, and that is what our Board is committed to doing.

This fiscal year the new tax will generate about \$1,767,750. Future occupation tax will be re-evaluated by the Board every year and may not be necessary every year, or at a lower rate depending on revenue streams, the cost of pending projects, and bonding obligations.

The clock is ticking and we all know that drought conditions will return. We need to make sure that the LRNRD is prepared to manage our water usage and supplies during those times and still meet Republican River Compact Compliance requirements.

Thank you for listening. This is Jo Siel, keeping you informed about your natural resources and the way NRDs protect lives, protect property and protect the future.