

February 17, 2006  
For Immediate Release

### NRD Supports Projects with Basin-wide Impacts

Curtis - A project sponsored in part by the Middle Republican NRD was found eligible for a grant award of \$35,578 by the Nebraska Environmental Trust.

Information and Education Coordinator Kara Gall shared the Statement of Eligibility and the Rank Order list for 2006 with the Middle Republican Board of Directors at the February 14 meeting in Curtis.

The project, which was submitted by the Nebraska Republican River Management Districts Association (NRRMDA), is for the production of a Republican River Basin Pocket Irrigation Guide. The guide would include best practices for irrigation water usage that irrigators could use in the field. Other sponsors include the Upper Republican NRD, Lower Republican NRD, and Tri-Basin NRD.

Funding recommendations by the Nebraska Environment Trust are subject to appropriations that are currently under consideration by the Legislature. The Environmental Trust board will be accepting written public comment on their recommendations through Friday, April 7, 2006. Final notification will be announced at the end of April.

District Manager Dan Smith indicated that the district is investigating additional funding possibilities. The District may partner with the Upper Republican in writing a grant. Congressman Osborne has been urging people in the Republican Basin to take advantage of programs to control invasive species, in particular programs such as NRCS Conservation Innovation Grants.

The board voted to continue to support 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.

John Kilpatrick, representing the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, requested financial assistance from the District for renovation activities at Camp Hayes. The lake has been drained and will be refilled in the fall. Renovations include a boat ramp and sediment control structures. Game and Parks proposes to move the boat ramp north of the dam in order to decrease the traffic across the dam. At this point, they hope to build the ramp in July or August. Chairman Haag recommended that this request be put on the agenda for the Personnel and Operations Committee meeting. No further action was taken on this request.

District Conservationist Doug Whisenhunt reviewed NRCS activity. The second EQIP sign-up deadline is February 28, 2006. The District has \$620,000 allocated for EQIP, with the possibility of more funds available after contracts are submitted. A total of 137 applications have been received for the first sign-up in 2006. Whisenhunt told the board that Prescribed Burn Schools are scheduled for March at a variety of locations. Additionally, the Loess Canyon Range Alliance (LCRA) has begun work on the black line for the 1500-acre burn north of Curtis. Budget cuts are a concern for NRCS. A hiring freeze is still in effect. In addition, training has been cut and there could be staff reductions in the future.

Southwest Nebraska RC&D Coordinator Roger Stockton reported. Stockton discussed a recent grant application RC&D submitted on behalf of Michelle Wendell. The grant was submitted to DED for intensive goat grazing on the west end of Swanson Reservoir. The goal of the project is to both reduce the invasive salt cedar and to act as feasibility study for Wendell's goat operation. The project will also count plants and measure moisture levels to evaluate the goats' effectiveness in reducing invasive species and conserving water. Stockton reported that the RC&D has been working on a number of other grant applications for various issues in the Basin.

Assistant Manager Bob Merrigan reviewed a livestock waste control application that was received from Southwest Feeders to increase their capacity. No monitoring well is located at this feedlot. The board approved the application with the condition that a monitoring well be installed.

Information and Education Coordinator Gall reviewed plans for the upcoming Envirothon contest. A training session for high school students took place in North Platte at the beginning of the month. Students from five schools throughout the region attended the training session. The contest itself is scheduled to take place in conjunction with the FFA Career Development Skills Contest on February 22 at NCTA in Curtis. Plans are also underway for the Southwest Nebraska Water Conference. The Conference will be held Wednesday, March 8 at the Fairgrounds in McCook, from 9AM until 3PM. Area producers are invited to attend. Lunch will be provided courtesy of the district. Call the district office at (800) 873-5613 with questions about the conference.

Smith reminded directors that February 15 is the deadline for incumbents to file. Dodson, Fornoff, Hoyt, Peters, Roberts, and Wertz are up for re-election in 2006.

Roberts indicated in January that he did not plan on filing for re-election. Smith reported that new filings included: Josh Friesen (Wallace), Dan Nelsen (Moorefield), and Jim Roberts (McCook). The filing deadline for non-incumbents is March 1.

The next regular meeting will be on March 14 in McCook at the Fairgrounds Community Building at 7:00 p.m.

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](http://www.mrnrd.org).

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For more information contact: Kara Gall  
Information and Education Coordinator

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Kara Gall  
Information and Education Coordinator  
Middle Republican Natural Resources District  
P.O. Box 81  
Curtis, NE 69025  
800-873-5613  
[kgall@mrnr.org](mailto:kgall@mrnr.org)  
[www.mrnrd.org](http://www.mrnrd.org)