



NEFB Supports NCORPE Project Bill

On Jan. 17 the Nebraska Farm Bureau (NEFB) testified in front of the Natural Resource Committee in support of Legislative Bill 758 introduced by Sen. Dan Hughes of Venango. LB 758 encourages the Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement Project (NCORPE) and county officials to work together in an effort to lessen the impact on county's property tax base. Also, an amendment to the bill was provided. The amendment will provide for payment in lieu of taxes to mitigate the tax concerns in Lincoln County and provide for greater transparency and public input for augmentation projects and would not create unnecessary legal risk for compact compliance purposes or future ground water use.

In 2012 four Natural Resource Districts (NRD) in the Republican and Platte Basin bought the NCORPE property which consists of 19,000 acres in Lincoln County. The project operates as an augmentation project to assist Nebraska in meeting its obligations in both the Platte and Republican basins. The NRDs ceased irrigation on the property, seeded it to grass, and developed infrastructure to augment water supplies in the Republican and Platte Basins. NCORPE has been pumped each year since 2014 for Compact compliance purposes. It is expected it will not need to be pumped in 2018. Without the project, Nebraska would have been out of compliance with the Compact.

Nebraska Farm Bureau members in Lincoln County have raised many concerns with the NCORPE project and its impacts on the county. At the same time, NEFB has members who reside and irrigate in the Republican Basin who recognize the importance of the project as a compliance tool for the state in the Republican River Compact. The project is vital to protecting irrigated agriculture in the basin. And finally, there are NEFB members across the state who are ground water irrigators and are watching this issue closely to assure any changes in law will not negatively affect their access to ground water.

Nebraska Farm Bureau supports the bill and that the concepts in the amendment can resolve most of the issues raised by those concerned with the NCORPE project.