

NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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DNR and Republican River NRDs to discuss alternatives for management plans Thursday in Holdrege

On Thursday, September 17, 2009, the Department of Natural Resources (Department) will attend the Republican River Management Districts Association meeting at the Holdrege City Auditorium in Holdrege. The meeting will begin at 10:00 a.m., and the Department will begin its presentation at 1:00 p.m. The purpose of the Department presentation will be to provide information to the NRDs, the surface water districts, and other interested stakeholders.

Department Director Brian Dunnigan said, "The Department and the Republican River NRDs look forward to continuing our cooperative relationship with the stakeholders in the basin. These relationships will play a vital role in the continued management and prosperity of the Republican River Basin."

Over the past year, the Department has been working with the Republican River Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) to ensure the State will remain in compliance with the Republican River Compact during future dry years. In December 2007, the State of Kansas presented its plan to keep Nebraska in compliance with the Compact. Last spring, the State of Nebraska successfully argued for a dynamic approach to achieve Compact compliance in front of the arbitrator selected by the States to resolve the matter. However, the arbitrator did find Nebraska's current plans did not ensure compact compliance in dry-years.

More recently, the Department has held several working meetings with the Republican River NRDs with the sole purpose of discussing various options to ensure compliance by Nebraska in dry years. Nebraska has a comprehensive program to monitor its current status in the Compact accounting, including the annual forecast the Department conducts pursuant to state statutes. It is imperative to continue to utilize the existing monitoring program and build on it to implement a proactive approach that looks forward and provides sufficient time to react when the water supply drops. During such dry years, there are many tools available to the Department and the NRDs, including dry-year leasing of surface water supplies, streamflow augmentation, riparian vegetation management and, as a last resort, additional regulation of water users.

The Holdrege meeting on Thursday will focus primarily on the issue of dry-year Compact compliance with a general discussion of the alternatives available to Nebraska to ensure the State remains in Compliance during drought periods. The Department will also discuss a proposed schedule to move forward with the NRDs to more fully develop Nebraska's comprehensive dry-year compliance plan, which Nebraska must have to ensure it remains in compliance and in control of its own interests. In the coming months, many additional public meetings will be scheduled in the basin to discuss the alternatives, options, and details of any proposed changes to the Integrated Management Plans to ensure the State meets its obligations under the Compact.

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