

Final numbers tallied on NRD's irrigation retirement program

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

A total of 15 tracts in Chase and Dundy County, representing 1,109.5 acres, are enrolled in the irrigation retirement plan offered in the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD).

Four of the 15 enrolled rest in Chase County with the remainder in Dundy County.

The largest tract enrolled in Chase County was 132.7 acres with the smallest at 44 acres.

In Dundy County, tracts ranged from as large as 152.3 acres down to 24.1 acres.

The goal of the program was to permanently retire acres in areas that had adverse affect on stream flow depletions in the district.

The two-year average of stream flow depletion factor totalled 70.7 percent with the 50-year average at 87.9 percent.

The higher the stream flow depletion factor, the more benefit gained by retiring those acres.

The annual water savings based on two-year depletion factors totalled 612 acre feet. That

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annual savings increases to 847 acre feet based on the 50-year depletion factor.

Approximately 850 acre feet of water a year that otherwise would have been used for irrigation will wind up in the Republican River due to the acreage retirement.

This savings will be used to help the URNRD in its compliance efforts within the Republican River Compact Settlement with Kansas.

"This is an essential piece of a multifaceted plan for managing groundwater resources and assisting the state with compact compliance issues," said Jasper Fanning, URNRD manager.

"Hopefully funding will remain for the project over the coming four years—with similar levels of enrollment as were achieved this year. This program would make up approximately half of the water that history suggests the district needs to help the state stay in compliance during the very driest of years," Fanning said.

The program was jointly administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the URNRD.

NRCS contributed \$1 million to the partnership with the URNRD contributing \$1.75 million in occupation tax dollars.

"This program exemplifies what can be achieved when government entities join hands to pursue a common purpose and conceive programs that ensure objectives are met," said Nadine Bishop, NRCS District Conservationist for Dundy, Chase and Perkins Counties.

She noted thousands of acre feet of water that otherwise would not have ended up in the Republican River will seep into the river over coming years and farmers will remain whole because of the funding provided by NRCS and the Upper Republican NRD under this program.

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