

Engineering continues on URNRD augmentation project

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Wednesday, 19 October 2011 19:43 - Last Updated Wednesday, 19 October 2011 19:44

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Engineering work continues on a project by the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD) designed to put water back into the Republican River for compact compliance purposes.

Jasper Fanning, manager of the URNRD, said engineering efforts have focused on pipeline design and routing.

Several variables will figure in on the final design.

Fanning said one variable revolves around whether some of the water pumped into the Republican River can be stored downstream in Swanson Reservoir near Trenton. This would allow for better timing of pumping to best match water needs for compliance efforts.

If water cannot be stored in Swanson, then some type of storage reservoir may be needed on Rock Creek above the Game & Parks Rock Creek Hatchery.

The NRD has been working closely with the Game & Parks to help provide a continual flow of water to the hatchery.

Where the augmentation water will be added to Rock Creek represents another variable.

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Fanning said if the water can be put into Rock Creek below the hatchery, 24-inch pipe can be used.

However, to protect Rock Creek Lake, which is approximately 1.5 miles downstream from the hatchery, it may be necessary to drop the water in below the lake.

Fanning said larger, and more expensive, pipe would be needed due to elevation changes in that scenario.

In terms of pumping, Fanning said it looks more feasible to drill one or two large wells. versus hooking together existing irrigation wells on the 4,000-acre tract.

He said they will locate the wells in areas of the property with the least amount of streamflow depletion and impact on neighboring wells.

Well capacity & variances

In the last several months, the board has heard several variance requests that involve the drilling of replacement wells or new wells.

In the case of new wells, old wells would be abandoned and the certified acres would be transferred to a different tract.

One of the issues discussed centered on the amount of water pumped in the old and new

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locations, as well as streamflow depletions on each tract.

The board wants to prevent a situation where pumping could be increased in the new location, since the goal of the district is to reduce overall use.

Chair Terry Martin suggested the possibility of regulating the pumping capacity of a well in such situations.

Tom Terryberry suggested the same could be achieved by limiting the number of certified acres on the new tract.

Martin noted these options need closer examination by the board as they consider the variance requests.