

URNRD accepts bid for pipeline

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Board members of the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD) accepted a \$2.142 million bid for the construction of a 4.6-mile pipeline to feed water into Rock Creek and eventually into the Republican River.

During their regular meeting April 3 in Imperial, the board selected the bid for \$2,142,360 from Garney Companies, Inc., of Kansas City, Mo., to build the pipeline.

Miller & Associates of Kearney, the engineering firm for the project, oversaw the bid process for the URNRD.

Chris Miller said a total of seven bids came in for the project—four from Nebraska companies, one each from Colorado and Kansas firms and the winning bid.

Miller felt all the bids were competitive, with all of them coming in under their estimate of \$2.5 million.

Bids ranged from the winning bid of \$2,142,360 to a high of \$2,489,893.

Nearly half of the pipeline will be 24 inches in diameter, with a selection of 20-, 18- and 12-inch diameter pipe used over the remainder.

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Miller said it will be mid- to late May before activity begins on the buried pipeline. Completion is set for Oct. 5, 2012.

As currently planned, the pipeline will end about one mile north of the Game & Parks' Rock Creek Fish Hatchery north of Parks.

Miller said they have conducted a stream flow analysis, to assess the amount of flows that can be handled through the hatchery.

Game & Parks is currently reviewing that study. Miller said if Game & Parks determines the flow will be too heavy, then some of the water may have to be piped around the hatchery facility.

Miller estimated that would require several more miles of pipe but the pipe price is already locked in as part of the bid.

Test drilling underway

Miller said they have drilled several test wells to determine where best to locate four new wells needed to supply augmentation water. One existing well on the north side of the tract will be used.

Miller said they're looking for wells with pumping capability of 1,200 gallons-per-minute.

Once those locations have been identified, drilling will begin and will likely run in conjunction

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with pipeline construction.

By the end of October, Miller said the project should be operational.

Compliance effort

Last year the URNRD purchased a 4,000-acre, \$10 million tract in southwest Dundy County north of Parks. Irrigation will be retired on the 3,261 certified acres that includes 23 wells.

Then, when needed, water will be pumped from wells on the tract to help the district meet compact compliance issues.

The augmentation project represents a cost-effective way to help the NRD meet its obligations under the Republican River Compact and associated settlement agreement.

Without it, the NRD would have to rely solely on regulations and retirement of irrigated acres. Generating needed water through retirement alone could cost \$30-40 million, or more.

Maintaining compliance solely through regulations would require shutting irrigation down on nearly 23,000 acres close to the Republican River and its tributaries in some dry years.

The five wells will be capable of providing 10,000 acre feet of water in years when it is needed. That amount roughly equals the largest gap in recent history between allowable and actual depletions to stream flow in the District caused by groundwater pumping in 2005.

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Adding the water back will help the district and the state stay in compliance with their 2002 settlement with Kansas.