By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Board members for the Upper Republican Natural Resources District approved a new budget last week that asks for the same amount of property and occupation taxes as last year.

The 2012-13 property tax request of $1,157,624 remains at the same level as the amount requested for the 2011-12 budget.

Occupation taxes in Upper Republican NRD

Year	Per Acre	$ Generated
2007-08	$6.95	$3,157,528
2008-09	$4.00	$1,740,000
2009-10	$4.00	$1,740,000
2010-11	$6.00	$2,610,000
2011-12	$10.00	$4,500,000
2012-13	$10.00	$4,500,000

As last year, the board set the occupation tax request at $10 per irrigated acre. This generates $4.5 million annually.

Money from the occupation tax helps pay for efforts made to keep the district and state in compliance with Kansas.

This includes the augmentation project in Dundy County and retirement of irrigated acres.

In 2011-12, the district paid $2.1 million to landowners to permanently retire irrigation on nearly 1,550 acres. These acres came from areas where the depletion to stream flow from pumping was significant.

The effort will save more than 1,129 acre feet of water per year over the next 50 years.

The district still owes the state $2.5 million, its remaining share of a $8.5 million loan to the basin NRDs approved by the Legislature in 2008.

The loan was to pay for surface water purchased in 2007 to aid compliance efforts as a result of drought conditions.

The district will pay their remaining balance with a $1.25 million payment this month from the 2011-12 occupation tax receipts. Another $1.25 million payment will be made next June from the 2012-13 occupation tax receipts.

The district also owes $3.9 million on the land purchase for the augmentation project. Previous occupation tax receipts from 2007-2011 generated the $5 million put down on the $10 million land purchase.

The district has budgeted approximately $4.5 million this year for the augmentation project and its operation. Operation of the system is expected to cost $500,000 annually.

It’s hoped the augmentation project will be paid off within two more years.