

UP TO 2,000 ACRE FEET OF WATER SET FOR RELEASE FROM ENDERS LAKE

BY RUSS PANKONIN THE IMPERIAL REPUBLICAN

Water purchased by MRNRD for compact compliance purposes

Three years ago, the Middle Republican Natural Resources District (MRNRD) purchased and released 4,000 acre feet (AF) of water stored in Enders Reservoir for compact compliance purposes.

The water was purchased from the Hitchcock & Red Willow (H&RW) and Frenchman Valley Irrigation Districts (FVID), which owned the rights to the water.

In early April, up to 2,000 acre feet of water stored in Enders will be released down the Frenchman

Bill Peck, with the Bureau of Reclamation office in McCook, said a release of up to 2,000 AF has been ordered by the irrigation districts.

The MRNRD purchased the water from the irrigation districts again this year. This water will be used by the MRNRD to aid in their effort to remain in compact compliance with Kansas.

MRNRD is also a member of the Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement Project (N-CORPE) which operates a streamflow augmentation project on land owned in Lincoln County.

The purchase of FVID H&RW water stored in Enders, along with pumping from the N-CORPE project and other credits, will provide the necessary compact compliance credits for the MRNRD.

According to the Department of Natural Resources, the MRNRD will need to offset a total of 6,100 acre feet by June 1 to be in compliance with the Kansas agreement.

2,000 AF not available now

Peck said the release will be up to 2,000 AF. However, as of this week, there is only about 1,744 AF available for release.

The elevation of the lake Tuesday stood at 3,085.03 feet above sea level. Peck said the lowest level they can go is 3,082.4 feet, which they refer to as the inactive pool. Dead pool on the reservoir is 3,080 feet.

Don Felker, manager of the FV and H&RW irrigation districts, said the 20-year average for water availability in Enders is about 7,000 AF, compared to the 1,744 AF available now.

The districts have not released any water from Enders for irrigation purposes since 2003.

The only recharge Enders receives is from natural flow of the Frenchman Creek and any accompanying storm runoff.

Recreation issues

People who use Enders Lake for recreation will experience even lower levels than present conditions.

Peck said the elevation of the lake will drop another 2.63 feet after the release is complete.

With less water currently in storage in the lake, the drop of 2.63 feet in elevation will appear more severe, based on the amount of new shoreline that will be exposed.

Beau Licking, Game & Parks Superintendent at the lake, said the only place boaters will be able to launch a boat will be at No-Name Bay, just west of the dam.

That was the case for the lake last year, as well.