

Rock Creek Augmentation 2023 Annual Report

The following report is provided pursuant to LB758, approved by the Nebraska Legislature and signed into law in 2018, requiring annual reporting on water augmentation projects. The Rock Creek Augmentation Project, constructed by the Upper Republican NRD in 2012 and located near the headwaters of Rock Creek, a tributary of the North Fork of the Republican River in Dundy County, Nebraska, is such a project. The legislation requires the following information be contained in the annual report: Amount of water pumped; amount of land leased and for what purposes; amount of revenue gained from land leases; amount of payments made in-lieu of taxes; financial details including amount of debt, amount of outstanding bonds and loans, and the project budget; whether the project is achieving its intended purpose; the effect of the project on groundwater supplies; and projections for use of the project in the future and the effect of the project on groundwater supplies. The information below pertains to calendar year 2023.

Amount of Water Pumped: 58.4 acre feet were pumped to maintain augmentation infrastructure; the water was not needed for Republican River Compact compliance.

Amount of Land Leased: 6,169 acres are subject to a prescribed grazing agreement to aid in the restoration of the formerly irrigated land to native rangeland pursuant to statutorily authorized Natural Resources Districts purposes including for soil conservation, wildlife habitat and range management.

Land Lease Revenue: \$76,737.99

In-Lieu of Tax Payments: \$37,119.18

Amount of Debt: \$20,823,756 million

Amount of Outstanding Bonds and Loans: \$14,710,907

Project Budget: The FY 23-24 budget for the project is \$1.5 million.

Achieving Intended Purpose: The project helped the State achieve Republican River Compact Compliance while lessening administration of surface water and preventing shutdowns of groundwater irrigation in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017. The project was not operated for Compact compliance in 2023 and has not been operated for compliance since 2017.

Effect on Groundwater Supplies: Groundwater levels declined an average of .78 feet from spring of 2022 to spring of 2023 at 39 monitoring wells on and adjacent to the project property. The average decline among all measured wells in Dundy County during the same time period was 1.2 feet.

Future Projections and Effects on Groundwater Supplies: Compact accounting forecasts by the state suggest project operations are possible in 2024-2025.