

Upper NRD shuts off Rock Creek Project

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IMPERIAL, Neb. -- The Upper Republican Natural Resources District, based in Imperial, Neb., has shut off its Rock Creek Water Augmentation Project and will rely now on the shared Lincoln County water project to offset the district's forecasted pumping in 2015.

The Benkelman News and Imperial Republican report that URNRD irrigators need to offset 14,600 acre feet of water to remain in compliance with the Republican River Compact agreed upon in 1943 by Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado to share the virgin water source in the Republican River basin.

The Republican reported that on Dec. 31, the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources provided Republican River basin natural resources districts with the official forecast of available water supply for 2015. The Middle Republican NRD needs to make up 4,200 acre feet. The Lower Republican NRD carries a positive balance of 1,200 acre feet.

The DNR indicates that the water supply at Harlan County Lake available for surface water irrigation will fall below the 119,000 acre feet benchmark, which means that 2015 will most likely be a "water-short year" and that compact compliance is figured on a two-year average rather than a five-year average.

When the DNR issues a "compact call" order, irrigation districts are not allowed to store any additional stream flow in reservoirs until the call is lifted. The Post reports that a compact call results in the DNR issuing closing notices on all natural flow and water storage permits in the basin.

Nate Jenkins, assistant manager of the URNRD, told the Post that the URNRD is going to use its share of water from the NCORPE Water Augmentation Project in Lincoln County, rather than its Rock Creek project, to offset its 2015 water shortfall. Jenkins said that -CORPE now and in the future will be able to significantly reduce the URNRD's reliance on Rock Creek to prevent irrigation shutdowns to maintain compact compliance.

The NCORPE water project is shared by the three Republican River Valley NRDs and the Twin Platte NRD on the Platte River.

For more information on the NCORPE project and an agreement in October 2014 by the Republican River Valley Administration that gives Nebraska 100 percent credit for augmentation water pumped by the NRDs in 2014, go the McCook Gazette website at www.mccookgazette.com and search NCORPE.

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