

## **Nebraska's Report to the RRCA 2015 Annual Meeting**

August 28, 2015

The State of Nebraska is in compliance with the Republican River Compact. More importantly, however, the three compacting States are now working together to go beyond the simple requirements of the Compact. This collaboration has provided opportunities to our water users that go well beyond what the Compact itself provides.

Nebraska's compliance efforts through 2015 have been substantial, affording Kansas' water user's full access to Kansas' allocations. This has occurred as prescribed through implementation of the third generation integrated management plans which contain forecasting provisions and accompanying controls that have ensured that Nebraska would take sufficient actions for Compact compliance.

The basin NRDs continue to demonstrate an on-going commitment to compliance through their significant investment in programs and projects that will reduce and/or offset depletions throughout the Basin. These include the augmentation project in the Rock Creek sub-basin, which provided water for compliance in 2013 and 2014, and the N-CORPE augmentation project in the Medicine Creek basin, which began operations in 2014 and was again utilized in 2015. Other programs have included the permanent and temporary retirement of surface and groundwater irrigated lands throughout the basin and leases of surface water.

The Department of Natural Resources continues to look forward to working to assess various water management alternatives through the USBR WaterSMART Basin Studies program and utilize the tools that have been developed as part of this study to evaluate system improvements and operational improvements that can be made throughout the Basin. Implementation of these system improvements will require partnerships with the irrigation districts, natural resource districts, and the Bureau of Reclamation. I do believe that through cooperation these partnerships can lead to a more prosperous outcome for all Nebraska water users.

During the course of the 2014 Nebraska Legislative session a new water funding process was established. These Statutes and pending rules will define the governance for administering the new Water Sustainability Fund. This fund represents a significant increase in funding for water projects aimed at addressing water quality and water quantity issues across Nebraska. The legislation also provides for additional basin-wide planning processes, including the Republican River Basin. In the basin the Department and the NRDs have initiated a stakeholder engagement process with approximately 50 individuals that expressed interest in participating. To date we have held three meetings that have provided a great opportunity for discussion and education about the hydrology of the basin and the perceptions of basin health. I anticipate that we will begin to draft elements of a basin-wide plan, with formal adoption coming within the next few years.

I am hopeful that the resolutions agreed to by the RRCA represent a new beginning of collaboration and cooperation amongst the three States. We have seen the drawbacks of simple Compact administration conducted without full consideration of the best interests of all our water users. This has demonstrated that simply complying with the law should not be our only goal. I think we all agree that we can and should do better than that.

In all three States the basins economy depends heavily on the ability to beneficially use the water supply available to each State. Residents of the basin care little about arbitrary state lines; but they do care deeply about the water resources across the basin. I applaud the efforts of the states in moving past the disagreements of the past and looking forward to the best interests of our water users for the future. I pledge Nebraska's continued cooperation in our ongoing discussions and look forward to continued success in managing the basins water supply not just for compliance with the Compact, but also for accomplishing the most we can for the benefit of water users across the basin.

I will now turn to Jesse Bradley who will give Nebraska's water administration report.

## **REPORT OF WATER ADMINISTRATION ACTIVITIES FOR THE REPUBLICAN RIVER BASIN IN NEBRASKA FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2014**

### January 1, 2014

Letters were mailed to all irrigation and storage permit holders notifying them that a Compact Call Year was in effect.

### January 31, 2014

One (1) storage closing notice was mailed to the Bureau of Reclamation notifying them that Harlan County Reservoir was closed to storage but could retain inflows for the sole purpose of delivering that water to the Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District.

### February 10, 2014

Letters were mailed to irrigators reminding them that the 2013 Water Use Reports must be filed with the Cambridge Field Office or they will be closed to irrigation for the entire 2014 calendar year.

### March 31, 2014

Three (3) storage closing notices were mailed to storage permit holders notifying them that they cannot raise the current water level in their reservoirs.

### April 2, 2014

Sixteen (16) closing notices were mailed to irrigators, who did not return their 2013 Water Use Reports, notifying them that they are closed to irrigation for the entire 2014 calendar year.

### April 14, 2014

Four (4) storage closing notices were mailed to storage permit holders notifying them that they cannot raise the current water level in their reservoirs.

### June 13, 2014

Mailed reminder notices to basin wide storage permit holders reminding them that their storage permits are closed.

June 17, 2014 Mailed reminder letters and closing notices to all owners and operators of pending petition or applications before the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources informing them of the requirement to pass inflows and release all water stored since January 1, 2014.

### June 18, 2014

One (1) storage closing notice was mailed to a storage permit holder notifying them that they cannot raise the current water level in their reservoir.

### June 27, 2014

Twenty one (21) regulating/opening notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin notifying them that they were open and the legal rate that they could pump.

July 02, 2014

Four Hundred Nine (409) regulating/opening notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin notifying them that they were open and the legal rate that they could pump.

July 8, 2014

Eight (8) closing notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin.

July 10, 2014

Eleven (11) closing notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin.

July 30, 2014

Seventy Nine (79) closing notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin.

September 05, 2014

Six (6) regulating/opening notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin.

September 05, 2014

Sixty Six (66) closing notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin.

September 05, 2014

Two (2) storage closing notices were mailed to storage permit holders notifying them that they cannot raise the current water level in their reservoirs.

September 29, 2014

One (1) storage closing notice was mailed to a storage permit holder notifying them that they cannot raise the current water level in their reservoir.

October 23, 2014

One Hundred Sixty Five (165) regulating/opening notices were mailed to irrigators in the Republican River Basin notifying them that they were open and the legal rate that they could pump.

October 23, 2014

Eighty seven (87) storage opening/regulating notices were mailed to storage permit holders notifying them that they could raise the current water level in their reservoirs.

December 03, 2014

Eighty (80) storage closing notices were mailed to storage permit holders notifying them that they cannot raise the current water level in their reservoirs.

December 08, 2014

Water Use Reports were mailed to all IR (irrigation from a natural stream), SI (irrigation from reservoirs on lands also covered by a natural flow appropriation), and SO (irrigation from reservoirs on lands not covered by a natural flow appropriation) permits in the Republican Basin with the exception of federally owned canals.