

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Property owners who received cease & desist (C&D) orders last week from the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD) are working to come into compliance with the district's rules and regulations.

That was the word from URNRD manager Jasper Fanning during the URNRD's monthly meeting June 10.

Fanning said the NRD mailed out 39 C&D orders to six land owners who are in violation of the rules and regs.

In addition, four different operators who lease some of the targeted land also received C&D orders.

Owners sent C&D orders included Bruce Kramer of Wauneta, Jack Bond and Randall Bond, both of Greeley, Colo.; Harry Stromberger, Windsor, Colo.; and Kent Crawford, Eaton, Colo.

Operators getting orders included Randy Acton and Keenan Kitt, both of Wauneta, Roger Shillington, Benkelman; and Kramer.

During their investigation, Fanning said they found three specific pivots where equipment had been installed that allowed some pumped water to bypass metering.

Other land had similar equipment that may have allowed diversion of some water. However, this equipment had already been modified so no bypass was occurring.

Fanning also noted some of the C&D orders were for improper meter spacing or placement, or for connecting two different wells together, which violates the intent of the well permit.

Fanning said all of the owners were working with the NRD to come into compliance within 10 days of receiving the C&D orders.

NRD chair Greg Pelster was quizzed as to what type of sanctions or penalties would be put in place for the violators.

Pelster said the matter is still under investigation and felt an answer wasn't prudent at that time.

A special meeting was set for 2 p.m. Wednesday June 16, for further consideration of the violations.

Fanning told the crowd of nearly 30 the NRD has the power to take away allocation and certified irrigated acres in part or whole.

IPA and augmentation

Fanning told the crowd the creation and use of an Improvement Project Area (IPA) appears to provide a financing tool to help pay for compliance projects.

He said the plan must show a benefit to members of the IPA.

He feels owners of irrigated ground in the basin would see a real benefit from compliance projects. As a result, it may be possible to declare all irrigated land in the district as an IPA.

He said work is still continuing on finding sites to do augmentation projects to keep the district and state in compliance with Kansas in the dispute over Republican River water.

He said the district is also looking at creating its own voluntary retirement program on land where groundwater pumping affects stream flow the most.

He said they would take bids from land owners interested in converting their irrigated land into dryland.

Funds generated through the IPA could be used to defray costs. It may also be possible to use occupation tax funds now being held by the NRD.