Dear Editor:

Why should farmers look closer at the NRD's plan to purchase land in Lincoln County?

Well, one reason is that farmers are paying the bill, and aren't getting any guarantees that they'll still get allocations for irrigation.

This plan is to pay $83 million for a farm that was purchased by investors only four years ago for $52 million. It will cost another $25-30 million to develop the pumps and pipeline to dump water into Medicine Creek. The pipeline to the Platte is estimated to cost another $20 million.

The interest on the land portion alone probably will cost $30 million over the life of the bond. So this project is probably going to cost around $160 million to be paid by occupation taxes in the four NRD districts.

The drawback is that Kansas hasn't signed off on this plan. Neither has the Republican River Compact. There are no guarantees that this plan will satisfy Kansas. Water put into Medicine Creek has to travel at least 150 miles before it ever has a hope of reaching Kansas. Our NRD managers say that it doesn't actually have to get to Kansas, that we'll measure it where the Medicine empties into the Republican.

If Kansas doesn't get money or water, they'll just sue Nebraska again. We know the legislature will just scratch out $10 per acre occupation tax and put in $20 or $30. Then we'll be looking at pumping restrictions again, or doing another project.

There's another problem with this plan. Each of the four NRD's put in an equal amount of money, 25 percent. Under the terms of the agreement, the Platte River will receive 7700 acre feet of water every year. The Medicine will receive about twice that much water, but only every third year.

You do the math…In three years, the Platte basin will get nearly 50 percent more water than the Republican, and the Republican basin pays 75 percent of the costs! Two thirds of the water lies on the Republican Basin side of the farm, one third is in the Platte Basin side of the farm.

Did you realize that the Twin Platte NRD doesn't have pumping restrictions? In fact, they don't even have monitoring equipment on their wells. Who's getting the short end there?

There are four things I'm sure of about this plan. 1. The farmers pay the bill. 2. The Lincoln Farm LLC investors will pocket $31 million in profits. 3. Southwest Nebraska will have less water to use than ever before. 4. There's no guarantee that this plan avoids radical pumping restrictions.

The farmers in southwest Nebraska need to be alert. This plan probably won't solve your problems. You need to be asking your NRD board members and managers a lot of questions. You should expect some guarantees if you are spending $160 million.

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