

*De-watering slowing pipeline construction.*

**By Russ Pankonin**

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Phase 1 of the N-CORPE (Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement Project) augmentation project in Lincoln County will go on line slightly later than planned. But work on Phase 2 of the project is running ahead of schedule.

During last week's Upper Republican Natural Resources District regular meeting, Manager Jasper Fanning briefed the board on the project's progress.

Ironically, what's holding up progress on the installation of the pipeline is the need to de-water several areas where the pipeline will pass under several other pipelines. One of these includes the Trailblazer gas pipeline.

Fanning said crews need to bore about 200 feet to get under the pipelines. However, with the water table in that area at nine to 10 feet, they haven't been able to get a bore hole to stay open to put the outer pipe in.

Frigid temperatures earlier this month slowed the process as well, with the de-watering pipelines freezing up.

The contract calls for Phase 1, which includes 13 augmentation wells, to be operational at the beginning of 2014.

Fanning said the boring issues could delay that until mid-January.

One plus, Fanning said, is that the contractor has already started on Phase 2 of the project, which includes another 17 wells. As a result, progress on that phase is two to three weeks ahead of schedule.

The entire project must be operational by the end of March 2014.

Fanning said pumping will begin as soon as the delivery pipeline is operational. He said the first 13 wells will be able to deliver about 50 percent of the capacity of the project.

He said the Republican River Basin will need pumping from the project to offset overuse in 2013 and keep the NRDs and state in compact compliance with Kansas.

Just how much overuse that will need to be made up won't be officially known until after Jan. 1.

Right now, Fanning is predicting that pumping from the Rock Creek and Lincoln County augmentation projects should be enough to keep all parties in compliance for 2014.

**Construction Bonds Sold**

Fanning informed the board N-CORPE completed the sale of \$15.7 million in bonds to pay off money borrowed from banks for construction costs.

Fanning said the well field cost is being split equally between the four participating NRDs. These include the three Republican Basin NRDs and the Twin Platte NRD.

The cost of the pipeline delivering water to the Republican Basin will be split among the three basin NRDs.

**DNR Allocates Stored Water**

In a related development, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has declared that all surface water now legally stored in Enders Reservoir, Harry Strunk Lake, Swanson Lake, Hugh Butler Lake and Harlan County Reservoir will not be needed for compliance purposes.

Director Brian Dunningan said this means that up 14,000 acre-feet of water now stored in these impounds will be available to irrigation districts for use in 2014.

While this creates a supply of water for surface water irrigators, Dunningan said that will not remove the need to declare 2014 as a compact call year.

That means that irrigation districts cannot store any water that comes into these impounds after Jan. 1.

Dunningan said it's possible the call could be lifted later this year if more normal rainfall returns to the area.