

NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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Republican River Basin Preliminary Forecast

The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources released its preliminary forecast for the Republican River Basin today at the Nebraska Republican River Management Districts Association (NRRMDA) meeting in Imperial. This forecast serves to notify local natural resources districts (NRDs) in the Republican River Basin when they are required to perform additional management actions due to limited water supplies. The water supplies in the basin that are available to Nebraska are determined by a 1943 Interstate Compact signed by Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado. Brian Dunnigan, Director of the Department, said, *"The forecast is a significant advancement over past tools that were available to the Department and basin NRD's and allows for the greatest opportunity for Nebraska to optimize its use of available water supplies in the basin."*

Past non-compliance with the Interstate Compact is the subject of current litigation before the United States Supreme Court. Since that period of non-compliance (2005-2006), the Department and basin NRDs have taken significant steps to support efforts to reduce groundwater pumping and identify other management actions that are designed to ensure that Nebraska will comply with the terms of the Compact, even during dry periods. Director Dunnigan said, *"It is unfortunate that these dry periods require these additional actions, but I am confident that we are now well prepared to proactively address the dry conditions that the basin is currently facing."*

The final forecast by the Department will be completed prior to January 1, 2013. Should the final forecast by the Department still indicate a potential shortfall next year, the next steps for the NRDs will be to develop and implement the necessary actions to keep their individual groundwater uses limited to their individual water supplies or in the alternative curtail groundwater pumping within the rapid response area. The next steps for the Department will require the issuance of closing notices to all surface water appropriations of natural flow, including those to store additional water subsequent to January 1, 2013. These closing notices will not prevent the release and use of water that is in storage on December 31, 2012. More information can be found in the presentation given at the NRRMDA meeting in Imperial and it is available at: http://dnr.ne.gov/IWM/docs/IWM_Presentations-Others.html

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