

NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2013

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Nebraska Sends Republican River Water Downstream After Kansas Rejects Deal to Aid Its Water Users

Water is being released to Kansas from Harlan County Reservoir as part of Nebraska's ongoing efforts to comply with the three-state Republican River Compact. This action came after Kansas ultimately could not agree on a plan that would have allowed Kansas water users access to this water during future irrigation seasons.

"It was my hope that the State of Kansas and the Bureau of Reclamation could have worked out a plan over the past four months that would have benefitted basin water users by making this water available to them without compromising Nebraska's ability to comply with the Compact. This did not happen," Nebraska Department of Natural Resources Director Brian Dunnigan said.

At the beginning of this year Department of Natural Resources officials determined that additional water would need to flow into Kansas for compliance with the Compact. Kansas had recently expressed interest in having the water that is now being released from Harlan County Lake to instead be retained so it could be used next year and possibly in 2015. Nebraska officials are agreeable to doing so, as long as Kansas will agree to hold Nebraska harmless for any computed shortfall that results from strict application of compact accounting.

Nebraska's compliance efforts are based on the proactive Integrated Management Plans that were jointly adopted in 2010 and 2011 by the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the three Republican River Basin Natural Resources Districts. The primary actions taken thus far to address the forecasted shortfall for 2013 have been the implementation of activities by the Natural Resources Districts to reduce water consumption and increase streamflow.

These actions by the NRDs have been coupled with actions by the Department of Natural Resources to ensure that this water is made available to Kansas. To carry out the Department of Natural Resources efforts a "compact call" was placed on surface water in the Basin at the beginning of the year. This call has restricted surface water users and irrigation districts in Nebraska from storing or diverting streamflows in the Republican

Basin. "It is unfortunate that these actions are necessary, but when these plans were being developed three years ago everyone anticipated dry years and that this day would likely come. I believe that Nebraska put a very reasonable solution on the table for the state of Kansas that would likely have benefited all water users in the basin, but Kansas appears to be much more concerned about the strict accounting result for 2013, so we are left with no other options but to release the water so that the accounting books will balance. The risk of non-compliance with the Compact is too great for Nebraska to wait until the end of the year to take these actions," said Director Dunnigan.

By taking these actions it is expected that compliance with the Compact will be achieved for the sixth straight year.

The release of approximately 20,000 acre-feet of water from Harlan County Lake that began Wednesday, May 1st, is expected to take approximately fifteen days.

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