

RRWCD BREAK GROUND FOR PIPELINE PROJECT

Submitted by: Deb Daniel, RRWCD General Manager

The Board of Directors of the Republican River Water Conservation District held the groundbreaking ceremony for the Compact Compliance Pipeline on the morning of Monday, August 29th, near the location of the future pipeline collection tank.

During the morning several state and local officials spoke about the visionary decisions made by the Board of Directors. While no one was celebrating the idea of pumping groundwater and delivering it to the North Fork of the Republican River to be measured at the state line ¼ mile downstream, all of the speakers praised the RRWCD Board for having the courage to make tough decisions. The pipeline and other actions taken by the RRWCD will provide the ability for Colorado to be in compliance with the Republican River Compact and will thereby help to insure the future of irrigated agriculture in northeastern Colorado.

RRWCD vice-president Greg Larson introduced the speakers at the groundbreaking ceremony. John Stulp, who is Special Policy Advisor to Governor Hickenlooper and grew up in Yuma County, was the first speaker. Mr. Stulp has also held the position of Colorado Commissioner of Agriculture. Mr. Stulp congratulated the Board on getting the pipeline project started and said he is excited that the pipeline should be completed during the summer of 2012.

Dick Wolfe, State Engineer for Colorado and Colorado's Commissioner on the Republican River Compact Administration, commented that the groundbreaking is a milestone of this journey and that the decisions of the RRWCD Board of Directors will provide a future for agriculture in this Basin: "Today's leaders understand the importance of maintaining a strong ag economy in the basin. They've known the risks but continue to focus on the results. The decisions they have made will be seen as visionary in the future."

Congressman Cory Gardner, who grew up in Yuma, CO, where his family owns and operates an implement dealership, recognized the pipeline as "providing the ability of future generations to call northeastern Colorado 'home'." He said, "When you touch water, you touch everything. Our past, our present and our future, is and will continue to be, written in water."

Jennifer Gimble, Director of the Colorado Water Conservation Board, said she has been impressed with the professionalism the CWCB has experienced in working with the RRWCD. The CWCB, with the approval of the Colorado legislature, has provided a \$60.6 million loan to provide assistance with funding for the pipeline project. She complimented the Board for having the "foresight and courage to tackle some very difficult issues." She said, "This is a smart and brave decision which will take care of your future."

State Senator Greg Brophy was very solemn when he spoke about the farm where he grew up, which is just north of where the ceremony was held: "It will break my heart to see this farm dry up due to taking the water from these wells and pumping them into the pipeline. The only thing that would be worse is to have ALL of the wells in northeastern Colorado shut off, which we know would happen if we do not build this pipeline. That path was laid out for us. It has been done before in other parts of the state, and it would have devastated our economy. We didn't want that to happen here." He congratulated the Board for making this tough decision.

RRWCD Board President Dennis Coryell spoke last. Responding to comments during the groundbreaking ceremony, he said, “No one wants to pump our precious groundwater and send it down the river to Nebraska and eventually to Kansas, but we have no other choice.” He continued, “The members of the Board of Directors, past and present, have taken the blows of criticism from those in our communities who do not support building the pipeline or doing all the other things we have done in order for Colorado to reach compliance with the Republican River Compact.” Addressing the RRWCD Board members, he said, “You guys have really stepped up! This is only the beginning. We have so much more to do.”

Pres. Coryell also noted there are other issues that have to be addressed, namely the issue of meeting the sub-basin non-impairment requirement on the South Fork of the Republican. “No one wants to drain Bonny Reservoir,” stated Coryell. “I remember growing up and going skiing and fishing at Bonny. Everyone has fond memories of enjoying Bonny, but we have no other option. The only way to meet the sub-basin test on the South Fork is to drain Bonny Reservoir, and it is up to the State to make sure that happens.”

Pres. Coryell concluded the ceremony by digging the first shovel-full of dirt. Each Board member then took his or her turn using the ceremonial shovel. Former General Manager Stan Murphy and current General Manager Deb Daniel were also asked to come forward to participate in the groundbreaking. Pres. Coryell pointed out where the collection tank will be built and that the pipeline would be built right through the area where the ceremony had been held.