

Questions

Submitted by, Deb Daniel, RRWCD General Mgr.

The RRWCD is frequently asked questions by residents of the District about the Compact Compliance Pipeline. A couple of the most often asked questions about the Pipeline project are:

Question #1: What is the benefit of the Compact Compliance Pipeline for the Republican River Basin?

Recently, a RRWCD Board member answered this question most concisely, "The pipeline is working exactly as it was designed to function. It allows Colorado the ability to be in compliance with the Republican River Compact without forcing the curtailment of irrigation."

When the RRWCD was created in 2004, Colorado believed that conservation programs would allow the State to be in compliance with the Republican River Compact.

However in 2007, it became apparent that the conservation programs alone would not be enough. Hal Simpson, the State Engineer at the time instructed Ken Knox Deputy Engineer, to circulate proposed rules and regulations which would curtail well pumping.

Even with shutting down all large capacity wells, Colorado would not be able to reach Compact compliance for decades but the State had to start attempting to comply with the Republican River Compact.

At that point, the RRWCD started considering a pipeline project. The Board decided to apply for and was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board for a feasibility study.

Results from the study revealed that a pipeline would give Colorado the ability to reach Compact compliance without forcing the shut-down of large capacity wells.

The RRWCD then applied for and received a \$60,600,000 loan from the Colorado Water Conservation Board for the Pipeline project. The Colorado legislature approved the loan contract in November 2008.

The Board entered into a purchase and sale agreement for groundwater rights and easements for the Pipeline project.

In the meantime, Colorado submitted an application to the Republican River Compact Administration for the Pipeline project. When Kansas and Nebraska voted against the resolution, Colorado invoked non-binding arbitration as required by the Final Settlement Stipulation.

Prior to the arbitration hearing in May 2010, Nebraska agreed to the Pipeline project subject to terms and conditions for Pipeline deliveries.

At that time, the RRWCD Board assumed that it could wait until Colorado could obtain approval from Kansas before it had to move forward with building the Pipeline project.

Then the State's economy took a severe down-turn. The District Board was informed the Colorado legislature would likely take the CWCB funds for the Pipeline loan due to the State's budget shortfall.

Construction costs for the Pipeline had dropped significantly due to the recession.

Although the Republican River Compact Administration had not approved the augmentation plan, the RRWCD Board recognized that without the Pipeline, Colorado would not be able to achieve Compact compliance. The State Engineer would be forced to curtail well pumping, which would devastate the economy of the Basin.

Therefore, in mid-2011, the RRWCD Board decided to build the pipeline and seek approval of the export of water from the Sandhills Ground Water Management District.

The Sandhills District approved the export with terms and conditions in early 2012 and the pipeline was dedicated on August 16, 2012.

As a result of the RRWCD's decision to build the pipeline well owners can continue to pump groundwater and produce irrigated crops without the threat of curtailment hanging over their heads. This is extremely valuable considering the current level of commodity prices.

Question #2: Why did the RRWCD build the Compact Compliance Pipeline when the State did not have approval from the Republican River Compact Administration or for exporting the water?

The State Legislature would likely have taken the funds awarded to the RRWCD through of the Colorado Water Conservation Board loan if the Board had not decided to move forward and build the pipeline.

The Sandhills GWMD has approved the export of groundwater for the Pipeline on specific terms and conditions.

The RRWCD continues to work with the State of Colorado in its efforts to obtain Kansas' approval for 100% credit for the water delivered by the Pipeline.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the RRWCD office located at 410 Main Street, Suite 8, Wray, CO 80758 or by calling at 970-332-3552.