

Compact pipeline continues to pump along

By the Yuma Pioneer

The Republican River Water Conservation District's "compact compliance pipeline" continues to pump ground water into the North Fork of the Republican River near the Colorado/Nebraska state line.

The pipeline first started operating for compact compliance in January 2014. It is part of Colorado's effort to come into compliance with the Republican River Compact, a 1942 agreement among the states of Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas, concerning water rights along the Republican River.

A stipulated agreement among the three states requires Colorado to send a minimum of 4,000 acre-feet through the pipeline each year. The Republican River Compact Administration groundwater model approved by the three states is used each year to analyze and determine how much more water above the minimum needs to be delivered each year.

Approximately 11,000 acre-feet was delivered into the North Fork in 2017.

The final portion for 2017 was delivered from October through December after the irrigation season was completed.

The pipeline continues to operate as Colorado delivers the 4,000 acre-feet minimum prior to the upcoming growing season.

RRWCD General Manager Deb Daniel said the estimate of how much above the minimum will need to be delivered in 2018 will not be made until September.

Various factors figure into how many acre feet need to be delivered each year — such as the amount of groundwater pumping throughout the Republican River Basin along with the amount of precipitation and where it falls within the basin. The more rainfall in Colorado's portion of the basin can actually increase the state's obligation to the downstream states.

Daniel noted the state has not had any problems meeting its obligations using the pipeline. Water for the pipeline comes from a series of wells located north of Laird that were purchased by the RRWCD as part of the pipeline project. The appropriation for all of the water rights has been designated to 15 wells within the pipeline project. Currently eight wells are connected and delivering water into the pipeline.

In the near future, as the need to off-set depletions and deliver additional water increases, the remaining 7 wells will be added to the pipeline system.