

How Is Your RRWCD Money Used?

By Stan Murphy, General Manager

Contrary to misconceptions about the Republican River Water Conservation District (RRWCD), money collected from water use fees will not be used to compensate well owners who may be forced to curtail pumping due to legal action, and will not be used to pay monetary damages to Kansas or Nebraska for failure to comply with the Republican River Compact, should that occur. These fees are collected to fund water retirement programs and augmentation projects that will help Colorado to comply with the Compact and to cover District operating expenses.

Water use fees are collected annually throughout the District at the rate of \$5.50 per acre for irrigation, \$4.40 per acre-foot for municipal and commercial use, and \$5.10 per acre-foot for surface water evaporation. These fees were set shortly after the District was created in 2004 and have not been increased since that time, generating approximately \$2.7 million each year.

So, where does this money go? Initially, the money is deposited with banks located within the District. To date, the District has deposited over \$4.87 million into savings, checking, and certificates of deposit in banks located within the seven counties making up the District. The rest of the funds have been used to pay for water retirement contracts and programs, and District operating expenses (such as county treasurer fees, board and administrative costs, employee salaries, rent, professional services, and day-to-day operation of the District).

As for water retirement program payments funded by the District, to date \$439,831 has been paid to well owners enrolled in the Environment Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), \$232,476 for lease programs, and \$163,400 for the initial payments to well owners in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). Of the more than 29,000 irrigated acres that have been taken out of production from these programs, over 23,000 acres are permanent retirements and the others were for 1-yr, 3-yr, or 5-yr retirements.

The funds held in the various bank accounts will be necessary in the future to cover payments under program retirement contracts, purchase or lease surface water rights, or build an augmentation pipeline, etc. Wherever possible, District funds are leveraged with federal funds to get the most “bang for the buck” on the District dollars spent. It is imperative that the District utilize the money collected for the purpose for which the District was created -- to assist the State of Colorado to carry out its duty to comply with the limitations and duties imposed upon the State by the Republican River Compact.

For more information about the District, contact Stan Murphy at the RRWCD office, 410 Main Street – Ste 8, Wray, CO, 970-332-2552, rrwcd@centurytel.net .