



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Construction began last week on a \$2.142 million, 4.6-mile pipeline to feed augmentation water into Rock Creek and eventually into the Republican River.

The pipeline represents one of the key elements of a project designed to keep the Upper Republican Natural Resources District and state in compliance with the Republican River Compact Settlement.

Garney Companies, Inc., of Kansas City, Mo., who won the bid to build the pipeline, began putting the pipe in the ground Tuesday, June, 19.

Completion is set for Oct. 5, 2012 but the contractor anticipates an earlier finish date. They have been able to put in about 1,000 feet of pipe each day at a depth of five to seven feet.

The contractor will also be installing other needed elements, such as valves and pressure relief units, to make the pipeline operational.

Miller & Associates of Kearney, the engineering firm for the project, is overseeing the contractor's work.

Nearly half of the pipeline will be 24 inches in diameter, with a selection of 20-, 18- and 12-inch diameter pipe used over the remainder.

As originally designed, the pipeline will end about one mile north of the Game & Parks' Rock Creek Fish Hatchery north of Parks. The water will discharge into Rock Creek at that point.

Up to 10,000 Acre-feet of Water

The augmentation project is designed to deliver up to 10,000 acre-feet of water to assist with compliance efforts.

Five large capacity wells located on the north end of the 4,000-acre tract in southwest Dundy County will be tied together to provide the water.

The wells will be pumped when compliance efforts are necessary.

Jenkins said they are working with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Frenchman Cambridge Irrigation district to store augmentation water in Swanson Reservoir.

Jenkins believes it could be beneficial for all parties involved if an agreement can be reached.

He noted the settlement with Kansas is not a delivery agreement. Instead, it's an agreement where basin NRDS can not exceed their allocation of virgin water supply.

So if water could be stored in Swanson, it would create water supply in the basin to help with compliance.

Storage Would Benefit G&P

Jenkins said being able to store water in Swanson would be a big advantage for the Game & Parks as well.

An additional mile of smaller diameter pipeline has been added to the project that could deliver water directly to the hatchery's water distribution system.

Jenkins said G&P wants a flow around 1,200 gallons per minute.

If a storage agreement can be reached for Swanson, Jenkins said they could run the flow continuously, with the runoff being stored in Swanson. Otherwise, it would only run while the augmentation system is operating.

Another option for G&P would be to buy and retire irrigated acres to offset a constant flow.

Grant money awarded to the NRD from the state's Environmental Trust Fund will pay for the additional cost of running the supply pipeline to the hatchery. The cost is approximately \$100,000.

Well Development

Jenkins said work is continuing on developing the well field to provide the augmentation water.

At least four new wells will be drilled on the north end of the tract. Engineers are trying to determine if one of the existing wells in that area can be used, bringing the total number of wells to five.

If necessary, a fifth new well will be drilled. The engineers want wells capable of pumping 1,200 gpm.

Jenkins said the wells are being located on the north end of the tract because that area causes less stream flow depletion.

The 4,000-acre tract included 23 irrigation wells, irrigating 3,261 certified acres.

Jenkins said 2,400 acres has already been seeded back to grass, with another 200 acres planned later this year. Over the next several years, all of the former irrigated acres will be planted into natural grasses.

The Environmental Trust Fund grant, totalling \$735,000, was used to pay for the seeding.