Allocation of 12-13 inches annually expected.

By Russ Pankonin
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The 2012 irrigation season marked the final year of the five-year allocation period set by the Upper Republican Natural Resources District.

During a special meeting and the regular meeting this month, the new allocation for the next five-year period received plenty of attention from the board.

During their regular meeting Dec. 18, board members directed the groundwater to draft proposed changes for discussion at the January meeting.

In addition to setting allocations, board members are looking at ways to provide for reasonable use of carryforward.

Manager Jasper Fanning said Wednesday the board is leaning towards keeping the allocation at 13 inches.

The annual pumping target for the district stands at 11.4 inches. This year, the district will exceed that target and will be made up with augmentation pumping.

If pumping continues to exceed the target, Fanning said the new rules could allow the board to reduce the allocation further within the five-year period.

Fanning predicted the allocation would be no lower than 12 inches, if further reductions are needed.

Carryforward Discussed

The issue of carryforward has been discussed extensively as well.

Fanning said the rules need to address carryforward to keep the district within its pumping target.

One idea under consideration would allow irrigators to use up to 5 inches of carryforward during the five-year allocation period.

Irrigators would have to manage how that carryforward is used during the allocation period.

If an irrigator used more than five inches of carryforward in the period, any additional use would be figured on a 2-to-1 basis. This would mean that for every inch of carryforward used above the five inches, carryforward would be reduced by two inches.

It’s a delicate balancing act, Fanning said, because the district is allowing irrigators to pump more than the 11.4-inch target already.

The groundwater committee proposal will be presented to the board in January. Fanning said the meeting date has not yet been determined.

If the board approves a proposal in January, Fanning said a public hearing on the proposed rule changes will be held sometime in February.