

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

If the attendance at Monday's information meetings serves as any indication, it appears irrigators feel they can live with the proposed rule changes for the Upper Republican Natural Resources District.

Less than 25 people showed up for the three meetings held Monday in Benkelman, Imperial and Grant.

Nate Jenkins, assistant URNRD manager, who made the presentations Monday, couldn't speculate whether the lack of attendance was a sign that people are happy with the proposed rule changes.

He did say he got positive input on a change that would penalize irrigators without any carryforward on a tract for dipping into the next allocation period.

Under that scenario, the penalty will be on a 2:1 ratio and will occur immediately after the year of use.

For instance, if a tract had no carryforward and the irrigator borrowed 10 inches into the next five-year allocation period, the tract would be charged for 20 inches of use, which is deducted from the new allocation immediately.

Hearing Today in Imperial

Board members will take input on the proposed changes to the URNRD rules and regulations during a hearing today (Thursday), March 21. It will begin at 1 p.m. at the URNRD headquarters in Imperial.

The proposal going to hearing calls for keeping the five-year allocation at 65 inches which averages to 13 inches per year.

In addition, the irrigator will be able to use up to 7.5 inches of carryforward (CF) during the allocation period.

Carryforward can be used during the allocation period as the irrigator wishes.

Another proposed change would bring pooling rules, with regards to CF, in line with CF rules as they apply to transfers of irrigated acres.

The CF allocation of any tract added to a pool would be limited to three years of annualized allocation. If the allocation is set at 13 inches as proposed, this would limit the amount of CF a tract could bring to a pool to 39 inches.

This marks the second hearing on proposed changes after the board made changes following input from a Feb. 12 hearing.

The first proposal called for a five-year allocation of 62.5 inches, with CF use limited to five inches over the allocation period.

In both proposals, the URNRD board reserves the right to revisit the allocations on an annual basis.

This would likely occur if the district experiences continued drought conditions which would also put compact compliance with Kansas in jeopardy.