By Russ Pankonin
The Imperial Republican

A 10,000 acre-feet streamflow augmentation project on Rock Creek in southwest Dundy County could be a stepping stone to more augmentation projects by the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD).

During their regular meeting Tuesday, Oct. 2, board members approved a two-fold motion dealing with augmentation.

The action followed a 67-minute executive session by the board to discuss real estate negotiations.

As one part, the board gave management the authority to negotiate to add more acres to the Rock Creek project.

But what came as somewhat of a surprise was also a directive to management to pursue a joint augmentation project with NRDs in the region.

If the Rock Creek addition is successful, it could bring the project closer to the 15,000 acre-feet capacity of the pipeline already in place.

This project is nearing completion and, if needed, will be available next year to help maintain compact compliance with Kansas.

As for the joint project, no specific details were released.

Nate Jenkins, an URNRD assistant manager, said the project is in the preliminary stages and is totally dependent on the acquisition of irrigated acres. Those acres would then be retired, just like what has occurred on the Rock Creek project.

The water that would otherwise be pumped could generate additional stream flows in the Republican and Platte River basins, he said.

This potential project will offer assurances of continued water compact compliance, protection of local economies and protection from sudden curtailment of present water uses, Jenkins said.

Two major benefits occur, Jenkins said, from streamflow augmentation—water can be provided at the time and in the quantities needed; and, it’s often significantly less expensive than other methods used to generate streamflow.

Jenkins added that more details will be released if further progress is made on the joint effort.