

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Irrigators with questions or wanting more information about the proposed allocation and carryforward rules should attend one of three information meetings next week.

The Upper Republican Natural Resources District will hold meetings in Benkelman, Imperial and Grant on Monday, March 18.

The info meetings will precede the board's hearing on the proposed rules planned for Thursday, March 21 at 1 p.m.

The informational meetings begin Monday at the Benkelman community building, 908 Huron St., from 9-11 a.m.

The next meeting will be held at the URNRD office in Imperial, 511 E. Fifth St., from 1-3 p.m.

The meetings will conclude at the Grant American Legion Hall, 245 Washington St., from 4-6 p.m.

65-inch allocation proposed

The proposal going to hearing next week calls for keeping the annual allocation at 13 inches, giving irrigators 65 inches of water over the five-year allocation period.

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.

Carryforward does not carry a "use-it-or-lose-it" provision. In addition any unused allocation after the five-year period can be added to a tract's CF balance.

The proposal allows for additional use of 7.5 inches of carryforward during the allocation period. However, any CF used above the 7.5-inch level will be deducted from the tract's CF balance at a ration of 2:1.

For instance, if the CF used during the allocation period exceeded the 7.5-inch total by five inches, the tract would have its CF balance reduced by 10 inches.

The proposal does allow for any carryforward lost due to the penalty to be recouped. If water use is reduced by a like amount in the next five-year allocation period, then the irrigator will get those penalized carryforward inches back.

The proposal will also penalize the overuse of water on tracts where there is no carryforward or a negative balance.

If a tract has no carryforward, an irrigator will be allowed to borrow into the next allocation period but that will come with a price.

For every inch borrowed, an additional one-inch penalty will be applied when the new allocation period begins.

For instance, if a tract has only 12 inches of allocation remaining in the fifth year of the period, the proposal allows the irrigator to borrow into the new allocation.

If the irrigator borrows 10 inches from the next period, it will be charged at a 2:1 ratio or 20 inches. As a result, the irrigator would lose 20 inches of future allocation instead of just 10.

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

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

Second proposal

This marks the second proposal the board has taken to hearing.

In their first proposal, the five-year allocation was set at 62.5 inches which amounts to 12.5 inches annually.

Use of CF was limited to five inches over allocation period.

During the first hearing, the board heard nothing but opposition to the plan from those who testified.

The biggest concern was the limit on CF at five inches.

In a meeting following the hearing, a motion to keep the allocation at 62.5 inches (12.5 inches annually) but raise the CF to 7.5 inches failed on a 4-6 vote.

A motion to forward to hearing the 65-inch allocation with 7.5 inches of CF use passed on a 6-4 vote.

URNRD information meetings/hearing on the proposed rules changes

Monday, March 18

Benkelman community building, 908 Huron St., 9-11 a.m.

Imperial URNRD office, 511 E. Fifth St., 1-3 p.m.

Grant American Legion Hall, 245 Washington St., 4-6 p.m.

Thursday, March 21

Hearing, Imperial URNRD office, 511 E. Fifth St., 1 p.m.