

Midlands

EDITORIALS, 28

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Decision on Wells May Cost State Not Metering Republican River Use Could Haunt State in a Lawsuit, Official Says

BY JULIE ANDERSON
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

A decision by the Lower Republican River Natural Resources District not to require meters on irrigation wells might give Kansas another argument in its favor if the state sues Nebraska in a long-running dispute over Republican River water, Nebraska's top water official said.

Such a lawsuit could end up costing the state millions, and, if Nebraska lost, it could mean less water for irrigating

crops and lower levels in the Harlan County Reservoir recreation area.

J. Michael Jess, director of the Nebraska Department of Water Resources, said the NRD board's decision last week also could send the message that state officials mean it when they tell Kansas officials that water-use regulation is in the hands of local governments.

"There is not somebody from on high or in Lincoln who can direct the policies of natural resources districts," Jess said.

But Jay Ziegler, an NRD board member from Riverton, said, "I don't think it will influence Kansas or influence the Supreme Court whether to take the case."

Kansas Attorney General Carla Stovall has said she plans to file a lawsuit against Nebraska with the U.S. Supreme Court alleging that Nebraska uses more than its share of Republican River water. She has asked for the backing of the Kansas Legislature, which convenes in January.

The states have negotiated for sev-

eral years to try to come up with a proposal that would resolve the dispute. So far, the states have not been able to agree on a way to adjust water use.

Thursday, the Lower Republican NRD board voted 5-4 against requiring the installation of flow meters on irrigation wells over four years.

Ron Wunibald, the NRD's general manager, said the board had decided about six months ago to move toward metering to provide better information about groundwater use in the area, primarily because of the dispute with

Kansas.

The data also might have helped determine whether groundwater pumping has contributed to the declines in inflows into Harlan County Reservoir that the Bureau of Reclamation has noted. The reservoir is valued for the irrigation and recreation it provides.

"We certainly do not have very good reporting right now of the groundwater consumption that goes on in the valley or outside the valley, for that matter,"

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Wunibald said. A number of people who attended the board meeting objected to the proposed regulations.

The objections were largely based on concerns about the cost of installing meters and additional government regulation and on a public statement by Attorney General Don Stenberg that Kansas doesn't have a case against Nebraska.

Moore, a board member from Bloomington, said it was estimated that adding meters to existing wells would cost roughly \$1,000 each, or about \$4 million for the district's approximately 4,000 irrigation wells.

Such an expense would "strap an already strapped economy," he said.

Stenberg told members of Nebraska's First Irrigation group, at a meeting last week in Grand Island that Kansas has been getting more than its share of water under a 1942 compact among Nebraska, Kansas and Colorado and that Nebraska's use of Republican River flows is significantly less than its allotment.

"Kansas could not win that result in court, and Nebraska should not surrender it at the bargaining table," Stenberg said in his speech.

Stenberg wrote to Stovall in early October asking Kansas to explain where it believes it has been shorted. Stovall replied in an Oct. 20 letter that the states can exchange information under the auspices of the court if and when Kansas files a lawsuit.

Stenberg said he has not received a reply to a letter he sent to Kansas officials about a month ago seeking detailed maps showing all wells in the river valleys and nearby uplands. Nebraska and Colorado both provided their maps. The maps would be useful in helping resolve the dispute, he said.

"You do begin to wonder if Kansas is withholding the maps and deliberately trying to frustrate a resolution," he said.

... fellow coaches and e...
Simply put, good guys do
ish last.

'Take Five for

From: Connie Lichty, Elkhorn.

Words cannot describe Osborne means to Nebraska fellow coaches, family, friends everywhere. I propose that for Tom with a statewide, possibly nationwide five-minute ovation for Tom Osborne at second ticks off the clock at the angle Bowl.

This would in no way be him, as that is not what he This would be to honor Tom. I would also hope that would remember this moment

CAL THOMAS

LOS ANGELES TIMES SYN

Wising Up on Military

disciplinary problems and a better unit cohesion and team building panel concluded. The panel far as the Marines, who train women in entirely separate (maybe that's why the Marine best), and post-basic training team integrated.

Military training softened standards were lowered to accommodate recruits. What the panel dress is how training will be it women again fail to meet standards. The objective of the generalists has been total equalization male and female service personnel what will happen when the force of politics comes up against a movable object of military strategy.

The Clinton administration the primary impetus behind general basic training. The result been obvious for some time to be blinded by politics. After too military facilities last summer, when Buver. R-Ind chairman

... that some of her classmates may have broader vision and might have heard more than Katie alleged for herself.

As for the wiper fluid, why would she want to change it? That is not a routine maintenance operation. Most fluid reservoirs are not designed to be emptied conveniently. Of course, I'm sure Katie knew all these things.

'Wait for Grand Jury'

From: Becky Bennett, Omaha

The police officer apparently felt that his life was threatened when he shot Marvin Ammons. A grand jury will look into the matter, and that is what should be done. If a police officer should have to do something like this again, do we want family and friends of that next person — and the next one — to see all the records before the grand jury does? Let the grand jury do its job. Then, if it wants, Ammons' family could petition the court to see the records. Let the judicial

WASHINGTON



And it came to pass in those days in Washington that a decree went out from the Pentagon. Eleven supposedly wise men and women were chosen to study the question of whether putting young men and women together in close quarters during basic military training might lead to sexual activity. At a cost to taxpayers probably surpassing the value of gold, frankincense and myrrh, the panel not only concluded that sex happens among recruits, but that the sexes should be separated during the initial phases of military training. The panel also found (surprise!) that basic training has gone soft.

These are hardly tidings of great joy. In fact, they are as predictable as the prophecy that combustible materials in a hot place are likely to ignite. But those who believed the military...

... the purchase. She said the purchase was a sore spot with many voters.

Nonetheless, old resentments have no place in the current discussion. The Ak-Sar-Ben purchase turned out well. The involvement of the county has helped keep a valuable tract of land in use for desirable community purposes. As to the proposed downtown area and convention center, that is an entirely different project that should rise or fall on its own merits.

Metering Wells Would Be Wiser Choice

the water resources department, said. His boss, J. Michael Jess, said the resources district's action could give Kansas another argument to use against Nebraska in a lawsuit.

Some lawyers for the state contend that the state could require meters. Blankenau called doing that "iffy," however, and indicated little thought was being given to doing any such thing.

Objections to the meters have centered on their cost — potentially \$500 or more for an irrigation well. Some people also objected to the additional government regulation and intrusion. They say meters aren't needed because Nebraska Attorney General Don Stenberg has contended that Kansas has no case against Nebraska.

Whether Kansas has a persuasive case or not, it's expensive to go to court. A loss by Nebraska could mean not only mandatory water meters but also court-imposed restrictions on water use.

The Lower Republican River NRD's choice of not requiring water meters has a potentially significant impact on the rest of the state.

Cleanup Work Beneficial for Inmates

Clarinda helped remove broken limbs from the campus of the Glenwood State Hospital-School.

Some inmates at the corrections facility already work at jobs outside the prison. But others don't. Often they just sit and watch television. Active, healthful work would benefit them mentally and physically.

... projections had to be scrapped after two riverboat casinos opened in Council Bluffs and Bluffs Run installed slot machines, driving the racetrack out of business, a fate that has befallen other racetracks.

County funds had to be tapped to pay for maintenance of the buildings and grounds. County Board members made almost no progress toward developing the property for recreation.

David Hessel 12/19/97

Nebraska's Lower Republican River Natural Resources District missed a good opportunity to establish a responsible water policy when it decided against requiring meters on irrigation wells.

Kansas officials have charged that Nebraska uses more than its share of Republican River water — in part because of excessive withdrawals of underground water. Less water is flowing into Harlan County Reservoir.

Metering of wells would have provided data to help Nebraska evaluate the Kansas complaints. And it might have helped determine whether groundwater pumping has contributed to the falling water levels in the reservoir.

The Lower Republican NRD and others in the area claim that the actual water use by irrigators using wells has been less than the Nebraska Department of Water Resources estimated.

However, there is no way to know whether that is true except by metering the use of groundwater.

"When Kansas claims that we use more water than we're entitled to, we don't know how to respond," Don Blankenau, an attorney with

It is fitting that inmates at the Iowa Residential Corrections Facility in Council Bluffs be put to work on community cleanup projects. The experience may help some inmates learn the discipline they will need to get and hold jobs outside the prison.

The cleanup plan got a tryout after the Oct. 26 snowstorm, when prisoners from the corrections facility and the medium-security prison in