

Republican River Basin focus of new web portal

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A new website focused on the Republican River Basin offers education and information about the contested river.

Development of the Republican River Basin Water and Drought Portal was led by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln-based National Drought Mitigation Center, in collaboration with Nebraska's Lower, Middle, and Upper natural resources districts.

"I personally find it an extraordinary source of current and relevant information at my fingertips," said Roger Lawson, information and education coordinator for the Middle Republican Natural Resources District. "The websites it takes me to are top-notch and current."

The portal includes current news, a history of the basin, legal information, links to current water and drought monitoring, forecasting and impacts, and sections on management, planning, education and research. The Republican River flows through Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas and is the subject of both negotiated agreements and current litigation.

Cody Knutson, a water resources scientist at the drought mitigation center who led the effort, said the portal was developed in cooperation with other related efforts in the basin, such as the work of the Republican River Restoration Partners, chaired by Ted Tietjen.

"Our objective is to get the three states to work together in resolving issues along the Republican River Basin," Tietjen said. "It's been kind of a challenge."

Tietjen's organization helped co-host a meeting in Kansas to get input on the portal and to help make it clear that the portal isn't just for Nebraskans. The team that developed the portal held listening sessions and made presentations at various locations in all three states in the basin beginning in March 2008, to learn what information stakeholders need.

Tonya Bernadt, NDMC research and outreach specialist who helped develop the site, said, "It's really a one-stop shop for stakeholders to utilize, whether they are farmers, water managers or

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the general public.

“We hope we’ve created a site that will be beneficial to all three states.”

The portal’s development was sponsored by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Sectoral Applications Research Program, and is likely to become a prototype for other river-basin websites on the website of the [National Integrated Drought Information System](#).

The Upper Republican Natural Resources District is hosting the [portal](#) .

The National Drought Mitigation Center is based in UNL’s School of Natural Resources.