



Legislative Council Staff

Nonpartisan Services for Colorado's Legislature

FISCAL NOTE

Drafting Number: LLS 19-0132 Date: January 7, 2019
Prime Sponsors: Rep. Arndt Bill Status: House Rural Affairs
Sen. Crowder Matt Becker | 303-866-4785
Fiscal Analyst: Matt.Becker@state.co.us

Bill Topic: REPUBLICAN RIVER WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

- Summary of Fiscal Impact: State Revenue, TABOR Refund, State Expenditure (minimal), Local Government, State Transfer, Statutory Public Entity

This bill adjusts the boundaries of the Republican River Water Conservation District and changes the meeting schedule of the district board. The bill creates a minimal, ongoing workload increase for the Thirteenth Judicial District.

Appropriation Summary: No appropriation is required.

Fiscal Note Status: The fiscal note reflects the introduced bill. The bill was recommended by the Water Resources Review Committee.

Summary of Legislation

This bill expands the boundaries of the Republican River Water Conservation District to include areas in Cheyenne County where groundwater pumping depletes the flow of the Republican River, as defined by the Republican River Compact Administration groundwater model. It also adjusts the boundaries of the district in Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Sedgwick, and Washington counties to align with the groundwater model. The size of the district's board of directors is increased from 15 to 17 to include representatives from Cheyenne County and the East Cheyenne Groundwater Management District. The bill also changes the months in which the district board holds its quarterly meetings.

Background

The Republican River Water Conservation District is a statutory public entity created by the Colorado General Assembly in 2004. The district was established for the conservation, use, and development of the water resources of the Republican River, its tributaries, and the portion of the Ogallala aquifer underlying the district. The district collects assessment fees from irrigation and other water users. The fees are collected by each county in the district.

The district currently includes Philips and Yuma Counties and the portions of Kit Carson, Lincoln, Logan, Sedgwick, and Washington Counties within the Republican River basin. The district is currently managed by a board of 15 directors, 7 of whom are appointed by county commissioners

from the counties within the district, 7 of whom are appointed by the boards of the Marks Butte, Frenchman, W-Y, Sand Hills, Central Yuma, Arikaree, and Plains Groundwater Management Districts, and one of whom is a member of the Colorado Ground Water Commission.

### **State Expenditures**

Much of the Republican River basin lies within the Northern High Plains Designated Ground Water Basin, which is overseen by the Thirteenth Judicial District. The court's current workload consists mostly of enforcement activities by the Attorney General for the Colorado Ground Water Commission. The district boundary adjustments created by the bill do not significantly change the court workload, so the bill can be implemented within existing appropriations.

### **Local Government and Statutory Public Entity Impact**

The bill will increase revenue to the district from new irrigation assessment fees collected from within the expanded areas of the district beginning in FY 2019-20. Under the current fee structure, revenue to the district is expected to be increased by about \$768,000 per year. The increased revenue will be used to support the cost of the Republican River Compact Compliance Pipeline and to fund the local cost share for local and federal conservation programs that support compact compliance. The revenue will also be used for public notices and public education to ensure that the expanded areas of the district are informed about the district's compact compliance programs.

The bill may also increase expenditures for the district for the two new district board members. The board directors are paid approximately \$1,600 per year. Additionally, Cheyenne County and the East Cheyenne Groundwater Management District will see minimal increased expenditures to advertise and appoint the new board positions. Cheyenne County will also see increased revenue and expenditures to collect and administer the new assessment fees for the district.

### **Effective Date**

The bill takes effect August 2, 2019, if the General Assembly adjourns on May 3, 2019, as scheduled, and no referendum petition is filed.

### **State and Local Government Contacts**

Counties	County Assessors	County Clerks	Information Technology
Judicial	Law	Local Affairs	Natural Resources