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Water flowing to Indian Cave State Park in new line

(KLZA)-- The final inspection of a new Richardson County Rural Water District #2 line to Indian Cave State Park was conducted Thursday.

About 10 years ago the idea for the project was brought up with about 35 private customers agreeing to tap into the line for water, however, that project fell through.

Rural Water District #2 Board Chairman Paul Benitz said the idea resurfaced about two years ago when Nebraska Game and Parks determined the need to either update their antiquated water treatment plant and continue to pay for a water operator or to find a new source of water.

Kevin Holliday with Nebraska Game and Parks said operating an aging water treatment plant at Indian Cave State Park is becoming very costly due to maintenance and manpower requirements.

The Game and Parks Commission committed to paying for a four inch line from the pumping station approximately four miles north of Falls City to the park. The cost was in the neighborhood of $900-thousand. Rural Water District #2 agreed to pay an additional $250-thousand to upgrade the size of the line to 6-inches.

Louis Funk, with Bartlett & West Engineering from Topeka, the lead Engineer for the project said demand for water from private customers in the area led to the decision to upgrade. With 72 customers paying for a feasibility study and committing to purchase water, it was determined that a 6-inch water line was a better option than the minimum 4-inch line needed to serve the park.

Currently there are 14 customers and the park being served by the line. The line has the capability of delivering from 10 to 50 gallons of water per minute to the water tower at Indian Cave State Park.

Phase II of the project will be to install feeder lines to an additional 55-60 private water customers. The second phase is expected to cost $1.3- $1.5-million.

Due to a drought weather pattern the past couple of years, additional funding was available from the USDA including a $1-million Emergency Community Water Assistance Grant. USDA is also providing a $300-thousand loan for the project.

Funk easements are not being acquired for Phase II of the project. He is hopeful

construction can being in about a year. Funk noted that an additional 12 people recently attended a Rural Water District Board meeting to inquire about becoming customers.

Funk praised the efforts of RWD Board members Paul Benitz and Gayle Swisegood in canvassing the area to find those wanting to be connected to the water line as part of Phase II.

It was also noted that the pumping station has the capability of adding chlorine to the water if needed.

Radio controls indicate to the pump house when there is a need to pump more water to the water tower at the park.

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