



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – Lake McConaughy Visitor Center  
October 2, 2018

**Meeting Attendees**

**Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**

**State of Colorado**

Jojo La – Member

Eric Skeie

**State of Wyoming**

Bryan Clerkin – Member

**State of Nebraska**

Kari Burgert

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Tom Econopouly - Member

Jeff Runge – Alternate

**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**

Brock Merrill – Alternate

**Downstream Water Users**

Cory Steinke – Chair

Jeff Shafer – Member

Brandi Flyr – Member (on phone)

Tyler Thulin

Nolan Little

**Colorado Water Users**

Jon Altenhofen – Member

Luke Shawcross - Alternate

Jason Marks

**Upper Platte Water Users**

Dennis Strauch - Member

**Environmental Groups**

Jacob Fritton – Member (on phone)

**Executive Director's Office (EDO)**

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Courtney Black

Scott Griebeling

Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

**Contractors**



**Welcome and Administrative:** *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*

Introductions were made. There were no modifications to the agenda. There were no edits to the August WAC meeting minutes. Shafer made a motion to approve, second by Merrill, unanimous approval.

**WAP Projects and Other Brief Water Updates**

***Cottonwood Ranch Broad-Scale Recharge: Kevin Werbylo, EDO***

Werbylo reported that bids for construction were opened last week. The winner was Myers Construction out of Broken Bow, Nebraska. Their bid of about \$4.2 million was slightly higher than the engineer's estimate of about \$4.1 million. The construction period for berms and water control structures is expected to be October 15, 2018 through May 1, 2019.

CNPPID is also proceeding with the construction of the pipeline from Phelps County Canal to Cottonwood Ranch. Bids were accepted. Steinke said construction may be completed by December but has to be done by March 31, 2019.

The project is expected to begin full operation in May or June 2019.

***Lakeside Gravel Pit: Kevin Werbylo, EDO***

Werbylo reported that the engineer's estimate increased to the \$8-9 million range. The EDO asked the GC for permission to continue with the project, which was approved at the GC special session in August. Design engineer JEO is expecting to have 90-95% design prior to December GC meeting, including nearly final cost estimates, etc. One significant change to the project is that the wellfield to withdraw water from the Platte River will be expanded, and the proposed infrastructure to deliver surface water from the Peterson Drain will be eliminated. There will be 8-10 wells capable of providing about 30 cfs inflows to the Lakeside gravel pit.

***CPNRD Water Leasing: Brandi Flyr, CPNRD***

Flyr reported that a pilot project agreement was reached with CNPPID to keep surface water allocated to the Thirty Mile, Cozad, and Orchard-Alfalfa canals in Lake McConaughy and then transfer that water to the EA. CPNRD is also working with the Nebraska DNR on the implementation of this pilot project, which is being done as an exchange outside the full statutory surface water transfer process. The full transfer volume is 14,251 AF, and it is expected to be transferred to the EA in early October. Farnsworth said there was an amendment to the water lease contract between the Program and CPNRD to allow the Program to purchase the water transferred to the EA. The unit cost for transferred CPNRD surface water was \$154.50/AF in 2018.

Altenhofen asked if this project will be scored; Farnsworth said eventually, assuming the project has long-term viability. As water contributed to the Lake McConaughy EA, the CPNRD surface water exchange would have an estimated score of about 12,000 AFY.



86 Flyr also said there were recharge diversions in the three canals from the end of the irrigation  
87 season through the end of September.

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89 ***NPPD Water Leasing: Jeff Shafer, NPPD***

90 Shafer said NPPD is working with CPNRD, CNPPID, and Nebraska DNR on a surface exchange  
91 similar to CPNRD's, to hopefully implement in 2019. Excess flows were diverted for recharge  
92 in the Gothenburg and Dawson County canals in September.

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94 ***CNPPID Water Leasing (Phelps, Elwood, Irrigators): Cory Steinke, CNPPID***

95 Steinke reported that the CNPPID Board approved a 5-year agreement with the Program to  
96 continue the irrigator lease project. The full available amount based on 2,055 acres enrolled in  
97 2018 will be transferred to the EA retroactive to October 1. Maintenance operations in the E-65  
98 system are underway and anticipated to be finished by November 15. At that point, when target  
99 flows drop, it is anticipated that water will be diverted to Elwood Reservoir for recharge. There  
100 has not yet been any recharge in the Phelps County Canal due to inspections of siphons and  
101 anticipated construction of the pipeline head (for deliveries to Cottonwood Ranch) prior to  
102 November 15. After that, CNPPID intends to divert water into Phelps for recharge if possible.

103  
104 Runge raised the issue of having flexibility in the timing of when water is credited to the EA.  
105 Given changes in the maximum operating capacity of Lake McConaughy around the same time  
106 additional water is typically credited to the EA in early October, USFWS wants to avoid hitting  
107 capacity and then having the EA debited after water was just added to the account. Runge  
108 suggested crediting the EA at a later date, in November or early in the next year. Steinke said  
109 chances of a reset in the fall are small. Shafer added that most of the water credited to the EA is  
110 from irrigation sources and therefore credited at the end of the irrigation season. If Program  
111 water projects stabilize and there are firm amounts credited to the EA in future years, CNPPID  
112 and NPPD may be able to consider options for flexibility.

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114 ***Project Scoring Update: Seth Turner, EDO***

115 Turner reported that additional analyses requested by the Scoring Subcommittee for Elwood  
116 Reservoir groundwater recharge were completed, an update to the Pathfinder Municipal Account  
117 Lease scoring was completed and submitted to the Scoring Subcommittee in mid-August, and a  
118 second Scoring Subcommittee conference call was held on August 27. The Scoring  
119 Subcommittee recommended an updated score of 6,350 AFY (increase of 2,350 AFY over the  
120 original 4,000 AFY), which was approved by the GC in September. A score was also  
121 recommended for Elwood Reservoir groundwater recharge, but presentation to the GC was  
122 deferred after the Nebraska DNR raised questions about the COHYST model underlying the  
123 recharge analysis. Griebeling said the questions are related to changes in stream depletion factors.  
124 Burgert said Nebraska DNR is reluctant to have different versions of the same model (COHYST)  
125 showing different results in the same area (Plum Creek). The EDO and Nebraska DNR are  
126 meeting in mid-October to discuss. It is anticipated that these issues will be resolved, and the  
127 recommended Elwood score will be presented to the GC in December.

**Water Portfolio Review:** *Scott Griebeling, Seth Turner, and Kevin Werbylo, EDO*

Turner, Griebeling, and Werbylo provided a review of Program water projects. This was intended to be a refresher for long-time committee members, a more detailed introduction for new committee members, and a companion piece to the water project fact sheets developed by the EDO. The presentation began with a recap of the Program's First Increment Water Objective and Milestone #4, followed by descriptions of the three initial state projects (Lake McConaughy EA in Nebraska, Pathfinder EA in Wyoming, and the Tamarack I groundwater recharge project in Colorado). Altenhofen provided some additional detail regarding Tamarack. From there, the presentation progressed through Water Action Plan projects contributing to the Lake McConaughy EA and the various water leasing and groundwater recharge projects implemented in collaboration with the Central Platte NDR, CNPPID, and NPPD. Information was also provided about the Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge project, now entering the construction phase, and the Lakeside slurry wall gravel pit, which is nearing a final design stage. The presentation concluded with brief discussions of potential future projects and the EDO's plans for scoring additional Water Action Plan projects.

**FY2019 Draft Water Plan Budget:** *Seth Turner and Kevin Werbylo, EDO*

Turner reviewed the water-related line items in the draft budget for FY2019. Farnsworth provided additional information regarding the proposal to work with the North Platte NRD on water conservation measures.

Black and Turner presented information on the streamflow forecast work performed by Dewberry for the past several years. There was discussion of whether the EDO should continue to provide streamflow forecasts on the PRRIP website; the general consensus was to continue the forecast work for another year. It was also suggested that a dialogue be facilitated with those on the WAC (and others) to discuss forecasting tools people use, additional forecast-related information may be helpful to include on the PRRIP website, and ways in which streamflow forecasting might better serve the Program's goals.

**Additional Business:** *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*

The draft meeting schedule for 2019 was reviewed. Shafer commented on a proposed Wyoming plan to modify Glendo Reservoir operations and requested a report on the proposal from Clerkin at the next WAC meeting. Steinke said that would be of interest to CNPPID as well as NPPD.

**Action Items****General WAC**

- N/A

**ED Office**

- N/A