



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Conference Call  
August 7, 2018

**Meeting Attendees**

**Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**

**State of Colorado**

Jojo La – Member

Eric Skeie

**State of Wyoming**

Bryan Clerkin – Member

Jeff Cowley - Alternate

**State of Nebraska**

Jessie Strom – Member

Jesse Bradley – Alternate

**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

Tyler Thulin

**Colorado Water Users**

Jon Altenhofen – Member

Luke Shawcross - Alternate

**Upper Platte Water Users**

Dennis Strauch - Member

**Environmental Groups**

Jacob Fritton – Member

Bill Taddicken - Member

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

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Scott Griebeling

Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

Courtney Black

George Oamek

**Contractors**



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

Introductions were made. Two edits to the May meeting minutes submitted by Altenhofen were noted. Shafer made a motion to approve the minutes with edits, second by La. Unanimous approval.

Econopouly reported that the USFWS is considering making EA releases in late October/early November for whooping crane. Steinke said CNPPID is coordinating with NPPD on a schedule of outages after irrigation season, trying to finish all by early October ahead of whooping crane releases. Econopouly also reported that the USFWS is working on an EA Manager document, which is being reviewed by the EDO and CNPPID, with the intent of distributing prior to the October EAC-RCC meeting.

**WAP Projects and Other Brief Water Updates**

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

Werbylo reported that the permits needed for construction are now in place. Everything was ready for GC and FC approval in June, but disagreements over language in the land agreement with NPPD and the WSA with CNPPID for deliveries via pipeline resulted in a delay. At present, it appears there is agreement on revisions, and the EDO expects the documents to be approved at the GC meeting on August 14. If approved, the project will be advertised shortly thereafter, with an anticipated bid opening in mid-September, start of construction of berms and water control structures in early to mid-October, and completion by early December to beat the first big freeze.

Up front capital costs for the project are about \$4 million, and the project has an estimated score of 4,000 AF. An additional \$1 million will be paid to CNPPID up front. This amount will be repaid to the Program through “free” water deliveries from the CNPPID. The EDO is working with NDNr and TBNRD on planning and permitting for the next phase of the project, which will be a series of downstream recapture wells.

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

Werbylo reported that the EDO presented a project update to the GC in June. Then-current estimates were a capital cost of about \$8.5 million for a score of less than 2,000 AF. The GC requested more analyses of cost, with comparisons to other WAP projects. This was completed by the EDO. The EDO also updated the preliminary score model for the Lakeside gravel pit for better consistency with other WAP projects. The latest score estimates range from 2,500 to 3,200 AF. The updated cost analysis and score updates will be presented to the GC on August 14.

Additionally, the EDO is talking with JEO (design consultant) about expanding the well field to provide all water deliveries so that the project is not reliant on moving water from Cottonwood Ranch through the Peterson Drain. This is intended to streamline the construction process and would make the project fully controllable by the Program. La asked if the source of supply affects score; Werbylo said no, the score model assumes fixed inflows to the gravel pit regardless of source. Clerkin asked if there will be an amendment to JEO’s design contract to



accommodate the larger well field. Werbylo said that will be discussed once the EDO has approval from the GC to proceed with the project, but a large amendment would not be expected.

Altenhofen asked if Nebraska would get a portion of the project yield. Farnsworth said that Nebraska opted out of project participation when the GC made the decision to proceed with a full-scale initial slurry wall project.

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

Flyr reported on a different approach to the surface water leasing from the Thirty Mile, Cozad, and Orchard-Alfalfa canals this year. Rather than return the water directly to the river at the canal headgates as in past years, the water will remain in storage in Lake McConaughy and will then be transferred to the EA. This is a pilot project for 2018, with an upper limit of 14,200 AF.

Farnsworth said the Program has an existing lease agreement with CPNRD, so they are developing a simple amendment to reflect this operational change. There was discussion of the timing and approach to the transfer to the EA. Flyr said the transfer would be reviewed in September; Bradley said it would be part of a request to NDNR similar to how CNPPID's NCCW and irrigator lease transfers to the EA are made at the beginning of October.

Altenhofen asked how this approach would affect score and whether Nebraska would get any part of it. Farnsworth said this is just Program water. Turner said the transfer of CPNRD surface water to the EA would likely have a much higher score than the way the transfer was previously operated, assuming this becomes the long-term operational approach.

Strauch asked if this is transferred storage water or natural flow captured instead of released. Steinke said the general concept is a transfer of storage water to the EA. CPNRD is not irrigating acres historically irrigated with surface water, keeping that water in Lake McConaughy, then moving it to the EA.

Flyr said there were no diversions of excess flows into the canals for recharge in the spring.

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

Shafer said NPPD attempted to develop an agreement to move water into the EA, similar to CPNRD, but wasn't able to come to terms. They will continue working towards such an agreement for 2019.

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

Steinke said that dryland corn looks as good as irrigated this year, and it is expected that the full CNPPID irrigator lease volume will be transferred to the EA in October. There were no recent diversions into Elwood Reservoir for recharge.

**WAP Project Scoring: Seth Turner, EDO**

Turner reported that the EDO is working on scoring analyses for the Elwood Reservoir groundwater recharge project, a score update for the Pathfinder Municipal Account lease, and the NPPD groundwater recharge project. At the June GC meeting, the EDO requested that the membership of the Scoring Subcommittee be reviewed and updated as needed.

A preliminary score analysis packet for Elwood recharge was submitted to the Scoring Subcommittee in late June, discussed by conference call on July 26, and sent back to the EDO for some additional analyses. The EDO anticipates sending out updates by August 17, having another conference call by the end of August, and presenting a score recommendation to the GC in September.

The Pathfinder Municipal Account lease was originally scored assuming 4,800 AF deliveries each year. The EDO is updating the analysis to reflect that 9,600 AF is available in many years. The preliminary score analysis was reviewed by Wyoming in early July, will be submitted to Scoring Subcommittee soon, with expectations of presenting to the GC in September or December.

Score analyses for NPPD groundwater recharge through Gothenburg and Dawson County canals is just getting underway. EDO had a few calls with NPPD to discuss approach and assumptions. This is currently anticipated to be ready for the GC in December.

**Flow Reconciliation Issues: Scott Griebeling, EDO**

Griebeling said that the EDO is looking into various issues raised at the May WAC meeting, including how the hydrologic condition can be affected by EA or other Program water releases. The EDO currently has nothing specific to present; however, the EDO is working on a memo that provides recommendations and describes metrics for flow accounting.

Econopouly thanked Griebeling for catching errors in Kingsley data summaries. Griebeling said EDO will be reviewing data in more detail with the new water accounting procedures.

**CNPPID Irrigator Lease WSA: Jason Farnsworth, ED**

Farnsworth discussed the new draft WSA for the CNPPID irrigator lease project. For the past few years, the Program has entered into annual agreements with CNPPID for irrigator leasing as a pilot program. Under this pilot program, enrollment of irrigated lands was capped at 2,000 acres. The Program paid \$220/acre and received a credit of 9 inches per acre added to the Lake McConaughy EA at the end of the irrigation season. Enrollment in the program increased every year, and at this point there needs to be a conversation with the GC about making CNPPID irrigator leasing a permanent WAP project.

The EDO is having discussions with CNPPID about a longer-term agreement. A draft WSA for 5 years would increase the enrollment cap to 3,000 acres. At full enrollment, this would add more than 2,000 AF to the EA every year. The costs per acre have not changed to this point, but



the Program would like to have the flexibility to adjust the cost in the future to reflect commodity prices and other factors. CNPPID is working on language to allow an annual amendment for contract price. The draft WSA will be presented to the GC in September.

**Water Project Fact Sheets and Accounting:** *Courtney Black, Scott Griebeling, and Seth Turner, EDO*

Black said the EDO sent out six water project fact sheets for review: Lake McConaughy EA, Pathfinder EA, Pathfinder Municipal Account lease, No-Cost NCCW, Elwood Reservoir groundwater recharge, and Phelps County Canal groundwater recharge (including the Cook recapture well). Comments are requested within two weeks.

The EDO is still working on additional fact sheets for NPPD groundwater recharge, CPNRD groundwater recharge, and the Tamarack project. These will be distributed for review when they are available. The intent of the fact sheets is to provide a useful reference for committee members, particularly to help educate new members. A more thorough water portfolio overview will be presented at the next WAC meeting. Econopouly complimented the fact sheets, said they are a good idea and look really good.

Turner provided the numbers to compare Dewberry's forecasts of May-June-July flows at Lewellen and Julesburg to the actual gaged flow records. There was discussion on the accuracy and utility of the forecasts and whether to continue paying for the forecasts. The EDO will take a closer look at the forecasts and actual flows over the past couple years, with the intent of discussing further at the EAC-RCC meeting in October.

**Lakeside Gravel Pit Cost/Benefit Analysis:** *Kevin Werbylo, EDO*

Werbylo reported that updated capital and O&M costs for the Lakeside gravel pit project were presented to the GC in June. Analyses showed costs trending up and score trending down from the earliest estimates. The GC requested additional analyses to provide context for costs compared to other Program water projects. This analysis was done by the EDO, led by Oamek, and will be presented to the GC on August 14. The analysis looked at costs over a project life of 50 years as well as over the shorter duration of the proposed First Increment Extension. The EDO also ran preliminary scoring analysis that suggested the score would be in the 2,500 to 3,200 AF range.

La asked if uncertainty around score leads to uncertainty in cost. Griebeling said using a daily vs. monthly timestep leads to different score results; the choice of which to use is ultimately a decision for the Scoring Subcommittee. Griebeling also said the preliminary score analysis accounts for the partitioning of available excess flows between the Phelps and Elwood recharge projects as well. In response to La, Werbylo and Griebeling said there is no specific timeline for submitting the Lakeside gravel pit project to the Scoring Subcommittee, that the EDO is waiting for GC approval to proceed with the project.



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

Based on comments during the May WAC meeting, there was discussion of whether to reschedule the October WAC meeting. A decision was made to keep it on October 2, starting at 10 a.m. at the Lake McConaughy Visitor Center. This will be preceded by the EAC-RCC meeting at 9 a.m.

The timing of fall EA releases was also discussed. Steinke said that J1 and J2 are planned for a two-week outage starting October 1. EA releases would come after that outage.

**Action Items**

**General WAC**

- Provide comments on the water projects fact sheets within two weeks (by August 21)

**ED Office**

- Review Dewberry forecasts and actual gaged flows in past years, prepare to discuss at EAC-RCC meeting in October.