PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – Lake McConaughy Visitors Center, NE

July 21, 2009

Attendance
Frank Kwapnioski – WAC Chair, NPPD  
Jerry Kenny – Executive Director, Headwaters Corp
Beorn Courtney – ED Office/Headwaters Corp
Sabre Duren – ED Office/Headwaters Corp
Mike Besson – Wyoming Water Development Office
Mike Purcell – Wyoming Water Development Office
Matt Hoobler – Wyoming SEO
Jim Schneider – Nebraska DNR
Jim Hall – Colorado DWR
Joe Frank – Colorado LSPWCD
Pat Goltl – Nebraska DNR
Jennifer Schellpeper – Nebraska DNR
Kent Miller – Downstream Water Users/Twin Platte NRD
Duane Woodward – Central Platte NRD
Rich Holloway – Tri-Bain NRD
Sandy Vana-Miller – Colorado USFWS
Matt Rabbe – Nebraska USFWS
Larry Reynolds – Tri-Basin NRD
Greg Wingfield – Grand Island – USFWS
Don Anderson – Colorado USFWS
Brock Merrill – Wyoming USBR
Jeff Runge – Nebraska USFWS
Dennis Strauch – Upper Platte Water Users/Pathfinder Irrigation District
Jon Altenhofen – Colorado Water Users/Northern Colorado WCD
Cory Steinke – CNPPID
Mike Drain – CNPPID
Pat O’Brien – Nebraska Association of Resource Districts (phone)
Ted Kowalski – State of Colorado/CWCB (phone)

Welcome and Administrative
Introductions; no agenda modifications. The May WAC Meeting Minutes, as amended, were approved.
Nebraska Depletion Plan Update
Schellpeper presented an overview of the Nebraska New Depletion Plan (NNDP), scheduling and reporting, and tasks remaining to be completed as implementation occurs. Nebraska is using the COHYST model and other management tools to determine the amount, timing, and location of depletions to state-protected flows and the Program’s target flows. Kwapnioski thanked Schellpeper and said we’re not expecting action or approval for the Nebraska Depletions Plan, just the overview presentation.

Wyoming Depletions Plan Update
Purcell gave a presentation on updates to the Wyoming Depletions Plan. Since the original Depletions Plan, they have fixed the irrigated baselines because areas that were non-hydrologically connected were previously included in estimates. Purcell discussed Amendment III and how Wyoming would like to withdraw the non-hydrologically connected areas from the baseline. Maps were provided with the current boundaries and the proposed boundaries. The WAC approved a recommendation to the GC for consideration of Amendment III.

Hoobler gave a presentation on the Wyoming 2008 Depletions Report. He discussed Baseline I and how it did not exceed the Modified North Platte Decree acreage or the Kendrick Project. Even with proposed acre changes, Wyoming would still need to be in compliance with the 226,000 acres that are entitled to the North Platte Decree. For Baseline II, Wyoming received 100% reporting from industries, 96% of municipalities, and review of new surface water and groundwater activities. There were under-runs for both the irrigation and non-irrigation season. It would help with potential over-runs in the future. Altenhofen asked about Table 2.1 and 2008 acreage – should it be 200,447 instead of 193,266. Hoobler said yes. Kenny said to keep the date, fix the table, and circulate the updated report to the WAC. Everyone agreed on the approach for the adjustment to Table 2.1.

Water Action Plan Update
Courtney said the ED Office has been working with Water Action Plan Subgroup to go through the 2000 Reconnaissance WAP and have identified additional data needs, costs, etc. and some things have changed significantly since the original document. We have an updated working plan with WAPS to be reviewed by the WAC. The goal is to have an updated WAP by the end of the year, so we will need to have a draft out by November, probably in the form of a collection of memos summarizing the projects. We need to prioritize the thirteen projects so we can hit the ground running with them at the same time. The ED Office is identifying RFPs to get feasibility projects going and to determine budgetary needs. A handout was provided with the thirteen projects prioritized into three tiers based on the May WAPS meeting, with a brief verbal update on each:

For WAP-2, Water Leasing in Nebraska, Kenny said he’s been looking into water markets, leasing mechanisms, auctions, etc. to establish a fair market value and development of programs for leasing water. The Program would most likely initiate efforts with a water holder group – CNPPID, NPPD, etc. Schellpeper said NDNR is using some stimulus money to contract with HDR to look into some similar concepts. Schellpeper said that she will fill Kenny in on this
effort.

WAP-3, Water Management Incentives, entails conversion from one use to another, most likely agriculture. Kenny spoke with Robert Meaney with Valmont, who is also the industry representative this year for the Center Pivot Industry in Nebraska, and there is interest in sustaining irrigated agriculture, but to make the systems more water efficient. Additional sensor technology could decrease the water used and increase the yield to the river rather than taking irrigated land out of production. The center pivot industry is interested in providing funding for research. Kenny is setting up a meeting with Darrel Martin and Dean Eisenhower at UNL to talk about these concepts and how to analyze yield.

Courtney said that all Tier III projects are potentially viable, but they’re not identified to be actively worked on right now. For La Prele (WAP-12), we should contact that group and see if there’s any information to obtain.

**Colorado Depletions Plan Update**

Kowalski circulated an email prior to the meeting providing a summary of what Colorado is doing to meet their obligation of 350 ac-ft for Federal depletions. They are interested in modifying the Depletions Plan to incorporate a Federal offset for the North Platte and they are planning to bring it to the GC in August. Water users would need to get certification to use water. The assumptions haven’t changed for water, it’s just taking multiple buckets of water and putting them all into one bucket, similar to the Wyoming plan. The WAC approved a motion to recommend that the GC approve Colorado’s proposal.

Altenhofen gave a presentation on the accounting tools for Colorado’s Depletions Plan. Tamarack I entails 10,000 ac-ft/yr of re-timing flows dependent on excesses at Grand Island. Tamarack II is Colorado’s Plan for future depletions. Stream accretions from population growth are retimed on a monthly basis to offset depletions in the months of May and June. SPWRAP funds the process with about $1M collected each year. Tamarack III is a potential Water Action Plan project and that is dependent on excess flows at Grand Island and may provide up to 17,000 ac-ft/yr. Tamarack III would be paid for by the PRRIP.

Closer tracking with SPWRAP would be beneficial. We need to project ahead to be aware of the future and how rapidly Colorado is using up water. Anderson asked for further discussion with maybe Kevin Urie, Vana-Miller, and Altenhofen.

Kwapnioski asked if the objective is for the WAC to concur that Colorado’s assumptions are appropriate. Altenhofen said yes, and asked if it is agreed they are appropriate assumptions for the next five year plan, that Colorado would like approval to take it forward. He asked if everyone would like the opportunity to submit comments. Kwapnioski recommended everyone think it over, get comments to Altenhofen within a month and for him to provide a memo with assumptions for approval to Courtney to distribute, and then to discuss approval at the next meeting.
Miscellaneous Water Plan Updates
Kenny said the weed management at the choke point along the North Platte is going to be a cost share with West Central Weed Management Agency and it is scheduled to occur this fall. The ED Office will oversee the work and the PRRIP will provide money. He provided an update on channel capacity and weed management from North Platte to Grand Island and said there have been discussions with Rich Walters (Coordinator for Platte Valley Weed Management Agency) regarding a budget estimate and matching funds. It’s estimated to cost $300,000 - $500,000 to clear from Grand Island to North Platte, which is about $50 - $100/ac. A similar amount is likely to complete clearing from McConaughy to Columbus.

Courtney said the target flow analysis is being updated based on several suggestions received at the May 2009 WAPS meeting. ED Office staff is meeting with Anderson late this week to review the updates. The ED Office is also working with Mike Thompson at NDNR to interpret several aspects of the analysis.

Courtney said the April 2009 Flow Routing Test report is being developed in collaboration with Anderson and USFWS. A report is being prepared for the October GC meeting and will be provided to the WAC in September for review beforehand.

Courtney said a proposal for Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Qualifications for water resources services is being developed for relatively small projects (under $50K) so that a less lengthy RFP process could be used for those projects.

Additional Business
Frank asked if there is anything else that needs to be addressed or if anyone has suggestions. No comments were made. The meeting was adjourned.