



1 **PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**
2 **Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**
3 **Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – Lake McConaughy Visitors Center, NE**

4
5 **November 9, 2010**

6
7 **Attendance**

- 8 Cory Steinke – WAC Chair, CNPPID
9 Jerry Kenny – Executive Director PRRIP, Headwaters Corp
10 Beorn Courtney – ED Office/Headwaters Corp
11 Steve Smith – ED Office/Headwaters Corp
12 Sira Sartori – ED Office/Headwaters Corp
13 Doug Hallum – NDNR
14 Dennis Strauch – Pathfinder Irrigation District
15 Jeff Shafer - NPPD
16 Jon Altenhofen – Northern Colorado WCD
17 Mike Drain – CNPPID
18 Rich Holloway – Tri-Bain NRD
19 Pat Goltl – NDNR
20 Brock Merrill – Bureau of Reclamation
21 Jeff Runge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
22 Greg Wingfield - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
23 Mahonri Williams – Bureau of Reclamation
24 Kent Miller – Twin Platte NRD
25 Suzanne Sellers – Colorado Water Conservation Board
26 Tom Econopouly – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
27 Duane Woodward, CPRND
28 Matt Hoobler-Wyoming SEO
29 Duane Hovorka-NE Wildlife Federation
30 Mike George – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
31 Matt McConville – HDR (by phone)
32 Mike Besson – Wyoming Water Development Office (by phone)
33 Bill Taddiken – Environmental Groups/Rowe Sanctuary (by phone)

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

38 Introductions were made. There were no agenda modifications. **The redlined August WAC**
39 **Minutes were approved with no modifications.**

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41 **Channel Improvements:** *Rich Walters, Platte Valley Weed Management Area Project*
42 *Coordinator, The Nature Conservancy*

43 Walters gave an update on the Platte Valley Weed Management Area (WMA)'s activities in the



44 Platte River corridor. The objective is to stop invasive and noxious weeds, and WMA has
45 primarily focused on phragmites. WMA is removing phragmites for conveyance efficiency, to
46 conserve water use and increase habitat. WMA has multiple matching grants to complete weed
47 control for a total of \$3.1 million allocated as of this year, including \$480,000 from the Program.
48 About 90% of funding has gone to herbicide applications and mechanical removal to date. The
49 North Platte channel from Lake McConaughy to the confluence with the South Platte was
50 sprayed in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Work on the North Platte is largely complete, and
51 unfortunately has not resulted in increased channel capacity (current flood capacity is between
52 1,600 and 1,700 cfs at the Cody Park Bridge).

53
54 In total, WMA has sprayed approximately 336 miles of the Platte from Lake McConaughy to
55 Columbus, including 18,300 acres with herbicide and removed biomass from 1,750 acres.

56
57 WMA uses an Integrated Management approach to control invasive and noxious weeds. The best
58 method is an integrated approach using an herbicide method (spraying of Imazapyr) followed by
59 biomass removal (e.g., discing, shredding, or burning). WMA found that using “biomass
60 removal only” is a short-term fix that allows other invasive species to replace phragmites
61 (“discing only” results in purple loosestrife emerging the same season, and “shredding only”
62 results in phragmites emerging the same season). Herbicide application is done by aerial and
63 ground applications. Typically, ground applications are done in sensitive areas. The best time to
64 spray for effective phragmites mortality is June through the occurrence of freezing temperatures,
65 based on rhizome testing. Local County Weed Districts also help in notifying individual
66 landowners of invasive species on private land. WMA sprays vegetation in the first year and in
67 the second year completes discing, shredding or mowing to remove the biomass. Burning,
68 grazing and flooding are other methods of biomass removal. High flows are effective in
69 removing biomass in the second year after spraying when phragmites stems are weak; otherwise
70 high flows do not produce enough force to remove phragmites. The 2-year waiting period was
71 demonstrated well with spraying that occurred in 2008, where 2010 high flows were successful
72 in knocking down dead and weakened phragmites. Another potential management strategy
73 could be to keep flows high enough through seedling germination season (e.g., through July) to
74 inundate seedling vegetation and prevent germination.

75
76 WMA is research testing the best long term options and management using test plots. WMA
77 uses color infrared mapping to detect phragmites outside channels to prevent future
78 encroachment. Some off-channel management has been done to control the source of phragmites
79 regrowth. WMA also completed a short water quality test and determined the background
80 herbicide levels after spraying are less than 60 ppb, which is well below the threshold for
81 affecting invertebrates (100,000 ppb).

82
83 Walters will be working on a Best Management Guide for free to landowners in the area. There
84 is also a website outlet for public outreach at Plattevalleywma.org. The 2010-2011 focus will be
85 to: 1.) Touch up channels where phragmites remain through aerial applications and follow up
86 ground applications and start biomass removal from North Platte to Grand Island and 2.) Monitor



87 and maintain (WMA has 2 years of grant money to continue spot vegetation removal with aerial
88 monitoring and will begin lining up funding for 3 years out). Public outreach will include
89 informing private landowners on how to control regrowth. The long-term maintenance will be
90 done by individual landowners for sustainable control.

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93 **2011 SDHF Planning:** *Greg Wingfield, USFWS*

94 Wingfield reviewed the 2009 flow routing test highlights and described the 2011 scheduled
95 SDHF. In 2009, the Program conducted a release of EA from McConaughy around April 8th.
96 Approximately 23,000 acre-feet were released from EA over 8 days. The peak at Overton was
97 approximately 3,600 cfs. A total of 12,000 acre-feet passed CNPPID's diversion and 5,500 acre-
98 feet was intentionally bypassed with district compensation (combined power bypass payment to
99 NPPD and CNPPID was approximately \$70,000). In the 2009 flow routing test report, a goal
100 was set to increase the flow above 4,000 cfs in the Central Platte by: 1.) Improving conveyance
101 at the Choke Point and 2.) Removing Phragmites above North Platte to allow water to move
102 faster through the system. These items have not been fully addressed for the 2011 SDHF but
103 there has been spraying and removal of biomass to address some of the flow capacity issues.
104 The choke point flood capacity remains around 1,600 cfs at the Cody Park Bridge in North
105 Platte.

106
107 The 2011 SDHF is tentatively scheduled sometime mid-February to mid-March in 2011 (most
108 likely mid-March). In 2011, the planning committee will identify clear objectives for the SDHF
109 event. This year will probably be another learning event, with one of the primary objectives
110 being to learn how weed management has influenced capacity on the river outside of the North
111 Platte choke point. One of the goals previously identified for 2011 was to test the effects of
112 sediment augmentation at Overton, but delays in the sediment augmentation feasibility study will
113 prevent the ability to test sediment augmentation during the 2011 SDHF. Effects of the SDHF
114 will be monitored at the Elm Creek FSM proof of concept site. Wingfield is hopeful there will
115 be additional sediment movement in comparison to the 2009 event. There may not be higher
116 flows this year unless natural flow is greater. The EA balance going into 2011 is about 120,000
117 acre-feet with anticipated storable natural inflows of 55,000 acre-feet. Evaporation and storage
118 losses are anticipated to be lower than in previous years. Wingfield suggests proactively using
119 the EA because it could be maxed this year. Although it is not the ideal time for a SDHF, the
120 Program has the water and can learn from another test.

121
122 The EA priorities for this year are releases in the summer for terns and plovers (30k AF), SDHF
123 (30k AF), and spring migration. Carryover is a lesser priority than in previous years. EA
124 balance is anticipated to be approximately 100,000 acre-feet at the end of 2011. Also, there is
125 budget this year for power bypass (approximately \$75,000), similar to last year. More
126 monitoring has been completed since 2009 in terms of flow monitoring using LiDAR. Districts
127 will be coordinating operations outside of drought mode. A few differences from last year will
128 be the water supply (districts will be operating differently this time around-2009 was an optimal
129 situation) and there may not be as much bypass as in the 2009 event. Hovorka mentioned



130 Walter’s WMA presentation to keep water in the river through July to help prevent phragmites
131 germination. Wingfield noted this comment.
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134 **WAP Project Updates:** *Jerry Kenny & Beorn Courtney, ED Office*

135 The ED Office has been focusing on the 2009 WAP Tier I projects in the past year. Two
136 priorities are retiming excess target flows and providing storage closer to the associated habitat.
137 Storage projects have been the focus including surface water storage reservoirs and storage
138 through groundwater recharge. The groundwater recharge pre-feasibility was completed.
139

140 ***Elm Creek Reservoir*** – Reservoir for flood control, recreation and Program storage to satisfy
141 target flows and supplement SDHF flows. Currently the contractor draft report is being
142 reviewed by EDO staff and CPNRD staff. There are water supply issues to the reservoir: the
143 capacity of the Dawson County Canal may limit deliveries to Elm Creek Reservoir during
144 irrigation season and winter operations.
145

146 ***J2 Rereg Reservoir*** – The contractor is finishing the geotech investigations report and modeling
147 the Phelps County Canal capacity. The first task of the feasibility study is to consider the
148 potential for joint operations to serve Program purposes and to mitigate CNPPID hydrocycling.
149 The contractor has not provided a clear answer as to whether this can work. Kenny is not feeling
150 confident about the contractor’s conclusions and is currently working with the contractor to
151 resolve this. Some issues brought up by Kenny, Courtney and Steinke include: challenges with
152 hourly data management, alternatives to other gate design, use of cells within reservoir to keep
153 higher head. The ED Office is continuing to work with the contractor to adequately address this
154 phase of the feasibility study.
155

156 Phase I was completed satisfactorily by the contractor. The contractor should complete Phase II
157 (Feasibility) in early 2011 but is not guaranteed for Phase III (Design). A question was raised
158 regarding the ED Office and special advisors reviewing the data to complete this task directly.
159 Kenny noted it is difficult to determine how long this would take. The operations are critical and
160 are a large portion of budget and score.
161

162 ***Groundwater recharge*** – Courtney stated the Selection Committee chose EA Engineering,
163 Science & Technology in Lincoln and Daniel B. Stephens and Associates in Albuquerque. **The**
164 **ED Office is working with EA to finalize scope, budget and contract for approval by the**
165 **Finance Committee.** A kickoff and scoping meeting with the Groundwater Recharge Work
166 Group and contractors will be held this afternoon, following by field visit tomorrow at the
167 potential Gothenburg and Phelps recharge sites.
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169 ***NCCW*** – Oamek is special advisor to ED Office and has been working with Marcia Trompke at
170 CNPPID to understand and interpret cost and yields.
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173 **NE Leasing Update:** *Beorn Courtney, ED Office*

174 Courtney described the WAP Nebraska Water Leasing projects. Dawson County Canal has
175 approached the Program regarding leasing opportunities. The WAC requested information on
176 existing methods to complete transfers. This information will aid the WAC in reviewing a lease
177 proposal if the Program were to move forward. Courtney discussed the CNPPID temporary
178 lease to Tri-Basin, CPNRD's water bank and NPPD's potential lease to the Program. Courtney's
179 discussion items included the quantification of yield, net impacts to the river, permitting
180 considerations and the value of water. Altenhofen asked about offsets from increased
181 groundwater pumping when surface water is transferred. As Drain understands it, when surface
182 water is removed and groundwater pumping increases, the associated NRD will be required to
183 address this.

184

185 **Courtney suggested starting a work group for NE Water Leasing - Shafer, Steinke, Drain,**
186 **Altenhofen, Woodward, Hoobler, Hallum, Sellers and Econopouly volunteered.**

187 **Altenhofen suggested the workgroup develop a matrix to review differences of each**
188 **method. The ED Office will set up a NE Water Leasing workgroup area on the PRRIP**
189 **website.** The next step is for the workgroup is to review and recommend the methodology for
190 the Program to use. Hovorka suggested using a consistent methodology (not necessarily
191 identical) to help the GC with scoring. Kenny noted the Program will look at leasing from
192 irrigation districts before individual users because they encompass larger areas and have staff to
193 help in the transfer. Drain added that the districts can serve as the administrative contacts for
194 required paperwork for water leasing.

195

196 Drain stated CNPPID submitted their temporary transfer application to NDNR last week. NDNR
197 does not have a specific time period to respond but CNPPID is hopeful it will not be too long
198 since the transfer is temporary. It was noted the leases will probably become longer once
199 implications are realized. CNPPID would like to have a process to allow individual irrigators to
200 choose who they complete transfer to in the future and CNPPID can assist with the paperwork.

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203 **2011 Water Plan Budget:** *Jerry Kenny, ED*

204 Kenny described budget changes. The two items that have been changed are the 1.) Water
205 Acquisition from \$500,000 to \$200,000, and 2.) Miscellaneous Water Resources Studies from
206 \$200,000 to \$100,000. Total reductions of \$400k so Water Budget decreased from \$7,250,000
207 to \$6,850,000.

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210 **Nebraska Depletions Plan Update:** *Doug Hallum, NDNR*

211 Hallum gave a brief overview of the NDNR depletions work with 5 of the NRDs. NDNR staff is
212 on-schedule and currently assembling data and providing QA/QC of datasets. A template report
213 will be tentatively completed and provided to the GC in December and presented to the WAC at
214 the February meeting. The Integrated Management Plans (IMP) were adopted in 2009 and
215 implementation is ongoing. The IMP process includes annual reports, annual basin-wide



216 meetings and monitoring plans. NDNR and the NRDs formed the Platte Basin Habitat
217 Enhancement Program (PBHEP) institutional funding mechanism and the NE Environmental
218 Trust (NET) supplemental funding to leverage the federal acreage retirement programs. The four
219 Management Options Plans are: 1. Recharge recovery, 2. Surface water demand management
220 (rotations, fallowing, dryup, leases), 3. Groundwater demand management (crop rotations,
221 fallowing, dry-up, leases), and 4. Conjunctive management. The NDNR is also working on
222 refinement of COHYST to improve groundwater analysis, add surface water conjunctively, and
223 certify acreage. Another objective of the COHYST 2010 project is to include the ability to route
224 depletions and offsets through the system.

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

229 **The next WAC meeting was scheduled for February 1, 2010, from 9:30 am – 3 pm**
230 **(mountain time) at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center.**

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232 There was no additional business.

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234 **Action Items**

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236 **General WAC**

- 237 • WAC workgroup formed for NE Water Leasing: Shafer, Steinke, Drain, Altenhofen,
238 Woodward, Hoobler, Hallum, Sellers, and Econopouly.

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240 **ED Office**

- 241 • The ED Office will set up a NE Water Leasing workgroup area on PRRIP website and
242 develop a matrix to review differences in methods
- 243 • The ED Office will work with EA to finalize scope, budget, and contract for the groundwater
244 recharge feasibility study for approval by the Finance Committee.

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