## Meeting Attendees

**Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**
- **State of Wyoming**
  - Mike Besson – Member
  - Greg Lanning – Alternate
  - Lee Arrington – Alternate

**State of Colorado**
- Suzanne Sellers – Member

**State of Nebraska**
- Brandi Flyr – Alternate

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**
- Tom Econopouly – Member

**Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**
- Brock Merrill – Alternate

**Downstream Water Users**
- Cory Steinke – Member (WAC Chair)
  - Duane Woodward – Member
  - Jeff Shafer – Member
  - Landon Shaw – Member
  - Mike Drain – Alternate
  - Tyler Thulin
  - Nolan Little

**Upstream Water Users**
- Dennis Strauch – Member

**Colorado Water Users**
- Jon Altenhofen – Member

**Environmental Groups**
- Greg Wingfield – Member
Welcome and Administrative: Cory Steinke, WAC Chair

Introductions were made. There were no agenda modifications. Steinke reviewed the May 2013 WAC Minutes, noting all modifications were minor. Woodward made a motion to approve the modified May 2013 WAC Minutes, which was seconded by Shafer. The May 2013 WAC Minutes were unanimously approved with modifications provided prior to the meeting.

WAP Project Updates: Jerry Kenny, ED, and Beorn Courtney, ED Office

Kenny updated the WAC on the J-2 Regulating Reservoir agreement which was recently signed by the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID), the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program). The agreement was approved by the Program Governance Committee (GC) and the CNPPID board and its effective date is July 9th, 2013.

Courtney provided an update on Water Action Plan (WAP) projects. The Phelps Groundwater Recharge project report has been accepted by the GC and the project’s score is being reviewed by the scoring sub-committee of the GC. The CNPPID has applied for a long term permit for the recharge project which is pending approval from the DNR. The CNPPID will file for a temporary permit to allow for recharge during the 2013 to 2014 recharge season. Altenhofen asked if Lake McConaughy Environmental Account (EA) water will be used for recharge in the event excess water is not available. Kenny replied that his discussions with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) indicate that use of EA water for recharge is not anticipated.

Courtney explained that groundwater recharge is also part of the Nebraska Water Leasing project with Central Platte Natural Resource District (CPNRD) and Woodward will be presenting more details on this project which also has a surface water component. Jeff Shafer will present on the NPPD water lease. Courtney also noted that there are ongoing discussions with the CNPPID regarding Net Controllable Conserved Water (NCCW).

Hydroclimatic Indices Project Update: Jerry Kenny, ED

Kenny reminded the WAC of the objective of the Hydroclimatic Indices project, which is to identify long range predictors for streamflow. The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is partnering with the Program and is in charge of project management. The CWCB procurement policy required bid submittals, resulting in one bid around $50,000 and one bid around $9,000. The low-bid firm was awarded the work and their data collection and analysis did not identify any useful long range predictors for streamflow. Kenny explained that other data analysis techniques may possibly identify meaningful results. The unused funds remain available to continue the project and would like to focus the analysis on extreme wet and extreme dry events using methods proposed by the high-bid firm. Kenny explained that future work will continue to be in partnership with the CWCB with 50% - 50% cost sharing between the two parties.
**Choke Point Update:** *Jerry Kenny, ED*

Kenny provided an overview of the choke point “Flood Risk Reduction” projects, including the Gravel Pond Outlet, the Whitehorse Creek Drainage, and the State Channel Reactivation. The goal of the projects is to reduce minor flooding impacts up to a river stage of 6.5 feet to encourage the National Weather Service (NWS) to consider increasing the flood stage designation at North Platte from 6 feet to 6.5 feet, recognizing there is no guarantee the NWS will make this change.

The North Platte Chokepoint Workgroup provided several recommendations to the WAC in a memo included in the WAC Meeting Materials.

Further investigation into the Gravel Pond Outlet project revealed the project would require active pumping rather than a gravity-fed outlet. This results in high project costs for marginal benefits, leading the Workgroup to recommend not advancing the Gravel Pond Project any further.

The Whitehorse Creek Drainage project would improve culverts and increase capacity in the Whitehorse Creek drainage along North River Road to alleviate flooding associated with higher river stage in the North Platte River. The project would cost approximately $75,000 and would only require a nationwide permit. The Workgroup recommends proceeding with this project.

The State Channel Reactivation project involves reconstructing a berm to direct flow down the State Channel and away from properties along North River Road. The initial project costs are estimated to be less than $50,000; however, the project would require an individual permit with approximately $40,000 in associated permitting costs. The high permitting costs have led the ED Office to question if additional benefits may be gained by increasing the berm elevation to maximize the project’s cost-benefit ratio. The Workgroup recommends further hydraulic analysis of the benefits associated with increasing the berm elevation. The outcome of this analysis will determine the magnitude of the permitting effort required and the ED Office will direct EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc. to proceed with project permitting.

Kenny also provided an update on the North Platte Canal By-pass project, reviewing the performance of the Keith-Lincoln, Suburban, and Platte Valley canals during the April, 2013, Short Duration Medium Flow (SDMF) release. The ED Office recommends pursuing agreements with the Suburban and Platte Valley canals as well as potential improvements along the Platte Valley canal to allow for future flow routing through the canals during flow releases.

Kenny fielded several questions regarding the chokepoint projects and indicated maintenance on the State Channel berm would potentially be assumed by the Twin Platte Natural Resource District (TPNRD) and road ditch maintenance would be the responsibility of the City of North Platte. Kenny explained these projects show good effort on the part of the Program to improve channel capacity. He explained that the next step in chokepoint capacity improvements would involve property buy-outs as dredging of the channel has high costs and several complications associated with it.
Sellers moved to accept the Workgroup recommendations and Woodward seconded the motion.

The WAC voted unanimously to approve the recommendations.

The ED Office will initiate discussions with the City of North Platte and Lincoln County representatives to initiate the Whitehorse Creek Drainage project. The ED Office will perform further hydraulic analysis for State Channel Reactivation to better direct EA on the magnitude of permitting activities. Upon completions of the hydraulic analysis, the ED Office will authorize EA to proceed with permitting. The ED Office will initiate conversations with TPNRD staff and the Platte Valley and Suburban Ditch Companies regarding system improvements and future use of their canals to wheel water from the North Platte to the South Platte to by-pass the Choke Point.

**Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring Project Update:** Scott Griebling, ED Office

Griebling gave an overview of the equipment installed on the Fox and Binfield wet meadows sites for the Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring project. River stage gages, groundwater monitoring wells, weather stations, and crest stage gages have been installed on both sites and telemetry systems for the river stage gages and monitoring wells will be installed by the end of the month. The Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring Workgroup will begin to review several aspects of the project in the upcoming months.

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

Shafer informed the WAC that the application to transfer water from relinquished acres along the Dawson County Canal to an instream flow right has been filed with the DNR. The transferred water would be made available for the Program to lease. He explained the steps involved with the transfer application, including determining historic consumptive use volume, rate, and timing, conducting a hydrological impact analysis, calculating the expected performance of the transfer, answering the question of whether the transferred water is really “new water”, and investigating if the transfer would result in additional groundwater depletions. In regards to the “new water” question, Shafer explained the Platte River is fully appropriated and a junior water user will take any the relinquished water the NPPD fails to use. The NPPD protects the water through this transfer by passing it through its headgates then returning it to the river as an instream use. Shafer also explained that the transfer would not result in additional groundwater depletions because all pumping wells should fall in to one of the following categories: pre-1997 wells, which are grandfathered by the Program, 1997-2005 wells, which are covered by the Nebraska New Depletions Plan, or post 2005 wells, which are offset according to the CPNRD rules. Additionally, any expanded acreage by irrigators would be caught during the 5-year COHYST review. The transfer would make 761 AF of water available for the Program to lease from the NPPD.

**CPRND Water Leasing:** Duane Woodward, CPNRD

Woodward presented an update on the groundwater recharge and surface water leasing projects the CPNRD is undertaking. Canal rehabilitation of the Thirty-Mile, Cozad, and Orchard-Alfalfa canals is progressing and the tracking and accounting spreadsheets are being updated to reflect canal improvements. Permits for transfers of canal natural flow water rights to instream use
should be ready to file with the DNR this fall. The CPNRD is accounting for current water uses and will base transfers on crop consumptive uses. A contract between the CPNRD and the Program is being negotiated and would allow the Program to lease up to 20,500 acre-foot (AF) annually at a price of $35 per AF. The price is set to increase at a rate of 7.5% annually to account for increases in operation and maintenance costs as well as the low initial price.

Kenny asked if the WAC is prepared to approve the approaches to surface water transfers outlined by the NPPD and the CPNRD at this point or if they would require more explanation or time. Several members of the WAC indicated they would like additional time and a summary document before they approve the approaches. The ED Office will provide materials summarizing the NPPD and CPNRD surface water transfer approaches to the WAC.

**2014 Water Plan Budget and Planning: Jerry Kenny, ED, and Beorn Courtney, ED Office**

Courtney presented a brief history of Water Action Plan (WAP) scores, noting that project scores have changed over time and will continue to evolve. She compared the 2013 Water Plan (WP) budget with a proposed 2014 WP budget. Kenny and Courtney explained each item in the 2014 WP budget and discussed the assumptions behind them. Overall, the current draft 2014 WP budget is approximately $93 million and would produce projects that would yield a score of over 65,000 AF.

Kenny explained that an offer letter for Net Controllable Conserved Water (NCCW) has been given to the Program from the CNPPID and requires a long lease period and upfront payment. The details of the NCCW offer are still being discussed with the CNPPID.

The Tamarack 3 project’s current yield is assumed to be 10,000 AF. Altenhofen explained that this score is based on historical flows and that recent hydrology has provided an average of only 60% of the historical excess flows. He stated it is unlikely that the Tamarack 3 project would produce water for the Program in the first increment. Several members of the WAC agreed that all WAC projects are scored using historical hydrology, so Tamarack 3’s yield is valid on that basis and the Program should pursue a lease for Tamarack 3 water.

Sellers requested that it becomes standard practice for the ED Office to post any presentations given at a WAC meeting on the Program website. **Kenny indicated that presentations will be loaded on the WAC website after the meeting.**

**Additional Business: Cory Steinke, CNPPID**

The next WAC meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2013, from 9:30 am – 3 pm (Mountain Time) at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center.

**Action Items**

**General WAC**

- Review the draft 2014 budget and provide feedback to the ED Office.
Review materials on the NPPD and CPRND water transfers and provide feedback to the ED Office.

ED Office

- Initiate discussions with the City of North Platte and Lincoln County representatives to initiate the Whitehorse Creek Drainage project.
- Perform further hydraulic analysis for State Channel Reactivation to better direct EA on the magnitude of permitting activities.
- Authorize EA to proceed with permitting upon completions of the hydraulic analysis.
- Initiate conversations with TPNRD staff and the Platte Valley and Suburban Ditch Companies regarding system improvements and future use of their canals to wheel water from the North Platte to the South Platte to by-pass the Choke Point.
- Provide the WAC with materials summarizing the NPPD and CPNRD surface water transfer approaches.
- Load presentations from this WAC meeting to the WAC website.