



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Lake McConaughy Visitors Center – Ogallala, NE
August 13, 2013

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 Flyn – 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

Executive Director’s Office (ED Office)

Jerry Kenny, Executive Director (ED)
Beorn Courtney
Scott Griebing
Janice Rainwater



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

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

53
54 **WAP Project Updates:** *Jerry Kenny, ED, and Beorn Courtney, ED Office*

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

60
61 Courtney provided an update on Water Action Plan (WAP) projects. The Phelps Groundwater
62 Recharge project report has been accepted by the GC and the project's score is being reviewed
63 by the scoring sub-committee of the GC. The CNPPID has applied for a long term permit for the
64 recharge project which is pending approval from the DNR. The CNPPID will file for a
65 temporary permit to allow for recharge during the 2013 to 2014 recharge season. Altenhofen
66 asked if Lake McConaughy Environmental Account (EA) water will be used for recharge in the
67 event excess water is not available. Kenny replied that his discussions with the United States
68 Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) indicate that use of EA water for recharge is not anticipated.

69
70 Courtney explained that groundwater recharge is also part of the Nebraska Water Leasing project
71 with Central Platte Natural Resource District (CPNRD) and Woodward will be presenting more
72 details on this project which also has a surface water component. Jeff Shafer will present on the
73 NPPD water lease. Courtney also noted that there are ongoing discussions with the CNPPID
74 regarding Net Controllable Conserved Water (NCCW).

75
76 **Hydroclimatic Indices Project Update:** *Jerry Kenny, ED*

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

88
89
90



91 **Choke Point Update:** *Jerry Kenny, ED*

92 Kenny provided an overview of the choke point “Flood Risk Reduction” projects, including the
93 Gravel Pond Outlet, the Whitehorse Creek Drainage, and the State Channel Reactivation. The
94 goal of the projects is reduce minor flooding impacts up to a river stage of 6.5 feet to encourage
95 the National Weather Service (NWS) to consider increasing the flood stage designation at North
96 Platte from 6 feet to 6.5 feet, recognizing there is no guarantee the NWS will make this change.
97 The North Platte Chokepoint Workgroup provided several recommendations to the WAC in a
98 memo included in the WAC Meeting Materials.
99

100 Further investigation into the Gravel Pond Outlet project revealed the project would require
101 active pumping rather than a gravity-fed outlet. This results in high project costs for marginal
102 benefits, leading the Workgroup to recommend not advancing the Gravel Pond Project any
103 further.
104

105 The Whitehorse Creek Drainage project would improve culverts and increase capacity in the
106 Whitehorse Creek drainage along North River Road to alleviate flooding associated with higher
107 river stage in the North Platte River. The project would cost approximately \$75,000 and would
108 only require a nationwide permit. The Workgroup recommends proceeding with this project.
109

110 The State Channel Reactivation project involves reconstructing a berm to direct flow down the
111 State Channel and away from properties along North River Road. The initial project costs are
112 estimated to be less than \$50,000; however, the project would require an individual permit with
113 approximately \$40,000 in associated permitting costs. The high permitting costs have led the ED
114 Office to question if additional benefits may be gained by increasing the berm elevation to
115 maximize the project’s cost-benefit ratio. The Workgroup recommends further hydraulic
116 analysis of the benefits associated with increasing the berm elevation. The outcome of this
117 analysis will determine the magnitude of the permitting effort required and the ED Office will
118 direct EA Engineering, Science, and Technology, Inc. to proceed with project permitting.
119

120 Kenny also provided an update on the North Platte Canal By-pass project, reviewing the
121 performance of the Keith-Lincoln, Suburban, and Platte Valley canals during the April, 2013,
122 Short Duration Medium Flow (SDMF) release. The ED Office recommends pursuing
123 agreements with the Suburban and Platte Valley canals as well as potential improvements along
124 the Platte Valley canal to allow for future flow routing through the canals during flow releases.
125

126 Kenny fielded several questions regarding the chokepoint projects and indicated maintenance on
127 the State Channel berm would potentially be assumed by the Twin Platte Natural Resource
128 District (TPNRD) and road ditch maintenance would be the responsibility of the City of North
129 Platte. Kenny explained these projects show good effort on the part of the Program to improve
130 channel capacity. He explained that the next step in chokepoint capacity improvements would
131 involve property buy-outs as dredging of the channel has high costs and several complications
132 associated with it.
133



134 Sellers moved to accept the Workgroup recommendations and Woodward seconded the motion.
135 **The WAC voted unanimously to approve the recommendations.**

136 **The ED Office will initiate discussions with the City of North Platte and Lincoln County**
137 **representatives to initiate the Whitehorse Creek Drainage project. The ED Office will**
138 **perform further hydraulic analysis for State Channel Reactivation to better direct EA on**
139 **the magnitude of permitting activities. Upon completions of the hydraulic analysis, the ED**
140 **Office will authorize EA to proceed with permitting. The ED Office will initiate**
141 **conversations with TPNRD staff and the Platte Valley and Suburban Ditch Companies**
142 **regarding system improvements and future use of their canals to wheel water from the**
143 **North Platte to the South Platte to by-pass the Choke Point.**
144

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

146 Griebing gave an overview of the equipment installed on the Fox and Binfield wet meadows
147 sites for the Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring project. River stage gages, groundwater
148 monitoring wells, weather stations, and crest stage gages have been installed on both sites and
149 telemetry systems for the river stage gages and monitoring wells will be installed by the end of
150 the month. The Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring Workgroup will begin to review several
151 aspects of the project in the upcoming months.
152

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

154 Shafer informed the WAC that the application to transfer water from relinquished acres along the
155 Dawson County Canal to an instream flow right has been filed with the DNR. The transferred
156 water would be made available for the Program to lease. He explained the steps involved with
157 the transfer application, including determining historic consumptive use volume, rate, and
158 timing, conducting a hydrological impact analysis, calculating the expected performance of the
159 transfer, answering the question of whether the transferred water is really “new water”, and
160 investigating if the transfer would result in additional groundwater depletions. In regards to the
161 “new water” question, Shafer explained the Platte River is fully appropriated and a junior water
162 user will take any the relinquished water the NPPD fails to use. The NPPD protects the water
163 through this transfer by passing it through its headgates then returning it to the river as an
164 instream use. Shafer also explained that the transfer would not result in additional groundwater
165 depletions because all pumping wells should fall in to one of the following categories: pre-1997
166 wells, which are grandfathered by the Program, 1997-2005 wells, which are covered by the
167 Nebraska New Depletions Plan, or post 2005 wells, which are offset according to the CPNRD
168 rules. Additionally, any expanded acreage by irrigators would be caught during the 5-year
169 COHYST review. The transfer would make 761 AF of water available for the Program to lease
170 from the NPPD.
171

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

173 Woodward presented an update on the groundwater recharge and surface water leasing projects
174 the CPNRD is undertaking. Canal rehabilitation of the Thirty-Mile, Cozad, and Orchard-Alfalfa
175 canals is progressing and the tracking and accounting spreadsheets are being updated to reflect
176 canal improvements. Permits for transfers of canal natural flow water rights to instream use



177 should be ready to file with the DNR this fall. The CPNRD is accounting for current water uses
178 and will base transfers on crop consumptive uses. A contract between the CPNRD and the
179 Program is being negotiated and would allow the Program to lease up to 20,500 acre-foot (AF)
180 annually at a price of \$35 per AF. The price is set to increase at a rate of 7.5% annually to
181 account for increases in operation and maintenance costs as well as the low initial price.
182

183 Kenny asked if the WAC is prepared to approve the approaches to surface water transfers
184 outlined by the NPPD and the CPNRD at this point or if they would require more explanation or
185 time. Several members of the WAC indicated they would like additional time and a summary
186 document before they approve the approaches. **The ED Office will provide materials**
187 **summarizing the NPPD and CPNRD surface water transfer approaches to the WAC.**
188

189 **2014 Water Plan Budget and Planning:** *Jerry Kenny, ED, and Beorn Courtney, ED Office*
190 Courtney presented a brief history of Water Action Plan (WAP) scores, noting that project scores
191 have changed over time and will continue to evolve. She compared the 2013 Water Plan (WP)
192 budget with a proposed 2014 WP budget. Kenny and Courtney explained each item in the 2014
193 WP budget and discussed the assumptions behind them. Overall, the current draft 2014 WP
194 budget is approximately \$93 million and would produce projects that would yield a score of over
195 65,000 AF.
196

197 Kenny explained that an offer letter for Net Controllable Conserved Water (NCCW) has been
198 given to the Program from the CNPPID and requires a long lease period and upfront payment.
199 The details of the NCCW offer are still being discussed with the CNPPID.
200

201 The Tamarack 3 project's current yield is assumed to be 10,000 AF. Altenhofen explained that
202 this score is based on historical flows and that recent hydrology has provided an average of only
203 60% of the historical excess flows. He stated it is unlikely that the Tamarack 3 project would
204 produce water for the Program in the first increment. Several members of the WAC agreed that
205 all WAC projects are scored using historical hydrology, so Tamarack 3's yield is valid on that
206 basis and the Program should pursue a lease for Tamarack 3 water.
207

208 Sellers requested that it becomes standard practice for the ED Office to post any presentations
209 given at a WAC meeting on the Program website. **Kenny indicated that presentations will be**
210 **loaded on the WAC website after the meeting.**
211

212 **Additional Business:** *Cory Steinke, CNPPID*

213 **The next WAC meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2013, from 9:30 am – 3 pm (Mountain**
214 **Time) at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center.**
215

216 **Action Items**

217 **General WAC**

- 218 • Review the draft 2014 budget and provide feedback to the ED Office.



- 219 • Review materials on the NPPD and CPRND water transfers and provide feedback to the
220 ED Office.

221 ED Office

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