



1 **PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**
2 **Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**
3 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – Lake McConaughy Visitors Center
4 October 21, 2014

7 **Meeting Attendees**

9 **Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**

10 **State of Colorado**

11 Suzanne Sellers – Member

13 **State of Wyoming**

14 Bryan Clerkin – Member

15 Lee Arrington – Alternate

16 Philip Stuckert – Alternate

18 **State of Nebraska**

19 Jesse Bradley – Member

21 **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

22 Tom Econopouly – Member

24 **Downstream Water Users**

25 Mike Drain – Alternate

26 Cory Steinke – WAC Chair

27 Duane Woodward – Member

28 Jeff Shafer – Member

29 Landon Shaw

30 Nolan Little

31 Tyler Thulin

33 **Colorado Water Users**

34 Jon Altenhofen – Member

36 **Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**

37 Brock Merrill – Alternate

39 **Environmental Groups**

40 Duane Hovorka – Member

41 Jacob Fritton

9 **Executive Director’s Office (ED Office)**

Jerry Kenny, ED

Scott Griebing

Sira Sartori

13 **Contractors**

Matt McConville, HDR

18 **Other**

Doug Hallum (UNL, Conservation & Survey)



47 **Welcome and Administrative:** *Cory Steinke, CNPPID*

48 Introductions were made. There were no agenda modifications. Steinke reviewed the August
49 2014 WAC Minutes. Woodward made a motion to approve the modified August 2014 WAC
50 Minutes, which was seconded by Shafer. **The August minutes were unanimously approved.**

51

52 **WAP Project Updates**

53 ***J-2 Regulating Reservoir: Cory Steinke, CNPPID***

54 Steinke provided an update on the status of the J2 regulating reservoir project. Initial offers have
55 been made to land owners, public hearings are scheduled in November, and negotiations will
56 begin in early December. Geotechnical and environmental studies are underway and will
57 inform the permitting process and engineering design.

58

59 ***Phelps Groundwater Recharge: Cory Steinke, CNPPID***

60 Steinke informed the WAC that long term agreements for the groundwater recharge on the
61 Phelps canal have not moved forward as the permanent water right for the project has not been
62 awarded. The Phelps canal is ready to recharge excess water in this current season under the
63 temporary agreements used in previous years, but no water has been recharged at this point.

64

65 ***Phelps Groundwater Recharge Pumping: Sira Sartori, ED Office***

66 Sartori presented an overview of the project which involves installing wells between the Phelps
67 canal and the Platte River to pump water recharged into the canal in order to increase the score
68 efficiency. The Program is considering installing wells in two locations in 2015, one on the
69 Cook property and another further to the east on private land. The two wells would likely pump
70 at a rate of 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm) and provide a score increase of approximately 500
71 acre feet (AF) for the Phelps groundwater recharge project, based on preliminary estimates. The
72 Program is discussing well installation with private land owners and has not yet developed the
73 final cost or design details.

74

75 ***Elwood Reservoir Seepage: Sira Sartori, ED Office***

76 Sartori provided a brief overview of the project which seeks to recharge water in Elwood
77 Reservoir. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is also looking at using
78 Elwood Reservoir as a recharge location and the Program intends to coordinate its efforts with
79 the DNR. The Program has included money in the 2015 budget for recharging water in Elwood
80 Reservoir. Steinke informed the WAC that the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation
81 District (CNPPID) plans to use Elwood Reservoir for irrigation deliveries in 2015 which may
82 limit the space available in the reservoir for recharge water. He also identified the need for
83 proper accounting if water is recharged in Elwood when irrigation water is also present in the
84 reservoir The CNPPID intends to begin filling Elwood Reservoir in April of 2015.

85

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

87 Woodward presented an update on the lease agreement between the Program and the Central
88 Plate Natural Resources District (CPNRD) for surface water and recharged groundwater.
89 Construction and rehabilitation of three canal systems used by the CPRND for surface water



90 leasing and groundwater recharge has been completed, although high flows in June of this year
91 resulted in minor damages to some of the canal return structures. Woodward presented the
92 tracking and accounting spreadsheets used to determine what excesses are available for
93 diversion. Flow conditions in September allowed for diversions of excesses into the Cozad
94 canal. Woodward indicated that 9,890 acres of surface water irrigated lands have signed up for
95 the lease program and the surface water portion of the lease agreement has the potential to
96 provide 7,000 AF to the Program.

97
98 Woodward explained that there was uncertainty regarding the availability of excess flows during
99 the first part of October. The October hydrologic condition designation is typically not available
100 until the 15th of the month and dictates the target flows for the month. There was discussion
101 about the methodology used to determine excess flows and potential ways to provide earlier
102 hydrologic condition designations. **The ED Office will review the methodologies used to
103 determine excess flows and alternative hydrologic condition designation approaches and
104 provide suggestions at the next WAC meeting.**

105
106 ***CNPPID Water Leasing: Jerry Kenny, ED***

107 Kenny presented the two lease concepts being discussed with the CNPPID and explained that
108 one involves transferring storage water in McConaughy from the CNPPID's account into the
109 environmental account (EA) and the other involves developing lease agreements directly with
110 irrigators in the CNPPID system. The CNPPID would act as the broker between the Program
111 and the CNPPID for the second leasing concept. Further discussions between the Program and
112 the CNPPID are expected to occur in the coming months. The question of how to deal with
113 depletions associated with increased groundwater use resulting in surface water leased by the
114 Program has not been addressed at this time.

115
116 ***NPNRD Water Leasing: Jerry Kenny, ED***

117 Kenny summarized a potential water lease in the North Platte Natural Resources District
118 (NPNRD) on a Ducks Unlimited (DU) property. The project is in preliminary investigations and
119 involves changing the groundwater pumping scheme to increase river flows.

120
121 ***Republican Basin Supreme Court Case: Jessy Bradley, DNR***

122 Bradley described the Supreme Court Case and explained there is not a significant impact of the
123 Republican River Basin Supreme Court case on the Platte River or the Program. If the case isn't
124 resolved it may impact accounting procedures for projects that impact the Republican basin, such
125 as the Elwood Reservoir seepage project.

126
127 **Surface & Groundwater Interaction in the South Platte Basin: Doug Hallum, University of
128 Nebraska-Lincoln**

129 Hallum presented initial results of a groundwater and surface water monitoring project along the
130 lower portion of the South Platte River in Nebraska. The project seeks to better identify which
131 reaches of the river are gaining or losing on both a temporal and spatial basis. The monitoring
132 effort used existing river gages at Julesburg, Roscoe, and North Platte, and added surface water



133 stage gages near Big Springs, Brule, Ogallala, Roscoe, Paxton, and Hershey. Existing shallow
134 and deep groundwater wells were equipped with data loggers near the river stage gages.
135

Permitting Processes for Changes in Surface Water, Groundwater & Comingled Lands:

137 *Jesse Bradley, NDNR*

138 Bradley provided an overview of the permitting process and depletion mitigation associated with
139 a variety of transfer scenarios between surface water, groundwater, and comingled irrigated
140 lands. Permitting does not capture all potential sources of new depletions and the DNR uses a
141 “Robust Review” process to account for all new depletions in conjunction with the integrated
142 management plan (IMP) process. Robust Reviews are intended to occur every five years and
143 consider irrigated acres, consumptive use, operational changes, Natural Resources District
144 (NRD) actions, and other factors to determine current depletions and compare them to 1997
145 depletions. The COHYST or Western Water Use (WWU) models are used in the Robust review.
146 Increases in depletions above the 1997 level require mitigation by either the DNR or the NRDs.
147

148 Bradley fielded several questions relating to depletions associated with Program leases. He
149 indicated that new mitigations will be the NRD’s responsibility and the DNR can only protect
150 transferred surface water reflecting the net effect of the transfer after depletions have been taken
151 into account. Bradley suggested that depletions mitigation be included in Program lease
152 agreements unless an alternative approach could be approved by the US Fish and Wildlife
153 Service (FWS). Econopouly indicated the FWS would not be likely to overlook monthly
154 depletions in light of an annual benefit. Kenny indicated the Program will work with the
155 Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) and the CPNRD on a depletions analysis on the NPPD
156 lease.
157

2015 Draft Water Plan Budget: *Jerry Kenny, ED, Sira Sartori, ED Office, and Scott Griebing, ED Office*

160 Kenny, Sartori, and Griebing presented the 2015 draft water plan work plan and budget.
161 Expected activities, budget details, and various assumptions were presented for each budget line
162 item. Comments and input were invited, and the process for budget approval moving forward
163 was explained.
164

Additional Business: *Cory Steinke, ED*

166 The 2015 meeting schedule was presented and no objections to the proposed dates were raised.
167 The 2015 schedule is posted on the WAC website. **The next WAC meeting is scheduled for
168 February 3, 2015, at 9:30 am (Mountain Time) at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center.**
169

Action Items

ED Office

- 172 • The ED Office will review the methodologies used to determine excess flows and
173 alternative hydrologic condition designation approaches and provide suggestions at the
174 next WAC meeting.