



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Conference Call
August 8, 2017

Meeting Attendees

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

State of Colorado

Suzanne Sellers – Member

State of Wyoming

Bryan Clerkin – Member

State of Nebraska

Jessie Strom – Member

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Tom Econopouly - Member

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

Brock Merrill – Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Cory Steinke – Chair

Jeff Shafer – Member

Duane Woodward – Member

Brandi Flyr

Tyler Thulin

Nolan Little

Colorado Water Users

Jon Altenhofen – Member

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch - Member

Elizabeth Miller

Tracy Zayac

Environmental Groups

Jacob Fritton – Member

Rich Walters

Executive Director’s Office (ED Office)

Jerry Kenny, ED

Darren Beck

Courtney Black

Scott Griebing

Bruce Sackett

Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

Contractors

Matt McConville - HDR



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

50 Introductions were made. There were no revisions to the April 2017 WAC meeting minutes.
51 Shafer made a motion to approve the April WAC minutes, with a second by Woodward and
52 unanimous approval by the committee.
53

54 **WAP Projects and Other Brief Water Updates**

55 ***Cottonwood Ranch Broad-Scale Recharge: Kevin Werbylo, EDO***

56 Werbylo reported that the contractor (HDR) is working through preliminary design. Related
57 fieldwork is complete and HDR is expected to finish the geotechnical analysis in about one
58 week. HDR will present preliminary design concepts (roughly 30-40% design) and the
59 recommended path forward to EDO by the end of August, and then to the GC in September. In
60 advance of the GC meeting, there will be a meeting with NPPD and the USFWS to address
61 land/habitat issues related to the CWR complex.
62

63 The EDO is working with CNPPID to get a Water Service Agreement (WSA) for a pipeline to
64 deliver water from Phelps County Canal to Cottonwood Ranch. Kenny reported that there were
65 discussions at the June GC meeting regarding a path forward on water deliveries, via the pipeline
66 or a well field; the GC had concerns about the terms of the proposed WSA for the pipeline.
67 After further discussions with CNPPID, a revised WSA is being worked out that addresses the
68 concerns of the GC and should be ready to present to the GC again at the September meeting.
69

70 Terms of the revised WSA, which would run through 2038, are as follows: the Program will pay
71 for design and construction of the pipeline up front. Water delivered would be at a cost of
72 \$25/AF, with a 2% annual increase. Water costs will be tracked from the beginning of pipeline
73 operations, but the Program will pay no fees until CNPPID effectively buys back the pipeline,
74 after which CNPPID will continue to own and operate the pipeline. The Program will then begin
75 paying for delivered water at the price of \$25 plus the 2% annual increase over however many
76 years elapse until the buyback is complete.
77

78 The economics of the pipeline and WSA are favorable relative to that of a well field. The
79 pipeline also offers the advantage of being able to deliver water to Cottonwood Ranch as well as
80 to the slurry wall project downstream.
81

82 ***Initial Slurry Wall Project Update and Slurry Wall Sub-Committee Report: Kevin Werbylo,***
83 ***EDO and Jeff Shafer, NPPD***

84 Werbylo reported that the GC gave direction to the EDO to move forward with full-scale slurry
85 wall project at the March 2017 meeting. In response, the EDO developed an RFP for
86 engineering design and construction administration services for Tract W1606 (Follmer pit), a 60-
87 acre existing gravel pit in the Elm Creek area. Elements of the RFP include design of the slurry
88 wall, infrastructure necessary to deliver water via the Peterson Ditch and a nearby well field, and
89 the infrastructure necessary to deliver water from the pit back to the river. The consultant will
90 oversee a full site and bathymetric survey.
91



92 The RFP was released on July 17. A mandatory pre-proposal meeting was held on August 1.
93 Around 12 firms were present at the pre-proposal meeting, some paired in teams. Proposals are
94 due on August 16. The EDO is anticipating submittal of 2-5 proposals, which will be reviewed
95 by a 7-member selection panel. Interviews of short-listed applicants will be held in Kearney on
96 September 11, and the results will be reported at the September 12-13 GC meeting.
97

98 In June, the EDO completed a preliminary bathymetric survey of the project site, which covered
99 about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the pit, since it is still being actively mined. They surveyed area was about 25 ft at
100 the deepest, with an estimated storage capacity of about 600 to 700 AF. Once mining is
101 complete and above-grade storage capacity is added, it is anticipated that the site will have a total
102 storage capacity in the range of 1,200-1,500 AF.
103

104 The Slurry Wall Sub-Committee was notified of recent project activities in an email from the
105 EDO but did not meet prior to the August WAC meeting.
106

107 ***Alliance Canal acquire & retire update: Seth Turner, EDO***

108 Turner reported that the EDO began working with the NPNRD in March 2017 to have a data
109 logger installed in the district's monitoring well 23-H, located on the adjacent property to the
110 west (upgradient) of the Program's Osborne property. Water depths are recorded hourly, and
111 NPNRD provided downloaded data to the EDO in April and July.
112

113 In mid-May, the EDO signed a contract with Chuck Henkel, a local farmer and NPNRD board
114 member, for monitoring and management of the Osborne property, including overseeing
115 irrigation, weed spraying, and mending fences. Mr. Henkel installed locks on the gates at the
116 property.
117

118 The EDO also continued coordinating as needed with the Alliance Canal ditch rider, Breanne
119 Hopkins. Spring irrigation deliveries began on May 20 and officially continued for 3 days, but
120 some water may have been delivered longer.
121

122 Griebing and Turner from the EDO made a visit to the site to observe conditions following the
123 spring irrigation, and completed installation of staff gages in the ditch to measure flow depth.
124 Fall irrigation is anticipated sometime in September.
125

126 In response to Altenhofen questions, Turner said the irrigated acreage was something less than
127 27 acres. The project objective is to establish a pattern of historical use and a site-specific data
128 record on which to base a consumptive use analysis, given the lack of historical data beyond
129 diversions for the entire ditch. Sellers asked about historical cropping and whether the EDO had
130 considered other data sources. Turner said that the property has most likely always been grass
131 pasture and that the EDO acquired aerial photography and several Western Water Use Model-
132 related datasets from Adaptive Resources, but that the data were generally for parcels larger than
133 the specific Program property.
134



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

136 Woodward reported that excess flows were diverted for recharge at the Thirty Mile and Cozad
137 canals in the spring (early April and May 11-19, before EA releases began). Recharge totals
138 were 1,200 AF at Thirty Mile and 300 AF at Cozad. Griebing asked how much recharge
139 volume was precluded by the EA releases. Woodward said there were about 6 days in March
140 during which there was potential to double recharge volumes if not for the EA releases. In May,
141 there likely would have been no difference.

142
143 Many of the participating lessors have agreements for only 1 or 2 years. CPNRD has been
144 working on filing for updated transfer rights associated with renewal of these short-term
145 agreements. Participation in the CPNRD surface water leases is as follows:

- 146
- 147 • Thirty Mile Canal: 10,170 acres participating; 6 new transfers filed for about 1,800
 - 148 acres.
 - 149 • Cozad Canal: 13,000 acres participating; 5 new transfers filed for 4,500 acres.
 - 150 • Orchard-Alfalfa Canal: 3,000 acres participating; 3 new transfers for 575 acres.

151
152 CPRND is awaiting Nebraska DNR approval of the new transfer filings.

153
154 Brandi Flyr will be replacing Duane Woodward as CPNRD’s representative on the WAC,
155 following Duane’s retirement at the end of August 2017.

156
157 ***NPPD Water Leasing: Jeff Shafer, NPPD***

158 Shafer reported that NPPD is still waiting for Nebraska DNR to review surface water transfer
159 permit applications for the Dawson County Canal. There was some spring recharge of excess
160 flows diverted through the Dawson County Canal, but the exact volume of AF was unknown.
161 NPPD did not recharge through the Gothenburg Canal, as they were running water to the B-1
162 Reservoir.

163
164 ***CNPPID Water Leasing: Jerry Kenny, ED***

165 Kenny reported that the Program has collaborated with CNPPID for two years on an irrigator
166 water lease pilot program. CNPPID serves as the broker and sets up one-year leases with their
167 irrigators. Participants sign up in the fall, and then must forego irrigation of the designated
168 parcels during the following growing season; the land can be dryland farmed, but not irrigated.
169 At the end of that growing season, leased water stored in Lake McConaughy is “moved” to the
170 Environmental Account (EA), e.g., leased water signed up in the fall of 2016 will be added to the
171 EA at the end of the 2017 growing season. The pilot program has a 2,000-acre cap, and
172 generally involves pivot corners and other odd-shaped parcels. Participation increased slightly
173 from year 1 to year 2 (1,037 acres to 1,275 acres). Terms of the program are that the Program
174 pays \$220/acre (plus a \$10,000 administrative fee to CNPPID) and receives 9” of water during a
175 full-allocation year. This is expensive water, but has storage and a high efficiency in terms of
176 reducing shortages to target flows.

177



178 There is now an opportunity to renew the pilot program for a third year. Kenny sees it as
179 worthwhile and important to do this for another year as part of efforts to get irrigators in
180 Nebraska comfortable with water leasing as a means of generating cash. The option for a third
181 year will be discussed with the GC in September.

182
183 There was discussion that the pilot program is only operable during full-allocation years in which
184 all irrigators are fully-satisfied and the Program can step in as the only market for water leasing.
185 When there is not full allocation, CNPPID irrigators can trade water amongst themselves. There
186 was discussion of whether such water leasing by the Program could occur during non-full-
187 allocation years. Econopouly expressed concerns of the USFWS. Steinke indicated that the
188 CNPPID Board would most likely prefer to stick with full-allocation years and not interfere with
189 internal water trading between irrigators. Flyr asked how long the water can stay in storage.
190 Kenny said once it is in the EA, it can be carried over from year to year.

191
192 ***Pathfinder Municipal Account Lease: Jerry Kenny, ED***

193 Kenny described the Program's agreement with the Wyoming Water Development Commission
194 (WWDC) for leasing of surplus water from the Pathfinder Municipal Account. In 2011, the
195 Program made a lump sum payment for 38,400 AF at \$51/AF, which was based on an annual
196 delivery of 4,800 AF for the remaining eight years of the First Increment (2012-2019). In some
197 years, additional water was available, and 9,600 AF was delivered. As a result, the last pre-paid
198 4,800 AF was scheduled for delivery in 2017, but 9,600 AF was available. The Program and
199 WWDC implemented a clause in the leasing contract to get the additional 4,800 AF of water at
200 \$65/AF. This clause will remain in effect through the end of the First Increment (years 2018 and
201 2019) rather than trying to figure out a new lump sum payment in advance. The Pathfinder
202 Municipal Account Lease will be re-negotiated for deliveries beyond 2019.

203
204 ***Lake McConaughy EA Releases: Tom Econopouly, USFWS***

205 Econopouly reported on releases from the Lake McConaughy EA. USFWS made 3 releases in
206 2017. This year had the largest annual release since the start of the Program, a total of about
207 140,000 AF (next largest was just over 78,000 AF in 2012).

- 208
- 209 • Summer release (July 10-August 8)
 - 210 ○ Initial target flow of 1,200 cfs, then dropped to 800 cfs.
 - 211 ○ Releases made at 250 cfs, total volume about 13,400 AF, roughly 50 percent
 - 212 reached Grand Island.
 - 213 • Late spring pulse (May 13-June 12)
 - 214 ○ Target flows 3,000 cfs or greater.
 - 215 ○ Approximately 49,000 AF released; 40,000 AF reached Grand Island
 - 216 • Late winter pulse (February 13-March 17)
 - 217 ○ Target flow 3,350 cfs
 - 218 ○ Total of 76,000 AF released, of which 69,000 AF reached Grand Island
 - 219



220 After summer release, EA volume is about 40,000 AF. With Pathfinder deliveries, the EA is
221 expected to increase to 70,000 AF in October, then nearly 110,000 AF in May 2018, following
222 non-irrigation season inflows. No further releases are planned until 2018. Merrill asked if the
223 USFWS made the request to Wyoming for water to be moved from Pathfinder to McConaughy;
224 Kenny and Econopouly agreed that the request was made.
225

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

227 The next WAC meeting was rescheduled for Tuesday, October 24 at the Lake McConaughy
228 Visitors Center.
229

230 **Action Items**

231

232 **General WAC**

- 233 • n/a

234

235 **ED Office**

- 236 • n/a