



1 **PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**
2 **Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**
3 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission – Lake McConaughy Visitors Center
4 October 24, 2017

7 **Meeting Attendees**

9 **Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**

10 **State of Colorado**

11 Suzanne Sellers – Member

13 **State of Wyoming**

14 Bryan Clerkin – Member

16 **State of Nebraska**

17 Jessie Strom – Member (on phone)

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

20 Jeff Runge – Alternate (on phone)

22 **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**

23 Brock Merrill – Alternate

25 **Downstream Water Users**

26 Cory Steinke – Chair

27 Jeff Shafer – Member

28 Brandi Flyr - Member

29 Kent Miller - Member

30 Tyler Thulin

31 Nolan Little

32 Tracy Zayac

34 **Colorado Water Users**

35 Jon Altenhofen – Member

37 **Upper Platte Water Users**

39 **Environmental Groups**

40 Jacob Fritton – Member

41 Bill Taddicken - Member

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

Scott Griebing

Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

Courtney Black

Bill Hahn (Special Advisor)

16 **Contractors**

Matt McConville – HDR (on phone)

Jim Schneider, Olsson Associates



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

45 Introductions were made. There were no modifications to the August 2017 WAC minutes;
46 motion to approve was made by Shafer, seconded by Merrill, unanimously approved.
47

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

49 ***Slurry Wall Gravel Pits: Kevin Werbylo, EDO***

50 Werbylo gave an update on the progress of the initial slurry wall gravel pit project, to be
51 developed on the Program's Tract W1606 (Follmer pit) near the Elm Creek interchange. A
52 project team led by JEO Consulting Group was selected in September for engineering design and
53 construction administration. The project is currently in the contracting phase, and a kickoff
54 meeting was held on October 16. Project scope is being finalized with the consultant and will
55 hopefully be ready for submittal to the GC in the next week. The contract amount is expected to
56 be around \$730,000; relatively close to the cost included in the project proposal (which was just
57 under \$700,000), the revised estimate includes some added geotech work, clarifications
58 regarding construction admin costs, and other small changes.
59

60 ***CPNRD Water Leasing: Brandi Flyr, CPNRD***

61 Flyr gave an update on the Program's surface water leasing and groundwater recharge project
62 with CPNRD. The project includes direct transfers of surface water from the Cozad, Thirty Mile,
63 and Orchard-Alfalfa canals. The total volume of transferred surface water was about 13,700
64 acre-feet for the 2017 irrigation season. Excess flow diversions were made in the spring at Cozad
65 and Thirty Mile. Thirty Mile is also diverting excess flows for recharge this fall, and Orchard-
66 Alfalfa may divert excesses as well. Diversion volumes for recharge are not yet final.
67

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

69 Shafer reported that NPPD is still waiting for Nebraska DNR to approve the surface water
70 transfer from Dawson County Canal. There was a minimal volume of excess flow diversions
71 into Dawson County Canal for recharge after the irrigation season. There were no diversions into
72 the Gothenburg Canal for recharge.
73

74 ***CNPPID Water Leasing (Phelps, Elwood, Irrigators): Cory Steinke, CNPPID***

75 Steinke reported that the Phelps County Canal diverted excess flows for recharge after the
76 irrigation season, until the second week of October. A gate at the upper end of E65 Canal was
77 replaced along with some other maintenance, but the system is expected to be ready for Elwood
78 Reservoir recharge in November when target flows drop. The CNPPID Board approved an
79 agreement for the irrigator lease pilot program again in 2018, allowing the Program to purchase 9
80 inches per acre for up to 2,000 acres, with payment going directly to the irrigators.
81

82 ***Project Site Screening and Project Scoring: Seth Turner, EDO***

83 Turner reported that the EDO is doing site screening analyses to identify new properties for
84 additional (broad-scale) recharge and slurry wall gravel pit projects. Lands under the three
85 CPNRD canals (Cozad, Thirty Mile, Orchard-Alfalfa) are being focused on to potentially better



86 utilize leased surface water. A screening memo is in progress, and will be discussed with
87 CPNRD soon.

88
89 The EDO is starting to make progress on project scoring again, having resumed scoring analyses
90 of the CPNRD leasing and initiated scoring analyses for the Elwood Reservoir recharge project.
91 For CPNRD scoring, the EDO hopes to have documentation ready for review by the Scoring
92 Subcommittee in January 2018, followed by presentation to the WAC in February and the GC in
93 March. Elwood recharge scoring is projected to be on the same timeline, but may require an
94 additional conference call with the Scoring Subcommittee in early December 2017 to discuss
95 methods.

96

97 **FY2018 Draft Water Plan Budget:** *Seth Turner & Kevin Werbylo, EDO*

98 Turner and Werbylo walked the committee through each of the line items included in the FY
99 2018 Draft Water Work Plan and Budget. Notable changes from past years include the
100 following:

101

- 102 • With the J-2 Regulating Reservoirs project officially on hold (as of November 2016), no
103 expenditures are anticipated in FY 2018 and the WP-4(a) line item was removed.
- 104 • Based on Water Service Agreements for leasing and recharge projects in 2017, all unit
105 costs (\$/acre-foot) are expected to increase by 3 percent for FY 2018. This applies to
106 several specific line items under WP-4(b) and WP-4(f).
- 107 • For past years' budgets, the volumes estimated for leasing and recharge projects were
108 based on OPSTUDY estimates. With at least a couple years of operational data for
109 these projects, volume estimates for FY 2018 were revised to better reflect actual project
110 operations. This applies to specific line items under WP-4(b) and WP-4(f).
- 111 • Line item WP-4(b)ii for Broad-Scale Recharge (BSR) Projects includes 100 percent of
112 Cottonwood Ranch construction costs (none spent in 2017), construction of a pipeline
113 from Phelps County Canal to Cottonwood Ranch, and acquisition of 560 acres of land
114 for future BSR projects.
- 115 • Line item WP-4(g) includes funding to support initiatives to develop methods for better
116 management of irrigation resources, including UNL-TAPS, the Nebraska Water Balance
117 Alliance, efforts involving The Nature Conservancy.
- 118 • Line item WP-4(i) for Slurry Wall Gravel Pits will include the full cost of engineering
119 design and construction administration for the Tract W1606 (Follmer pit) project, funds
120 to purchase a 68-acre parcel to square up the Program's Lindstrom tract and a portion
121 (25 percent) of the Tract W1606 construction costs.
- 122 • Line item WP-4(j) is new for FY 2018 and provides funding for the general maintenance
123 of land-for-water properties.
- 124 • Line item WP-6 Feasibility Studies is included for investigation of non-slurry wall
125 storage options and conjunctive management.
- 126 • Total budget for Program water projects in FY 2018 is estimated at about \$16.2 million.

127



128 There were a few comments from the committee. Steinke and Thulin from CNPPID reported
129 that materials costs for PVC pipe have increased significantly (about 50 percent) due to recent
130 hurricanes, which in turn increases the cost of the proposed Phelps-to-Cottonwood pipeline.
131 CNPPID will put together a new cost estimate based on the most recent available information, in
132 time for the GC budget meeting in mid-November. This affects line item WP-4(b)i.

133
134 Merrill inquired about the status of cost-sharing between the Program and other entities for
135 Phragmites spraying under line item WP-1(b). Sellers asked if costs for the CPNRD
136 groundwater market, line item WP-4(f)vi, can factor in lagged accretions in future years. The
137 EDO will consider these issues.

138
139 Merrill inquired about Wyoming Water Development Commission water being available beyond
140 2019. Turner said he wasn't aware of specific discussions, but it is expected that the WWDC
141 water will be available beyond 2019.

142
143 **CPNRD Groundwater Model:** *Jim Schneider, Olsson Associates*

144 Schneider presented on the recently-developed CPNRD groundwater model. The main purpose
145 of the models is to track recharge of excess flows in the Cozad, Thirty Mile, and Orchard-Alfalfa
146 canals. The model was developed using MODFLOW-USG (UnStructured Grid). It is a sub-
147 regional model representing only 2-3 percent of the total COHYST study area, allowing for
148 much greater refinement. The model study area extends from Brady to Lexington along the
149 Platte River and from south of the CNPPID Supply Canal to the Gothenburg Canal and Buffalo
150 Creek at the northern boundary. The model runs off the cloud and provides fast results. It will
151 be available for posting on the web shortly. Model results compare favorably to spreadsheet
152 analyses previously completed by Duane Woodward at CPNRD.

153
154 **Cottonwood Ranch Broad-Scale Recharge Update:** *Kevin Werbylo, EDO*

155 Werbylo provided a status update on the Cottonwood Ranch Broad-Scale Recharge project. The
156 timeline for the project is as follows:

- 157
- 158 • Preliminary design nearly complete
 - 159 • Moving towards final design
 - 160 • Initiated permitting discussions
 - 161 • Planning to start construction late next spring (2018, after migration)
 - 162 • Functioning project next summer/fall (dependent on pipeline)
- 163

164 Werbylo said that the existing irrigation wells at the Cottonwood Ranch complex will remain in
165 place. They will not be flooded and may be used as a backup source of supply since the
166 ponds/wetlands need to have standing water during the crane migration.

167
168 The critical path currently depends on permitting and construction of the pipeline for delivery to
169 the southwest corner of the property. Steinke and Thulin from CNPPID said that next fall is the
170 most likely timeline for pipeline construction. There are no known issues with running pipeline



171 year-round to deliver water to Cottonwood Ranch. If cost of pipeline goes up (due to materials
172 cost), CNPPID and the Program should still be able to keep the capital cost-buyback
173 arrangement proposed in the Water Service Agreement.
174

175 **Wet Meadows Update:** *Scott Griebling, EDO*

176 Griebling presented an update on the Program’s wet meadows research, with focus on the Fox
177 site. Results show that groundwater responses to river stage vs. precipitation differ by orders of
178 magnitude. The results of Glover analyses are matching observed results well.
179

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

181 The next WAC meeting is scheduled for February 6, 2018 at the Lake McConaughy Visitors
182 Center.
183

184 **Action Items**

185

186 General WAC

- 187 • n/a

188

189 ED Office

- 190 • n/a

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