

NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ogallala Platte River Recovery Project Awarded \$2,000,000

The Ogallala Platte River Recovery project has been awarded \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2010 through the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) of the Natural Resources Conservation Service. This project will assist in planning efforts to reduce consumptive uses of water in the Platte River Basin. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is the lead partner along with the Central Platte, Tri-Basin, Twin Platte, South Platte, and North Platte Natural Resources Districts (NRDs).

The purpose of this project is to reduce water consumption and related depletions to surface water flows in these five NRDs, helping to meet the requirements of the integrated management plans recently adopted by the DNR and the NRDs. The AWEP funds will provide direct payments to producers for a conversion of agricultural land from irrigated farming to non-irrigated land uses for a period of five years. Non-federal funds will then be offered to extend the conversion through the purchase of permanent easements. These non-federal funds are available through the Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Program (PBHEP), funded through DNR and NRD contributions, and a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Through PBHEP, the DNR and the NRDs will promote and enhance the AWEP project.

AWEP is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides assistance to agricultural producers for agricultural water enhancement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface water and groundwater and improving water quality. AWEP is part of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and operates through program contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in project areas established through partnership agreements. Details regarding the process for sign-up will be available soon.

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