

**Republican River Basin-Wide Plan  
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
March 15, 2016 | Community Center; Cambridge, Nebraska**

**Stakeholder Advisory Committee members in attendance were:**

Mike Delka	Max Kaiser	Daniel Smith
Brad Edgerton	Bradley Knuth	Shad Stamm
Troy Fletcher	Kent Lorens	Aaron Thompson
Josh Friesen	Jeff Loschen	Ted Tietjen
Wayne Haarberg	Gale Lush	Marcia Trompke
Dale Helms	Cedric McDaniel	Jerda Garey Vickers
Dick Helms	Roric Paulman	Tom Vickers
Bill Hoyt	Rick Frakes for John Rundel	Todd Watson
Michael Kahrs	Richard Siel	

**Plan Development Team members in attendance were:**

Jeff Fassett	Jennifer Schellpeper	Rick McConville
Ray Winz	Amy Zoller	
Carol Flaute	Phyllis Johnson	

**Individuals from the community present during the meeting included:**

Craig Scott	Jay Schilling	Jean Eichhorst
Chelsea Erickson	Dale Cramer	Mark Clersfaser

Note: See Attachment A for a copy of the sign-in sheets.

**NOTICE OF THE MEETING**

Notice of the meeting was published on the Department of Natural Resources web site ([dnr.nebraska.gov](http://dnr.nebraska.gov)) and in the following Newspapers: Holdrege Daily Citizen, McCook Gazette, Imperial Republican, and Benkelman Post & News Chronicle.

**INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS**

The following informational materials were distributed via stakeholder notebook:

- January 19, 2016, Meeting minutes

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

NeDNR Director Jeff Fassett welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that the overall purpose of this meeting was to have a discussion about whether the planning process is effective or needs to be changed. The consultants and NRD staff were asked to not come to this meeting in order to focus this meeting on direct and open dialog between the stakeholders and the NeDNR Director.

**DISCUSSION**

Director Fassett described changes that have happened in the basin within the last few years, including rulings on the Kansas v. Nebraska litigation, changes to compact accounting, completion of N-CORPE, and creation of the Water Sustainability Fund. He also described some concerns he has heard about the basin-wide planning process from various people, and then invited stakeholders to participate in an open discussion about the planning process, problems and potential solutions in the basin, and other concerns. Stakeholder discussion from the meeting has been compiled into a summary document where it is sorted by category (process, issues, potential solutions, or studies and education) and then by topics within each category (Attachment B).

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held at the Cambridge Community Center from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on May 17, 2016. The meetings are scheduled to occur on the third Tuesday every other month at the same location. Meeting agendas, presentations, and meeting minutes will be available on the project website ([dnr.nebraska.gov/RRBWP](http://dnr.nebraska.gov/RRBWP)).

**Attachment A – Summary and Compilation of Stakeholder Feedback**

**STAKEHOLDER ATTENDANCE RECORD**

Republican River Basin-Wide Plan  
OA Project No. (014-3270)

March 15, 2016

10:00AM

**STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

Community Center - Cambridge, NE

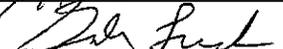
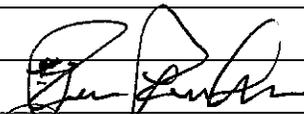
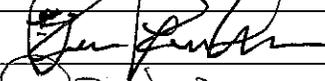
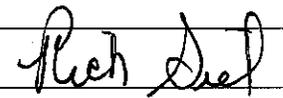
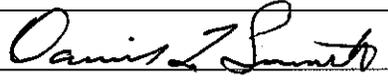
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### STAKEHOLDER ATTENDANCE RECORD

Republican River Basin-Wide Plan  
 OA Project No. (014-3270)

March 15, 2015  
 STAKEHOLDER MEETING

10:00AM  
 Community Center - Cambridge, NE

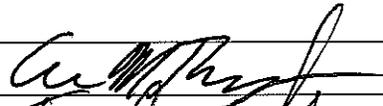
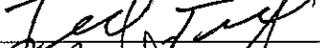
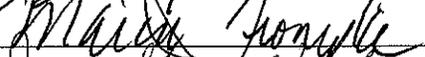
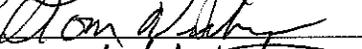
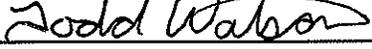
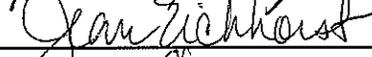
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## STAKEHOLDER ATTENDANCE RECORD

Republican River Basin-Wide Plan  
OA Project No. (014-3270)

March 15, 2015  
STAKEHOLDER MEETING

10:00AM  
Community Center - Cambridge, NE

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PLAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM ATTENDANCE RECORD

Republican River Basin-Wide Plan

March 15, 2015

10:00AM

OA Project No. (014-3270)

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Community Center - Cambridge, NE

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Rick McLawville	<i>Rick McLawville</i>	MIRNRD		
<del>Ted Tetz</del>	<del>Ted Tetz</del>			

**Attachment B – Sign-In Sheets**

# PROCESS (1 of 5)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>DNR / NRD transparency</b></p>	<p>Some stakeholders desire increased transparency about what is discussed internally and at DNR/NRD Coordination meetings. There is concern about whether stakeholders will really have input or whether DNR and the NRDs are actually writing the plan and/or making decisions without the stakeholders; if the latter is true, this process is a waste of stakeholder time.</p> <p>It was brought up that stakeholders are welcome to attend the DNR/NRD Coordination meetings.</p>	<p>"Why do we sit around and discuss options when you've probably already ruled out lots of options. We're not privy to that information."</p> <p>"I think the input from DNR and the NRDs is important. If there's something you've decided won't work, we need to know that so we don't spend months talking about something that won't work."</p> <p>"Remember that the DNR and NRD meetings are always open, so you can go if you want."</p>
<p><b>DNR / NRD input and participation</b></p>	<p>Some stakeholders would like more input from DNR and the NRDs at stakeholder meetings regarding DNR and the NRDs' knowledge of limitations (regulatory, etc.), opportunities, and feasibility of possible solutions. DNR and the NRDs' approval of the plan is critical, so stakeholders want feedback.</p> <p>Several stakeholders expressed appreciation for the previous education sessions.</p>	<p>"Someone needs to say, here are some ideas, here is a place to go, this is where we need an answer."</p> <p>"When we get it done, it does need approval of DNR and the NRDs, so DNR and NRD opinion is essential."</p> <p>"I've appreciated the education we've gotten."</p> <p>"I think the input from DNR and the NRDs is important. If there's something you've decided won't work, we need to know that so we don't spend months talking about something that won't work."</p> <p>"What about the process of submitting some management successes and other possible solutions that are in targeted areas and compile and distribute that? Ideas that DNR sees as the results of discussions today? Also, how do they meet the goals and objectives of the legislation?"</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# PROCESS (2 of 5)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Stakeholder input</b></p>	<p>There is concern that stakeholders have not had enough direct input, been asked for recommendations, or even defined what the problems and questions are.</p> <p>Others felt that the purpose of the stakeholder group is poorly defined or understood, and suggested a need to better define the stakeholder group's purpose, target outcomes, and stakeholder roles vs. existing management roles (e.g., boards, agencies).</p> <p>Stakeholders expressed that they really appreciated the opportunity at this meeting for a large, whole-group, open-ended discussion, and would like more opportunities for this type of input at future meetings, with fewer constraints on how stakeholders provide input during meetings when compared with past meetings. The group also appreciated that the Director of DNR came to the meeting and listened to their concerns."</p>	<p>"[In the Platte basin-wide process,] we forced the issues, brought the problems, and the process was consensus building. The conversation got all the way around the table. That's lacking here."</p> <p>"I don't feel like we've made any recommendations or had any input. Some time in the last year we could have given input on something."</p> <p>"Unless we have a definite definition of what we are to do, this group is worthless. Someone needs to say, here are some ideas, here is a place to go, this is where we need an answer."</p> <p>"Today is a breath of fresh air."</p> <p>"I really appreciate what you did today. This was a productive day. A lot of honest comments that we haven't had in the past."</p> <p>"Thanks for being here. It's nice to hear from someone I think is listening."</p> <p>". . . cat herders. . . getting everyone pointing in one direction. . . more worried about consensus than results."</p> <p>"We need the back-and-forth like this, that hasn't been happening, in order to make progress."</p>
<p><b>The need for specific ideas</b></p>	<p>Consider establishing a process for submitting specific possible solutions.</p>	<p>"What we haven't gotten today is specific suggestions of projects or programs to help us address the issue."</p> <p>"What about the process of submitting some management successes and other possible solutions that are in targeted areas and compile and distribute that? Ideas that DNR sees as the result of discussions today?"</p> <p>"Someone needs to say, here are some ideas, here is a place to go, this is where we need an answer."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# PROCESS (3 of 5)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Pace of planning process</b></p>	<p>Certain stakeholders expressed frustration with the slowness of the planning process to date.</p> <p>Some suggestions were offered that could speed up the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider using subcommittees to address specific topics</li> <li>• Meet more often</li> <li>• Increase the use of electronic communication between meetings</li> <li>• Consider what else may be constraining the planning process</li> </ul>	<p>"I don't feel like we've made any recommendations or had any input. Some time in the last year we could have given input on something."</p> <p>"We've already discussed subcommittees and executive committees and decided against them. Maybe that needs to be readdressed."</p> <p>"A lot of us have frustrations with meetings two months apart. It seems like a lot could be done with letters and email in the interim between those two months. That said, it would all need to be compiled and shared so that it comes back to everyone. . . . I want to do more than sit down once every two months. More could be done with surveys."</p>
<p><b>Decision-making</b></p>	<p>Suggestions related to how the group makes decisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remember that the statute is to guide the plan and the planning process</li> <li>• Prioritize outcomes and define how success will be measured</li> <li>• Identify incremental steps to address problems</li> <li>• Consider using subcommittees to address specific topics</li> <li>• Keep in mind the group's early consensus on the importance of maintaining community vitality</li> <li>• We cannot afford inaction. What can we afford?</li> </ul>	<p>"We're tap-dancing around the legislation. Our objective is in the statute. . . . Sustainability isn't even in this, it says 'sustain a balance.' . . . We're not asked to define sustainability in the law, we're asked to find a balance between different kinds of sustainability. If we don't narrow down to the law, to what we're asked to do, we can go on tangents all day long and get nowhere."</p> <p>"The legislature has already decided what we are to do and when. It doesn't matter what we decide or you decide."</p> <p>"The elephant in the room is depletions. The overappropriated feel of the basin. . . .not advocating that those depletions go to zero. . . . what is a good incremental step for dealing with that?"</p> <p>"One of the things that has pleased me about the whole process is consensus about community vitality."</p> <p>"We have to decide what we cannot afford, which is inaction. We need to look at what we can afford and what we can't."</p> <p>"We've already discussed subcommittees and executive committees and decided against them. Maybe that needs to be readdressed."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# PROCESS (4 of 5)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>The East</b>	<p>The state is looking to us to solve our problems; we want to solve it ourselves (gain consensus in stakeholder group) instead of the alternative (the East implementing regulation).</p>	<p>"We're the test case. Can we solve our own problems? If we don't, I can guarantee that someone will. You're not going to like it."</p> <p>"We are guinea pigs. Lincoln is watching us. If someone else solves your problem, it's usually not a good way."</p> <p>"If we don't decide something, someone else will for us. I think we can disband this bunch, but if we can come up with a good compromise we can all live with, it may be a whole lot better than what the folks back east would decide for us."</p>
<b>Goals for and basis of the plan</b>	<p>Is the basis of the plan sustainability, or Compact compliance, or some combination of the two?</p> <p>Is the overarching goal to achieve overall sustainability, or is to prioritize and balance the multiple facets of sustainability that are laid out in statute?</p> <p>It was noted that there has been considerable agreement from stakeholders regarding the importance of community vitality.</p> <p>The basin-wide plan can be a tool to help the NRDs work together towards a common goal and increase buy-in from water users about NRD management actions.</p>	<p>"Is this a sustainability plan or a compliance plan or a combination?"</p> <p>"We're tap-dancing around the legislation. Our objective is in the statute. . . . Sustainability isn't even in this, it says 'sustain a balance.' . . . We're not asked to define sustainability in the law, we're asked to find a balance between different kinds of sustainability. If we don't narrow down to the law, to what we're asked to do, we can go on tangents all day long and get nowhere."</p> <p>"One of the things that has pleased me about the whole process is consensus about community vitality."</p> <p>"Here's a viewpoint from the NRD side. One reason I think it's important to have this basin plan. It's been brought up about incentivizing NRDs to do the right thing to work towards goals. What we've seen is that if one NRD steps up to do the right thing and the other NRDs don't follow suit, we can't get buy-in from our water users; there's lots of backlash. . . . This plan is a good way to get the NRDs to work together towards goals for the basin."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# PROCESS (5 of 5)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Diversity of stakeholder interests</b></p>	<p>Facilitates exchange of information and ideas among diverse stakeholder interests. This builds a foundation of understanding, which is critical to moving forward.</p> <p>However, it was also noted that because of the diversity of stakeholder interests, reaching consensus may be difficult.</p> <p>Ongoing litigation may be hindering the process by causing some stakeholders to feel like their current role in the process is to protect their own interests in response to the litigation.</p>	<p>"The fact that we have diverse opinions and diverse backgrounds in one room is the only way to make progress. There's a lot of value to having us both here instead of as a bunch of separate ideas and entities operating alone. Coming together fosters understanding. Once you have understanding, it's the only way to come forward."</p> <p>"This group is a good group to have this discussion."</p> <p>"Coming together, I have learned to appreciate the surface water guys' problems. That has been good."</p> <p>"With such a diverse group of stakeholders, it's going to be hard to come up with a broad plan."</p> <p>"When I read the surface water guys are suing me, I want to protect my own interests."</p>

**Attachment B**

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (1 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Fairness, burden</b></p>	<p>Many stakeholders expressed that surface water users have suffered the most loss due to lowered stream flows and the burden of compliance, and there is a general lack of awareness from other users and decision makers about what they have given up for the good of the Basin.</p>	<p>"Is the State complying? Or are the NDRs complying? It's a State compact, but we're paying for it personally through the NRDs. . . . It seems to me we should sue the state because we're keeping you in compliance."</p> <p>"When there's excess water in the Platte and we need water here, why is the burden on wells and surface water here?"</p> <p>"Why is the burden of compliance here instead of on everyone in the state?"</p> <p>"From my perspective, the surface water people have been shut out of the conversation. . . . That's why there are lawsuits. There's no other way to be heard."</p> <p>"The surface water users have paid for those projects to use that water. The Projects were first for flood control, second for irrigation. But the irrigators paid for those."</p> <p>"I don't think people in this room understand what happened with N-CORPE to ensure compliance. I Does everyone understand what was given up? The water's there in the dam, but I can't get it."</p> <p>"The state of Nebraska needs a statewide plan for how to handle recharge to ensure the aquifer for years to come."</p>
<p><b>Fairness, geography</b></p>	<p>Cross-boundary (political, hydrologic regulatory boundaries) inequalities have a spectrum of negative consequences for water users (seed corn opportunities, regulation, land value).</p>	<p>"There are currently no allocations for areas in the Model area that aren't in the drainage basin. Many people feel this is not very fair when everyone else has allocations."</p> <p>"We need to have an understanding of why some acres were excluded."</p> <p>"Seed corn companies won't plant their seed in Lower Republican . . . . Right across the county line you can plant it."</p>

**Attachment B**

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (2 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Measurable objectives</b></p>	<p>Several stakeholders feel that we need a better understanding of hydrologic lower and upper limits, which measure/unit is most appropriate within these limits, and where our current condition falls.</p>	<p>"How much flow is needed at the head gates to sustain your system? Solutions have to be based on science rather than politics."</p> <p>"Surface water guys won't have anything if the focus is on depletions. It makes it look like we depleted it to nothing, and we didn't have anything to do with that."</p> <p>"What's a good metric for fairness and sustainability?"</p> <p>"We need to come to an agreement on how we measure depletions and what we cannot or will not accept."</p> <p>"I think it would go a long way for everyone if they used the model and gave them the starting point--what are the inches per acre, with zero flows in the river, and Compact compliance. I don't think it's 8 or 10. The allocations given aren't scientifically based. If that number comes out, then we can start to get at the issues of how to get from that number and where we want to be."</p> <p>"In Union precinct, they set a limit of 9 inches because they set IMP limits. Even in dry years, groundwater levels go up. That tells me we can probably use more than 9 inches."</p>

**Attachment B**

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (3 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Lack of baseline data and information</b></p>	<p>Stakeholders felt there is not yet enough information available to provide a foundation for planning decisions. For example,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's the 'right' baseline condition?</li> <li>• What's the current condition?</li> <li>• Need a foundation of data from which to plan</li> <li>• Based on science, how much water is actually needed by surface water users? What level of allocations is actually needed for groundwater users?</li> <li>• There is a lack of clarity about the area the basin-wide plan applies to (surface water basin, hydrologically connected area, or model area). What are the actual boundaries of the geographic area of the plan? If some areas of the basin are excluded from the plan, why?</li> <li>• What target should this plan be aiming for? Sustainability, Compact compliance, or both?</li> </ul>	<p>"We're trying to build a house without a foundation."</p> <p>"It has been brought up a couple of times, 'the way things were.' What does that mean? The way things were in 1880? . . . I've appreciated the education we've gotten. My concern is that a lot of the data is beginning around 1940. Our farming practices have changed dramatically. In the 1970s, there was water running down every ditch and putting water into the Republican. That isn't happening today. I don't think it was happening in 1880 due to grassland, pre-tilling, etc. My concern is with what snippet of time we want to look at. I think we're closer today to 1880 than we were in the 1960s."</p> <p>"None of us know how short we are, so it's difficult to find solutions. What do we work toward?"</p> <p>"We still need to know where we are."</p> <p>"How much flow is needed at the head gates to sustain your system?"</p> <p>"I think it would go a long way for everyone if they used the model and gave them the starting point--what are the inches per acre, with zero flows in the river, and Compact compliance. I don't think it's 8 or 10. The allocations given aren't scientifically based. If that number comes out, then we can start to get at the issues of how to get from that number and where we want to be."</p> <p>"In Union precinct, they set a limit of 9 inches because they set IMP limits. Even in dry years, groundwater levels go up. That tells me we can probably use more than 9 inches."</p> <p>"Is it going to be based on the basin area, 10/50 area, or model area?"</p> <p>"We need to have an understanding of why some acres were excluded."</p> <p>"Is this a sustainability plan or a compliance plan or a combination?"</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (4 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Reality of current water supply limitations / depletions</b></p>	<p>Many stakeholders feel there has been and continues to be overconsumption in the basin, but the exact amount is unclear. Even if consumption is reduced to sustainable levels, any streamflow recovery will be slow, streamflow levels will always be lower than in some periods in the past, and will vary by region.</p> <p>Recognize there are limitations of using external sources such as the Platte River as solutions for overconsumption.</p>	<p><b>OVERCONSUMPTION</b>            "We're using more water than we have."            "The elephant in the room is depletions. The overappropriated feel of the basin."            "The State owes the citizens of this basin an idea of how far past fully appropriated we already are."            "Our water tables are going to decline until we pump less. It's that simple."            "None of us know how short we are, so it's difficult to find solutions. What do we work toward?"            "The elephant in the room is overconsumption. No one wants to think about that because we all want what we want, but your standards change if you don't have the water."            "You can cut pumping, shut down end guns, conversion to dryland, crop rotations, and allocations; water tables and streamflow won't go back up for a long time."</p> <p><b>LIMITS ON STREAMFLOW</b>            "For the Republican Basin, there's no way to treat the surface water users fairly, because there's no way to make the river flow again."            "I'm glad we're finally at the table to say 'this is what we have.' We may not be able to ever go back, but we can go forward."            "I'm not sure we can get to where everyone's happy because we can't get back to where we were."            "Based on my observations, Nebraska is much closer to coming to sustainability than people realize. Much closer to resolving those issues and maintaining economic viability. The problem I see is getting adequate streamflow in the river."            "We're always going to have a 0 [in water supply] at the beginning of any basin, and there's no way to get water out there."            "You need to realize there's almost 10 inches of rainfall difference between the western and eastern sides of the Basin."</p> <p><b>PLATTE TRANSFER</b>            "There is excess water [in the Platte] from time to time. Short duration flows. That would be high dollars."            "About the Platte transfer: physically we could do that in a matter of a month, but there's a lot of opposition in the Platte Basin to a transfer to down here. So I think that might go into the long-term category of possible solutions."</p>

**Attachment B**

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (5 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>Regulatory limitations</b>	<p>Surface water and groundwater and regulated separately because the legislature was slow to recognize they are connected.</p> <p>The scope of what this plan can accomplish may be limited by the varied regulatory authorities of DNR, NRD, and other agencies.</p>	<p>"Another issue that probably needs to be brought forth is the first legislation in 1940 to identify that surface water and groundwater are hydrologically connected. It didn't pass, but it continued. Someplace in there, we need to recognize that there is a connection that needs to balance."</p> <p>"There's nothing that stacks groundwater and surface water rights together. They exist as they are now. There's no relationship between them. Now we're way past where that decision could have been made."</p> <p>"Anything we do, it has to be recognized that it takes the other step that the NRDs and the Department need to be able to do it through regulation."</p> <p>"We can't be too specific because of all the different NRDs, Irrigation Districts, etc., who are actually managing the water."</p>
<b>RRCA accounting / Compact compliance</b>	<p>Stakeholders want more clarity on Compact accounting and compliance.</p>	<p>"I am thankful that the state is going to continue to comply and has complied."</p> <p>"If we use off-site storage for recharge, what does that do for accounting?. . .If we hold 1000 acre-feet in a reservoir, does that count against Nebraska?"</p> <p>"Is groundwater pumping [from N-CORPE] captured by the dams or the Gulf of Mexico?"</p> <p>"If it were up to me, I'd give Kansas the money and keep the water."</p> <p>"Is the State complying? Or are the NDRs complying? It's a State compact, but we're paying for it personally through the NRDs. . . . It seems to me we should sue the state because we're keeping you in compliance."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (6 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Some stakeholders feel the Basin is in an over-appropriated state, not just a fully appropriated, and that compact compliance is not necessarily sustainable.</p> <p>Along those lines, N-CORPE to stay in compliance is a Band-Aid approach to fixing the problem. What will the consequences be of using N-CORPE water to stay in compliance, and what is Plan B when N-CORPE fails?</p> <p>Also, in areas where groundwater is declining, how can that be fixed? Is irrigated corn a sustainable option?</p>	<p>"Is groundwater pumping [from N-CORPE] captured by the dams or the Gulf of Mexico?"</p> <p>"Is the pumping [from N-CORPE] sustainable? How do we meet sustainability without reducing the groundwater table?"</p> <p>"That's my concern with the whole thing [N-CORPE]. If these plans or programs don't work down the line, what's the next plan for what's going to happen?"</p> <p>"Getting back to fully appropriated is sustainable. Fully appropriated, sustainable, and Compact compliance should go hand in hand."</p> <p>"Our whole economy is based on irrigated corn, whether we like it or not. In our area, irrigated corn equals groundwater depletion. I have farmed for 40 years, groundwater has gone down a foot a year near Imperial. I don't like that. How can we slow that down? You can cut pumping, shut down end guns, conversion to dryland, crop rotations, and allocations; water tables and streamflow won't go back up for a long time."</p> <p>"What is plan 'B' when N-CORPE doesn't work anymore?"</p>

**Attachment B**

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (7 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>The East</b>	Major decisions for the Basin have come from Lincoln/Omaha area, and there is a general lack of awareness from these areas about our situation and what we are already doing.	<p>"There's a growing concern in the east that the NRD system is the fox watching the chicken house."</p> <p>"A lot of the problem in the Republican is perception. We weren't getting anything done, and yet no one was asking us what we're doing. The Kansas lawsuit drug on, and we couldn't do anything while that was going on. I always felt this plan was a lack of understanding from the east about what we were doing."</p> <p>"We are guinea pigs. Lincoln is watching us."</p> <p>"We've gotten more efficient and reduced our pumping. So we're not just paying \$10 an acre toward solving problems [what folks in the east say]. I've paid thousands for new, more efficient irrigation systems, end gun practices, etc."</p> <p>"The state looks at us as trouble, but we're one of the only places with meters, the only ones with certain other measures."</p>
<b>Uncertainty / reliability</b>	Uncertainty is a concern, especially for surface water users. The lack of a reliable water supply makes it difficult to plan and may to lead to mistrust issues.	<p>"A lot of the issues have to deal with lack of trust. Uncertainty in the basin has led to lack of trust. Developing certainty in the basin will go a long way to developing trust."</p> <p>"In 2007 it happened and [surface water users] got compensated. In 2013 and 2014, [compensation] didn't happen. Surface water users never know whether we are going to get water or not. We have no way to plan. Groundwater guys have certainty. How do you plan if you don't have certainty?"</p> <p>"There's a lot of things to consider besides amounts of water. Reliability is one."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# CHALLENGES (8 of 8)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>Economic impacts</b>	<p>Economic impacts include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss on investments in surface water infrastructure</li> <li>• Loss of opportunities to benefit from seed corn company incentives</li> <li>• Loss of opportunities to plant high dollar crops</li> <li>• Potential decrease in tax revenues to support the communities</li> <li>• Increased costs associated with conservation practices</li> </ul>	<p>"We need to support schools, roads, etc."</p> <p>"We're growing crops that aren't economically viable in order to stay within compliance and allocations."</p> <p>"We've gotten more efficient and reduced our pumping. So we're not just paying \$10 an acre toward solving problems [what folks in the east say]. I've paid thousands for new, more efficient irrigation systems, end gun practices, etc."</p> <p>"The surface water users have paid for those projects to use that water. The Projects were first for flood control, second for irrigation. But the irrigators paid for those."</p> <p>"Seed corn companies won't plant their seed in Lower Republican . . . . Right across the county line you can plant it."</p>
<b>Lack of funding</b>	Getting funding for projects is difficult.	"Getting funding is always an issue. In the 108 process, NRDs had to fund the study because the law was enacted without funding. I believe the state has fallen behind in what we can do."

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# OPPORTUNITIES (1 of 4)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>Fairness, burden</b>	Better understand the history of the laws and how these have been out of balance, raise awareness about what surface water users have given up.	<p>"I don't think people in this room understand what happened with N-CORPE to ensure compliance. I Does everyone understand what was given up? The water's there in the dam, but I can't get it."</p> <p>"Another issue that probably needs to be brought forth is the first legislation in 1940 to identify that surface water and groundwater are hydrologically connected. It didn't pass, but it continued. Someplace in there, we need to recognize that there is a connection that needs to balance."</p>
<b>Fairness, geography</b>	Some stakeholders suggested using a subbasin (micro-basin, watershed) approach to more effectively manage the basin.	<p>"There are many micro-basins within the basin that are all unique."</p> <p>"We need to give serious thought to going to watershed management."</p>
<b>Measureable objectives</b>	Suggestions included: identify a universal metric and for management purposes and successes (e.g. acres-inches, maximum crop yield, groundwater levels, depletions, water consumption per acre).	<p>"What's a good metric for fairness and sustainability? . . . We look at inches per acre as a tool for measuring whether you're sustainable. You can trade inches per acre with dollars."</p> <p>"Ultimately, depletions are the consumption on every acre."</p> <p>"We need to come to an agreement on how we measure depletions and what we cannot or will not accept. For example, we have meters to measure groundwater use. It's the only accurate way to measure depletions. . . . Monitoring is where we start to determine depletions and when we cannot deplete more."</p> <p>"There are lots of tools, but I think groundwater levels are <i>the</i> tool for management."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# OPPORTUNITIES (2 of 4)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>Management practices</b>	<p>Stakeholders presented a variety of possible management solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buyout of irrigated acres</li> <li>• Voluntary conversion of irrigated to dryland acres</li> <li>• Increase irrigation efficiencies</li> <li>• Remove vegetation from streams</li> <li>• Eliminate end gun use</li> <li>• More allocations/reduction in pumping</li> <li>• Increase crop rotations</li> <li>• Pro-rate occupation tax according to water use to incentivize efficiency</li> <li>• Develop a market for water exchange</li> <li>• Look to new funding sources: Water Sustainability Fund and past Colorado non-compliance</li> </ul>	<p>"We need to recognize that certain areas need markets to get water from where it is to where rights are. . . . Market-based solutions allow people to solve some of their own problems."</p> <p>"Things to think about: occupation tax, irrigated property tax. Should we prorate them on the amount of water used as an incentive to use less?"</p> <p>"If we have too many irrigated acres, let's find some money and let economics take care of some of the poorer, less effective acres."</p> <p>"You can cut pumping, slow down end guns, conversion to dryland, crop rotations, allocations "</p> <p>"We can pick and pluck at [1098], but it finally put into play real money. . . . This question is a potential funding application to the Sustainability Fund. What are the effects of farming practices on depletions?"</p> <p>"Since 2003, Colorado has never complied with the Compact. Maybe in 2-3 years they will be in compliance, but they owe us a lot of water. There's a funding opportunity there. I know Colorado isn't going to pump all that water to repay us, so we need to sit down with them and have a discussion about funds that we can target to the Republican River Basin in Nebraska."</p> <p>"Knocking out more trees would get us more water."</p>
<b>The East - solutions</b>	<p>Consider hiring a public relations person to speak on behalf of the basin and raise awareness.</p>	<p>"NRDs on the Republican River need a PR person to talk to Omaha and Lincoln. The state looks at us as trouble, but we're one of the only places with meters, the only ones with certain other measures. We need to let Omaha know we are doing something."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# OPPORTUNITIES (3 of 4)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>Infrastructure-based solutions</b>	<p>Interbasin Transfer: Throughout the stakeholder process, stakeholders have expressed interest in transferring water from Platte River excess flows to the basin. Considerations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RRCA Accounting (imported water credit):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Platte River supplies are limited</li> <li>○ Look within the basin for solutions first; do not rely exclusively on external water</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• Conjunctive management (recharge):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Recognize that Republican Basin also has excess flows that can be used for recharge</li> <li>○ To take advantage of excess flows, there must already be a logistical plan in place that can be implemented quickly and efficiently</li> <li>○ Consider both canal recharge and recharge via off-canal reservoirs</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• Other suggestions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consider how Reclamation projects can increase water supply certainty</li> <li>○ Consider developing additional augmentation project(s) that are closer to Kansas to decrease conveyance loss</li> <li>○ Increase canal efficiencies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>"One solution is diversions everywhere. From Colorado, and lots of opportunities along the Platte."</p> <p>"Excess water in the Platte is a solution."</p> <p>"About the Platte transfer: physically, we could do that in a matter of a month, but there's a lot of opposition in the Platte Basin to a transfer to down here."</p> <p>"The solution isn't looking outward--getting water from somewhere else. It's looking inward--how can we solve our own problems?"</p> <p>"Imported water counts as a credit as soon as it reaches the basin. It doesn't have to make it to a flowing stream to count."</p> <p>"Augmentation projects don't just keep us in compliance, they generate recharge. We need to look at the Platte River as a resource. Why can't we just divert some excess flows to recharge reservoirs?"</p> <p>"We also have wet years in the Republican. We're not prepared for when we have lots of water; it gets sent downstream. We need to be prepared for recharge in the canal systems. Maybe pumping into a canal for recharge is less expensive than the Swanson pump-back deal that was too expensive. . . . To do canal recharge in the Republican, we need to have canals ready way earlier than we usually do. So there needs to be planning in place to make it happen. We also need to be able to put water into off-canal reservoirs that are made for recharge. Canals seal up and don't leak anymore after some time, so you can only get so much recharge by just using canals."</p> <p>"[For recharge of excess flows], start getting a plan now, because you don't know when it will hit. It takes 6-8 months to get it all through the system."</p> <p>"I think there needs to be another N-CORPE on Superior, right down by Kansas."</p> <p>"Reclamation's projects can go a long way toward building certainty in the water supply."</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

# OPPORTUNITIES (4 of 4)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>The need for specific ideas</b>	Consider establishing a process for submitting specific possible solutions.	<p>"What we haven't gotten today is specific suggestions of projects or programs to help us address the issue."</p> <p>"What about the process of submitting some management successes and other possible solutions that are in targeted areas and compile and distribute that? Ideas that DNR sees as the result of discussions today?"</p> <p>"Someone needs to say, here are some ideas, here is a place to go, this is where we need an answer."</p>

# STUDIES & EDUCATION (1 of 2)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<p><b>Study ideas</b></p>	<p>Stakeholders suggested studies that would facilitate planning and/or plan implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantify the effects of land use (e.g., farming practices) and land cover (all types) changes on water consumption and stream depletions</li> <li>• Assess basin's fully appropriated or overappropriated status. If overappropriated, by how much?</li> <li>• Explore the benefits and limitations of a range of potential allocations, including how these affect Compact compliance</li> <li>• Better understand the economic impacts of compliance</li> <li>• Better understand the effects of conservation practices on runoff reduction</li> <li>• Find out what is already working in the basin. One way to do this would be to ask stakeholders to share their own management successes</li> <li>• Some suggestions were to use modeling and science to better understand limits of system, identify a universal metric (e.g. acres-inches, maximum crop yield) for management purposes and successes, consider using a longer historic time period for analyses, better understand all land use effects (not just ag land) on consumptive use</li> </ul>	<p>"The State owes the citizens of this basin an idea of how far past fully appropriated we already are."</p> <p>"I think it would go a long way for everyone if they used the model and gave them the starting point--what are the inches per acre, with zero flows in the river, and Compact compliance. I don't think it's 8 or 10. The allocations given aren't scientifically based. If that number comes out, then we can start to get at the issues of how to get from that number and where we want to be."</p> <p>"In Union precinct, they set a limit of 9 inches because they set IMP limits. Even in dry years, groundwater levels go up. That tells me we can probably use more than 9 inches."</p> <p>"Would it be possible for DNR to work with the Bureau to figure out how short we are in this basin and figure out how we can make that up? None of us know how short we are, so it's difficult to find solutions. What do we work toward?"</p> <p>"What about the changes in rain-fed? That in itself is significant."</p> <p>"What are the effects of farming practices on depletions?"</p> <p>"We can be depleting on dryland acres, too, if we're using crops that use every drop and don't allow recharge."</p> <p>"Our long-term goal should be what I call 'ecological long-term water equilibrium.' Recharge equals consumption. Consumption is consumptive use of plants grown on all acres in the basin. Scientists can determine, what is that level?"</p> <p>"Ultimately, what we're talking about here is a water budget. Hopefully we'll define or understand all of the uses and put them into it. That's not always a fun conversation."</p> <p>"What about the process of submitting some management successes and other possible solutions that are in targeted areas and compile and distribute that?"</p>

## Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting

## STUDIES & EDUCATION (2 of 2)

General Topic	Summary	Quotes
<b>Analysis, how-to</b>	<p>Some stakeholders suggested that when undertaking analyses,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use science and modeling to set allocations and other management actions and to better understand the limits of the system</li> <li>• Collaborate with the Bureau on analysis and possible solutions</li> </ul>	<p>"It seems like the Bureau of Reclamation is an untapped resources in this basin. Would it be possible for DNR to work with the Bureau to figure out how short we are in this basin and figure out how we can make that up?"</p> <p>"Ultimately, what we're talking about here is a water budget. Hopefully we'll define or understand all of the uses and put them into it. That's not always a fun conversation."</p> <p>"I think it would go a long way for everyone if they used the model and gave them the starting point"</p> <p>"None of us know how short we are, so it's difficult to find solutions. What do we work toward?"</p>
<b>Education topics</b>	<p>Stakeholders identified some areas where education or additional information would be helpful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Colorado is doing to address their depletions</li> <li>• The effect of pumping in Tri-Basin on Republican River streamflow; specifically, how the presence of bedrock and the mound affect the area's hydrologic connection to the basin.</li> <li>• A better understanding of the hydrology of Colorado flows in the South Fork</li> </ul>	<p>"We have seen no data from Colorado on their depletions and usage. It affects the west side a lot. Unless we know what they're doing to try to stop usage . . ."</p> <p>"I come from a part of the basin [Tri-Basin] without water problems. Our water tables go up every year because of the mound and bedrock. And hydrologically, we're not connected to the Republican Basin because of the bedrock. It wouldn't matter if you turned off all the water there, it wouldn't make a difference to the Republican River."</p> <p>"Amazingly, now, in the South Fork, there have been water flows. We don't have the knowledge to know the reason for that. Is it because water's flowing through Bonnie? Because of wells shut off?"</p>

### Attachment B

Summary of stakeholder input from March 15, 2016, Republican River Basin-Wide Plan Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting