

# **Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project**

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – Twin Platte NRD

January 4, 2011

**Call to Order and Attendance** – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. CST. Sponsors and Partners in attendance were: Ron Bishop, Matt Bohnenkamp and Mark Czaplewski (Central Platte NRD), Kent Miller and Ann Dimmitt (Twin Platte NRD), Rod Horn and Kyle Liebig (South Platte NRD), Larry Reynolds and Rich Holloway (Tri-Basin NRD), Ron Cacek (North Platte NRD), Jennifer Schellpeper and Doug Hallum (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), Tim McCoy (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission) and John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy). Guests in attendance were: James Huntwork (NRCS), and Robert Peterson. Miller noted that the PBHEP abides by the Open Meetings Act in conducting business and that a copy of the Act was provided in the meeting room.

**Meeting Notices** – Chairman Miller reported that notice of the meeting had been published in the Grand Island, North Platte and Scottsbluff newspapers as required by law.

**Agenda Modifications** – No changes were made to the agenda. Chairman Miller notified the group that the agenda for the next meeting will include election of officers.

**Approval of Minutes** – Motion by Ron Bishop, second by Rod Horn to approve the minutes of the September 7, 2010, meeting as distributed in advance of the meeting. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

## **Committee Reports –**

Education and Outreach Committee - Czaplewski reported the Education and Outreach Committee met on September 9 via conference call. As directed by the administrators, the Committee's discussion focused on ways to increase AWEP-related outreach activities. Several of these outreach activities have been and will continue to be implemented.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee – No report.

Water Tracking and Accounting Committee - Kyle Liebig reported the Committee has not met since the last administrators meeting. The Committee continues to work on plans to revise existing CALMIT remote sensing data and develop a recommendation on the matter for consideration by the administrators. The Committee will review related work currently underway in the North and South Platte NRDs which is a refinement of the 1997 CALMIT data.

**Financial Report** – Miller and Czaplewski provided the financial report, including a roll-up of in-kind and cash contributions through September 30, 2010 (the closing date of the most recent NET quarterly report). Czaplewski reviewed the PBHEP water acquisition budget documents distributed in advance of the meeting, noting that the August 24 version is current to date and the December 20 version includes values from the Central Platte NRD, South Platte NRD, and Tri-Basin NRD funding proposals to be addressed later on the agenda. Bishop noted that, in accordance with provisions in the PBHEP Interlocal Cooperation Agreement, subsequent funding proposals from Central Platte NRD will likely request unused funds from other PBHEP sponsors. Bishop also noted Central Platte NRD is considering seeking 50/50 funding from DNR on conservation easements acquired in advance of NET grant award. Central Platte

NRD has expended approximately \$2.2 million on these older easements.

Czaplewski reported on a recent conversation with NET Executive Director Mark Brohman in which Brohman requested the PBHEP administrators consider the possibility of NET moving \$500,000.00 to \$750,000.00 of funds we have already been awarded from the 2011 grant year to the 2012 grant year in an effort to help the NET with anticipated budget concerns. Brohman noted the existence of the funds would not be jeopardized, but extending their use another year would help the NET's cash flow and, given the current rate of PBHEP expenditures, may not cause us a problem. Brohman is soon going to be discussing the matter with the NET's Grants Committee and would appreciate the administrator's consideration. After a lengthy discussion, no objections to the deferral of funds by NET were expressed, so long as it wouldn't jeopardize DNR funding plans for PBHEP. Schellpeper will visit with others at DNR regarding possible concerns or affects on funding plans.

**AWEP Update** – James Huntwork provided an update on the Ogallala/Platte River Recovery AWEP. Huntwork noted the national AWEP budget is approximately \$62 million with \$38.6 million allocated to states with existing AWEP projects, the remainder to be used for new projects. Nebraska requested \$6 million of the funds for existing projects with the Ogallala/Platte Recovery AWEP requesting \$2 million per year for 5 years. Nebraska received about \$2.5 million in the first year's funding. This year's allocations are, as yet unknown. The 2011 AWEP application cut-off has been set for February 18, but a continuous sign-up is encouraged. Nebraska funds will be obligated by July 1, with any unused funds available to other projects after that date. Huntwork distributed a handout showing an updated practice payment schedule summary noting rates similar to 2010 levels with some slight increases and decreases for each NRD for 2011.

He discussed the development of the land eligibility criteria and distributed a handout of draft Schedule F of the EQIP Conservation Programs Manual. The draft document is subject to change, but addresses concerns raised at previous PBHEP meetings regarding irrigation history on qualifying lands associated with AWEP and EQIP. The requirement of 2 years of irrigation in the last 5 years, continues to be part of the definition of eligible lands, but the new language provides for additional criteria for eligibility including FSA data, areas certified by local NRD's, provisions for deep-rooted crops on sub-irrigated lands with a history of irrigation.

Huntwork also distributed the AWEP application ranking summary sheet used for 2010 applications noting the use of two funding pools (one for temporary and one for permanent easements). He asked for input on any changes for use with 2011 applications. The administrators asked John Thorburn (Committee chair) and the rest of the Ad Hoc Ranking Review Committee to examine the document and provide Huntwork with any comments by the January 14, 2011 deadline. Larry Reynolds expressed concern with the prioritization of permanent easements over temporary ones, noting that in the long-term and with potentially new goals and requirements, some land covered by such easements may again be looked at for irrigation.

**Central Platte NRD-NDNR-NGPC Draft Agreement regarding Ownership Transfer** – Czaplewski reported that a finalized Agreement had been signed by Central Platte NRD and forwarded to the DNR and NGPC for signature. The Agreement addresses the matter of property right transfers similar to language included in the PBHEP conservation easement templates.

**Tri-Basin NRD North Dry Creek Streamflow Augmentation Project** – Rich Holloway and Reynolds reviewed the Tri-Basin NRD preliminary Project plans. A total of four metered pumping sites would be

developed with one site on line as early as spring of this year, each pumping from around 700 to 1200 gpm. Tri-Basin NRD is working with DNR to finalize pumping plans and calculate water delivered to the river. Flexible pumping plans could be used to operate Project pumps when river discharges fall below certain trigger levels or operate continuously if needed to offset depletions. Questions were raised regarding operational plans, funding details and other items. The consensus of the group was in support of the concept of the North Dry Creek Project. Czaplewski was asked to draft a letter for Chairman Miller to send to Tri-Basin NRD expressing support for the Project concept, but expressing that, if the Project is to be pursued further for PBHEP funding, additional details discussed would need to be provided. Czaplewski noted that costs included in the December 20, 2010, PBHEP Budget for Water Acquisition only included initial capital costs associated with the Project.

**Central Platte NRD Third Request for Funding** – Bishop and Czaplewski reviewed the third Central Platte NRD funding proposal distributed in advance of the meeting and requested its approval. The proposal includes funding levels of Central Platte NRD \$179,060.00 (40%), DNR \$179,060.00 (40%) and NET \$89,530.00 (20%). The proposal includes both Protocol Type 1 permanent groundwater irrigation retirements and Type 2b projects involving permanent retirement of surface water irrigation with the replacement by groundwater irrigation. The seven conservation easements involved are calculated to result in the annual retirement of 269.37 acre-feet of water to the river. Motion by Schellpeper, second by Horn to approve the proposal for submittal for reimbursement. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**South Platte NRD Second Request for Funding** – Horn reviewed the South Platte NRD funding proposal distributed in advance of the meeting for the Lockwood conservation easement and requested its approval. The proposal includes funding levels of South Platte NRD \$13,068.00 (40%), DNR \$13,068.00 (40%) and NET \$6,534.00 (20%). The proposal includes a Protocol Type 1 permanent groundwater irrigation retirement involving 43.9 acres of land in Kimball County. Motion by Bishop, second by Ron Cacek to approve the proposal for submittal for reimbursement. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**Other** – Czaplewski reminded the group of the need to provide quarterly in-kind contribution documentation for submittal to the NET in January. The NET is scheduled to award 2011 grants (including possible 3<sup>rd</sup> year PBHEP funding) in April.

**Next Meetings-** Chairman Miller reminded the group that the next meeting is scheduled for March 1, 2011 with the start time moved to 10:30 a.m. CST. Future meetings are scheduled for May 3, 2011 (starting at 11:00 a.m.), July 5 (starting at 1:00 p.m.), September 6 (starting at 1:00 p.m.) and November 1, 2011 (starting at 11:00 a.m.)(all times Central) at the offices of Twin Platte NRD in North Platte.

**Adjourn** – The meeting was adjourned at 4:07 p.m. CST.