

Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – Twin Platte NRD

March 1, 2011

Call to Order and Attendance – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 10:38 a.m. Sponsors and Partners in attendance were: Ron Bishop, Matt Bohnenkamp, Duane Woodward and Mark Czaplewski (Central Platte NRD), Kent Miller and Ann Dimmitt (Twin Platte NRD), Rod Horn and Kyle Liebig (South Platte NRD), John Thorburn (Tri-Basin NRD), Ron Cacek and Tina Kurtz (North Platte NRD), and Jim Schneider, Jennifer Schellpeper and Doug Hallum (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources). A guest in attendance was: James Huntwork (NRCS). Chairman 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 public notice of the meeting had been published in the Grand Island, North Platte and Scottsbluff newspapers as required by law.

Agenda Modifications – Jim Schneider requested a new item entitled “NDNR Ground Water Recharge” be added to the agenda. Chairman Miller added it to the agenda after the “AWEP” item.

Approval of Minutes – Motion by Ron Bishop, second by Rod Horn to approve the minutes of the January 4, 2011, meeting as distributed in advance of the meeting. Motion passed by roll call vote with John Thorburn abstaining.

Election of Officers – Chairman Miller asked for nominations for Chair. Thorburn nominated Kent Miller for Chair and further moved that nominations cease and Miller be elected as Chair, second by Horn. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. Chair Miller asked for nominations for Vice-chair. Bishop nominated Rod Horn for Vice-chair and further moved that nominations cease and Horn be elected as Vice-chair, second by Schneider. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Committee Reports –

Education and Outreach Committee – No report.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee – Thorburn reported the Committee had not met since the last administrators meeting, but the Committee was asked to provide input on the NRCS’s project application ranking template.

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 – Czaplewski provided the financial report, including review of a recently developed PBHEP spreadsheet listing specific easement and project reimbursements and pending reimbursements from NET and NDNR. Czaplewski also reviewed the PBHEP water acquisition budget documents distributed in advance of the meeting (dated February 18th). The spreadsheet corrected a Central Platte NRD math error and backed out previously included capital costs for the Tri-Basin NRD North Dry Creek Project. As of February 18, 2011, the total PBHEP water acquisition funds used or committed are

\$2,087,873.32.

AWEP Update – James Huntwork provided an update on the Ogallala/Platte River Recovery AWEP. Huntwork distributed a handout detailing the applications submitted for the Project allocation of \$680,000.00 for FY 2011. Applications for prioritized permanent conversions from irrigated to non-irrigated land as well as temporary conversion applications and associated dollar amounts were reviewed. The 13 basinwide applications for permanent conversions alone exceed the total allocated amount by over \$53,000 and so funding for any of the 39 applications for temporary conversions is unlikely. The NRCS's deadline for ranking is March 4th and landowner contacts for signing contracts will start on March 7th. Huntwork reminded the group that there remains a chance that we could still receive unused and unallocated funds from other projects.

NDNR Ground Water Recharge – Schneider distributed and explained the NDNR's ground water recharge demonstration project proposal. The NDNR proposes that multiple existing irrigation district canals divert Platte River flows this spring and potentially this fall (pre- and post-irrigation season) for the purpose of recharging ground water aquifers in the Platte Valley and to assist with the mitigation of anticipated flood flows. Schneider asked that the NRD's participate in and support this Project. The Project has been discussed recently with Central NPP&ID and PRRIP officials and a presentation is planned for next week's PRRIP Governance Committee meeting. Additional meetings with other potential partners are planned for the near future. Schneider will keep the PBHEP NRD's posted on meeting dates and locations. Permitting plans were discussed with hopes of starting the Project and related studies by April 1st. Expected costs include canal operation and maintenance costs plus a fixed dollar amount for each acre-foot calculated to be recharged to the aquifer. The 2011 demonstration Project could serve the development of possible similar long-term projects.

Motion by Bishop, second by Ron Cacek that PBHEP support the Ground Water Recharge Demonstration Project described by NDNR in their memo dated February 28, 2011, and more specifically, PBHEP supports the bullet items A through E under section II of the memo, as direction on how to move forward with the Project. PBHEP expects a more detailed Project proposal will be developed and brought to PBHEP for further approval as the Project is moved forward. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

The group agreed that, in order to better quantify Project benefits, an extra set of early-season water level measurements in the areas affected would be in order. A more detailed Project proposal will be provided as documents and contracts are developed. A final complete Project package will be presented to the PBHEP administrators for approval after the demonstration Project has taken place.

Tri-Basin NRD IMP Implementation Projects – Thorburn provided a *PowerPoint* presentation and reviewed a project overview document distributed in advance of the meeting. The project is proposed to proceed in two or three phases. Phase 1 would include the construction of a single 1250 gpm production well (Site A). This prototype well would be operated for at least one year to test equipment, project design and construction methods and materials. In a later phase or phases, Tri-Basin NRD intends to develop two additional upstream sites (Sites B and C). Operational protocols, streamflow benefits and construction schedules, cost estimates and operational costs were discussed. Site A construction costs are estimated at \$76,300.00 (assuming a single associated observation well). Estimated annual operating costs for Site A are \$16,800.00. Tri-Basin NRD continues to work with NDNR on permitting, evaluating and accounting for water savings. Thorburn requested financial support for Site A construction costs and operational costs for the first few years of operation, based on availability of funding. Motion by Bishop, second by Schneider to approve for submittal for reimbursement, the North Dry Creek Streamflow Augmentation

Project Site A construction costs and handle associated annual operational costs based on fund availability. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

South Platte NRD Third Request for Funding - Kuehn Conservation Easement – Horn reviewed the South Platte NRD funding proposal distributed in advance of the meeting for the Kuehn conservation easement and requested its approval. The proposal includes funding levels of South Platte NRD \$25,847.28 (40%), DNR \$25,847.28 (40%) and NET \$12,923.64 (20%). The proposal includes a Protocol Type 1 permanent groundwater irrigation retirement involving two parcels totaling 125.51 acres of land in Cheyenne County. Motion by Bishop, second by Schneider to approve the proposal for submittal for reimbursement. Payments to the landowner are set up to be made one-half in September 2011 and one-half in September of 2012. Given that the conservation easement and other agreements would be made and funds legally obligated now, the administrators discussed and voiced no opposition to moving forward with the funding proposal in advance of total payment by South Platte NRD. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

NET Update – Czaplewski briefed the group on recent actions taken by a NET Board Committee to recommend full funding of the third year PBHEP grant (\$1,000,000.00) which will be voted on by their full Board in April. Czaplewski met with NET staff and management last week to review the PBHEP and likely need for a grant extension later this calendar year. The group was reminded of the approaching end of the NET quarter and associated need for submission of documentation of cash and in-kind contributions. Jennifer Schellpeper noted that her understanding is that NDNR funding for PBHEP will continue to roll forward in 2011 and beyond for Project use. The group discussed preliminary plans to make an additional application to the NET for Project funding after current fund availability terms expire. There was general agreement that the current three year Project budget would suffice for 2011 and during a possible additional year extension of NET grant funding (should it be requested and granted).

Next Meetings- Chairman Miller reminded the group that the next meeting is scheduled for May 3, 2011, starting at 11:00 a.m. CDST. Future meetings are scheduled for July 5 (starting at 1:00 p.m.) and September 6 (starting at 1:00 p.m.). The meeting previously scheduled for November 1 was changed to November 3, 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 12:10 p.m.