

Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – Twin Platte NRD

May 3, 2011

Call to Order and Attendance – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. Sponsors and Partners in attendance were: Ron Bishop, Duane Woodward and Mark Czaplewski (Central Platte NRD), Kent Miller and Ann Dimmitt (Twin Platte NRD), Kyle Liebig (South Platte NRD), John Thorburn (Tri-Basin NRD), Ron Cacek and Tina Kurtz (North Platte NRD), Jim Schneider and Jennifer Schellpeper (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), and John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy). 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 – Ann Dimmitt requested a new item entitled “TPNRD/SPNRD Re-Use Pits Recharge Demonstration Project” be added to the agenda and Ron Bishop requested a new item entitled “CPNRD Conjunctive Management Projects” be added to the agenda. With the agreement of the group, Chairman Miller added both items to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes – Motion by Jim Schneider, second by Kyle Liebig to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2011, meeting as distributed in advance of the meeting. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Committee Reports –

Education and Outreach Committee – Czaplewski reported on behalf of the Committee that they met via conference call on April 20. Discussions centered on following up on NET public relations activities associated with the award of the third year grant.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee – No report.

Water Tracking and Accounting Committee – No report.

Financial Report – Czaplewski provided the financial report including the April 22, 2011, PBHEP water acquisition budget documents distributed in advance of the meeting. In advance of funding decisions to be addressed later in the meeting, the total PBHEP water acquisition funds used or committed are \$2,152,491.52. Schneider re-emphasized the need to more aggressively pursue water acquisition projects.

Update on DNR Ground Water Recharge Projects – Schneider distributed a handout detailing the status of contracted groundwater recharge demonstration projects. The DNR proposes that funding come from the NRD’s involved (40%), the DNR (40%), and the NET (20%). If the NET does not reimburse the NRD for 20% of total costs, DNR will reimburse the NRD for up to 10% of the total costs, resulting in a 50:50 contribution split. The project is neither a Type 1 nor Type 2 project that involves the permanent or temporary retirement of irrigation water consumptive use, and therefore it requires review by the PBHEP Administrators independent of the Trial Protocol adopted in June of June, 2010.

Nineteen contracts have been entered into with various irrigation districts and canal companies across the upper and central Platte Basin. Project costs include a fixed maximum dollar amount if the water is

delivered for at least 30 days. If the water is delivered for fewer days, then the payment is pro-rated based on the number of days of diversion. Project maximum costs (\$281,000.00) and contribution splits were reviewed. Actual diversions are to be tracked and reported and will be the basis of final contributions. DNR staff will work with the PBHEP Water Tracking and Accounting Committee to review the calculation of Project water recharged and discuss the calculation/modeling of accretions to the stream. Similar project diversions may occur this coming fall. Related DNR permits would apply to both spring and fall diversions.

TPNRD/SPNRD Re-Use Pits Recharge Demonstration Project – Ann Dimmit reviewed documents distributed in advance of the meeting and provided a *PowerPoint* presentation detailing the Twin Platte/South Platte NRDs Re-use Recharge Demonstration Project. The Project is proposed to use existing structures along the Western Irrigation District Canal in Deuel and Keith Counties and works in association with the DNR Groundwater Recharge Demonstration Project. This Project further incorporates recharge into 12 re-use pits between the Western Canal and the South Platte River to study and quantify the recharge of these pits when canal water is diverted prior to the Canal Board’s call on the river. Payments for project use of the pits include \$500 for pits needing no modification and \$750-\$1000 for pits needing modification prior to use. The NRDs will monitor area water levels to better determine water movement and recharge values. The total estimated cost of the project is \$6,000.00. Motion by Schneider, second by Bishop to support the Twin Platte/South Platte NRD Re-use Pits Recharge Demonstration Project described in their letter dated April 27, 2011. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Central Platte NRD Funding Proposal – Package #4 – Bishop and Czaplewski reviewed the Central Platte NRD funding proposal #4 distributed in advance of the meeting and requested its approval. The proposal includes funding levels of Central Platte NRD \$179,520.00 (40%), DNR \$179,520.00 (40%) and NET \$89,760.00 (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 five conservation easements involved are calculated to result in the annual retirement of 215.0 acre-feet to the river. As detailed in the materials distributed in advance, the PBHEP funding sources remaining available to Central Platte NRD for the first three years include \$93,833.91 of NRD contributions, \$93,833.91 of DNR contributions and \$46,646.95 of NET contributions. With this proposal, the Central Platte NRD will have exceeded its PBHEP three-year contribution by \$85,686.09. Similarly, DNR and NET will have exceeded their budgets for Central Platte NRD water acquisitions by \$85,686.09 and \$42843.05, respectively. In keeping with Section 5.02.4.3 of the PBHEP Interlocal Cooperation Agreement, Central Platte NRD requested the release of PBHEP water acquisition funds currently budgeted to other of the NRD’s involved to cover these amounts. The group discussed approaches to release such funds. Motion by Thorburn, second by Cacek to approve the proposal for submittal for reimbursement, with funds to be released by the other NRD’s proportionate to their respective PBHEP water acquisition budget shares. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Central Platte NRD Funding Proposal – Package #5 – Bishop and Czaplewski reviewed the Central Platte NRD funding proposal #5 distributed in advance of the meeting and requested its approval. The conservation easements involved were acquired in advance of the NET award of the PBHEP grant (prior to February 5, 2009) and therefore do not qualify for NET funding. The proposal includes funding levels of Central Platte NRD \$927,954.50 (50%) and DNR \$927,954.50 (50%) for a total of \$1, 855,909.00. 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 seventeen conservation easements involved are calculated to result in the annual retirement of 1,016.14 acre-feet to the river. With this proposal (and factoring in budget affects related to Central Platte NRD’s

Package #4), the Central Platte NRD would exceed its PBHEP three-year contribution by \$1,013,640.59. Concerns were expressed by Schneider and others that funding of this proposal with 50:50 funding by the NRD and DNR would affect PBHEP's ability to fully utilize available NET funds. With LB229 remaining for vote by the Unicameral and given its potential to affect future PBHEP funding, the Administrators tabled a decision on this proposal until the next Administrators meeting.

(Adjourned for lunch at 11:55 a.m. – Reconvened at 1:25 p.m.)

Central Platte NRD Conjunctive Management Projects – Bishop presented a *PowerPoint* presentation on Central Platte NRD's Conjunctive Management Projects associated with the Cozad, 30-Mile, and Orchard-Alfalfa Irrigation Districts. The Project would involve operation of the canals to conjunctively manage surface and groundwater activities, provide benefits to Platte River stream flows, assist in canal district maintenance and rehabilitation, and better assure the canal districts continued operation and benefits to groundwater recharge, supply and quality. Bishop noted that many tasks remain to be worked out and that additional details would be presented at future meetings. The Projects have the potential to annually provide as much as 20,000 ac/ft of water to the river. Preliminary cost estimates for a 50% acquisition in the three districts could amount to nearly \$7 million. Water rights transfer issues and coordination with officials from the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program continue. Motion by Thorburn, second by Liebig to support in concept the utilization of PBHEP funding for the Central Platte NRD Conjunctive Management Projects. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Schneider's requested the development of a comparison of PBHEP available funding and PBHEP Project costs to get a better handle on where we are from a broader financial perspective.

Next Meetings- Chairman Miller reminded the group that the next meeting is scheduled for July 5, 2011, starting at 10:30 a.m. CDST. Future meetings are scheduled for September 6, 2011, (starting at 1:00 p.m.) and 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 2:40 p.m.