

# Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – Twin Platte NRD Office

May 5, 2010

**Call to Order and Attendance** – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 10:36 a.m. CDST. Sponsors and Partners in attendance were: Jim Schneider, Jesse Bradley and Bob Bettger (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), Ron Bishop 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 John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy). One guest in attendance was: James Huntwork (NRCS). Miller noted that the PBHEP abides by the Open Meetings Act in conducting business and that a copy of the Act was displayed 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.

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

**Financial Report** – Czaplewski discussed the financial reports distributed in advance of the meeting, including a roll-up of in-kind and cash contributions through the previous NET quarterly report, and 3-Year overall budget status (dated April 28, 2010). Czaplewski noted that reimbursement requests to the DNR for conservation easement packages approved at the last PBHEP Administrators meeting will be sent in the near future directly from the sponsoring entities (i.e., Central Platte NRD and South Platte NRD), assuming the administrators approve the associated protocol zone maps being advanced later on the agenda by the Water Tracking and Accounting Committee.

## **Committee Reports** –

Education and Outreach Committee - Czaplewski reported on the activities of the Education and Outreach Committee, noting their continuing development of a PBHEP website. Once the website is up and running, Czaplewski will distribute link information.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee - Thorburn reported the Committee hasn't met since the last meeting of the administrators.

Water Tracking and Accounting Committee - Kyle Liebig reported the Committee last met on April 20, noting their focus was work related to the zone maps associated with the "PBHEP Protocol for Funds" and CALMIT remote sensing data correction and 2010 acquisition. Liebig noted that, in accordance with recent direction from the administrators, the Committee developed and approved a RFP for the "Modernized Classification of 1997 Land Use in the COHYST Model Area". Matt Bohnenkamp and Rich Holloway would act as leads for the effort, coordinating with the Water Tracking and Accounting Committee. Liebig recommended the administrators approving distribution of the RFP as advanced by the Committee. The group discussed how the project links to COHYST and the Western Nebraska Water Use Models. Motion by Schneider, second by Bishop to approve moving forward to release the request for proposal as developed by the Water Tracking and Accounting Committee and requesting the Committee to coordinate the effort with COHYST and Western Nebraska Water Use Model entities and request that proposals be due no later than June 30, 2010. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

The Committee was asked to have the short list of candidates for review and selection at the administrators by the July 6, 2010, meeting.

Liebig reported on plans for 2010 CALMIT data gathering an analysis, including plans developed for ground truthing this coming growing season. The Committee was directed to investigate the least expensive and best option and to move forward with getting it done for 2010. The Committee plans to continue detailed planning when they meet later this month.

As directed, the Water Tracking and Accounting Committee also tentatively approved Protocol zone maps working with DNR personnel. Copies of the zone maps were distributed and discussed. Motion by Schneider, second by Bishop to approve the Committee recommended zone maps and incorporate them into the previously approved "Protocol for PBHEP Funds". Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. The DNR will incorporate previously made editorial changes to the Protocol with "cleaned up" zone maps which will include revised legends and distribute finalized versions to the group. The group reinforced the understanding that the Protocol and associated zone maps may be adjusted in the future as appropriate by the administrators.

**Federal Programs Update** – Bob Bettger and James Huntwork provided an update on plans to submit the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program Partnership Agreement Proposal for the "Ogallala/Platte River Recovery AWEPP". Comments were solicited on a final draft of the application distributed at the meeting. DNR continues to work with NRCS representatives to finalize the Nebraska proposal and submit it in advance of the May 17<sup>th</sup> deadline. The NRD's were encouraged to submit letters of support. Bettger noted that we will hopefully hear on approval or rejection of the application by July. Timing will be important given the fact that the NRCS would need to begin to obligate any funding by the end of the current fiscal year (September 30, 2010). Payments would be made for 5 years, based on practice payment schedules that vary across the basin. Lands enrolled in the program could be linked to permanent retirement of irrigation with other projects such as PBHEP and could be converted to dryland cropland, grassland or wildlife habitat.

**Next Meetings-** At Chairman Miller's suggestion, the group agreed to start meeting every other month rather than every month. The previously scheduled meetings on June 1 and August 3, 2010 are cancelled. Future meetings were scheduled for July 6, September 7, and November 1, 2010 (all starting at 1:00 p.m. Central Time) with all meetings being held at the offices of Twin Platte NRD in North Platte.

**Adjourn** – The meeting was adjourned at 11: 50 a.m. CDST.