

Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – Twin Platte NRD

July 13, 2012

Call to Order and Attendance – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Sponsors in attendance were: Kent Miller and Ann Dimmitt (Twin Platte NRD), Ron Bishop, Duane Woodward and Mark Czaplowski (Central Platte NRD), Rod Horn and Travis Glanz (South Platte NRD), Larry Reynolds and John Thorburn (Tri-Basin NRD), Ron Cacek and Tina Kurtz (North Platte NRD), and Jesse Bradley and Heather Hurst (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources). Partners and guests present were: John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy), Jerry Kenny (Platte River Recovery Implementation Program) and Dean Edson (NARD). 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 – No changes were made to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes – Motion by Ron Bishop, second by Rod Horn to approve the minutes of the May 1, 2012, meeting as distributed in advance of the meeting. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Financial Report – Czaplowski provided the financial report including a discussion of the PBHEP Funding Summary spreadsheet (dated July 9, 2012) distributed in advance of the meeting. Including updated numbers associated with the North Platte NRD Labovitz conservation easement, total PBHEP funds spent and committed are \$14,772,638.77 leaving an estimated remaining balance of \$227,361.23. However, it was pointed out that the estimated value noted in the table related to implementation of spring 2012 DNR Groundwater Recharge Demonstration Project (\$257,667.00) will likely be reduced to an actual expenditure of around \$1000 and none of the estimated value previously incorporated related to the Twin Platte/South Platte NRD Re-use Pits Recharge Project for this past spring (\$7,500) was expended. Factoring in these changes, the revised remaining balance of funds as yet not spent or committed currently is \$491,528.23.

Trial Protocol (Updated Tables) – Czaplowski briefed the group about three recently processed conservation easements that, using the originally developed land values contained in the “Trial Protocol for PBHEP Funds” (2010), would only be eligible for a discounted reimbursement from DNR. However, after contacting the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Agricultural Economics (the original source of land value data used in the Trial Protocol) and incorporating updated values (reference the June 2012, Report No. 191, “Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Highlights 2011-2012”) all three conservation easements involved would be eligible for an undiscounted reimbursement. Handouts of the updated tables were distributed and discussed. Given the fact that farmland values have risen significantly in recent years and given the provision in the Trial Protocol for annual updates, it was recommended that the Trial Protocol tables be updated. Motion by Bishop, second by Bradley to amend the Trial Protocol tables to reflect the updated land values as developed based on UNL Report No. 191. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Collaboration with Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP) – Following up on

discussions at the previous PBHEP administrators meeting, the consensus of the group was to defer future collaboration activities with PRRIP to the Platte Basin Coalition.

DNR Ground Water Recharge Demonstration Projects – Bradley reported on the spring 2012 implementation of the Project. Given construction and maintenance activities on various previously participating canals, only the Orchard-Alfalfa irrigation district participated in the spring of 2012 and only for a shortened duration. A fall 2012 implementation is being considered, but will be dependent on river discharge. Related project briefings were held in late June with districts on Project details, similar to discussions held in 2011.

Cozad and Thirty-Mile Canal Rehabilitation Projects Update – Bishop provided a status report on the two canal rehabilitation projects. Phase 1 of the Cozad Canal rehabilitation has been completed. Several hundreds of thousands of dollars of associated billings have been incurred and will be submitted to the NET for partial reimbursement for the previous quarter. The Central Platte NRD board took action in June to approve advertisement for Phase II of the Cozad canal rehabilitation and work will resume this fall and winter on additional canal clearing, reshaping and structure replacement. Limited initial clearing on the lower portion of the Thirty-Mile Canal was completed early last spring and more substantial rehabilitation work will resume this fall. Bishop noted both projects could be completed by the spring of 2013, but realistically, it could take a year beyond that and require an additional extension of the PBHEP NET grant. DNR and Central Platte NRD are developing a Project Agreement for both projects. The agreements are required to be in place prior to DNR reimbursements for projects under PBHEP.

North Platte NRD Funding Proposal – Labovitz Conservation Easement – Cacek and Kurtz reviewed the North Platte NRD funding proposal distributed in advance of the meeting for the Labovitz conservation easement and requested its approval. The proposal includes funding levels from the North Platte NRD of \$62,736.00 (40%), DNR \$62,736.00 (40%) and NET \$31,368.00 (20%) for a total of \$156,840.00. The proposal includes a permanent AWEP contract and Protocol Type 1 permanent groundwater irrigation retirement involving 130.7 acres of certified acres in Scotts Bluff County. Motion by Horn, second by Bishop to approve the Labovitz conservation easement proposal for submittal for reimbursement. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Other – Thorburn updated the group on the initial testing and operation of the North Dry Creek Streamflow Augmentation Project. The system was tested in early June and has operated approximately 12 hours per day (under load control) since that time. Preliminary results indicate additional streamflow has helped with water temperature concerns in the creek.

Next Meetings – Future meetings were previously scheduled for September 5 and November 29, 2012. Plans for additional future meetings were deferred to be further addressed at the Platte Basin Coalition meeting scheduled for later in the day. The meetings are scheduled to start at 10:30 a.m. Central time at the offices of Twin Platte NRD in North Platte.

Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.