

# Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – North Platte Community College

July 6, 2010

**Call to Order and Attendance** – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. CDST. Sponsors and Partners in attendance were: Ron Bishop, Matt Bohnenkamp and Mark Czaplewski (Central Platte NRD), Kent Miller and Ann Dimmitt (Twin Platte NRD), Kyle Liebig (South Platte NRD), Larry Reynolds and John Thorburn (Tri-Basin NRD), Ron Cacek and Tina Kurtz (North Platte NRD), Jim Schneider, (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), Matt Steffl (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission) and John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy). Guests in attendance were: James Huntwork, Curtis Scheele, Kevin Breece, Kristin Miller, Dallas Johansen, Mary Reece (NRCS), and Dean Edson (NARD). 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.

**Approval of Minutes** – Motion by Ron Bishop, second by Larry Reynolds to approve the minutes of the May 5, 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 has not met since the last meeting of the administrators. The Committee has completed initial development of a PBHEP website currently hosted by the Central Platte NRD.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee - Thorburn reported the Committee hasn't met since the last meeting of the administrators. He noted he plans to work with the Committee to complete development of a draft habitat management plan template.

Water Tracking and Accounting Committee - Kyle Liebig reported the Committee last met on April 20. The Committee has continued to work on the project to make corrections to 1997 CALMIT remote sensing data and gather 2010 remote sensing data. 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 have lead for the effort and continue to coordinate with COHYST and Western Water Use Model Area committees. The RFP's have gone out and two proposals were submitted by the late June deadline. Review of the proposals has not yet been completed, but is expected in the near future. The Committee anticipates a July meeting to move forward with contracting plans.

**AWEP Update** – James Huntwork provided an update on recent approval of the Ogallala/Platte River Recovery Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) application. Huntwork went through the details of the new program and emphasized the need for quick action to encourage sign up during, what looks to be a short sign up period. 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 or temporary retirement of irrigation with other projects such as PBHEP and could be converted to dryland cropland, grassland or wildlife habitat. Larry Reynolds voiced concern about the fact that the program does not currently cover the conversion of subirrigated croplands (not physically irrigated) despite the fact

that some NRD's certify such subirrigated lands as irrigated for such crops as alfalfa. Motion by Reynolds, second by Ron Bishop to advance correspondence on behalf of PBHEP sponsors and partners to appropriate congressional delegates voicing concern that the Ogallala/Platte River AWEP payments are not eligible for subirrigated lands with a history of irrigation and certified as irrigated by local NRD's. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. The administrators asked that such correspondence be distributed via email as draft for comment before sending. Motion by Bishop, second by Reynolds to actively pursue local NRCS office support for the aforementioned recommended change to the Ogallala/Platte River AWEP coverage of subirrigated cropland conversions when such lands have a history of irrigation and have been certified as irrigated by the local NRD. Motion passed by roll call vote with Jim Schneider abstaining. Such follow-up would involve working with such groups as The Nature Conservancy's Farm Bill Advisory Committee.

Huntwork explained AWEP payment limitations, practice payment criteria, deadlines and the need for execution of a Partnership Agreement with DNR. Payments will be made on a per acre basis, not an acre/foot of water saved to the river basis. Motion by Bishop, second by Ron Cacek to establish the Ad Hoc Ranking Review Committee consisting of the Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee with the addition of Mary Reece (NRCS), Ann Dimmit (TPNRD), and Jennifer Schellpeper (DNR) to review AWEP ranking elements. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. The Ad Hoc Committee was directed to consider such ranking factors as depletion percentage maps, cover types, and permanent vs. temporary conversions.

**Other** – Czaplowski reminded the group of the need to provide their quarterly in-kind contribution documentation to him for submittal to the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Copies of the final Trial PBHEP funding Protocol were distributed.

**Next Meetings-** Chairman Miller reminded the group of planned future meetings scheduled for September 7 (starting at 1:00 p.m. CDST) and November 1, 2010 (starting at 11:00 a.m. CST) in North Platte. The group agreed to additional meetings on the first Tuesday of every other month, including January 4, March 1, May 3, 2011 (starting at 11:00 a.m. Central) at the offices of Twin Platte NRD in North Platte.

**Adjourn** – The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m. CDST.