

# Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – Twin Platte NRD

August 18, 2011

**Call to Order and Attendance** – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 10:16 a.m. Sponsors and Partners in attendance were: Ron Bishop, Duane Woodward, Matt Bohnenkamp 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), Tina Kurtz (North Platte NRD), Jim Schneider, Jennifer Schellpeper and Pat Gottl (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy) and T.J. Walker (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission). Guests in attendance were Dean Edson (NARD) and Jerry Kenny (Platte River Recovery Implementation Program). 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. Mark Czaplewski noted that with Tim McCoy's recent promotion and Matt Steffl's transfer to the NGPC office in Alliance, T.J. Walker has been named the NGPC's PBHEP Administrator and Keith Koupal is his alternate. Koupal will also serve on the Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee.

**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 Bishop, second by Jim Schneider to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2011, meeting as distributed in advance of the meeting. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

## **Committee Reports** –

Education and Outreach Committee – No report.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee – No report.

Water Tracking and Accounting Committee – No report.

**Financial Report** – Czaplewski provided the financial report including a discussion of the PBHEP water acquisition budget spreadsheet and the PBHEP Funding Summary spreadsheet (both dated August 5, 2011) distributed in advance of the meeting. Changes to the water acquisition budget included funding of the Tri-Basin NRD North Dry Creek Project and changes related to Central Platte NRD's conservation easement package #4 and associated release of funds. The Funding Summary spreadsheet was developed as requested at the last Administrators meeting. It summarizes funding levels and projects the Administrators have taken formal action on. In advance of funding decisions to be addressed later in the meeting, the total PBHEP water acquisition funds used or committed are \$2,635,712.99.

**LB229 Update** – Schneider reported on the DNR's drafting of an application to the NET as directed under LB 229 requesting \$9.9 million for the Platte Basin Water Management Action Initiative (PBWMAI). In essence, the PBWMAI will become the principal funding mechanism for the central and upper Platte basin in Nebraska, likely replacing the need for future PBHEP applications to NET. Schneider discussed a draft of the application distributed in advance of the meeting including planned funding from the WRCF and the combined NRD funding match of \$6.6 million (\$2.2 million for each of three years). Comments on the draft were requested in order to submit the application in advance of the September 6 deadline.

**Update on DNR Ground Water Recharge Demonstration Projects** – Schneider discussed a memo he distributed via email on August 17, 2011, providing a status report and documenting DNR’s final expenditures for the spring recharge and flood flow mitigation projects. DNR requested approval of the related expenditures as detailed in Table 1 of the memo. Motion by Rod Horn, second by Tina Kurtz to approve the final expenditures associated with the Ground Water Recharge Demonstration Projects including \$103,067.00 from DNR and \$154,600.00 by the NRD’s, and that they be accounted for in the PBHEP budget and approved for reimbursement from NET. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Copies of final executed contracts were distributed for submittal to NET. The DNR and NRD’s need to provide Czaplewski with any invoices and documentation of their payment to the canal companies for inclusion in the next quarterly funding request from NET.

Details of a proposed fall continuation of the project were discussed. Based on current expected flows from the Bureau of Reclamation and expected operating plans of CNPP&ID, DNR believes that excess flows will be available at the end of the irrigation season. DNR has contacted the irrigation districts involved in the spring project to request coordination for a fall demonstration project. DNR has water rights in place for fall diversions and they will coordinate execution of related contracts. Motion by Bishop, second by Kurtz to support the continuation of the ground water recharge demonstration project as described by the DNR at the March PBHEP meeting, PBHEP expects a more detailed project proposal will be developed and brought to PBHEP Administrators for further approval once contracts are signed and that the project expenditures will be approved for submittal to NET once the project is complete. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

**Central Platte NRD Funding Proposal – Package #5** – In light of the desire to fully utilize NET funding and given that all details related to LB229 funding are not finalized, Bishop suggested the Central Platte NRD funding proposal #5 continue to be tabled for the time being. The consensus of the group was to let the matter remain tabled.

**Central Platte NRD Funding Proposal - Thirty-Mile Canal Rehabilitation Project** – Bishop reviewed details of the Thirty-Mile Canal Rehabilitation Project as provided to the Administrators in advance of the meeting. The purpose and scope of the canal rehabilitation were discussed including a detailed description of the system and system capacity, plan of development and associated cost estimates. At the present time a two-year schedule is planned for the system rehab. The cost estimate for the major rehab project improvements is \$2,776,853. Czaplewski noted the related need to release funds to Central Platte NRD and to seek the approval of NET for extending use of their funds for the project. Bishop noted the recent application before DNR for related permanent water rights to divert natural flow for the purpose of ground water recharge. The diversion of flows considered “excess” to those identified in the PRRIP Agreement will serve to enhance Platte River flows through recharge in an economical means for the State of Nebraska and the NRD’s to help return to 1997 levels than through the retirement of irrigated acres. The enhanced flows to the Platte will also help Central Platte NRD and the State of Nebraska return the area back to a fully appropriated status. Considerable discussion ensued including status of negotiations with other canal districts in the region. Bishop explained the tailoring of four different such arrangements with four privately owned regional districts (i.e., Six Mile, Thirty-Mile, Cozad and Orchard-Alfalfa) to suit their particular needs and long-range plans while still providing tangible environmental, economic and social benefits.

Motion by Horn, second by Miller to support the long-term lease and canal rehabilitation by Central Platte

NRD of Thirty-Mile Canal for a conjunctive management project for the purpose of enhancing streamflows as described by the Central Platte NRD. PBHEP releases funds to Central Platte NRD from the other NRD's proportionate to their respective PBHEP water acquisition budget shares. PBHEP also recognizes a two year schedule of rehabilitation is anticipated and costs are estimated at \$2,776,835; therefore discussion with NET will be required in regards to continued funding beyond the current funding schedule. PBHEP also recognizes that this is not a Type 1 or Type 2 project as described in the current trial protocol and therefore it requires review by the PBHEP administrators independent of the Trial Protocol adopted in June of 2010. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

**Central Platte NRD Funding Proposal - Cozad Canal Rehabilitation Project** - Bishop reviewed details of the Cozad Canal Rehabilitation Project as provided to the Administrators in advance of the meeting. The purpose and scope of the canal rehabilitation were discussed including a section by section evaluation of the canal structures and embankments, potential operational issues and associated cost estimates. At the present time a three-year schedule is planned for the system rehab. The cost estimate for the rehabilitation project improvements is \$7,739,800. Similar to the previously discussed Thirty-Mile Canal Rehab, Czaplewski noted the related need to release funds to Central Platte NRD and to seek the approval of NET for extending use of their funds for the project. Motion by John Thorburn, second by Horn to support the long-term lease and rehabilitation of the Cozad Canal by Central Platte NRD for a conjunctive management project for the purpose of enhancing streamflows as described by the Central Platte NRD. PBHEP releases the funds to Central Platte NRD from the other NRD's proportionate to their respective PBHEP water acquisition budget shares. PBHEP also recognizes a three year schedule of rehabilitation is anticipated and costs are estimated at \$7,739,800; therefore discussion with NET will be required in regards to continued funding beyond the current funding schedule. PBHEP also recognizes that this is not a Type 1 or Type 2 project as described in the current trial protocol and therefore it requires review by the PBHEP administrators independent of the Trial Protocol adopted in June of 2010. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

**TPNRD/SPNRD Re-Use Pits Recharge Demonstration Project** – Ann Dimmit reviewed a document distributed in advance of the meeting regarding the Twin Platte/South Platte NRDs Re-use Recharge Demonstration Project. The total requested contribution for the project is \$6,500.00 to be split 40% by the two NRD's involved (South Platte NRD \$400 and Twin Platte NRD \$2,200), 40% by DNR and 20% by NET. Motion by Bishop, second by Thorburn to support funding of the Twin Platte/South Platte NRD Re-use Pits Recharge Demonstration Project as described in their letter dated July 6, 2011. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

**Other** – Czaplewski requested that Central Platte NRD, DNR and any other PBHEP sponsors or partners interested arrange for a meeting with NET staff and Board to discuss the need for a potential 3 year extension of the PBHEP funding well in advance of the current June 30, 2012, grant expiration date. NET Board action is required to extend use of grant funding.

**Next Meetings-** The previously planned meetings for September 6 and November 3, 2011 were cancelled. Future meetings were scheduled for October 3, 2011 and January 11, March 6, May 1, and July 11, 2012, all meetings starting at 10:00 a.m. Central at the offices of Twin Platte NRD in North Platte. PBHEP Administrators meetings will normally be followed by Platte Over-Appropriated Committee meetings starting at 1:30 p.m. Central at the offices of Twin Platte NRD.

**Adjourn** – The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.