

Platte Basin Habitat Enhancement Project

Meeting Minutes

North Platte, NE – North Platte Community College

September 7, 2010

Call to Order and Attendance – With a quorum present, Chairman Kent Miller called the meeting to order at 1:28 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), Rod Horn and Kyle Liebig (South Platte NRD), John Thorburn (Tri-Basin NRD), Ron Cacek and Tina Kurtz (North Platte NRD), Jim Schneider, Jennifer Schellpeper and Jesse Bradley (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources), Tim McCoy and Matt Steffl (Nebraska Game and Parks Commission) and John Heaston (The Nature Conservancy). Guests in attendance were: James Huntwork (NRCS), and Jerry Kenny (PRRIP). 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 John Thorburn to approve the minutes of the July 6, 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 development of a PBHEP website currently hosted by the Central Platte NRD. Jim Schneider inquired about the possibility of the Committee's help in AWEP-related outreach activities. Czaplewski will follow-up with the Committee.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee - Thorburn reported the Committee, working through e-mail, has completed development of the PBHEP habitat management plan for grassland easements. The plan provides a general template for management activities that would be tailored to the site-specific needs and goals of a parcel with a PBHEP conservation easement. Thorburn moved that the PBHEP Management Plan for Grassland Easements template be adopted by the administrators, second by Bishop. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote. Thorburn also reported on the Committee's work with the Ad Hoc Ranking Review Committee to help refine the AWEP application ranking guidelines.

Water Tracking and Accounting Committee - Kyle Liebig reported the Committee met on July 21 and August 19. The Committee continues to discuss plans to revise existing CALMIT remote sensing data and develop a recommendation on the matter for consideration by the administrators. The Committee will review related work currently underway in the North and South Platte NRD's which should be completed this fall.

Financial Report – Miller and Czaplewski provided a financial report, including a roll-up of in-kind and cash contributions through June 2010 (the closing date of the most recent NET quarterly report). Czaplewski reviewed the PBHEP water acquisition budget distributed in advance of the meeting, noting that it included values from the Central Platte NRD funding proposal to be addressed later on the agenda. Czaplewski noted that if the Central Platte NRD proposal is approved, it would involve use of third year budget funds. Bishop noted that, in accordance with provisions in the PBHEP Interlocal Cooperation

Agreement, subsequent funding proposals from Central Platte NRD may request unused funds from other PBHEP sponsors. Schneider encouraged the sponsors to more aggressively pursue water acquisition projects in accordance with approved plans and budgets.

AWEP Update – James Huntwork provided an update on the Ogallala/Platte River Recovery Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) sign ups. Huntwork noted that despite the brief sign up timeframe for 2010 AWEP funding, the landowner response was remarkable. He distributed a handout showing preliminary data noting a total of 90 applications requesting an estimated \$2.7 million on over 4,600 acres including both temporary and permanent easements. Some of these applications may yet be cancelled or found to be ineligible. Funding requests exceed funds available for 2010 and Huntwork encouraged the continuation of AWEP signups for future funding opportunities. Given the fact that the NRD's involved may not know of temporary easements, and given DNR biannual reporting requirements (as Program Partner with NRCS) the group discussed the need to efficiently communicate AWEP sign up data. Huntwork and other area NRCS representatives will work to provide the group with needed data as it becomes available.

Czaplewski discussed the development of the August 27, 2010, letter to the NRCS State Conservationist regarding concerns that AWEP payments are not available for sub-irrigated lands with a history of irrigation and certified as irrigated by local NRD's. After considerable discussion the group agreed that, in advance of any contact with the congressional delegation, we would contact the NRCS Chief regarding our concerns, making sure to coordinate our activities with the State Conservationist. Chairman Miller will follow-up with Steve Chick. Czaplewski was directed to develop PBHEP letterhead stationery. Central Platte NRD's address will be used on the letterhead since they provide the Project Coordinator. Schneider will check with DNR legal counsel regarding whether they can be listed on such stationery before it is finalized.

Central Platte NRD-NDNR-NGPC Draft Agreement regarding Ownership Transfer – Czaplewski discussed the draft Agreement distributed in advance of the meeting related to the DNR's need for property right transfer language similar to that included in the PBHEP conservation easement templates. Easements already acquired or in process by Central Platte NRD in advance of the approval of the templates did not include this language. The Agreement was drafted by Central Platte NRD legal counsel in an effort to reconcile this matter for easements in the first and second funding proposals and in a few additional easements working their way through their system. McCoy and Schneider noted that NGPC and DNR legal counsel would need to review the Agreement prior to signing. Any comments are to be directed to Central Platte NRD's legal counsel in hopes of finalizing the document in advance of the November meeting.

Central Platte NRD Second Request for Funding – Bishop and Czaplewski reviewed the Central Platte NRD funding proposal distributed in advance of the meeting and requested its approval. The proposal includes funding levels of Central Platte NRD \$245,194.09 (40%), DNR \$245,194.09 (40%) and NET \$122,597.05 (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 eight conservation easements involved are calculated to result in the annual retirement of 462.5 acre-feet to the river. Motion by Thorburn, second by Horn to approve funding for the proposal as presented. Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote. Schneider clarified that his vote in support of the motion should not be construed as final funding approval by the DNR and that DNR would still need to review the detailed request made to them as appropriate.

Other – Czaplewski noted that PBHEP Habitat Management and Monitoring Committee member Emily Munter has left her employment with NGPC and taken a new job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and has requested she remain on the distribution list for PBHEP matters. The group agreed to keep her on

the distribution list and NGPC representatives will consider her possible replacement on the Committee. Czaplewski noted the pending resignation of Lisa Beethe from the NET (effective September 10, 2010) and the upcoming reassignment of Steve Chick within the NRCS. He reminded the group of the upcoming need to provide quarterly in-kind contribution documentation for submittal to the NET in October.

Next Meetings- Chairman Miller reminded the group that the next meeting is scheduled for November 1, 2010 (starting at 11:00 a.m. CST-subsequently changed to 2:00 p.m.) in North Platte. Future meetings have already been scheduled for January 4 (starting time changed from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. CST), March 1 (starting at 11:00 a.m. CST), and May 3, 2011 (starting at 11:00 a.m. Central) at the offices of Twin Platte NRD in North Platte. The remainder of 2011 meetings will be scheduled at the November 2010 meeting.

Adjourn – The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m. CDST.