

Meeting Summary

Project: 2nd Increment Stakeholder Process for Central Platte NRD Integrated Management Plan (IMP)

Subject: Stakeholder Meeting #1

Date: Tuesday, August 14, 2018 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: Holiday Inn, Kearney NE

Topics:

1. HDR led the stakeholder group through introductions and the open meetings act. Notifications were published in the Kearney and Grand Island newspapers. Project binders (including copies of the agenda and presentations) were handed out to stakeholders.
2. HDR led the stakeholder group through the state statutes pertaining to basin wide planning (BWP) and integrated management planning (IMP) as well as history of the overappropriated designation in the Upper Platte River Basin (2004), the subsequent basin wide planning, and the integrated management planning as a result.

The purpose of these planning meetings is to update Central Platte NRD's IMP in coordination with the update of the Upper Platte BWP that is occurring in parallel. The vision is that the IMP goals and objectives will complement the BWP goals and objectives.

3. NeDNR led the stakeholder group through the evolution of the state statutes and the development of the fully-appropriated/overappropriated evaluation conducted by the NeDNR. The evaluations were a result of groundwater disputes between groundwater users as well as surface water disputes on the Republican River. Recognizing that surface water and groundwater are interconnected, and with the purpose to protect existing appropriators, the state of Nebraska passed LB962 and the Groundwater Management and Protection Act. The annual basin evaluations are a way to account for the water supplies and demands in the basin, provide a comparison and allow for monitoring.

In 2004, the hydrologically connected portions of the Upper Platte River Basin above the Kearney Canal diversion (near Elm Creek) was designated over-appropriated and the remaining areas were designated fully appropriated. The resultant BWP and Nebraska New Depletions Plan called for groundwater depletions post-1997 to be offset (return consumption to 1997 levels through projects, retiming, or retirement of acres) by 2043. This amount was estimated as 1900 AF for the CPNRD.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP), a joint effort by the Department of Interior and the states of Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska, is an example of project that supplements water to the Platte River to support endangered species.

BWP is regional in nature while IMP is specific to each NRD. The IMP is a coordinated effort with the NeDNR and the CPNRD with specific goals and targets for the CPNRD. The CPNRD has separate goals for the overappropriated and fully appropriated areas. The IMP includes groundwater controls, surface water controls, and a monitoring plan.

4. CPNRD adopted its first IMP in 2009 (modified in 2012). The purpose of the current planning effort is to develop the second increment IMP for the CPNRD in conjunction with the development of the Upper Platte BWP second increment planning.
5. CPNRD walked the stakeholder group through the existing CPNRD IMP in its entirety. The existing IMP vision statement is to balance water supply and uses and to return its overappropriated areas to fully appropriated status. The IMP includes six goals and six objectives. It includes incentives, water banking, monitoring studies, post-1997 depletion targets, and authorized controls.

The revision of the IMP in 2012 was to break out the fully appropriated area below Chapman and included separate language to allow limited development in this area. Development was allowed for 2012 but has not been allowed since. CPNRDs recommendation for the 2nd increment plan is treat all fully appropriated areas the same (without the language allowing development below Chapman).

CPNRD has taken management actions during the first increment to address post-1997 depletions to the Platte River. They have diverted excess flow multiple years in the Dawson County canals to retime water. Additionally, the CPNRD has retired approximately 2,447 acres. These projects have allowed CPNRD to exceed their 1,900 AF offset requirement.

CPNRD led the stakeholder group through a history of the groundwater and surface water modeling efforts in the Upper Platte River Basin including COHYST.

The COHYST model consists of a watershed model, groundwater model, and surface water routing model that are all interrelated. COHYST uses real world inputs (such as streamflow measurements) as well as simulates changes through time in crop use patterns, irrigation practices, increased demands, and spatial distribution. COHYST estimates both supplies and demands in the basin.

The COHYST model has been updated several times as better science and more data became available. As expected, with each update the modeled results change. One of these changes is a higher estimate of the hydrologic connectivity of the Platte River than originally estimated (higher SDF – especially in lower reach of CPNRD). Because the SDF map has changed (due to better science and data), how has the estimate of post-1997 depletions changed (likely higher)? We would need to update this offset requirement in the 2nd increment IMP language.

Finally, CPNRD led a discussion of lessons learned from their experience during the first increment IMP implementation. Briefly, these are as follows:

- *Water is expensive and scarce*
- *Shortage of water is a management problem. The water is available, just not when needed. Solution is retiming of water.*
- *Understand that as technology improves, model results will change and, as a result, targets in the plan will change*
- *Need for better communication between agencies (e.g. NeDNR communication with CPNRD or CPNRD communication with Kearney or Grand Island or between agencies on the various modeling platforms)*
- *Improve timeliness of analyses so can make changes sooner*
- *Challenge defining "what is fully appropriated"?*
- *The current IMP works. Need only make minor refinements to 2nd increment IMP to match the 2nd increment BWP*

6. Discussion of topics to address in the 2nd Increment IMP included the following:

- *Stakeholders found it confusing when talking about different plans (IMP vs BWP vs Nebraska Depletion Plan). Make clear the differences and requirements between each.*
- *Stakeholders provided annual update during 1st increment implementation; however, there was some feedback from stakeholders that they wanted to be more involved throughout the implementation (rather than just receiving an annual report).*
- *Discussion on the need to incorporate a Drought Plan. If water demands can be addressed at the most critical time, then directly supports to Goal #1 of the BWP.*
- *Discussion that there have been no calls from Kearney Canal and question as to whether allowing more excess flow to leave the system than necessary?*

- *Recognized that Dawson County Canal the primary demand not fully satisfied in the CPNRD.*
- *Some discussion on how to address urban growth in Kearney and Grand Island. Stakeholders from these two cities indicated that their average daily demand has decreased; however, their peak daily demand has increased which has resulted in the need for infrastructure improvements.*
- *Urban consumptive use is less than agricultural use. If urban land replaces irrigated land, the consumptive use decreases only if the irrigation use was not transferred to another parcel.*
- *Some discussion on the need to break the analysis of stream depletions above Cozad and downstream of Cozad to better understand system and target mitigation actions appropriately.*
- *Recommendation to continue to use conjunctive management of surface and groundwater rather than buying up acres.*
- *The stakeholders would like to see results from the Robust Review by the next planning meeting.*

7. Public comment - None

Next Meeting: September 18, 2018 at Younes Conference Center