

**MINUTES OF THE
2016 ANNUAL BASIN-WIDE PLAN MEETING FOR
JOINT INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OF
OVERAPPROPRIATED PORTIONS OF THE PLATTE RIVER BASIN**

June 16th, 2016 10:30 a.m. CDT

Monsanto Learning Center
76268 NE-47, Gothenburg, NE

Attendance:

Pat Heath	City of Gering	Brian Barels	NPPD
Carson Sisk	City of Kimball	Dennis Strauch	Pathfinder ID
Don Kraus	CNPPID	Jerry Kenny	PRRIP
Jesse Mintken	CPNRD	Judy Eggleston	Southside ID
Duane Woodward	CPNRD	Rod Horn	SPNRD
Jim Bendfeldt	CPNRD	Travis Glanz	SPNRD
Lyndon Vogt	CPNRD	Bill Halligan	SPNRD
Robert Busch	Gering Ft. Laramie	Kevin Derry	SPNRD
John Engel	HDR	Jared Derry	SPNRD
Dustin Wilcox	NARD	Kathy Narjes	SPNRD
Jennifer Schellpeper	NeDNR	Bernie Fehringer	SPNRD
Jessie Winter	NeDNR	John Thorburn	TBNRD
Melissa Mosier	NeDNR	Larry Reynolds	TBNRD
Beth Eckles	NeDNR	Russell Edeal	TBNRD
Colby Osborn	NeDNR	Tyrell Anderson	TEI
Kathy Benson	NeDNR	Rick Walters	TNC
Frank Albrecht	NGPC	Ann Dimmitt	TPNRD
Gene Zuerlein	NGPC	Kent O. Miller	TPNRD
Keith Koupal	NGPC	Dennis Schilz	Western ID
Barb Cross	NPNRD		
Tracy Zayac	NPNRD		
John Berge	NPNRD		
Chuck Henkel	NPNRD		

- 1) **Introductions:** Schellpeper welcomed the group and started introductions that went around the room. The attendance sheet is included (Attachment A).
- 2) **Review Agenda & Meeting Procedures:** Schellpeper went over the agenda (Attachment B) and meeting procedures. There were no revisions or edits to the agenda.
- 3) **Monitoring & Management Actions**
 - a) **NeDNR Report:** Winter reported that between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2015, the Department issued nine new surface water permits (table 1, page 6 of report). Two of the permits were for temporary construction projects that would expire in one year. Four temporary groundwater recharge permits were issued with a one-year expiration date, and three permanent groundwater recharge permits. The Department issued two dam safety permits (table 2) for livestock waste control. No new municipal or industrial groundwater transfer permits were issued. No offsets were required as the groundwater recharge permits were for excess flows only. Construction and dam safety permits also do not require offsets as per the permit regulations. There were seven cancelled surface

water permits which were temporary groundwater recharge permits that expired within one year of the issue date (table 3). An analysis of depletions was not warranted. Copies of the applications and orders for these permits are available on the website at (<http://dnr.nebraska.gov/iwm/dnr-annual-reports-for-platte-basin-wide-meeting>). The information for the 2005-2010 reporting can be found in previous years' reports, and the data for the 2010-2015 is being compiled and analyzed.

b) NRD Reports

- i) CPNRD:** Mintken provided the 2015 report for CPNRD. The CPNRD currently has 1,028,044 certified irrigated acres, of which 936,554 acres are groundwater, 14,315 acres are surface water, and 77,175 acres are for co-mingled use. There were 160 transfers with 1,955 acres within those transfers being newly certified acres, and 1,094 acres used for offsets. These transfers did not generate net increases. Using the COHYST offset calculator, 160 groundwater acres were retired. CPNRD issued 131 well permits and one perpetual conservation easement on water rights in Dawson County with an estimated accretion in the Platte River of 61.46 acre-feet. At the close of 2015 the water bank had 2,566 acre-feet of water rights available for offsets in the overappropriated area. Woodward reported on other streamflow accretion activities including rehabilitation on three of the Dawson County canals, which are Cozad, Thirty Mile, and Orchard Alfalfa. CPNRD is in the process of re-timing excess flows for all three canals. Diversion for excess flows started in 2011 and has continued to the present time with 37,368 acre-feet being diverted, amounting to 23,900 acre-feet recharged. This resulted in about 80-90 acre-feet of return to the Platte River every month. A collaborative study between NeDNR, NPPD, and CPNRD, the Conjunctive Water Management Study, looks at all the irrigation canals in Dawson County to run scenarios and help optimize how water is managed. A new project being worked on is crop irrigation and demands wherein meters were put on 75 irrigation systems (pivots, SDI, or gravity systems) giving real-time data to look for key information in helping with efficiencies in water use.
- ii) NPNRD:** Berge reported that NPNRD has roughly 153,000 certified acres and pumped about 86,000 acre-feet on those acres for an average of 6.8 inches pumped per acre. This was a relatively low number due to the wet year. NPNRD is currently adding about 500 flow meters to regulated wells in the fully appropriated area of the NRD, which will be completed by the end of the calendar year. Acres retired in the past year were 815, and 150 acres of surface water was temporarily leased. Over the past three years, around 2,000 acres of groundwater was retired, and 450 acres of surface water were leased. NPNRD received a Water Sustainability Fund grant this year to be used for retiring another 1,000 acres of groundwater irrigation in the District. Conservation easements are currently being worked on with NeDNR for this project. A telemetry pilot project was completed for gathering water-use data from irrigation wells. Future annual reports will include information from this data which was partly funded by NeDNR and the Nebraska Environmental Trust. This information will help save money in data collection and is a way for landowners to utilize the information for efficient water management. There were excess flow agreements with 11 surface water districts within the NRD area with 1,100 cfs and 18,000 acre-feet of credit into storage. There will be some rule changes in the future

to help align both basins with each other. And finally, over the past fiscal year, two new programs were designed to reduce consumptive use.

- iii) **SPNRD:** Glanz reported that SPNRD approved five transfers: one gravity system converted to pivots with no consumptive use or expansion of acres, and four industrial transfer permits offset by irrigation allocation. There were only five well replacement permits in the District, two variances that transferred water across sub-area boundaries (from the PRRIP area to the non-PRRIP area). Industrial accounting for 2015 was 25 non-baseline certifications, 17 active industrial wells with approved baselines, and 11 of those pumped approximately 538,000 gallons of water. Within the District, there are 10 municipalities with established baselines that pumped just over 723 million gallons for 2015. SPNRD has 132,492 certified irrigation acres and pumped roughly 78,000 acre-feet (7.1 inches per acre). Retirements for the District amounted to 1,651 acres with a credit of 714 acre-feet benefitting Lodgepole Creek. Other activities being worked on are a study of the hydrogeology of western Nebraska through interpretation of oil logs in order to help better understand groundwater resources, and continued excess flows down the South Platte River.
- iv) **TBNRD:** Thorburn gave the 2015 report and stated that there are 298,000 total irrigated acres in the Platte Basin of the District with 112,000 of those acres being commingled. Certified acre transfers totaled around 79 acres and three groundwater transfers. There were no new water well permits, but there were 18 replacement irrigation wells, and 5 conditional replacements (4 for groundwater; 1 for surface water). A streamflow augmentation well was built in the past year by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP), and four new commercial/industrial well permits.
- v) **TPNRD:** Dimmitt reported that in 2015, TPNRD had 321,000 certified irrigated acres and approved 23 transfers involving 800 acres. The TPNRD's water bank accepted 150 acres, but it is expected that many of these will only remain there for less than one year. TPNRD issued 14 replacement well permits, and 15 new well permits. They continue to work with municipal and industrial users in the establishment and maintenance of annual baselines. It was a good spring with excess flows so the District worked with six of the seven irrigation canal companies to move the water. Landowners are encouraged to have re-use pits and ponds to help store excess flows and recharge the aquifer. The District is also involved in the N-CORPE Project with plans to start construction to the north pipeline in late fall or winter 2016.

c) **Data, Information, Studies**

i) **Progress Toward Increment Goals (measuring the success of the IMPs)**

1. **Annual Review (NeDNR):** Winter reported on the "Report on the Depletions and Mitigations (Accretions) from 2015 Permitted Activities for Central Platte, North Platte, South Platte, Tri-Basin, and Twin Platte Natural Resources Districts for the 2016 Basin-Wide Meeting." Of the permitted activities in 2015, only the NRD groundwater acre transfers required analysis of their impact to stream-flows. CPNRD had 160 permits, NPNRD no permits, SPNRD two permits, TBNRD 8 permits, and TPNRD 23 permits which were evaluated. All of the net impacts were positive and the overall

total net effect was 32.5 acre-feet coming back to the river. This was due to some retired acres, and new use being farther away from the river. By 2019 (the end of the first increment), there is approximately a 40 acre-feet of positive impact to the stream-flows.

2. Projects

- a. **North Dry Creek (TBNRD):** Joint IMP requirements are that TBNRD work back towards 1997 levels of depletion (Attachment C). In order to accomplish this by the year 2020, water use will need to be reduced or flows augmented by about 3,500 acre-feet per year. Regulatory actions state no increase in certified irrigated acres, which has been in place since 2004 in the over-appropriated part of the Platte, and since 2006 in the fully appropriated part of the Platte. Offset projects consisted of retiring irrigated acres, augmentation wells on North Dry Creek, and participating in the J-2 Reservoir project, which gives a credit of 2,040 acre-feet per year through 2019. As with other Districts, TBNRD is also working with Central Nebraska Public Power District to divert high flows from the Platte for purposes of groundwater recharge. Since 2008, over 96,000 acre-feet have been diverted.
- b. **Groundwater Exchange (CPNRD):** Vogt reported on a pilot groundwater exchange program (Attachment D) that was a partnership between CPNRD & NeDNR. This first auction was held in March of this year. The purpose was to assist producers in efficiently using water, assist the State in meeting new depletions, and a tool for meeting the District's IMP goals. Water has to be put back into the river to meet the goals and the hope is to not have to permanently dry up acres. An economic consulting firm was hired to assist in putting together an algorithm. Buyers and sellers had to come into the District office to show where the water is that's being sold, and where the water being bought would end up, in order to prevent negative effects on the river. There are plans to have another auction in November of 2016.
- c. **2015 Excess Flows (NeDNR):** Winter reported the canal recharge projects, which have been ongoing for the past five years (Attachment E). The River has a variable water supply and the Basin is considered overappropriated. The existing basin-wide plan and the integrated management plans have certain goals and objectives that need to be met. The conjunctive water management process helps to maximize water use and minimize impacts to streamflow and groundwater levels. Diverting excess streamflow into unlined canals to recharge groundwater is one example of conjunctive water management. In 2015, there was extreme flooding on South Platte portion of the River in Nebraska. To divert flows, irrigation districts, NRDs, and NeDNR worked together to quickly get the necessary permits and contracts in place. This resulted in a 16,000 acre-foot diversion and 6,500 acre-feet of groundwater recharge which will return to the River over the next several years. Overall, since 2011, more than 86,000 acre-feet of water has been recharged. The spring of 2016 also saw excess flows and the process was put into place again to divert water and recharge groundwater.

3. Update on Studies:

a. Schellpeper reported on three collaborative studies between the NRDs and NeDNR:

- i. The Difference between Current and Fully Appropriated Levels of Development Study has taken a phased approach. In Phase I a consultant was hired to look for methodology. Phase II implemented the methodology, which resulted in some preliminary numbers. Finals numbers should be in place by the end of 2016.
- ii. The Soil and Water Conservation Measures Study is also a phased approach. Phase I is complete (this can be found on the NeDNR website on the Upper Platte page). Phase II is looking more specifically at irrigation and tillage practices and their impact on depletions. This study is being done in the Western Water Use Model (WWUM) area and COHYST model area, and should be completed later this year.
- iii. The Robust Review Study is a complete review of all the NRD and NeDNR activities to gain an understanding of what effect all the management actions are having on streamflow. The scope of work has been developed and some initial results should be available by early 2017.

4) **Second Increment Basin-Wide Planning:** The kickoff meeting is this afternoon with a start time of 1:00 p.m.

5) **Review of Revision to the Basin-Wide Plan or to Individual IMPs:** No revisions in the last year.

6) **Written Requests for Revisions to the Basin-Wide Plan or to Individual IMPs or Disputes:** No requests in the last year.

7) Public Comment Period:

- Don Kraus, CNPPID: Thanked the participants, the NRDs, NeDNR for the significant work done. The 2005-2009 dry years were rough, but in the big picture, continued effort needs to be made to take advantage of wet years. He emphasized the importance of planning to help deter conflicts with closures.
- There were no other public comments.

8) Meeting Summary

a) **Action Items:** Kick-off meeting for the stakeholder process.

b) **Schedule Next Annual Meeting:** The 2017 Annual Meeting for the Upper Platte Basin-Wide Plan will be on June 15, 2017, at 10:30 a.m. CT, with Central Platte NRD as host of the meeting in Grand Island, NE.