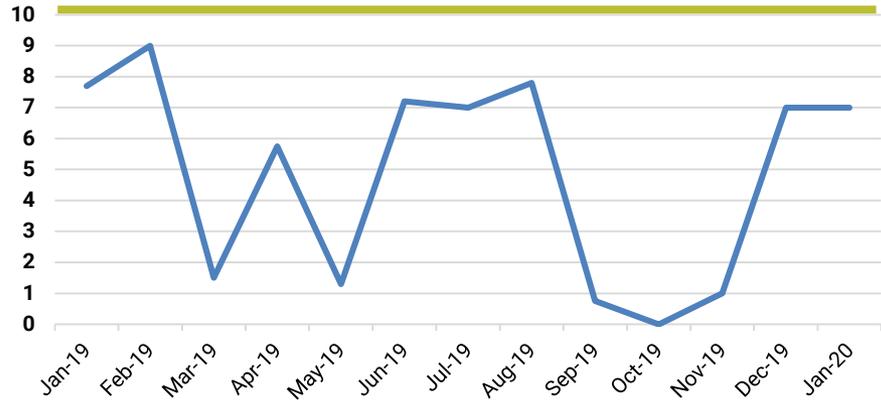
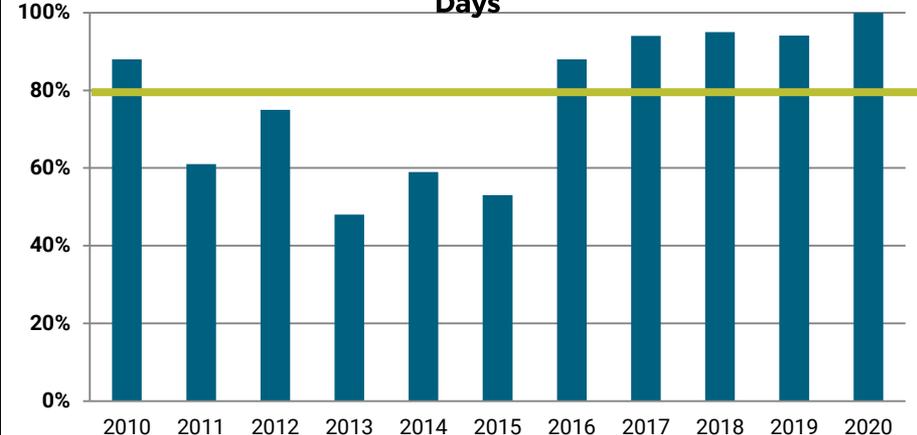


Average Processing Time for New Surface Water Applications, in Weeks

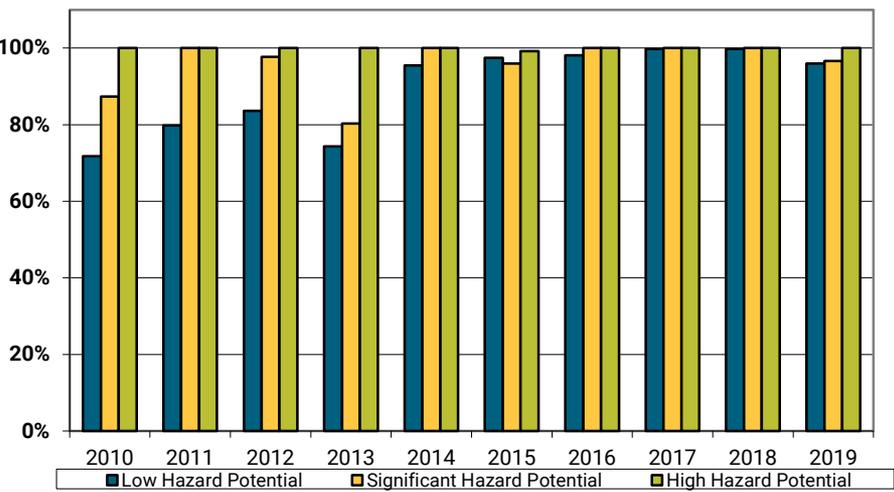


The 2020 processing time goal has been updated to 10 weeks.

Percent Of Dam Applications Approved within 90 Days

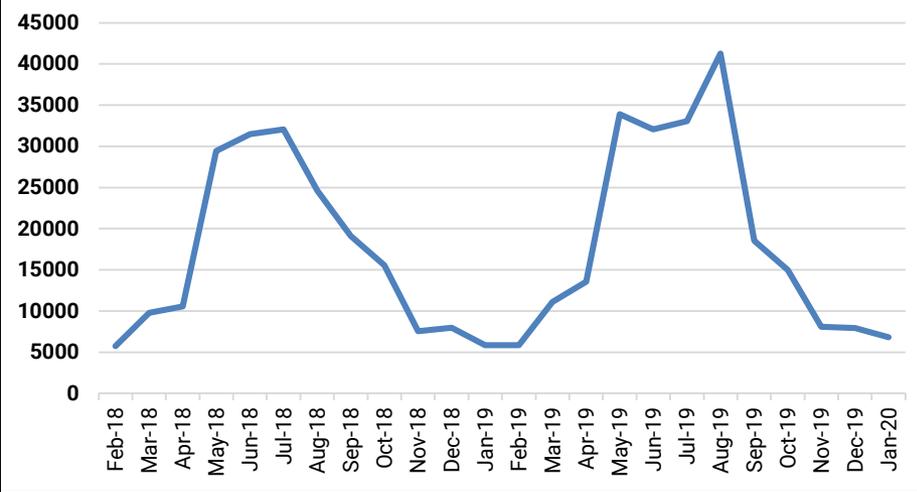


Percent of Dam Inspections Completed by Year



Dam inspections for 2020 are scheduled to begin in March.

NeRAIN Monthly Users



Emerging Issues and Accomplishments

Water Sustainability Fund

On December 18th, 2019 the NRC formally closed-out thirteen completed projects and rolled \$108,277 of previously committed funding into the available balance (due to projects being completed for less than the grant); approved one application for financial assistance to the Omaha combined sewer overflow project, five applications requesting \$250,000 or less, and six applications requesting over \$250,000. In total the NRC allocated over \$17.8 million to applications filed in 2019 including the use of \$2,564,141.04 of the “cap”.

Completed and submitted the 2018-2019 WSF Biennial Report to the clerk of the legislature.

Water Planning

Tri-Basin NRD’s board of directors voted on January 14 to advance a proposed Integrated Management Plan (IMP) to a public hearing, to take place February 11. This IMP is a voluntary IMP for the portion of Tri-Basin NRD that is located in the Little Blue River Basin, and has been jointly developed by the NRD and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, in consultation with a stakeholder advisory committee.

The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Legislative Conference took place on January 28 and 29. Water Planning Division Manager Jennifer Schellpeper gave a presentation on the Decision Support System (DSS) NeDNR is developing to help manage excess flows in the Platte River. Jennifer and all of the Water Planning Division’s Coordinators also attended the conference to network and attend integrated management planning meetings with our partner NRD managers, board members, and staff.

Three Interstate Committees met in January. The first two meetings focused on activities in the Republican River Basin. The first was the Republican River Compact Association’s (RRCA’s) Engineering Committee meeting to touch base on progress on the committee’s assignments from the RRCA for this year. Nebraska is the current chair of both the RRCA and the Engineering Committee. The second meeting was a Three-States Discussion, including representatives from Kansas, Colorado, and Nebraska to discuss interstate water management of the Republican River Basin. The third meeting was the North Platte Decree Committee’s Consumptive Use Subcommittee meeting to discuss the ongoing assignment of assessing a new methodology for calculating the consumptive use of irrigated acres in Wyoming. This assignment has been ongoing for a number of years and is relevant to Wyoming’s compliance with the interstate agreement. In recent years the current calculations of consumptive use have shown an increasing trend.

On January 14, NeDNR and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) staff held a joint water issues update meeting to learn about activities at each other’s agencies. NGPC staff gave updates on their rivers and streams program, water issues team, and Conservation and Environmental Review Tool. NeDNR staff discussed dam inspections, floodplain management, surface water rights and administration, and water planning. The event was well-attended by staff from both agencies, and hosted by NGPC at its Outdoor Education Center.

NeDNR received several NRDs’ new Long Range Implementation Plans (LRIPs) and Master Plans for review recently. The Water Planning Division coordinates NeDNR’s review of each NRD plan received. Comment letters were sent to the NRDs in January on the following plans: Central Platte NRD’s LRIP (January 3), Upper Niobrara-White NRD’s LRIP and Master Plan (January 10), Lower Platte North NRD’s Master Plan (January 15), Lower Big Blue NRD’s LRIP (January 15), and Lewis and Clark NRD’s Master Plan (January 28). In addition, NeDNR provided a testimony letter for the public hearing on Lower Loup NRD’s Ground Water Management Area designation, which took place on January 7.

Water Administration

All data has been transitioned out of WISKI and is now in Aquarius, with real-time streamflows, diversions, and related data being populated in both systems. Staff are currently maintaining both systems as we finalize adaptations and testing to the Department Streamgaging Website and the Platte Water Accounting Program (PWAP). Both programs are ready to run and are in the final testing phases. We anticipate fully switching over to Aquarius in early March, 2020 and will retire WISKI and utilize only the Aquarius streamgaging software going forward.

Rivers across the State continue to flow above average. There is still an ice jam along the Elkhorn River near Scribner. Emergency management reported flood waters had receded, allowing Highway 275 to open between West Point and Scribner near and north of Highway 91. However, flood waters remained in the ditches along the highway, and fluctuations in river levels could flood Highway 275 very quickly. Thus the Flood Warning has been extended through at least Friday (2/14) as melting both Tuesday and Wednesday could aid in rising river levels. The 8-14 day forecast calls for warmer temperatures and below normal precipitation. We will continue to monitor the rivers for Ice Jams and flooding.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, in coordination with the Executive Director's Office and CNPPID, will be releasing Environmental Account water from Lake McConaughy, beginning February 17 and extending through approximately March 15. This late winter release will bring the flow at Grand Island to 3350 cfs, and result in beneficial channel maintenance and wet meadow recharge. At this point, with the current flow and planned operations on the river, the EA release will be between 250 and 300 cfs. Adjustments to the release may be made to account for changes in river conditions during the next several weeks. The release will be terminated if there is a threat of flooding.

Permits and Registrations

Our teamwork with the Department's IT Division has resulted in deployment of a significantly upgraded web-based interactive map. Deployment is scheduled for Friday, February 14th. The URL is <http://maps.nebraska.gov/dnr/groundwater>. For 6 weeks we will maintain our current groundwater well interactive map alongside the new one to allow for our customers to learn about the new features available. There are two instructional tutorials that have been produced by IT on how to use the new map.

Our Groundwater Team has launched an improvement project with Nebraska Interactive, Inc. to improve the customer experience and increase accuracy of online water well registrations. The developers are expected to complete their work by the end of April and deployment should be done by the end of June. The well drillers who use the online registration website will be able to update their own information and we will provide more error checking from within the application itself to reduce the number of rejections. We will also provide an in-application link to our interactive map, so well drillers can verify the location of new wells visually before they submit their registration documents electronically.

Our Permitting Team produced a nice map showing the major surface water irrigation projects around the state. It has received good feedback from surface water interests and our teammates as well.