

NEBRASKA PLATTE-REPUBLICAN
CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
NOVEMBER 12, 2008
1:30 P.M. TO 3:30 P.M.
AT NEBRASKA EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

MINUTES OF MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT

Bob Bettger	Greg Reisdorff	Bobbie Kriz-Wickham
Keith Koupal	Milton Rogers	Barb Cooksley
Tim McCoy	Randy Zach	Marcia Trompke
Mike Clements	Glen Bowers	Ritch Nelson
Dan Smith	Dick Ehrman	
Susan France	Craig Romary	

Bob Bettger started the meeting with a welcome and asked all present to introduce themselves. Bob then gave a power point presentation on the proposal to use CREP as part of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. This presentation included the idea that CREP be used as part of the base agreement with additional incentive payments being made from local natural resources districts and the State when the contract would result in a permanent buyout. The presentation also included the new rental rates and other parts of the new farm bill.

Discussion concerning the idea of proposed CREP amendments to allow permanent buyouts and for the wetland incentives was held. The result was that the partners wanted to review drafts of the proposed amendments prior to giving agreement that such amendments should go forward. Greg Reisdorff stated that the FSA would like to have an amendment in place before any permanent buyouts are associated with the CREP program. Greg said that FSA would like the amendment on permanent buyouts completed before any partner offered a "side contract" to an existing CREP contract to permanently retire the water use.

There was a lot of discussion on whether the current CREP contracts should be eligible to participate in the permanent buyout or whether it should just be future contracts after an amendment is received. Bobbie Kriz-Wickham was concerned that the State had presented the CREP program originally as a temporary restriction on water use and that she had presented programs across the state informing the public that the use of water would be returned to people. There was also discussion that the CREP program was presented to the Legislature and the public as a program where the land would remain as irrigated for purposes of taxes during the program.

Glen Bowers asked about amending the area to include the South Platte River area. Greg Reisdorff stated that there would have to be an environmental assessment to change the area and that the partners would have to pay all the costs which is usually around \$65,000. A second issue is designating priority areas for CRP acreage. CREP acres are included in allocating priority areas.

Greg Reisdorff and Bob Bettger went over why certain parts of the new farm bill could not be implemented until after an environmental assessment is completed.

Tim McCoy suggested that FSA and DNR put together some examples of the new incentive programs and how they could be used as an incentive to farmers.

Susan France presented information on the number of contracts that have been cancelled for non-compliance and have been voluntarily withdrawn. She also had the new report on the number of acres under contract as of September 30, 2008. Susan explained that in the original two reports, the number of acres reported were the number of acres included in applications filed in the Department of Natural Resources and the 2007 report and the 2008 report are reporting acres actually under contract.

Susan requested assistance from the steering committee regarding what is acceptable and what is not acceptable for inclusion in the "in-kind" matching funds. Keith Koupal stated that the wording included in the original application for the CREP program was very carefully worded and was to the effect that anything that is used for the conservation of water quantity, water quality, or wildlife habitat is acceptable, unless it is included under another federal match program. Based on that discussion, we agreed that partners should review their past reported matches and forward any additions to Susan for inclusion in this year's report.

The topic of acreage limitations above Lake McConaughy was discussed and Marcia Trompke explained why the limitations are in place. The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District would strongly oppose any changes to the current agreement as amended which now limits the number of acres served by surface water (or commingled water—surface and ground water) to 5,000 acres of land above McConaughy. Susan reported that she had discussed this with Ron Cacek of North Platte Natural Resources District and that Ron said there were approximately 45,000 acres of land within the NPNRD and within the CREP area that were served solely with ground water that were not currently in the CREP program.

A discussion was held regarding the plan to have two CREP Steering Committee Meetings a year. It was decided that one annual physical meeting, and one telephonic meeting would be held. The telephonic meeting for this year will be held after the draft amendments have been distributed.