

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NEBRASKA PLATTE/REPUBLICAN CONSERVATION RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

MINUTES OF CONFERENCE CALL ON MAY 19, 2009

STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN CALL:

Marcia Trompke, CNPPID
Lavaine Moore, FSA
Greg Reisdorff, FSA
Phil Erdman, Senator Johanns Office
Mike Kucera, NRCS
Tina Kurtz, NPNRD
Jordan Dux, NFBA
Randy Zach, NPPD
Pat, O'Brien, NARD
Cory Steinke, CNPPID
Milt Moravek, CPNRD
Mike Clements, LRNRD
Mary Crawford, Congressman Smith's Office
Keith Koupal, NGPC
Bobbi Kriz-Wickham, DOA
Bob Bettger, DNR
Brian Dunnigan, DNR
Susan France, DNR

Bob discussed the issues that were the reason for the call. He stated that there have been discussions between the Department and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) of adding additional lands into the CREP area along Pumpkin (Pumpkinseed) Creek for Banner County; that the South Platte Natural Resources District (NRD) had requested that we discuss the possibility of adding into the CREP the Lodgepole Creek and South Platte areas; the addition of the CRP incentives CP 21, CP 22, CP 23 and CP 23A; and to give an update of where we are at with the action items discussed at last falls meeting. Bob reported that Greg Reisdorff and he had discussions with Lana (Washington D.C. USDA CREP Coordinator) regarding the issues, and she was favorable to the issues, but reserved comments until there was a discussion with Matt Ponish, the NEPA coordinator for the FSA.

Susan reported that the Department had received comments on its draft proposed amendment to the agreement, water use contract changes, and proposed amendments and that all comments had been incorporated except that two letters had been received, one from Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) and one from Central Nebraska Public Power District (CNPPID) (copies of which are attached) and that the Department had a meeting scheduled next week to discuss the issues brought forward in these letters and to evaluate the possible effects of the proposals on the intended goals of CREP and on the Platte River Recovery Program (PRRIP).

Greg stated that he had a discussion with Matt on Monday and that all issues seemed to not raise any NEPA issues until Greg discussed the idea of the permanent retirement of water uses on acres enrolled in CREP. Greg was informed that this issue may cause the requirement of an environmental assessment, and that if an assessment were required, it would have to be done

by an independent, neutral party, at a cost paid by the parties requesting the change. It was suggested that we formalize our documents and requests, including maps of the areas we want to include, and present them to Matt for further discussion. Greg was asked to get some idea of what the costs would be for an assessment.

Keith requested that we ask DNR's Integrated Water Management Division to take a look at the requested areas and use the current models and information that the Department has to evaluate the areas that will or will not meet the intended goals of the program and draw the boundary lines using a scientific means rather than just so many miles from the stream. Specifically Keith thought the Department should analyze whether there are adequate supplies available or whether any savings would be taken by other users, or whether any water saved would get to the stream.

Bobbie suggested that before we change any boundaries for the CREP, we find out the expected sign-ups in the area by discussing this with the NRDs and that we have public meetings to present the possibility before imposing such boundaries or announcing the program.

Marcia stated CNPPID's position that they do not want the permanent buyouts to be surface water, and Milt added that the NRDs are also concerned about whether water obtained by buyouts is protected in the stream.

Susan said that after the Department's in-house meeting, more information would be provided to the CREP Steering Committee. Questions on whether a face-to-face meeting is required or whether electronic mail is sufficient were raised. This issue was not finalized, but will be brought forward after the new documents are sent to the CREP Partners for review and comment.