

CPNRD Stakeholder Meeting #2 Minutes

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

Subject: Stakeholder Meeting #2

Date: Tuesday, September 18, 2018 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: Younes Conference Center, Kearney NE

I. Welcome

- a. Lyndon Vogt, Central Platte NRD (CPNRD) general manager, opened the meeting at 2:01 p.m. CT. He thanked the stakeholders for coming to the meeting. Lyndon introduced Stephanie White, HDR, and Stephanie then asked the stakeholders to introduce themselves. The attendance sheet is included (Attachment A).
- b. Stephanie White reviewed and summarized the planning process thus far. She described how the state, stakeholders, and NRDs work together and how the integrated management plan (IMP) works with the basin-wide plan in this process. She stated the call which is to update the IMP for CPNRD. She then discussed agenda of the meeting (Attachment B). Stephanie stated that a copy of the Open Meetings Act was present and went over safety and logistics.

II. 2nd Increment Topics

- a. **Conjunctive Management:** Jennifer Schellpeper, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NeDNR), introduced the concept of conjunctive management as an important tool that has been successful in previous CPNRD partnerships. She discussed the underlying concepts of conjunctive water management (CWM), being that canals, streams, and aquifers are all connected in one system of water. Since groundwater and surface water are connected, we need to think about them and manage them as one water resource. She discussed how CWM is an adaptive process and that we need to learn as we go, use models along the way, adapt to wet/dry cycles, and consider the various factors that affect results. She stated the goal of CWM is to maximize use of the water supply while minimizing impact to the streamflow. CWM is accomplished by storing surface water when there is excess available, and relying on those stores in times of shortage. She discussed two scenarios demonstrating consumptive water use. She listed the components of CWM: surface water diversions, groundwater pumping, recharge of aquifer, timing of return flows, and a program for monitoring and evaluation. The benefits of CWM include maximizing the available supply and making it more reliable over time, leveraging existing infrastructure, using existing planning framework, minimizing

the need for regulatory action, being able to customize to local opportunities, and maintaining viability of existing uses.

Brandi Flyr, CPNRD, discussed the ways CWM has been applied in the Central Platte NRD in the past. She discussed the 2011 Pilot Project, in which high flows in the spring were allowed to infiltrate into the aquifer. There was much collaboration between agencies and irrigation districts involved and it was beneficial overall. In 2013 and 2015 – both wet years – the same method was used. For the three years mentioned, they were able to divert and recharge up to 12,500 AF of water. Other projects include surface water temporary transfers, in which agreements are made with other entities to use water that is not being diverted to achieve other management goals. Overall CWM has been very beneficial and CPNRD will look to expand and continue these efforts. She stated that CWM takes a significant amount of collaboration and time with lots of parties involved.

Question: In reference to surface water temporary transfers, the amount of transferred water in 2017 is quite a bit less than the years prior. Do those leased rights have a diminished value?

Brandi: If the canals weren't diverting during certain days, the benefits were not being calculated for that and there are days where it ran off storage water. Storage water is not included in this calculation.

Question: Do you have numbers on how much transferred water was put into ditches?

Brandi: The three canals have head gates, which monitor how much is diverted daily and we take into account some of the groundwater depletions and how much water is put back into the river, so there are a series of calculations that are used to figure these numbers, which are different every year.

Lyndon: The numbers for surface water transfers are based on the consumptive use of the acres that were transferred back to the river minus the negative effect of groundwater pumping. It is during irrigation season.

- b. Municipal Statute – 2026 Offsets:** Brandi Flyr discussed statutes in the first increment of the plan that reference municipal and industrial use. It will be beneficial to change the wording regarding these topics in the second increment of the plan to better reflect what can and can't be monitored and what can and can't be done, while staying consistent with relevant statutes (Statute 46-740). She stated there is difficulty in getting data for municipalities with a population of less than 2,500 regarding water use. Most small municipalities' water use is very minimal and doesn't have measurements of discharge, therefore consumptive use is not able to be calculated. It is proposed to look at smaller communities' populations, based on the census, and calculate consumptive use based on a per capita use of water, which seems reasonable based on what has been seen in other similar situations. In addition, the population change for smaller municipalities is extremely small or negative, so there will probably not be an

increase in water use. In contrast, in communities with a population greater than 2,500, there is better access to data and very reliable tracking, in addition to being more likely to increase in water use. Currently all municipalities are required to report water use, but there are no enforcement mechanisms in place. The larger municipalities are more likely to see an increase in population and new industry, leading to an increase in water use. She reiterated that this is a main component in which feedback is needed for the plan. In the end, it will help to simplify baseline calculations in smaller communities where there is little or incomplete data. The other proposed wording change is regarding the use of the term 'offset', which is difficult to do because if there has been a chance, it is not known until after the fact and this can vary depending on if it is a wet or dry year.

Question: Do municipalities with a population less than 2,500 monitor what they pump out?

Brandi: Yes, so it can also inflate their use. Not all are monitoring what each household is using, but they are monitoring their total.

Question: What is largest town with a population below 2,500?

Lyndon: There are only six towns over 2,500: Gothenburg, Cozad, Lexington, Grand Island, Kearney, Central City. And the only town under 2,500 that showed a population increase was Doniphan and it was very small. The only three communities that showed population growth were Doniphan, Grand Island, and Kearney. We are looking for a more feasible way to manage municipalities.

Question: Are these methodologies driven by the basin-wide plan?

Lyndon: No, it is up to each NRD to decide how to manage municipality and industry offsets. It doesn't make sense to address offsets annually. It is all taken care of in the end in the robust review. Even if a large industry came in, we would require them to offset right when they came in. Doing it this way makes everything easier.

Stephanie: This question has not been answered by any of the other three NRDs I am working with, so there is no norm.

Jennifer: It is being driven by statute and what we have learned.

Lyndon: And we know municipalities have been using less per capita than ever.

b. Municipal Statute – 2026 Offsets (Cont.): Brandi discussed the maximum municipal water use to date in Kearney, Grand Island, and Gothenburg. She stated it is small, about 3-4% of water use in the District compared to agricultural water use. She summarized the proposed changes which will simplify the plan and calculations for more achievable and implementable actions.

Question: In terms of what we need for our IMP, do we want this group to come up with planned wording or just a yes or a no answer?

Lyndon: I think today we just want to know if stakeholders are okay with the concept. The bottom line is that we have to offset the 1997 baseline and a 2026 baseline, and the municipalities don't have to be concerned with offsets until 2026. The reason we showed the 2002/2003 numbers is, you are going to get your largest years as your baseline for this plan. If we go over the baseline it has to be offset. If an industry came in we would require an offset at that time and if it was municipal growth, we would worry about it at the end of the increment.

Question: Back in 2003, a substantial use of the water in Grand Island was for power generation and we have changed our systems since then. Now we are looking more at municipal use – not industrial.

Lyndon: The slide doesn't show what is industrial and what is per capita. If it was a high industrial use, that will be the industrial base plus per capita use per person per day based on the statute. We will work on showing how much was municipal and how much was industrial.

Question: Could smaller municipalities be hurt more by the proposed baseline calculations?

Lyndon: Smaller populations won't be penalized if industry does move in because we are tracking by population growth. We can look into tracking smaller municipalities differently.

Question: How do we address Grand Island supplying water to Alda and Doniphan (i.e., smaller communities connecting to service from larger municipalities)?

Lyndon: Will need to reflect on that and discuss in future meetings.

- c. **Drought Planning:** Stephanie White discussed an overview of new drought planning language in the draft plan that will be discussed at the September 19th, 2018, basin-wide planning meeting. She stated that there are a series of action items that give guidance to the basin-wide plan in stakeholder binders.

Lyndon Vogt stated that CPNRD was awarded a grant by the Water Sustainability Fund for developing a drought plan, which was put on hold for one year in order to coincide with the IMP and basin-wide plan. He then discussed what the plan intends to accomplish regarding water management. He stated that conjunctive management is the ultimate drought planning tool to address groundwater and surface water needs. This tool could help to become more resilient during typical times of drought. He discussed how the drought management plan will be developed through data collection and stakeholder meetings (drought tournament/workshop).

Question for Stakeholders: What problems do you face in drought? What is a drought plan to you?

Stakeholder responses:

- Long term consequences of groundwater drawdown
- Educating public on how to deal with drought
 - How to deal with restrictions and motivate the public to conserve
- Don't worry about it much – have abundance of water down in the bottom, but up in the hills there is a problem during drought
 - Drought disparity tied to geography of land
- Canals: problems predicting how much water is going to be at each diversion point – need better predictive tools in regards to this issue
- Need efficient methodology to educate customers during drought, quickly; getting the word out on why they are doing what they're doing
- Supplemental supply
- Managing stored water when the drought comes, getting it where we need it, when we need it. Conjunctive water management is a good tool for this
- CNPPID: junior users of system, so when drought comes, in terms of streamflow, receive less due to junior status.
 - Water right for storage is junior also. Worried about the future regarding reduction in hydropower generation – biggest source of income
 - When in a drought, see revenue cut plus increase in expenses
- Education to public is needed – NeDNR and NRDs get lots of calls during drought
 - Educate on differences between NRD and NeDNR responsibilities, help public understand what authority each entity has in terms of responding to drought
- Drought is inevitable with no easy answer; we must understand and accept it; can mitigate, but there is no easy answer
- Municipal conservation and stewardship
- Timing and technology improvements
- Worried about a big drought where all surface water is used, and water is being stored, getting a phone call Kearney and Grand Island not getting water
- A good plan needs communication and to protect municipalities first
- Could there be possible recharge project in future allowing groundwater pumping to be put back into stream and to put in new storage reservoirs?
- Farmer worried about crops and being able to pump, is often pulled two ways – wanting to grow crops already invested in for the current season, but wanting to save water for future seasons
 - Planning ahead is essential
- Need for new infrastructure to be used during drought year
- Automation of technology
- Better economic management; without money being made during time of drought, the municipalities hurt in the end
- Would like to see how we can use excess storage water for groundwater recharge
- Regulatory obligations during drought that force NRD to use water that would rather not, but have to follow
- Stephanie: stewardship, education, municipal priority. Previous plans based on past numbers, it's different now

- It costs money to improve farm efficiency; we have tried different things over time; center pivots that are currently in use work well, but are more expensive
- Invasive species use lots of water; ways to remove them could be beneficial in reducing excess water use
- Irrigation *is* drought mitigation

Question for Stakeholders: What is a drought plan to you?

- Stakeholders answered this question in discussion above

Question for Stakeholders: Would you be interested in participating in a drought workshop?

- Stakeholders showed general interest in participating in a drought workshop.
- **Question:** Is a drought plan what we do when we have a drought or how to prevent a drought?

Lyndon: It is both. It encompasses what we do in times of plenty to help alleviate the situation in times of shortage, and CWM is probably one of the best options.

Question for Stakeholders: How to we entice peers to come to meetings?

- It would depend on what the goal of the workshop is – need a defined outcome stated
- Not sure if all parties attending meetings would be beneficial (i.e., farmers, the city)

Question: Are you contemplating reduced allocation?

Lyndon: No, not at this time. We are not talking about controls, but management actions to address times of drought.

Question: If CPNRD decided we needed to build some type of structures, would municipalities be willing to put money into this?

Stakeholder: They are already putting in their share and not sure if they would be willing to put in more. It could raise a double taxation issue, but might be something to look into.

- It is important to maintain balance of equity

Stephanie summarized the stakeholders' comments regarding drought planning. She reminded stakeholders to go over the existing IMP before the next meeting. Lyndon noted there is additional information regarding conjunctive management on page 21 of the binder. Stephanie thanked the stakeholders for their time and adjourned the meeting.

III. Meeting adjourned: 4:01 p.m. CT

IV. Attachments:

V. Public comment: No public comment.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 13, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Kearney, NE