PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Lake McConaughy Visitors Center – Ogallala, NE
May 7, 2013

Meeting Attendees

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

State of Wyoming
Mike Besson – Member
Matt Hoobler – Alternate

State of Colorado
Suzanne Sellers – Member

State of Nebraska
Jesse Bradley – Member

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Matt Rabbe
Mike George
Eliza Hines

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
Brock Merrill – Alternate

Downstream Water Users
Cory Steinke – Member (WAC Chair)
Duane Woodward – Member
Jeff Shafer – Member
Mike Drain – Alternate
Landon Shaw – Member
Tyler Thulin
Nolan Little

Upstream Water Users
Dennis Strauch – Member

Colorado Water Users
Jon Altenhofen – Member

Environmental Groups
Greg Wingfield – Member

Executive Director's Office (ED Office)
Jerry Kenny, Executive Director (ED)
Beorn Courtney
Scott Griebling

Other
Rich Walters – TNC
Greg Glunz – URS
Matt McConville – HDR (call-in)

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Welcome and Administrative: *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*
Introductions were made. There were no agenda modifications. Courtney reviewed the February 2013 WAC Minutes with modifications by Runge. Woodward made a motion to approve the modified February 2013 WAC Minutes, which was second by Little. **The February 2013 WAC Minutes were unanimously approved.**

WAP Project Updates: *Beorn Courtney, ED Office*
Courtney provided an update on Water Action Plan (WAP) projects. The engineering review report for the J-2 Regulating Reservoir project has been completed and accepted by the Governance Committee (GC); the GC will determine when it is made public. The sponsorship agreement is still being negotiated.

Progress continues on water leasing agreements with NPPID and CPNRD and there is nothing specific to report. The Phelps Groundwater Recharge is reported on in the next section.

A work group with members from the WAC and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) has been created for the wet meadow hydrologic monitoring project; members include Mike Besson, Duane Woodward, Mark Czaplewski, Jeff Shaeffer, Jim Jenninges, Mike Drain, Mark Peyton, Tom Econopouly, Matt Rabbe, Mary Harner, Jon Altenhofen, Suzanne Sellers, and Jesse Bradley. The ED Office is compiling a document to facilitate the interaction of WAC and TAC members on this workgroup. The ED Office began installation of the basic hydrologic monitoring equipment the WAC approved during the February 12 WAC meeting. Twenty-seven groundwater monitoring wells and four river stage gages have been installed on two of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (the Program) wet meadow sites, and sixteen data loggers have been installed on twelve of the wells and the four river stage gages. Installation of weather stations will be the end of May due to Campbell Scientific factory delays. Downloading data from monitoring wells and river gages has consumed a large amount of ED Office staff time and the ED Office is going to draft an RFP for a telemetry data collection system. A topographical survey of the monitoring wells, river stage gages, and weather stations will be executed this summer.

Phelps Canal Groundwater Recharge & Monitoring: *Beorn Courtney, ED Office*
Courtney gave an overview of the second year of Phelps County canal groundwater recharge operations, from 2012-2013. Recharge was extended from mile post 9.7 to mile post 13.3 and the recharge basin was not used during the 2012-2013 operation period. McConaughy Environmental Account water was used for recharge as excess flows were not available during the 2012-2013 period. The monitoring network was expanded in 2012 to include eight additional monitoring locations. Threshold groundwater level triggers were also developed as part of the Program's good-neighbor policy; however, groundwater levels remained well below the thresholds during the 2012-2013 recharge period. The first two years of recharge operations have been conducted under temporary DNR permits and CNPPID agreements; the ED Office is working with CNPPPID to develop a longer-term agreement and permits for future recharge. An

This document is a draft based on one person's notes of the meeting. The official meeting minutes may be different if corrections are made by the Water Advisory Committee before approval.

annual report for the 2012-2013 recharge period will be circulated to the WAC in May and presented to the GC in June.

The average daily recharge rate during the 2011-2012 recharge period was 3.7 cubic feet per second (cfs) per mile at the beginning of the season and 2.1 cfs per mile at the end of the season, while the average daily recharge rate during the 2012-2013 recharge period was 1.5 cfs per mile. The reason for the difference in recharge rate is unclear. Some correlation between canal temperature and recharge rate was seen in the 2011-2012 period, however canal temperature was not measured during the 2012-2013 period. River temperatures were generally a little colder in December through March during the 2012-2013 period versus the 2011-2012 period, which may also explain some of the difference between the observed 1.5 cfs per mile versus 2.1 cfs per mile recharge, respectively. Possible reasons for the difference in recharge rate between the 2011-2012 recharge period and the 2012-2013 recharge period were discussed by the WAC members, focusing on the following points:

- Water running through the canal is very clear because it passes through multiple impoundments and hydropower plants before it arrives in the recharge reach. The canal has not been cleaned during 2011-2013, nor has there been significant burning along the canal. Differences in suspended sediment load between the two years are unlikely.
- The ice over the canal was thicker during the 2012-2013 period than the 2011-2012 period, which may affect recharge rate.
- The gage between the upper portion of the canal (up to mile post 9.7) and the lower portion of the canal (mile post 9.7 to 13.3) leaks, which might affect the recharge rate.
- The question if any other weather parameters might affect recharge rate was raised, **the EDO will look into correlations between weather parameters and recharge rates.**

With the second year or recharge complete, a draft of the Phelps Groundwater Recharge scoring methodology will be circulated to the GC Scoring Workgroup in May.

Choke Point Update: *Jerry Kenny, ED*

Kenny noted that the draft design report of the flood-proofing concepts has been completed by EA Engineering, Science, and Technology and has gone through the first round of revisions. All of the flood proofing concepts are more expensive than originally thought, with the total cost for all three projects coming to approximately $250,000. The pumping required at the gravel pond project will likely make this project financially unfeasible. The State Channel project will require an individual nationwide permit, which will likely cost between $30,000 and $50,000. The Whitehorse Creek project will require more culverts and earthwork than originally expected. Mike Drain asked if the increase in cost would result in these projects not being constructed and Kenny replied that some might not be feasible and landowner buyouts are becoming a more attractive alternative. Kenny also mentioned that the United States Army Corps of Engineers (the Corps) is developing a hydraulic model of the area which will be used to officially delineate the floodplain, which will establish what properties should be on the buy-out list.

Short Duration Medium Flow (SDMF) Update: *Jerry Kenny, ED*

Kenny provided an update on the 2013 SDMF release that occurred from April 1, 2013, through April 16, 2013. Flow peaked at the Overton Gage above 4,000 cfs, flows at Overton remained above 3,800 for one-and-a-half days, and river stage at the North Platte choke point near North Platte, NE, remained below flood stage. The release used approximately 50,000 acre-feet of McConaughy Environmental Account water. The release was similar to the flow routing test conducted in 2009, with the addition of a North Platte canal bypass which used three canals to divert water from the North Platte to the South Platte. The Keith Lincoln canal did not perform as well as hoped and would likely function better for a groundwater recharge project. The North Platte and Suburban canals performed well and show potential to pass flow more efficiently with some minor improvements to the canals. There was good cooperation between the many entities involved in the SDMF release. The release did not have as long of duration as hoped for due to the surprisingly fast translation of flow shut off downstream. Further analysis will investigate causes of this in a lessons learned document to be compiled by the USFWS and the ED Office.

Weed Management Update: *Rich Walters, The Nature Conservancy*
Walters provided an overview of the weed management program that focuses on controlling invasive species along the Platte River, focusing primarily on phragmites. The weed management program started 2007 and has partnered with several organizations, including the Program. Phragmites control has been largely successful, using a combination of aerial and ground-based herbicide application, mechanical removal, grazing, and burning to spray 24,158 acres of phragmites. Research has guided the program's methodology and identified optimal spraying times and approaches. The next two years will prove critical in determining how well landowner management will work as the program shifts future phragmites control to depend on landowner maintenance. Walters explained that all the herbicides they use are approved for aquatic use and the water samples they have taken after application show herbicide levels in the water to be well below thresholds.

Rabbe asked what the optimal hydroperiod for phragmites removal would be and Walters replied that flooding during August might limit rhizome growth but would need to be over a long (up to two month) duration. Kenney inquired if landowners feel it is their responsibility to control phragmites on their land and Walters replied that while many may feel obligated, few take much action towards phragmites control. Altenhofen asked if the Program has a budget for this phragmites maintenance effort and Kenny responded that the 2013 budget is $200,000, with continued funding at declining levels into the future

Federal Depletions Plan Update*: Matt Rabbe, USFWS*
Rabbe reviewed the federal depletions plan packet that had been provided to the WAC prior to the meeting. Matt Hoobler brought up the topic of depletions from firefighting on Federal lands in Wyoming and there was discussion about how this is to be handled.

Nebraska Depletion Plan Update*: Jesse Bradley, NDNR*
Bradley provided a summary of the two documents that were provided to the WAC prior to the meeting. The combination of conjunctive management and WAP projects will result in an

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additional benefit of 27,000 acre-feet per year, not including the Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement (N-CORPE) project. The COHYST 2010 model and the Western Water Use Model (WWUM) will be used to further refine depletion calculations.

Wyoming Depletion Plan Update: *Matt Hoobler, Wyoming State Engineer's Office*
Hoobler reviewed the 2012 Wyoming Depletions Report that was provided to the WAC prior to the meeting. Hoobler noted a significant decline in intentionally irrigated acres and mentioned that an expected river call will impact the Environmental and Municipal accounts in the Pathfinder reservoir.

Colorado Depletion Plan Update: *Suzanne Sellers, CWCB & Jon Altenhofen, Northern Colorado Water*
Sellers reviewed the North Platte Annual Accounting that was provided to the WAC prior to the meeting. Altenhofen reviewed the Colorado Plan for Future Depletions for the South Platte basin that was provided during the meeting, including an annual review of the Tamarack I project. Mike Drain suggested separating the Tamarack I annual report from the Colorado depletions report to avoid confusion between the two. **Altenhofen agreed this would be a good idea and will do this for future reports.**

Additional Business: *Cory Steinke, CNPPID*
The next WAC meeting is scheduled for August 13, 2013, from 8:30 am – 2 pm (Mountain Time) at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center. Mike Drain noted the WAC meeting schedule shows the October meeting scheduled for the October 15, **this will be changed to October 8 as previously agreed on**.

Action Items

General WAC

- Altenhofen will provide separate reports for Colorado Depletions on the South Platte and Tamarak I annual reviews in the future.

ED Office

- The ED Office will look into correlations between weather parameters and recharge rates on the Phelps County Canal.
- The ED Office will update the WAC Meeting Schedule to reflect the October 8 meeting date.

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