



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Conference Call  
August 7, 2018

**Meeting Attendees**

**Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**

**State of Colorado**

Jojo La – Member

Eric Skeie

**State of Wyoming**

Bryan Clerkin – Member

Jeff Cowley - Alternate

**State of Nebraska**

Jessie Strom – Member

Jesse Bradley – Alternate

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Tom Econopouly - Member

Jeff Runge – Alternate

**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation**

Brock Merrill – Alternate

**Downstream Water Users**

Cory Steinke – Chair

Jeff Shafer – Member

Brandi Flyr - Member

Tyler Thulin

**Colorado Water Users**

Jon Altenhofen – Member

Luke Shawcross - Alternate

**Upper Platte Water Users**

Dennis Strauch - Member

**Environmental Groups**

Jacob Fritton – Member

Bill Taddicken - Member

**Executive Director’s Office (EDO)**

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Scott Griebbling

Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

Courtney Black

George Oamek

**Contractors**



46 **Welcome and Administrative:** *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*

47 Introductions were made. Two edits to the May meeting minutes submitted by Altenhofen were  
48 noted. Shafer made a motion to approve the minutes with edits, second by La. Unanimous  
49 approval.

50

51 Econopouly reported that the USFWS is considering making EA releases in late October/early  
52 November for whooping crane. Steinke said CNPPID is coordinating with NPPD on a schedule  
53 of outages after irrigation season, trying to finish all by early October ahead of whooping crane  
54 releases. Econopouly also reported that the USFWS is working on an EA Manager document,  
55 which is being reviewed by the EDO and CNPPID, with the intent of distributing prior to the  
56 October EAC-RCC meeting.

57

58 **WAP Projects and Other Brief Water Updates**

59 ***Cottonwood Ranch Broad-Scale Recharge: Kevin Werbylo, EDO***

60 Werbylo reported that the permits needed for construction are now in place. Everything was  
61 ready for GC and FC approval in June, but disagreements over language in the land agreement  
62 with NPPD and the WSA with CNPPID for deliveries via pipeline resulted in a delay. At  
63 present, it appears there is agreement on revisions, and the EDO expects the documents to be  
64 approved at the GC meeting on August 14. If approved, the project will be advertised shortly  
65 thereafter, with an anticipated bid opening in mid-September, start of construction of berms and  
66 water control structures in early to mid-October, and completion by early December to beat the  
67 first big freeze.

68

69 Up front capital costs for the project are about \$4 million, and the project has an estimated score  
70 of 4,000 AF. An additional \$1 million will be paid to CNPPID up front. This amount will be  
71 repaid to the Program through “free” water deliveries from the CNPPID. The EDO is working  
72 with NDNR and TBNRD on planning and permitting for the next phase of the project, which  
73 will be a series of downstream recapture wells.

74

75 ***Lakeside Gravel Pit: Kevin Werbylo, EDO***

76 Werbylo reported that the EDO presented a project update to the GC in June. Then-current  
77 estimates were a capital cost of about \$8.5 million for a score of less than 2,000 AF. The GC  
78 requested more analyses of cost, with comparisons to other WAP projects. This was completed  
79 by the EDO. The EDO also updated the preliminary score model for the Lakeside gravel pit for  
80 better consistency with other WAP projects. The latest score estimates range from 2,500 to 3,200  
81 AF. The updated cost analysis and score updates will be presented to the GC on August 14.

82

83 Additionally, the EDO is talking with JEO (design consultant) about expanding the well field to  
84 provide all water deliveries so that the project is not reliant on moving water from Cottonwood  
85 Ranch through the Peterson Drain. This is intended to streamline the construction process and  
86 would make the project fully controllable by the Program. La asked if the source of supply  
87 affects score; Werbylo said no, the score model assumes fixed inflows to the gravel pit regardless  
88 of source. Clerkin asked if there will be an amendment to JEO’s design contract to



89 accommodate the larger well field. Werbylo said that will be discussed once the EDO has  
90 approval from the GC to proceed with the project, but a large amendment would not be expected.

91  
92 Altenhofen asked if Nebraska would get a portion of the project yield. Farnsworth said that  
93 Nebraska opted out of project participation when the GC made the decision to proceed with a  
94 full-scale initial slurry wall project.

95  
96 ***CPNRD Water Leasing: Brandi Flyr, CPNRD***

97 Flyr reported on a different approach to the surface water leasing from the Thirty Mile, Cozad,  
98 and Orchard-Alfalfa canals this year. Rather than return the water directly to the river at the  
99 canal headgates as in past years, the water will remain in storage in Lake McConaughy and will  
100 then be transferred to the EA. This is a pilot project for 2018, with an upper limit of 14,200 AF.

101  
102 Farnsworth said the Program has an existing lease agreement with CPNRD, so they are  
103 developing a simple amendment to reflect this operational change. There was discussion of the  
104 timing and approach to the transfer to the EA. Flyr said the transfer would be reviewed in  
105 September; Bradley said it would be part of a request to NDNR similar to how CNPPID's  
106 NCCW and irrigator lease transfers to the EA are made at the beginning of October.

107  
108 Altenhofen asked how this approach would affect score and whether Nebraska would get any  
109 part of it. Farnsworth said this is just Program water. Turner said the transfer of CPNRD surface  
110 water to the EA would likely have a much higher score than the way the transfer was previously  
111 operated, assuming this becomes the long-term operational approach.

112  
113 Strauch asked if this is transferred storage water or natural flow captured instead of released.  
114 Steinke said the general concept is a transfer of storage water to the EA. CPNRD is not  
115 irrigating acres historically irrigated with surface water, keeping that water in Lake  
116 McConaughy, then moving it to the EA.

117  
118 Flyr said there were no diversions of excess flows into the canals for recharge in the spring.

119  
120 ***NPPD Water Leasing: Jeff Shafer, NPPD***

121 Shafer said NPPD attempted to develop an agreement to move water into the EA, similar to  
122 CPNRD, but wasn't able to come to terms. They will continue working towards such an  
123 agreement for 2019.

124  
125 ***CNPPID Water Leasing (Phelps, Elwood, Irrigators): Cory Steinke, CNPPID***

126 Steinke said that dryland corn looks as good as irrigated this year, and it is expected that the full  
127 CNPPID irrigator lease volume will be transferred to the EA in October. There were no recent  
128 diversions into Elwood Reservoir for recharge.

129

130

131



132 **WAP Project Scoring:** *Seth Turner, EDO*

133 Turner reported that the EDO is working on scoring analyses for the Elwood Reservoir  
134 groundwater recharge project, a score update for the Pathfinder Municipal Account lease, and the  
135 NPPD groundwater recharge project. At the June GC meeting, the EDO requested that the  
136 membership of the Scoring Subcommittee be reviewed and updated as needed.

137  
138 A preliminary score analysis packet for Elwood recharge was submitted to the Scoring  
139 Subcommittee in late June, discussed by conference call on July 26, and sent back to the EDO  
140 for some additional analyses. The EDO anticipates sending out updates by August 17, having  
141 another conference call by the end of August, and presenting a score recommendation to the GC  
142 in September.

143  
144 The Pathfinder Municipal Account lease was originally scored assuming 4,800 AF deliveries  
145 each year. The EDO is updating the analysis to reflect that 9,600 AF is available in many years.  
146 The preliminary score analysis was reviewed by Wyoming in early July, will be submitted to  
147 Scoring Subcommittee soon, with expectations of presenting to the GC in September or  
148 December.

149  
150 Score analyses for NPPD groundwater recharge through Gothenburg and Dawson County canals  
151 is just getting underway. EDO had a few calls with NPPD to discuss approach and assumptions.  
152 This is currently anticipated to be ready for the GC in December.

153  
154 **Flow Reconciliation Issues:** *Scott Griebing, EDO*

155 Griebing said that the EDO is looking into various issues raised at the May WAC meeting,  
156 including how the hydrologic condition can be affected by EA or other Program water releases.  
157 The EDO currently has nothing specific to present; however, the EDO is working on a memo  
158 that provides recommendations and describes metrics for flow accounting.

159  
160 Econopouly thanked Griebing for catching errors in Kingsley data summaries. Griebing said  
161 EDO will be reviewing data in more detail with the new water accounting procedures.

162  
163 **CNPPID Irrigator Lease WSA:** *Jason Farnsworth, ED*

164 Farnsworth discussed the new draft WSA for the CNPPID irrigator lease project. For the past  
165 few years, the Program has entered into annual agreements with CNPPID for irrigator leasing as  
166 a pilot program. Under this pilot program, enrollment of irrigated lands was capped at 2,000  
167 acres. The Program paid \$220/acre and received a credit of 9 inches per acre added to the Lake  
168 McConaughy EA at the end of the irrigation season. Enrollment in the program increased every  
169 year, and at this point there needs to be a conversation with the GC about making CNPPID  
170 irrigator leasing a permanent WAP project.

171  
172 The EDO is having discussions with CNPPID about a longer-term agreement. A draft WSA for  
173 5 years would increase the enrollment cap to 3,000 acres. At full enrollment, this would add  
174 more than 2,000 AF to the EA every year. The costs per acre have not changed to this point, but



175 the Program would like to have the flexibility to adjust the cost in the future to reflect  
176 commodity prices and other factors. CNPPID is working on language to allow an annual  
177 amendment for contract price. The draft WSA will be presented to the GC in September.  
178

179 **Water Project Fact Sheets and Accounting:** *Courtney Black, Scott Griebing, and Seth*  
180 *Turner, EDO*

181 Black said the EDO sent out six water project fact sheets for review: Lake McConaughy EA,  
182 Pathfinder EA, Pathfinder Municipal Account lease, No-Cost NCCW, Elwood Reservoir  
183 groundwater recharge, and Phelps County Canal groundwater recharge (including the Cook  
184 recapture well). Comments are requested within two weeks.  
185

186 The EDO is still working on additional fact sheets for NPPD groundwater recharge, CPNRD  
187 groundwater recharge, and the Tamarack project. These will be distributed for review when they  
188 are available. The intent of the fact sheets is to provide a useful reference for committee  
189 members, particularly to help educate new members. A more thorough water portfolio overview  
190 will be presented at the next WAC meeting. Econopouly complimented the fact sheets, said they  
191 are a good idea and look really good.  
192

193 Turner provided the numbers to compare Dewberry's forecasts of May-June-July flows at  
194 Lewellen and Julesburg to the actual gaged flow records. There was discussion on the accuracy  
195 and utility of the forecasts and whether to continue paying for the forecasts. The EDO will take  
196 a closer look at the forecasts and actual flows over the past couple years, with the intent of  
197 discussing further at the EAC-RCC meeting in October.  
198

199 **Lakeside Gravel Pit Cost/Benefit Analysis:** *Kevin Werbylo, EDO*

200 Werbylo reported that updated capital and O&M costs for the Lakeside gravel pit project were  
201 presented to the GC in June. Analyses showed costs trending up and score trending down from  
202 the earliest estimates. The GC requested additional analyses to provide context for costs  
203 compared to other Program water projects. This analysis was done by the EDO, led by Oamek,  
204 and will be presented to the GC on August 14. The analysis looked at costs over a project life of  
205 50 years as well as over the shorter duration of the proposed First Increment Extension. The  
206 EDO also ran preliminary scoring analysis that suggested the score would be in the 2,500 to  
207 3,200 AF range.  
208

209 La asked if uncertainty around score leads to uncertainty in cost. Griebing said using a daily vs.  
210 monthly timestep leads to different score results; the choice of which to use is ultimately a  
211 decision for the Scoring Subcommittee. Griebing also said the preliminary score analysis  
212 accounts for the partitioning of available excess flows between the Phelps and Elwood recharge  
213 projects as well. In response to La, Werbylo and Griebing said there is no specific timeline for  
214 submitting the Lakeside gravel pit project to the Scoring Subcommittee, that the EDO is waiting  
215 for GC approval to proceed with the project.  
216

217



218 **Additional Business:** *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*

219 Based on comments during the May WAC meeting, there was discussion of whether to  
220 reschedule the October WAC meeting. A decision was made to keep it on October 2, starting at  
221 10 a.m. at the Lake McConaughy Visitor Center. This will be preceded by the EAC-RCC  
222 meeting at 9 a.m.

223

224 The timing of fall EA releases was also discussed. Steinke said that J1 and J2 are planned for a  
225 two-week outage starting October 1. EA releases would come after that outage.

226

227 **Action Items**

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229 **General WAC**

- 230 • Provide comments on the water projects fact sheets within two weeks (by August 21)

231

232 **ED Office**

- 233 • Review Dewberry forecasts and actual gaged flows in past years, prepare to discuss at  
234 EAC-RCC meeting in October.