

The Communicator



Published by The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District

Summary of Central's customer service survey

The Central District retained the services of a professional research firm this fall to conduct a customer service survey of irrigation customers. Results of that survey are summarized in this issue of *The Communicator*.

Can Central move water rights to another use or other acres if a customer cancels a water service agreement?

The vast majority (76%) correctly answered that Central is able to make such transfers. Only 8% said no.

Rating of Central's efforts to provide groundwater recharge in the area.

Most irrigation customers indicated that Central is doing an excellent (39%) or good (49%) job at providing recharge. Only 10% thought Central's efforts needed improvement.

In a related question, on a 10-point scale, an overwhelming majority of customers feel recharge is highly important to the area; 62% gave a 10 rating, while another 27% rated it an 8 or 9. Only 2% gave a 1 to 3 rating.

What is the primary source of inflows

to Lake McConaughy?

Technically, return flows from upstream surface water irrigation projects along the North Platte River is the most precise answer, but only 3% of respondents provided that answer. The Platte River (23%) and snow melt (22%) were mentioned most often, while many others provided more or less specific answers to the open-ended question.

Likelihood to consider leasing all or a portion of surface water supplies.

Irrigation customers appear to be evenly split on whether they would consider leasing water supplies. "Probably

the responses; "Might/It depends" drew another third (35%); while "Probably not" (23%) and "Definitely not" (10%) made up another third.

Among reasons given for answering "Might/It depends," 30% said the financial incentives were the primary consideration, while 23% would like to know what leased water would be used for before making such a decision, and 18% were concerned about the uncertainty of whether the water would be needed for irrigation during the lease period.

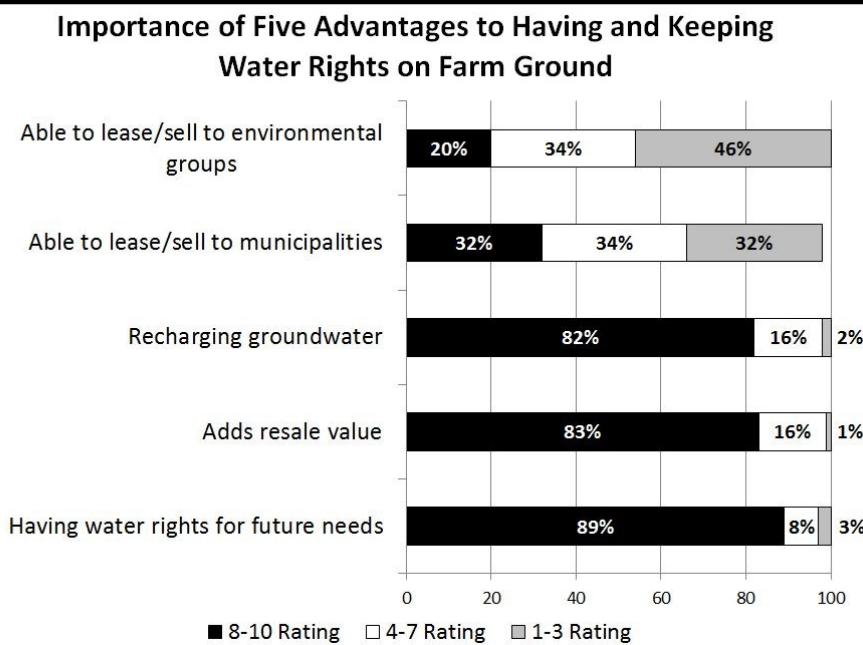
Among those who indicated that they definitely would not or would be unlikely to consider a leasing arrangement, 61% said they need it themselves or it is their only source of irrigation water.

Another 16% indicated that they do not want to lose control of their irrigation water.

Those who indicated an interest in some form of leasing program were asked what the *most important factor* would be in making a decision.

Opinions were mixed, but the amount of lease fee paid to the land-

(Continued on p. 2)



would" (28%) and "Definitely would" (4%) comprised about a third of

the responses; "Might/It depends" drew another third (35%); while "Probably not" (23%) and "Definitely not" (10%) made up another third.

Irrigation customer survey (*continued from p. 1*)

owner (38%) and the length of the lease (30%) were the most common responses.

If a leasing program was initiated, what would the preferred lease term be?

Fully one-third (34%) preferred to let the landowner set the term of the lease, while just less than a third (30%) preferred a one-year lease. Another 24% answered 2 to 3 years. No one surveyed wanted such a lease to exceed five years.

Opinion as to whether leases should be restricted to transfers to a like use or allowed for other uses.

The majority of customers (64%) indicated that transfers should be to allowed only to other irrigators, but a significant minority (31%) feel that transfers to other uses, e.g., groundwater recharge, instream flows, etc., should be permitted.

Questions related to The Communicator newsletter.

Nearly all customers read all (48%) or some (37%) of this newsletter. Another 14% at least glance at the headlines. The survey also found that if the newsletter was available only on-line, 65% of respondents would be *less* likely to read it.

Utilization of Central's web site.

Half of those irrigation customers interviewed replied that they have never visited Central's web site (www.cnppid.com), suggesting that Central needs to be more proactive in drawing its customers to the site and increasing awareness about the value of the information to be found on-line.

Responses from those who indicated a recent visit to the site revealed that information about inflows and elevations at Lake McConaughy (each with 28%), rainfall totals, crop water-use

data, and District news/board meeting summaries or minutes (all with 13%) were the most common information sought.

Ratings of accessibility/process by which customers receive information from Central.

Irrigation customers had very favorable perceptions of the accessibility of Central's staff and communications between employees and customers. Almost all customers had either excellent (39%) or good (56%) marks for staff. Regarding the information exchange between customers and board members, two-thirds gave either good (48%) or excellent (19%) scores, while 18% said fair and another 9% poor or very poor.

Preferred method of receiving communication from Central.

The majority of customers (63%) indicated that they would prefer to receive communications from Central in the mail, either letters, postcards or The Communicator. However, almost one-third (29%) indicated that they would like to receive at least some information by e-mail, indicating that Central may want to at least experiment with expanding customer communications in that area.

Thulin Graduates from WLA



Water Leaders Academy — Tyler Thulin (sixth from the left) is shown with members of Class IV following their graduation ceremony.

Central's Civil Engineer Tyler Thulin graduated as a member of Class IV of the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy in a ceremony held in November in Nebraska City.

The Academy is a one-year program established by the Nebraska State Irrigation Association that educates participants

about water issues and leadership skills. To participate, applicants must have a commitment to understanding Nebraska water issues, have an interest in seeking leadership roles on public boards, commissions and water policy groups, and have a commitment to the community through voluntary activities.

Each participant is expected to commit time to the Academy's activities, which includes group discussions and sessions with experts on Nebraska water issues and lessons provided by UNL Professors.

Thulin is Central's third employee to graduate from the program.

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*Published by The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District
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The Communicator is published by CNPPID to inform its customers and interested parties of District activities and issues.
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On the Lakefront

Cabin-owners Survey Results

Central also conducted a customer service survey of cabin-owners at Johnson Lake/Plum Creek Canyon and Lake McConaughy, reservoirs at which Central has property leases. Central retained the same professional research firm used for the irrigation customer survey to survey its cabin-owner customers.. The results of that survey are summarized below.

Lake at which leasehold is located.

More than 90% of the respondents indicated that their leasehold is located at Johnson Lake or Plum Creek, a slight over-representation of the overall cabin-owner population. Lake McConaughy leaseholds actually comprise 13% of the number of cabins/homes at the surveyed lakes.

Central's performance in specified areas.

Seventy percent of lake customers indicate that Central is doing a good or excellent job with maintenance of commons areas and access roads while about 20% gave a "fair" rating in those categories. For the permitting process, ratings were 9% "excellent," 46% "good," and 25% "fair." About 12% were unsatisfied with the permitting processed.

In handling unspecified complaints, responses were 9% excellent, 37% good, 22% fair and 11% poor or very poor.

Shoreline management performance was rated 4% excellent, 43% good, 22% fair and 27% poor or very poor.

Overall, the responses indicated that there is room for improvement in several areas.

Awareness of Central's dedicated Lake Improvement Fund.

Just over half (53%) of lake customers said that they were aware that Central budgets funds each year specifically for improvement of recreational aspects at the lakes. (It is noteworthy that awareness of the fund was significantly higher (66%) among those who indicated

that they had recently visited Central's web site.

When asked their opinion about how projects funded by the Lake Improvement Fund have improved recreational aspects at the lake, 46% said they had "improved a little," 36% felt that the projects had provided "a lot of improvement," and 9% said "not at all." The remainder of responses were about evenly split between "not sure" and "not aware" of any improvements.

Improvement projects that could be implemented to enhance the lake community.

When cabin-owners were give the opportunity to volunteer one improvement project that they wish could be implemented to enhance the recreational experience at the lake, the responses were highly varied and "Don't know," at 20% was the most common response. However, others mentioned included "keep water levels up/less fluctuation" was provided by 15% of respondents, "make the lake deeper/dredge shallow areas" was mentioned 9% of the time and "complete the hike/bike trail" and "maintain better roads" were each mentioned by 8%.

Incidence of applying for/receiving a permit to construct in last few years.

In total, 63% of respondents have applied for and/or received a permit to construct on their leased property within the last two years.

Suggested improvements in the permit to construct process.

Those who have recently applied for or received a permit offered a variety of suggestions to improve the process., although more than half 54% had no immediate suggestion. The suggestions provided most often included "fewer regulations/permits" (9%), "simplify the process (6%), and "lower cost," "consistent rules," and "better explanation of process" each were mentioned by 5% of respondents.

Rules and regulations pertaining to use of the commons areas.

While 73% said they fully understand the rules and regulations, the 25% who

said they do not indicates a need for continued efforts to increase awareness may be necessary.

Central's performance in providing information about five specific topics.

A little over half of respondents said Central is doing an excellent or good job of providing communications about lake levels (54%), lake water quality (55%) and lease issues (54%). A lower percentage gave good or excellent ratings for communication about state/federal regulations (41%) and property values (25%). Overall, the responses seem to indicate a need to improve communication with cabin-owners on various topics.

Utilization of Central's web site.

The majority of cabin-owners (51%) have visited Central's web site at least once in the last year (www.cnppid.com), but a significant portion (42%) have never visited.

Extent to which Central's newsletter, *The Communicator*, is read.

Most (55%) read all or most of the newsletter, another 22% read at least some of it, and 21% at least glance through it. Only 2% indicate that they do not read it at all.

If the newsletter was available only online, survey results indicate that 65% would be less likely to read it, while another 26% say that it would not make a difference in their likelihood of reading it.

Preferred communication method for receiving information from Central.

More than half (53%) of cabin-owners indicated a preference for communications in the mail, either in the form of a letter or postcard (37%) or in the newsletter (16%). A significant portion (34%) indicated that e-mail would be a preferred communication tool.

Volunteered concerns related to lake property.

A majority of respondents (69%) did not volunteer any additional concerns, although 12% said their biggest concern was excessive increases in lease fees.



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Soil Moisture Probe Workshop

Ag Industry Education Center
Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture—Curtis, NE

February 19, 2015

Workshop Topics:

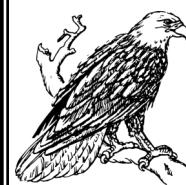
- Importance of monitoring soil moisture in agriculture
- Understanding water movement in soil
- Residue management & crop water use
- Probe placement procedures
- Digital probe data interpretation
- Breakout sessions: See the newest probes and software from Aquacheck, Aquaview, Aquaspy, John Deere and Watermark

Who should attend? Anyone who is interested in... learning to install watermark sensors or digital probes, managing irrigation water using digital data, or anyone hiring NCTA students studying to be irrigation technologists!

To guarantee a lunch ticket and materials packet you **must preregister by January 15**. Email NEWBA2012@gmail.com or call Paige at (308) 324-2386 to register.

Eagle Viewing Facilities Open

Facilities located at J-2 Hydroplant south of Lexington and on the shore of Lake Ogallala are open Saturdays and Sundays from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m.



Bring your binoculars or use a set at the viewing center to observe America's national bird!

<http://www.cnppid.com>

On the Web

Central's web site has a new look, but it will continue to provide information about Central's project, operations, multiple benefits and current issues. New content will include blog entries written by various District personnel on a variety of topics. Check it out if you haven't done so already!