

The Communicator

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Copter Sprays Bays at Lake McConaughy

By Holly Hiebert, Public Relations Assistant

Central teamed up with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to hire Sky Copters from Ulysses, Kan., to spray volunteer woody vegetation in the exposed lake bed at Lake McConaughy this fall.

A helicopter applied herbicide to 98 acres to help control cottonwood tree growth in Spillway, Divers, Martin and Arthur Bays at Lake McConaughy.

During the last major drawdown, many areas adjacent to the lake's beaches and bay areas became overgrown with trees. The vegetation growth creates potential safety hazards and limits public use of the areas. Helicopter application was used because there is limited ground access due to older vegetation growth from previous low water periods. The herbicide that was used is labeled as an aquatic product and is safe for use in aquatic environments.

The application of the herbicide should

help prevent overgrowth of cottonwood in low water areas for at least one year.

Lake McConaughy will enter 2014 at less than 60 percent of capacity and the immediate future holds little potential for the reservoir to fill next year. Low-water elevations present challenges for managing vegetation growth in recreation areas that typically attract heavy use by the public because of the open spaces.

The cooperative effort between Central and NGPC will also yield benefits to piping plovers and interior least terns, two federally protected bird species that nest on the beaches of Lake McConaughy each spring and summer.



Vegetation Control — Sky Copters Inc. sprays new tree growth in low water areas of Spillway Bay at Lake McConaughy (top). At bottom, the helicopter lands on a trailer to refill its tank with herbicide.



Eagle-viewing Season Begins Dec. 28

Central will once again provide eagle-viewing opportunities to the public this winter.

The viewing centers will be open on

Saturdays and Sundays this season, starting on Sat., Dec. 28, and will remain open until the first weekend in March.

The J-2 hydroplant facility is open from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., CST. The Kingsley Dam facility is open for eagle-viewing from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. MST.

Several factors influence the number of

eagles seen from the facilities on any given day. The best viewing time is normally earlier in the day.

A limited number of binoculars are available at the facilities, but visitors are encouraged to bring their own viewing equipment. Eagle-viewing is free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.cnppid.com.

Hiebert Participates in Water Leaders Academy

Public Relations Assistant Holly Hiebert graduated from the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy in a ceremony held Nov. 9 at Mahoney State Park near Ashland. As a participant, Hiebert and 11 others traveled the state touring facilities and listening to experts in various water-related fields.

The Academy is a one-year program established by the Nebraska State Irrigation Association that educates participants about water issues and leadership skills. The Academy prepares participants to take active, cooperative approaches to decision-making about water resources in both rural and urban settings. Leading academic scholars and policy-makers serve as program facilitators and mentors.

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 two days every other month to the Academy's activities, which includes

group discussions and sessions with experts on Nebraska water issues. The 2013 class traveled to Nebraska City, Lincoln, Kearney, Scottsbluff, Valentine and Ashland

Along with featuring water experts from around the state, the Academy also provides leadership skill development with direction from Dr. Mark Burbach, environmental scientist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Dr. Connie Reimers-Hild, extension

educator with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

"The Academy is a great program that brings together people from all across the state to find common ground," Hiebert said. "To me, the knowledge I gained is a great benefit, but the best part was the networking and relationship building with other professionals from many diverse aspects of water use in Nebraska."



Water Leaders Academy — Holly Hiebert (far right) works with other WLA participants on a small group discussion topic during the second session held in Lincoln, Neb.

Ron Fowler Joins CNPPID Board of Directors

Ron Fowler of Johnson Lake was formally seated on Central's board of directors on Nov. 22, to fill a vacancy on the board.

Fowler was selected by a vote of the directors from a field of three applicants to serve the remainder of Richard Hove's term which expires in 2015. Hove had represented Gosper County on the board since 2010 but resigned because he and his wife moved to Lincoln.

Fowler is a graduate of the University of Nebraska-Kearney with a B.S. degree in chemistry and biology. He retired in 2009 from the Eaton Corporation in Kearney after more than 30 years with the company, most of which were spent in management positions.

Following Fowler's retirement, he and his wife Kathy became full-time residents of Johnson Lake, although they have been leaseholders since April 1991



Ron Fowler

He has been associated with Johnson Lake through a residence that has been in the family since 1971. He has been a representative on the Johnson Lake Development, Inc., board (the cabin-owners' association) since 2010 and has served the last two years as JLDI's liaison to Central's board.

"After attending the Central's board meetings for two years as the liaison for JLDI, I gained some insight into the complexity of managing Nebraska's water resource and the many stakeholders that are affected by project operations," Fowler said. "I feel honored to have the opportunity to join the board and Central's staff in serving those stakeholders to the best of my ability."

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On the Lakefront



Central amended an agreement with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the Johnson Lake Sanitary Improvement District No. 1 to allow payment of general benefit costs associated with the Johnson Lake State Recreation Area.

Central and NGPC are not required to pay real estate taxes, which is the method of payment for the general benefit portion of the sewer system constructed by the SID. However, both entities recognize the benefits to the SRA and for water quality and recreation provided by the sewer system, therefore Central agreed to make a one-time payment of \$125,990 to the SID as the fair share of the costs attributable to the SID's sewer system serving the SRA.

The payments will be made in two installments, \$45,990 this year and

\$80,000 next year from Central's lake improvement fund. The NGPC agreed to reimburse Central for 50 percent of those costs.

Central staff reminds lake tenants to apply early for permits regarding docks/boat lifts, erosion control, construction on a leased lot, home additions, and planting, trimming or cutting down of vegetation. If you have plans to do any of the work listed, please contact Central staff and complete permits as early as possible.

Central, in cooperation with Tri-Basin NRD and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, used excess water in the South Platte River during the

flooding in September, diverting flood waters to re-fill lakes that had been drawn down at the end of the irrigation season and to recharge groundwater supplies in the irrigated area.

Following the diversion of flood waters, water quality was a concern for many lake users. Central's Conservation Director Marcia Trompke took water samples to determine levels of pH, organics, volatiles, pollutants, bacteria and much more. Trompke found that the presence of chemicals and alkalinity levels were within normal levels and were below drinking water, wetland and agricultural standards. Although there was bacteria and e. coli present immediately following the flood, those pollutants are short-lived and were no longer detectable in the water by Oct.10.

Central's Hydros Retain Low-Impact Certification

The Low Impact Hydropower Institute has approved Central for re-certification for the Kingsley Dam Hydroelectric Project. The certification was approved for an additional five years. Central submitted an application for re-certification on May 22, 2013, so the approved certificate runs through May 22, 2018.

According to their website, "The Low Impact Hydropower Institute (LIHI) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to reducing the impacts of hydropower generation through the certification of hydropower projects that have avoided or reduced their environmental impacts pursuant to the Low Impact Hydropower Institute's criteria."

The LIHI certification is a voluntary certification process that allows a hydropower project to receive recognition for their efforts to reduce effects of their project on the environment. Central's project not only uses water for irrigation and hydropower generation, but



Kingsley Hydroplant — Kingsley Hydroplant, completed in 1984, can generate up to 50 megawatts of electricity. Kingsley and Central's Supply Canal hydroplants — with an additional 63 megawatts of generation capacity — were recently recertified as low-impact hydroelectric power plants.

also provides benefits to recreation, groundwater recharge and wildlife habitat.

In order to meet certification standards, hydropower facilities must meet specifications in the areas of river flows, water quality, fish passage and protection, watershed protection, threatened and

endangered species protection, cultural resource protection, and recreation.

Each year, 10 percent of the storable inflows to Lake McConaughy are set aside in an "environmental account" managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service. USFWS can then control the release of that water to benefit threatened and endangered species.

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Former GM Frank Dragoun Passes Away at 84

Frank J. Dragoun, of DeBary, Fla., former general manager of the Central District, died on Dec. 9 in Thornton, Colo., while visiting relatives.

Born in Omaha in 1929, Dragoun graduated from Omaha Creighton Prep and, after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1950-51, earned his B.S. degree in civil engineering from Creighton University. He worked as a hydraulic engineer in Hastings and in Coshocton, Ohio and received his master's degree in civil engineering from Colorado State

University in 1962.

Dragoun joined the District in 1970 as assistant general manager and succeeded Richard Dirmeyer as general manager in 1982, serving in that capacity until 1992.

During his years of service to the District, Central began automating its hydro-irrigation season, completed the rehabilitation of the Phelps and E-65 irrigation systems and construction of Kingsley Hydroplant, and began the

process of securing a new federal license to operate its hydroelectric system, which was issued in 1998.

Dragoun received the "Ditchrider Award" from the Four States Irrigation Council in 1991 in recognition of service for the betterment of irrigated agriculture.

<http://www.cnppid.com>

On the Web

Central's web site will soon have a new look! Watch for the unveiling of the new design, but be assured that the site will continue to provide pertinent information about Central's project, operations, multiple benefits and information about current issues.

Also, Central will introduce a blog that will contain a variety of topics, including interesting historical information and current observations about happenings within the District and throughout Nebraska's of water and natural resources.

Board Approves Rate Increase for 2014

There will be a 3 percent increase in irrigation rates for the 2014 season, bringing the base rate for delivery of nine inches of water to \$31.67 per acre.

Under Central's Incremental Pricing Program, the rate for deliveries above 9 acre-inches, and up to 18 acre-inches, will be an additional \$1.11 per acre-inch, although previous board action will limit deliveries during the 2014 irrigation season to 9 acre-inches because of below normal inflows to Lake McConaughy and projections for a limited supply of storage water in the reservoir next summer.