



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) – The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District’s board of directors approved agreements at Monday’s board meeting that will allow payment of costs associated with the sanitary improvement district at Johnson Lake.

The actions modified a lease agreement with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for land managed as a State Recreation Area (SRA) and an agreement with the Johnson Lake Sanitary Improvement District No. 1 to allow payment of general benefit costs associated with the Johnson Lake SRA.

The general benefits costs include lift stations, the outfall sewer, the SID building and the lagoon system.

Central owns the land on which the SRA is located and leases the property to the NGPC. Central and the NGPC are exempt from the payment of 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.

Also at Monday’s board meeting:

- The board approved an operating budget for the 2014 fiscal year. The budget, which goes into effect on Jan. 1, anticipates total revenues of \$15.46 million, including \$6.54 million from the sale of hydroelectric power, \$3.46 million from irrigation delivery service, and \$5.46 million from other sources.

Included in the budget was 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.

- Conservation Director Marcia Trompke and Curtis Scheele, irrigation water management specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, presented their annual water conservation report.

Trompke briefed the board on the results of a five-year contract under the NRCS Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP). From 2009 through 2013, Central irrigation customers installed 30 pivots and four subsurface drip irrigation systems with cost-share assistance through the program.

Trompke also summarized the results of efforts to monitor the quality of water being diverted into Central’s system during September’s South Platte River flood event.

“Chemically speaking, water samples before and after the flood were similar,” Trompke said. “We did not measure much salinity or sodium, and no nitrates to speak of, so the water was good for irrigation and groundwater recharge.”

She said there was no detection of fuels, oils and pesticides that had raised concerns for water quality and that the presence of some heavy metals – such as zinc, selenium, lead and arsenic – in the flood water were well below drinking water standards. Also, while fecal and e-coli bacteria levels were elevated for a short period of time, such bacteria are short-lived in water and contaminant levels in Central’s canal system quickly dropped to virtually zero.

Scheele reviewed the Nebraska Agricultural Water Management Network’s system of evapotranspiration data-gathering sites, 16 of which are located within Phelps, Kearney and Gosper counties. He also discussed projects funded in part by NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and AWEP programs. The programs helped fund 52 water conservation contracts in 2013, including 34 pivots and 11 subsurface drip systems on a total of 5,171 acres.

- The board approved a \$16,100 contract with Kleinschmidt Associates, headquartered in Pittsfield, Maine, to inspect the Elwood Reservoir dam. Central personnel inspect the dam on a regular basis, but staff recommended an independent inspection to supplement the routine inspections and assure the dam’s safety.

- The board approved a staff recommendation to offer “net controlled conserved water” to the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program to comply with provisions in Central’s Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license.

- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy’s elevation was at 3231.8 feet on Monday with a storage volume of 912,300 acre-feet (52 percent of capacity). Inflows have been averaging about 850 cubic feet per second, or about 60 percent of normal for this time of year

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