



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) -- The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors unanimously approved a task order agreement at Monday's monthly meeting with an engineering firm to further evaluate the merits of becoming a member of the Southwest Power Pool (SPP).

SPP is a Regional Transmission Organization mandated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to ensure reliable supplies of power, adequate transmission infrastructure, and competitive wholesale prices of electricity.

As part of the agreement, Black & Veatch Corp., of Overland Park, Kan., will conduct a transmission cost of service study to support a rate tariff request to the FERC. The engineering firm will also study and evaluate the estimated utilization of Central's three substations for power flows.

The study will determine the potential cost recovery Central might realize for use of its transmission facilities by other utilities under the SPP tariff.

The cost of the studies is not to exceed \$150,000.

Also at Monday's meeting:

- The board approved expenditure of \$22,000 for the replacement of a pump in a groundwater well on the E65 Canal system.
- Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford reported that diversions to begin filling the irrigation system will likely begin next week. He said the District will utilize flows in the South Platte River to the extent possible during the process and to provide for any early deliveries to pivots on the system. Usage of South Platte flows will help conserve storage water in Lake McConaughy.
- The board approved a request for \$100,000 from Central's Lake Improvement Fund to help fund the expansion of the public meeting room at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center. Others also contributing to the expansion project include the Friends of Big Mac organization and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Central's contribution will be made in equal parts over the next two years.

The board also approved a request from Johnson Lake Development, Inc., (JLDI) for \$5,000 to offset costs associated with carp removal efforts at the lake. The carp removal will be conducted this spring by a company specializing in such projects and by volunteers.

- Gary Robison of Bertrand appeared before the board to ask questions about the proposed J-2 Regulating Reservoirs south of the Platte River between Lexington and Overton. Most of Robison's questions were based on concern that the reservoirs would not be able to hold the intended volume of water.

Civil engineer Cory Steinke said that almost 30 soil borings were done in the area during the feasibility studies. Analysis of the borings indicated the presence of sufficient amounts of clay to use to construct two layers of lining. In addition, another layer of compacted earth is included in the preliminary design. However, Steinke said additional borings will be made to confirm the initial findings before construction commences.

"We're confident in the engineering process and we trust the engineers who are involved in the process," Steinke said, "but construction will not proceed until we're also confident that the reservoirs will perform as designed in terms of holding water."

While the reservoirs will be constructed, owned and operated by Central, they are primarily designed to provide benefits to the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program and the State of Nebraska by retiming flows in the Platte River for endangered species' habitat enhancement. While the total volume of water returning to the Platte River after diversion into Central's system will not change, the timing of those releases are intended to be beneficial to the species of concern.

- The directors approved the annual services agreement with JLDI covering communication services, provision of a yard waste landfill, and garbage disposal service. Per terms of the agreement, Central will reimburse JLDI \$48,153 for the services.
- The board approved an application by Morgan Wells to close a small lateral on the Phelps Canal system north of Axtell that has been unused for several years.
- Gothenburg Division Manager Kevin Boyd reported that a project to install a pedestrian bridge over the outlet canal at Johnson Lake has gone through a number of engineering revisions. The design now being pursued is a three-span aluminum bridge with two pilings, which replaces the original free-span design. The new design is lighter and less costly, but meets all of the design codes for a pedestrian bridge. Boyd said the engineering firm will review the impacts of the revisions to the bridge's design.

Director Ron Fowler of Johnson Lake said the lake's trails committee does not have a preference as to whether the bridge is constructed of steel or aluminum as long as it meets all design codes.

- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy's elevation was at 3239.0 feet (a volume of 1.06 million acre-feet and 61 percent of storage capacity) as of Monday. Inflows have averaged 858 cubic feet per second over the past month, compared with normal historic inflows of 1,196 cfs (71 percent of normal).

Steinke also reported that snowpack above the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs in Wyoming ranges from 126 percent of normal in the upper basin to 130 percent of normal in the lower basin, but carryover storage in the reservoirs is below average.

"There's plenty of room to store runoff from the snowmelt, so we don't expect inflows to Lake McConaughy to be increased by excess runoff," he said. "On the plus-side, surface water irrigation projects in eastern Wyoming and western Nebraska should receive normal allocations from the upstream reservoirs."

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