

Press Release

PROGRAM RESPONSE TO J-2 CONSTRUCTION COST INCREASE

Kearney, NE, September 9, 2015 – In its regular quarterly meeting today, the Governance Committee of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) addressed an updated cost estimate for the J-2 Regulating Reservoirs Project. The project sponsor, The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (Central), and its engineer, RJH Consultants Inc., delivered a presentation detailing project changes and associated construction cost increases significantly higher than originally anticipated. The original construction cost estimate was \$63 million. The cost estimate is now \$170 million. Neither of these figures includes the cost of land acquisition.

The J-2 Regulating Reservoirs are a component of a Water Action Plan intended to develop and implement water projects to provide sufficient water to and through the central Platte River habitat area to assist in improving and maintaining habitat for the target species. The reservoirs are one of several projects to re-time flows in the Platte River and reduce shortages to target flows.

The Governance Committee authorized the Program's Executive Director to work with Central and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources to evaluate J-2 project alternatives that can be accomplished within the available Program budget. There will be a status update on the J-2 Regulating Reservoirs and other water projects at the December 2015 Governance Committee meeting in Denver, Colorado.

As the Program continues work on the J-2 project, several other Water Action Plan projects are being evaluated and implemented to keep the Program on track to meet its First Increment water objective of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year on average.

“Today the Governance Committee reaffirmed the Program's commitment to meet its water objective by the end of the First Increment,” said Dr. Jerry Kenny, Executive Director of the Program. “We continue to explore all options, including revisions to the current J-2 design concept, to make the best use of Program monetary resources to achieve the water objective.”

The Program began in 2007 as a basin-wide effort between the states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming, Department of the Interior, water users, and conservation groups to provide benefits for certain threatened and endangered species and water users through increased regulatory certainty.

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