



The Communicator

Published by The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District

2016 Water Supply Projections Hold Promise

A strong El Niño weather pattern and nearly full upstream reservoirs in Wyoming are making Central staff an optimistic about water supply projections for the 2016 irrigation season.

Civil Engineer Cory Steinke said the main Wyoming reservoirs on the North Platte River — Seminole and Pathfinder — are all nearly full, and should fill with runoff from just an average snowpack this winter. Once these reservoirs fill, they will begin releasing water down the North Platte River into Nebraska, which typically results in higher inflows at Lake McConaughy.

On top of good storage conditions upstream, a strong El Niño is forecasted. Historically, this has produced some of the highest inflows ever recorded into Lake McConaughy.

Currently, the Oceanic Niño Index reading is a 2.0, which is the threshold between a “strong” and a “very strong” El Niño. Historically, the three strongest El Niño years on record were 1972-73, 1982-83 and 1997-98. These three events produced 7 of the top ten inflow rankings at Lake McConaughy since 1942.

Steinke said Central is preparing Lake McConaughy for possible high inflows while keeping a close eye on snowpack conditions in Colorado and Wyoming.

Water Year Lake McConaughy Inflow Rankings
Highest to Lowest (1942-2015)

Rank	Year	Total WY Inflows in acre-feet
1	2011	2,615,110
2	1984*	2,603,165
3	1983*	2,358,865
4	1973*	2,218,404
5	1971*	2,052,371
6	1974*	1,693,350
7	1986	1,658,226
8	1999*	1,477,212
9	1997*	1,460,294
10	2010	1,453,834

J-2 Regulating Reservoir Update

Following a delay due to escalated project costs, the J-2 Regulating Reservoir project is back on track with a new design in the works. During the December board meeting, Central’s board of directors directed staff to resume planning for the project, which will likely result in a single reservoir, rather than the two containments as originally designed.

The new design will retain the ability to re-time water releases to the Platte River to help meet goals established by the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program for threatened and endangered species habitat. Central’s benefits will be reduced without the second reservoir, so Central’s board instructed staff to seek a reduction in Central’s financial contribution to the project. However, Central will still see benefits from increased generation at their nearby J-2 Hydroplant and an alleviation of concerns about impacts to riverine habitat caused by fluctuating flows through the hydroplant.

Central Installs Ice Booms at Jeffrey Lake

Jeffrey Lake visitors will notice a bright new barrier in the Jeffrey Hydroplant forebay this winter.

In the past, Central employees have been called out during nights, weekends and especially in harsh winter weather conditions to help remove ice jams from the Jeffrey Hydro forebay. This year, staff investigated alternatives to the time-consuming process of removing ice with heavy machinery.

In October, the board of directors approved the purchase of a new “tuff boom” barrier for installation in the channel above the hydroplant. The barrier is set at an angle, so ice that is



moving downstream that would normally clog the forebay will collect on one side of the barrier. This will allow more consistent water flows through the plant and will make removal of the ice much easier for em-

ployees using equipment on either side of the bank.

One of the most significant benefits of the boom will be prevention of generation interruptions caused by ice jams above the hydroplant.

Safety Committee Helps Keep Employees on the Job

Central’s General Safety Committee has been keeping tabs on employees’ safety for more than 20 years.

The committee consists of eight members, including employees from each of Central’s four offices. The committee meets every other month at one of the Central offices and conducts a building inspection to check for any safety concerns, improper use or storage of tools and equipment, building maintenance and upkeep, and proper checks of fire extinguishers and other safety equipment.

Following building inspections, the committee reviews any accident reports since the previous meeting. Each report is discussed to determine how and why an accident occurred and then designated as either “avoidable” or “unavoidable.” The

committee also often makes recommendations as to what can be done to make sure a similar accident does not happen again.

The committee also rewards employees for good safety records with periodic safety awards. Several employees have been accident-free for more than 30 years of employment.

Central also sees benefits from their employees’ good records. Before bids come in each year, insurance companies look at Central’s safety records. Central currently carries a loss experience rating of 0.61, which is the lowest the rating has ever been and is considered excellent by industry standards.

The safety rating is also taken into consideration when insurance compa-

nies submit bids for insurance coverage. Other factors considered include miles driven by Central employees versus the number of fleet accidents. Collectively, Central’s employees drive more than a million miles per year with an accident rate that is well below national the national average.

In addition to the Safety Committee’s efforts, monthly safety meetings are conducted by the irrigation and hydro divisions to reinforce safe practices at job sites.

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On the Lakefront



Johnson Lake Bridge Completed

A new pedestrian bridge has been completed at the Johnson Lake Outlet. The bridge is another step toward completion of the Hike/Bike Trail. Work began Oct. 5 and wrapped up ahead of schedule on Nov. 20.

The bridge, designed by Oak Creek Engineering of Kearney, is a 10-foot wide wooden structure located about six feet upstream of the current road bridge.

The bridge was assembled by Central's Gothenburg employees, who worked quickly and efficiently despite some weather delays and a short wait for materials to arrive.

Feedback

Central's Land Administration staff is looking for feedback from customers. If

you have recently worked with employees on a project and have a recommendation on how we can improve, please contact us at 308-995-8601.



The crane on top of Kingsley Hydroplant (photo at left) received a fresh coat of paint this fall, by workers from W.S. Bunch Co., Inc., of Omaha, Neb.

The sandblasting and new paint job took a little longer than expected, due to inclement weather, but the fresh paint has the crane looking like new again.



The parking lot on the south side of Central's Holdrege office (photo at right) recently underwent an expansion, a project made necessary by the widening of Highway 6 & 34. The highway project required removal of one of the entrances to the parking area and reduced the availability of parking near the entrance to the Irrigation Office. As a result, a redesign of the parking area and street access was required to maintain proper traffic flow and safety of employees and customers alike.



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Irrigation Management Workshop Set for Jan. 28

Curtis, Neb. – “Low to High Tech Water Solutions” will be the theme for the 2016 irrigation management forum to be hosted at the University of Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis on Jan. 28.

“The workshop targets crop producers and irrigation management – choosing tools that work for their specific operations,” said Brad Ramsdale, PhD, agronomy and agricultural mechanics division chairman. “Our NCTA agronomy students will be joining irrigators and crop producers in receiving excellent management information.”

Irrigation and technology companies will display the latest in water management resources, said Roric Paulman, a Sutherland, Neb., producer and industry advocate. Paulman is chairman of the Nebraska Water Balance Alliance, event co-host with NCTA and the University of Nebraska’s West Central Research and Extension Center.

“Every farm operation is unique and this workshop will emphasize how irrigators can use various management tools,” Paulman said. “Some may be simple but very workable, low-tech

strategies while others may be quite sophisticated.”

Information will include producer panels and success stories, break-out sessions, research trials, and discussions on technology from sprinkler packages to use of satellite imagery for field management, said Ramsdale.

The event is complementary for attendees, but pre-registration is required by Jan. 21 to guarantee a noon meal. See details at <http://www.nebraskawaterbalance.com/>

Additional information is available from Ramsdale at bramsdale2@unl.edu or by calling (308) 367-5225.

AGENDA

- 8 am - Registration
- 9:00 - Welcome and overview
- 9:10 - Low to high tech options
- 9:30 - Advantages and challenges of different sprinkler packages
- 10:00 - Grower symposium - Success strategies from growers
- 10:30 - Break/Visit exhibitors
- 10:45 - Grower symposium - Success

strategies from growers

11:30 - What NEWBA has taught us

12:00 - Lunch

1 p.m. - Q&A session with grower panel

1:25 - How much technology should I invest in?

1:45 - Break/Visit exhibitors

2:00 - Breakout sessions: Improving water management topics

3:30 - Future directions

3:45 - Workshop ends

<http://www.cnppid.com>

On the Web

Central has been utilizing social media to keep customers and stakeholders informed. If you’re interested in keeping in touch, “like” our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/cnppid.