



The Communicator

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NGPC unveils recreational plan for Lake McConaughy

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission unveiled its long-range plans for improving recreational opportunities and facilities at Lake McConaughy and Lake Ogallala at a public meeting Aug. 4 in Ogallala.

Michelle Stryker, NGPC's Planning and Programming Division administrator, informed an audience of about 150 people that the master plan will consist of four-year phases over 20 years.

The NGPC recognizes that there are budgetary constraints under which it must operate, Stryker said while explaining the phased process of improv-

ing facilities and introducing new management practices at the State Recreation Areas (SRA).

The first phase will include a variety of changes that will be evaluated over time to determine what is working and what needs to be adjusted during subsequent phases to ensure that the needs of the public are met, she said.

NGPC personnel stated that the plan is currently in draft form, adding that once implemented it will be flexible and adaptive to changes as lessons are learned about the process.

With an emphasis on providing a fami-

ly-friendly environment at Lake McConaughy, the stated goals of the plan are:

- Provide visitors with a memorable experience at the lake(s);
- Increase visitation during spring and fall "shoulder seasons;"
- Create partnerships with the community to enhance economic benefits from the lake;
- Expand recreational opportunities;
- Manage and protect natural resources to avoid conflicts;

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Platte Program discusses extension, idles J-2 Project

The Governance Committee of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP) met recently in Denver, Colo., in the first of a series of special sessions focused on an extension of the Program's first increment beyond the current end date of Dec. 31, 2019.

A number of milestones were set to be accomplished during the first increment. All have been achieved except for two related to supplying additional water to the habitat area along the central Platte River. According to a news release from the PRRIP, the water milestone will not be achieved prior to 2019 which has led to the extension discussions.

The Governance Committee also provided direction on several water related issues at the meeting, included placing

further development of the J-2 Regulating Reservoir project on hold.

The J-2 Project is a proposed water storage project between Lexington and Overton associated with Central's hydroelectric and irrigation facilities. The PRRIP, the state of Nebraska, and Central are partners in the proposed project.

Rising costs, resulting in the need to reconfigure the project, caused delays as many issues remain unresolved. Primarily due to institutional and cost issues, the Governance Committee placed the project on hold until further notice while the PRRIP pursues other water project opportunities involving groundwater recharge, small-scale storage projects, and water acquisition and transfer opportunities. The PRRIP's

Water Action Plan will be updated accordingly as the feasibility of these projects is examined.

The next meeting of the Governance Committee will be Aug. 17 in Denver to further advance the extension proposal.

The PRRIP is a collaborative program established to assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered species in the Platte River basin, thereby providing Endangered Species Act coverage for that area. The Governance Committee consists of representatives of the states of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming, the Department of the Interior, water users in all three states, and environmental and conservation organizations.

Central renews water leasing program for 2017 season

Central's irrigation customers will again have the opportunity to participate in a program to lease surface water acres during the 2017 irrigation season. The leased water will be credited to the Environmental Account in Lake McConaughy.

The program will operate in accordance with the following terms.

- The lease term begins when the agreement is accepted by Central's board of directors; it expires at the end of the 2017 irrigation season.
- The number of acres leased under the program will be capped at 2,000. If the number of acres offered for enrollment exceeds 2,000, then acres will be selected by a random drawing.
- Only accounts not in termination are eligible for the program.
- Customers will identify the acres to be leased. Leased acres shall not be irrigated by surface water or groundwater in 2017 and enrollees shall agree to allow inspection to ensure that irrigation did not occur in 2017.
- The enrollment period will be Nov. 15 through Dec. 15, 2016.
- Central will pay the irrigation customer \$220 for each acre leased by Nov. 1, 2017 after verification that the lands were not irrigated.
- The owner of the tract of land from which the water is leased will be responsible for all water service charges specified in the Water Service Agreement.
- All previous water service charges must be paid.
- Acres to be leased must have been irrigated with surface water during the past five years.

Pondweed not welcome in canals

While Sago pondweed is an important aquatic plant in lakes and ponds because of its value as a food source for waterfowl and shorebirds and to provide fish habitat, it's not welcome in Central's irrigation canals and is considered a nuisance in water used for recreational purposes.

Sago pondweed is found throughout the United States. It grows best in shallow areas where sunlight can filter through the water to germinate tubers. The tubers produce shoots that grow into stems and leaves, while the under sides produce roots.

Despite its annoying characteristics, Sago pondweed does have some redeeming qualities. Its long rhizomes provide anchorage in the soil, helping to reduce shoreline erosion. The leaves, which resemble pine needles spread out in bushy fashion, provide shelter and increased oxygen supply for aquatic creatures. The plant also uses dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus, which helps reduce algae blooms by depriving the algae of nutrients.

Waterfowl and shorebirds will eat the whole plant, including the tubers and seeds. The plant also serves as food for various amphibians, reptiles and fish and provides habitat for invertebrates, which in turn are consumed by several species of wildlife.

However, in some circumstances it can create dense stands that cause problems in irrigation canals and laterals. In these circumstances, the plant's undesirable characteristics make control measures necessary.

Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford said that, typically Central contends more with filamentous algae than Sago pondweed, but both plant species are in abundance this year.

"We see more or less growth during

different irrigation seasons," he said. "This year just happens to be one of those years when conditions are conducive to more growth."

Central uses various aquatic chemicals approved for use in irrigation canals, including endothall, marketed under the trade names Cascade and Teton.



Endothall does not harm fish, frogs, snails and other aquatic life and is safer for workers to handle. The chemical is approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for use in canals and

irrigation ditches and is considered an excellent option for vegetation management in flowing water.

Sago pondweed can also cause problems in lakes when its population spikes. It can interfere with access to the water (particularly for those who do not like to swim or wade through masses of underwater vegetation) and can also cause problems with hydroelectric generation when masses of the plant break off and block the intake grates above hydroplants.

Controlling Sago pondweed in larger bodies of water is more difficult. Chemical control would be cost-prohibitive and studies have shown that regrowth occurs because herbicides don't kill the roots or tubers. Mechanical control (raking or seining) in areas of dense growth can be somewhat effective, but the plants will reestablish from remaining roots and seeds, although generally not within the same season.

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On the Lakefront



Central wrapped up dredging operations at Jeffrey Lake in August after removing more than 40,000 cubic yards of sediment from the lake.

Gothenburg Division Manager Kevin Boyd said the project successfully opened a large area of water between the inlet and the outlet, which will improve operational flows through the lake and boat travel on the lake.

“The dredge performed as expected,” Boyd said, “but we learned that there were certain limitations which can be addressed with a larger, more versatile dredge equipped with different features.”

Central will now seek bids for a dredge on a lease/purchase basis that will allow removal of more sediment over a shorter period of time and will be more suited for use in other areas, including at the Diversion Dam, in the Supply Canal and irrigation canals, and at other District lakes.

Lake Improvement Fund

At August’s board meeting, Central’s directors approved several requests for

Lake Improvements Funds:

- \$26,000 toward the purchase and installation of three boat motors and a side-scan sonar system for the Keystone/Lemoyne Fire & Rescue Dept., to improve safety and rescue abilities at Lake McConaughy.
- \$20,000 for a Sanitary Improvement District connection for the Lakeside Country Club at Johnson Lake, contingent upon the club raising matching funds.
- \$15,000 for playground equipment at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission’s Johnson Lake State Recreation Area.
- \$1,000 for the purchase and installation of a picnic table along the Johnson Lake hike/bike trail.

Johnson Lake Lease Analysis

Central recently contracted with a firm to conduct a comprehensive study of lake lot lease rates. The consultant’s key findings include: (1) Central’s current rate structure, based on 5% of the mar-

ket value of a lot, is typical for governmental agencies and utilities throughout the country; (2) that current rental rates at Johnson Lake are well below market rates; and (3) the current fair market value of Johnson Lake lots are such that rental rates would be expected to increase substantially under the terms of the current leases.

However, it should be noted that the report was developed for informational purposes only, to provide information on how rental rates for lakefront properties are typically set by governmental agencies and utilities, and to provide current market information. The report does not determine what the rental rates at Johnson Lake will be. Central’s board is still considering, and has made no decisions about, possible changes to the current leases or rate-setting process.

A re-appraisal of lot values (as required by a provision in the current leases) will be completed by March 1, 2017. Any changes to lease rates would go into effect by March 1, 2018.

Lake McConaughy recreational plan (cont. from p. 1)

- Protect endangered species that use the lake;
- Ensure public safety;
- Educate the public about cultural and natural resources issues;
- Provide effective and efficient management of the SRA; and
- Manage the lake in accordance with Central’s existing Land & Shoreline Management Plan (which is required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license) and tern/plover monitoring and protection plans.

The master plan contains a number of new and improved amenities that were identified during a steering committee’s extensive study of potential improve-

ments in recreational opportunities and management of the SRAs. The steering committee consisted of representatives from the NGPC, the Keith County/Lake McConaughy community, and Central.

Among the list of improvements included in the draft plan are provisions for new modern campgrounds and improvements to existing campgrounds; improvement and expansion of boat ramps; additional parking areas; creation of hike/bike trails; improvements to and addition of restrooms and shower facilities; an equestrian campground; a decontamination station for boats to avoid introduction of invasive aquatic species; fishing piers; kayaking/

canoeing trails; additional gates and gate houses to control access/egress points; road improvements and road closures in certain areas; additional fish-cleaning stations; and expansion of the visitors center.

Upon approval, the plan’s components will be prioritized and improvements would begin in 2017 and continue through the phased process.

The plan also calls for creation of zones on the beaches where vehicle access and/or camping will be prohibited. Areas frequently used by least terns and piping plovers (shorebirds federally designated as endangered and threatened, respectively) will also be off-limits

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Lake McConaughy (cont. from p. 3)

to the public during the nesting period from Apr. 15 to Aug. 15. In addition, some areas may be designated as “day-use only,” where foot traffic is allowed, but camping and vehicles are not.

“We know that people like to access the beach with their vehicles,” Stryker said, “but in some areas that simply won’t be possible if we want the plan to realize its overall goals.”

Stryker said that the changes within the long-range plan have become necessary to address issues that have been simmering for several years. In fact, many of the proposed enforcement and regu-

lation issues are in response to requests from the public.

“It’s apparent that we need to control the density of visitors in some areas by spreading people out and putting in some restrictions on where and how many lake visitors gather,” she said.

The current practice of allowing camping on all of the beaches makes it difficult to manage the crowds and enforce rules and regulations, she said. To address that issue, the plan calls for additional staff and law enforcement personnel.

New CNPPID Employees

Luke Ritz joined Central on Aug. 8 as a land administrator. He will be headquartered in Gothenburg.

Beth Ignowski also became a Central employee on Aug. 8 as an administrative assistant in the Holdrege office. She replaces Kristen Dorsey who is moving with her husband to North Carolina.

<http://www.cnppid.com>

On the Web

Central’s “Reservoir/River Data” page on the website has a new look. In addition, the page has been automated so that daily updates to the lake elevation and flow data will appear 365 days a year, including weekends and holidays.

Also, check us out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cnppid/ for a photo recap of events during the 75th anniversary celebration at Kingsley Dam.

In conjunction with the 75th anniversary of Kingsley Dam, here’s a look at Centrals’ logos through the years



1940s



1950s, early '60s



Alternate, ca. 1940s



Late 1960s, '70s most of '80s