



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors was briefed during Monday's monthly meeting on a boundary review process being conducted to comply with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) requirements.

Gothenburg Division Manager Devin Brundage reported that Central needs to begin work in the near future on the FERC requirement to control its project boundaries around each of Central's many reservoirs, lakes and canals for project-related operations and maintenance.

Brundage said language in Central's FERC license requires licensees to "... acquire title in fee or the right to use in perpetuity all lands, other than lands of the United States, necessary or appropriate for the construction, maintenance, and operation of the project."

Central is currently conducting a boundary review of its properties to determine areas where it will need to acquire property to comply with the FERC requirements. Some of the need has arisen because of erosion along its lakes and canals; in other areas it may be determined that insufficient land was acquired during the original project construction that occurred in the 1930s.

Most of the properties being reviewed are adjacent to Central's Supply Canal, including the reservoirs and small canyon lakes along the canal, although there may be additional acres at Lake McConaughy, the project's primary storage reservoir, that may need to be acquired.

As an example, Brundage said, last year's purchase of 189.65 acres of farm ground adjacent to Gallagher Canyon Reservoir (southeast of Cozad) at public auction was done to comply with FERC boundary requirements.

Central representatives had approached the landowner about purchasing only a small number of acres necessary for boundary control, but were informed by the landowner that the property would be sold only as a single parcel. Central is currently leasing the majority of the recently acquired acres for farm and pasture use.

In the future, after boundary issues are addressed, such land not necessary for project purposes will be offered back to the public, likely through a public auction process.

Brundage presented several other examples of properties that are being analyzed and said the boundary review process addresses each respective area as it pertains to environmental and cultural resources, public recreation, shoreline management, project security, and residential and agricultural uses.

Also at Monday's meeting:

- Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford presented information from Central's semi-annual data collection from its network of groundwater observation wells.

Analysis of the data indicates that within Central's service area (Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties) there were relatively minimal changes in groundwater levels since last spring, except for slightly more declines in Kearney County. Over the past ten years, about half of the 132 wells within Central's network showed increases and half showed declines, with more pronounced declines in the eastern part of the service area.

Ford said Central also analyzes data from the average groundwater levels from 1981 to '85 and compares that data to the present readings. Sixty percent of the wells, most of them east of Holdrege show declines between one and 20 feet, although about half of the wells showing declines were in the 1 to 5 feet range. Declines over the longer period are likely due to increased irrigation efficiency by irrigators (which reduces the amount of water that goes to recharge) and a lower volume of water being diverted into the canal systems as a result of the higher efficiencies.

Ford added that wells showing increases tend to cluster around Elwood Reservoir where recent efforts to intentionally provide groundwater recharge are showing good results. The recharge efforts benefit return flows back to the river in both the Platte and Republican basins.

- The directors approved a bid from Nebraska Machinery Co., of North Platte for purchase of a Caterpillar track loader for \$72,200.
- The board approved a contract closure for replacement of a bridge over the Supply Canal southeast of North Platte By Simon Contractors of North Platte.
- Approved modifications to shoreline setback requirements at Johnson Lake's Mallard Beach South Bay to allow a 40' setback for enclosed structures/additions; and a 30' setback for structures without walls, e.g., awnings or covered porches. The board also approved a modification to permitting procedures on Central property that will allow staff the discretion to reduce or eliminate administrative fees to adjacent landowners for vegetation modification or removal activities if they are performed in order to provide environmental or ecological benefit on District lands.
- The directors approved a land use permit for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program to facilitate a sediment augmentation project along the south channel of the Platte River upstream from the Overton bridge.
- The board approved an amendment to the 2017 budget adding \$152,000 for replacement of electromechanical relays and the addition of generator protection relays at Central's Supply Canal hydroplants. The bid to perform the services was awarded to SEL Engineering Services of Lakewood, Colo.
- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy has been steadily rising with increasing inflows and is at elevation 3254.9 feet, about ten feet below capacity. The reservoir is currently about 83 percent full with about 1.4 million acre-feet in storage. Given current projections, he said, it is looking less likely that excess water will have to be released from the reservoir unless there are significant changes in inflows. Given current conditions and trends, he said, the reservoir is likely to reach a peak near full capacity.

Steinke said the snowpack in the Rocky Mountains, which had fallen below average, has returned to normal levels as a result of recent snowfall. He is projecting that inflows to Lake McConaughy will be relatively high into June.

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