



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors approved, subject to legal review, a series of water service agreements for groundwater recharge at Tuesday's monthly meeting.

Central has entered into agreements with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) for recharge during the non-irrigation season on the Phelps Canal to help augment return flows to the Platte River. The recharge – up to 10,666 acre-feet of water per year – helps the Nebraska and the Program meet goals of offsetting depletions to river flows.

The board approved a similar water service agreement with the Program, NDNR and Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (TBNRD) for diversions of up to 16,000 acre-feet into Elwood Reservoir with 50 percent of the credit and cost allocated to the Program and the remaining 50 percent split between NDNR and TBNRD.

The board also approved a water service agreement for groundwater recharge purposes with TBNRD and NDNR for non-irrigation season diversions to the E65 Canal, Elwood Reservoir and the Cottonwood Waterfowl Production Area. The two entities will share costs and credits associated with diversion of up to 13,500 acre-feet of water per year.

The agreements all run through December 2019. Similar agreements in past years have all been for one year.

Also at Tuesday's meeting:

- The board approved a water leasing agreement with the Platte River Program, extending a program that has been in place for the past two irrigation seasons.

Under the program, Central will offer to lease surface water from its customers during the 2018 irrigation season provided the customer agrees to not irrigate those lands with either groundwater or surface water. Water that is leased will be credited to the environmental account in Lake McConaughy – managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to benefit endangered species habitat along the central Platte River – in October of 2018.

Central will accept proposals during the fall of 2017 from customers identifying the acres to be leased next year. Under terms of the agreement, up to 2,000 acres may be enrolled in the program.

- The board approved a contract closure for purchase of a motor grader from Murphy Tractor of North Platte for \$274,990.
- The directors approved use of \$3,741 in Lake Improvement Funds for purchase of ice rescue equipment (ice rescue suits and drysuits) for the Elwood Volunteer Fire & Rescue Department.
- The board approved a staff recommendation to increase the fee for variance requests from \$50 to \$125. Staff reported that a significant amount of time is spent preparing requests for variances to construction policies at District lakes. The current \$50 fee, which has been in place since inception of the variance process many years ago, is no longer sufficient to offset the time spent processing the requests.
- The board authorized provision of an additional 100 hours of labor and/or use of equipment to complete upgrades to the public boat ramps at Plum Creek Lake and Jeffrey Reservoir. Central partnered with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission on the improvement projects. The Plum Creek Lake boat ramp project has been completed and the ramp is in operation, while work will begin soon on the Jeffrey Reservoir ramp.
- Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford informed the board that irrigation season should conclude by the end of this week or early next week. Final deliveries will be accomplished with draw-down water after the head gates of the irrigation canals are closed.
- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy's elevation is currently at elevation 3,247.9 feet (1.27 million acre-feet or 73 percent of capacity). Relatively mild temperatures and timely rainfall during August helped reduce irrigation demands and a period of higher than normal inflows helped offset releases from the reservoir.

He reported that the reservoir is near its low elevation for the season and is expected to start coming back up in the near future.
- Steinke also reminded the board members of upcoming drawdowns at Jeffrey Lake and Johnson Lake to facilitate maintenance projects at the three Supply Canal hydroelectric plants. Jeffrey Lake will start declining on Sept. 11 and will be down about seven feet until returning to normal levels by Oct. 31. Johnson Lake's decline will begin Oct. 1 and will be down about eight feet until returning to normal levels by Oct. 31.
- Gothenburg Division Manager Devin Brundage reported that the dredging project at Jeffrey Reservoir concluded on Aug. 11 and the recently purchased dredge is now operating in the Supply Canal below the head gates of the North Platte Diversion Dam.

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Contact: Jeff Buettner
Public Relations Coordinator
Office: (308) 995-8601
E-mail: jbuettner@cnppid.com