



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - Don Kraus, general manager of The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District since 1992, announced during Monday's board meeting his intention to retire, effective in January 2019.

Kraus joined Central in 1971 as an electrical engineer helping install the supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) equipment that controls the District's hydroplants and water conveyance throughout the system.

He left the District in 1974 for another engineering position in Iowa, but returned in 1976. He was named general manager in 1992. He is the longest-serving general manager in Central's history.

In preparation for Kraus' retirement, the board of directors voted to retain the services of Mycoff, Fry and Prouse, an executive recruiting firm from Denver, to facilitate the recruitment and hiring of a new general manager.

Also during Monday's meeting:

- Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford presented results from this spring's collection of data from 138 of Central's observation wells located in Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties. Analysis of the data shows that changes over a one-year period from spring 2017 to spring 2018 were minimal, with less than one foot of change in either direction. Over a ten-year period, about 40 percent of the wells, primarily in the western half of the irrigated area near Elwood Reservoir, showed increases of up to 17 feet. However, over the same ten-year period, the eastern half of the irrigated area showed a generalized decline in the water table.

Ford said Central also analyzes data from the average groundwater levels from 1981 to '85 and compares that data with the present readings. Forty-five percent of the wells show declines from one to 15 feet, although most of those declines average closer to two to seven feet. Nearly 20 percent of the wells shows no change in water levels during this period, while the remaining 35 percent shows rising levels. Most of the wells with rising levels show an average of over 10 feet in change. These wells are located near Elwood Reservoir, where recent efforts to raise groundwater levels through recharge projects have made significant progress. The recharge efforts also benefit return flows back to the river in both the Platte and Republican basins.

- The board approved a letter of consent and a letter of understanding with Gosper County as preparations are made to replace a county bridge that crosses Central's E-65 canal south of Johnson Lake. Staff recommended that Central should help fund the construction of a larger culvert crossing to enable conveyance of higher flows if Central decides to increase the canal's carrying capacity in the future.

Central agreed to pay up to \$73,000 for the installation of the twin 10' x 12' concrete box culvert to replace the existing timber bridge.

- The board approved the construction of a memorial lighthouse on the end of Mallard Beach jetty, subject to neighbor approval. Central will perform some maintenance to the jetty to repair hazards and prepare the site for the concrete pad to be installed. Construction of the lighthouse will be funded by private donors. The lake association will be responsible for mowing the adjacent area and maintenance of the structure.
- The board approved a "Certified Contractor Pilot Program," which will allow area contractors who regularly work with Central's customers, particularly those who lease lots at lakes, to go through a certification process. The goal will be for these contractors to have an expedited permitting process on their projects.
- The board approved a budget amendment for \$6,100 for the purchase of a new ultrasonic flow meter from GPM Enterprises, Inc., of Aurora, Neb. The meter is used to check the accuracy of irrigation flow meters at Central's customer turnouts.
- The board approved a memorandum of understanding with Jeffrey Lake Development, Inc., that provides additional time for lot lessees to comply with shoreline protection regulations. As a result of an increase to the lake's average operational levels - to increase the efficiency of the Jeffrey Hydroplant - some cabin and homeowners have yet to make shoreline improvements or have made noncompliant improvements to the shoreline.
- Ted Rowan, president of Jeffrey Lake Development Inc., expressed his thanks for Central's willingness to work with the lessees on correcting shoreline work with the memorandum of understanding and informed the board of the association's work on other bank stabilization and sedimentation projects.
- Deb Jensen, Johnson Lake Development, Inc.'s liaison to Central, showed a few photos to the board of directors of a field adjacent to some properties near the outlet at Johnson Lake. The field was previously planted to native grasses by Central and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, but JLDI is seeking Central's assistance with maintenance.
- Civil Engineer Cory Steinke said Lake McConaughy is currently at elevation 3255.4 feet, with a storage volume of about 1.46 million acre feet (84.1 percent of capacity). Releases from the Environmental Account, a block of water in the lake managed for wildlife habitat purposes by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, have ended and inflows to the lake are around 1,100 cubic feet per second.

Steinke also reported that the North and South Platte Basin snowpack levels are declining with not much runoff remaining, and the current inflows are slightly below average for this time of year. He also mentioned that the drought conditions currently plaguing the Oklahoma panhandle appear to be expanding northward and could possibly impact Central's irrigated area this summer.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2018

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