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# The Communicator

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## Early Study Results Show Benefits of Potential Merger

Directors of the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Dawson Public Power District have voted to continue to move ahead with consolidation talks after finding financial benefit for each district.

Last December, both organizations' boards agreed to share costs of retaining a consultant to conduct a phased study to determine whether a consolidation would be an economic and strategic fit that benefits both entities, as well as their customers and stakeholders.

Phase one yielded favorable data that indicates a good strategic fit and positive financial advantages resulting from a consolidation. Preliminary findings were presented to members of both boards on March 31. Potential savings were identified in power supply costs and combining of facilities. The study process has four phas-

es before a merger could occur and each phase requires approval of both boards.

"We were excited to see such positive results in this initial portion of the study," said Devin Brundage, Central's general manager. "We will be diligent in taking all the time it takes in this process to thoroughly understand the opportunities and any challenges associated with this potential consolidation."

Phase two of the study includes a more detailed analysis of the financial components of a merger necessary to satisfy the boards of both entities, as well as requirements of any financial or regulatory agencies. Phase two will also refine the outlook for benefits of a consolidation, work through possible resolution options for potential challenges and complete due diligence efforts, which involve a

deeper analysis of the costs and benefits of a merger.

Power Systems Engineering (PSE) of Wisconsin is conducting the consolidation studies. PSE will now further assess elements of the District's governance, finances, facilities, existing contracts, employees, state/federal government regulations and operations of the projects, as well as other categories or topics that may arise during the study.

"This discussion is exactly what those before us envisioned," Brudage added. "These Districts were formed by people asking if there was a better way for the citizens of Nebraska to find innovative ways and organizations to develop and sustain our natural resources to power their future. We continue that mission today and into the future."



## Irrigation Season Ready to Kick Off

April 15th marked the official start of irrigation season with water beginning to be pushed down the supply canal. Pivot irrigation use continues to be on the rise within the district. For the 2021 irrigation season, 669 pivots are registered, up 30 units from the previous irrigation season accounting for 60 percent of total acres served. Pivot systems are beneficial for both Central and the water user as the user has opportunity to apply water to crops more efficiently and generally has higher crop yields due to improved uniformity of water application..

Civil engineer Tyler Thulin noted that Lake McConaughy is at around 75 percent of capacity heading into the start of irrigation season. This level is slightly lower than the past several years. Water will only be released from the lake for irrigation use, not for hydro power production.

# Bills of Interest in Nebraska Legislature

Central annually tracks a number of bills in the Nebraska Legislature, and when needed, works to either support or oppose proposed legislation. Below is a summary of three bills of interest to Central and its stakeholders.

**LB513** – The bill would require that persons running for election to the boards of a public power district or a public power and irrigation district be registered voters within the district's chartered territory as well as retail power customers of that district.

Central opposes the bill because we currently do not sell power to retail customers. All power generated by the four hydroelectric plants is sold at wholesale to other utilities.

The bill also proposed to shorten board members' terms from six years to four years.

Central, as well as other public power

entities, testified in opposition to the bill at a hearing in February. Subsequently, an amendment was proposed that removed the retail power customer requirement, leaving only the change in the length of terms.

The bill remains in the Natural Resources Committee as of early May.

**LB406** – The bill, as currently amended on Select File, creates a special seven-member legislative committee to study potential flood-control and improvement projects in the lower Platte River corridor and to explore public safety, public infrastructure, land-use and economic development around Lake McConaughy and in Knox County, including Lewis & Clark Lake and the Niobrara State Park. The study would be funded by (up to) \$2 million from the state's General Fund.

Central worked to amend the original bill to protect the basis of a \$900,000 appropriation from the Water Sustainability Fund, but changed its position to neutral after an amendment removed the request for WSF dollars.

**LB190** – The bill provides that the Legislature shall not transfer money from the Water Sustainability Fund for any purpose other than the goals stated in statutes that created the Fund. Central supported LB190.

The WSF has been targeted in the past to help fund other initiatives not necessarily related to the objectives of the WSF. LB190 was amended into LB507 – a bill to prohibit the use of treated seed corn for the production of ethanol – which was passed by the Legislature on April 29 and sent to the governor for his signature.



## East Phillips Lake Project Approved by Board

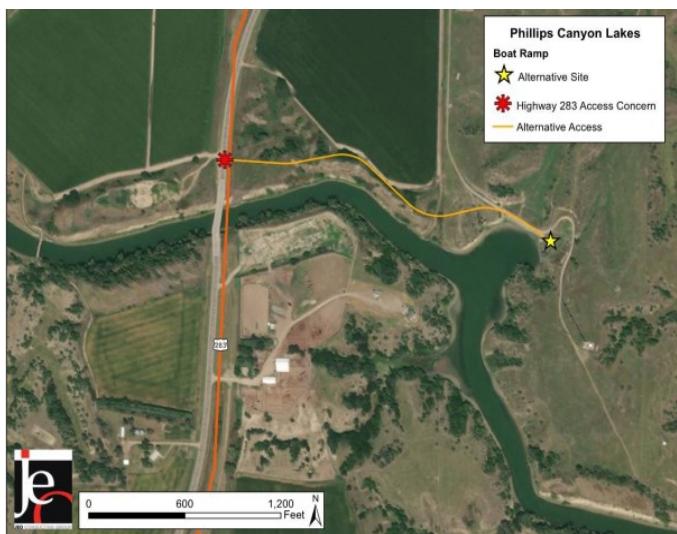
Central's board of directors recently approved a project to improve the boat ramp and access to East Phillips Lake, a small lake along the Supply Canal about four miles east of Johnson Lake.

The project will be a cooperative effort with the Nebraska

Game and Parks Commission, which maintains a small Wildlife Management Area and boat ramp at East Phillips Lake. The lake is a popular spot for fisherman despite difficult access to the WMA over a minimum-maintenance county road and the poor condition of the existing ramp.

The new boat ramp will be located on the north side of Middle Phillips Lake, a little over a half mile west of the existing ramp. The new ramp will be accessible via a connecting road off of U.S Highway 283. The new facility will include parking and fencing and will be managed and maintained by the NGPC.

Cost of the improvement project, which is subject to a final agreement with NGPC, is estimated at \$330,000. A federal grant available to NGPC is expected to provide more than \$200,000 and Central's contribution is not to exceed \$130,000, which will include a consultant's design costs and construction by Central personnel.



The plan includes road design and a boat launch facility, along with improvements to the boat ramp to enhance safety and accessibility to Phillips Lake.

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# On the Lakefront



## Permitting Procedure Changes

Several changes to the Permitting Procedures and Fee Schedule were approved by Central's board of directors at the March meeting. These changes included modifying the Land Based SWAF side and roadway construction setbacks to provide greater opportunities for tenants. Fee schedule cost adjustments made were intended to further reduce the frequency of variances and after the fact fees.

Regarding the land-based SWAF setback, the new requirement now reads:

The location of Land-Based SWAF will be limited by the SWAF side setback, no closer than ten feet (10') to the side boundary lines of a leased or subleased lot or privately owned lot, *unless written adjacent neighbor and area association approval is obtained*.

On the roadway construction amendment, the requirement now reads:

Dwellings and related structures and improvements, which in Central's opinion would create a visual obstruction, shall be located no closer than twenty feet (20') horizontally from a platted *exterior* roadway or ten feet (10') from a platted *interior roadway* or alley, and no closer than ten percent (10%) of the lot depth from the lot boundary *if not adjacent to a roadway*.

(Changes in two requirements noted in ***bold italic*** text)

Fee structures were increased slightly for after the fact permits on SWAF, vegetation and additional fees for projects requiring a variance.

The initial variance application fee also saw an increase in cost for filing.

## Johnson Lake Cabin-owners Tour Dates

*Friday, July 16*

*Friday, July 30*

*Friday, August 13*

Tours of Central's hydro-irrigation project leave from the Johnson Lake EMS Building at 7 a.m., and return around 5 p.m. Lunch at Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and transportation is provided.

For reservations contact Alex Linden: [alinden@cnppid.com](mailto:alinden@cnppid.com)  
or  
(308) 995-3560

(Masks are optional for tour participants)

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## CNPPID New Employees and Retirees



*Jared Piper  
(General Maintenance)*

*Dallas Roemmich  
(Irrigation)*

*Doug Todd  
(General Maintenance)*

*Ron Marlin  
(Retired)*

Several new faces have joined the team at Central, while the District said goodbye to one long-time employee who recently retired.

At the Gothenburg location, two open general maintenance positions were filled by Jared Piper and Doug Todd.

In Holdrege within the irrigation department, Dallas Roemmich was

hired as an irrigation systems specialist.

Ron Marlin, who retired in late March, started working at Central in November 1977 as part of the Gothenburg maintenance crew. For the last 20 years he has worked as a heavy equipment operator. His 43 years of service and experience will be missed.

## On the Web



Central was a primary sponsor and contributor for the NET TV Program called *Nebraska: The Great American Water Machine*. District photos, video and Central employees can be seen throughout the program. To view the show online visit the NET website, through the NET Nebraska App or on the Central website – [www.cnppid.com](http://www.cnppid.com).



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