

The Communicator

Published by The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District

Water Year Summarized with Varying Perspectives

A summary of the 2020-21 water year (Oct. 1 to Sept. 30) makes one think of the old expression: “Is the glass half full or half empty?”

While much of the western United States suffered from a long-term drought (see the end-of-September drought map), Nebraska – and perhaps Lake McConaughy – fared a bit better.

If you’re in the “glass half empty” camp, inflows to Lake McConaughy during the water year (WY) amounted to just over 642,000 acre-feet (af), the 14th lowest WY total since Kingsley Dam was closed in 1941. The historic median WY inflow is 928,964 af.

Typically, the months of October and November see the highest inflow totals to Lake McConaughy, but last year’s total for those two months amounted to only 79% of normal. Spring (March-May) inflows were only 69% of normal. As a result, the reservoir peaked on June 5 at elevation 3,250.9 feet, about 14 feet below capacity. It reached its low elevation for the year in early September at 3,235.4 feet, a drawdown of 15.5 feet.

It should be noted that releases from the Environmental Account (a block of water managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to benefit wildlife habitat along the river) from mid-May through June contributed to the drawdown, as did releases for several irrigation canals along the North Platte and Platte Rivers operated by entities other than Central.

For those who subscribe to the “glass half full” attitude, despite the combined demands, releases during the water year were only 80% of the historic median and 90% of the 30-year median. Also, much of the irrigated area served by Central benefited from rainfall that was slightly above normal during the growing season, despite some stretches of hot, dry weather.

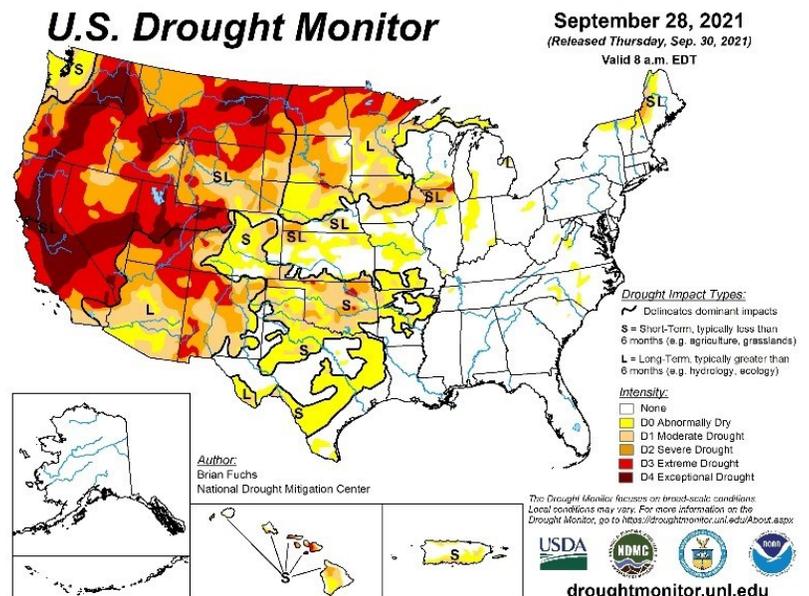
And the fact that the reservoir only declined by 15.5 feet given the scarcity of inflows – and little contribution from the South Platte River, water from which can be used to reduce releases from Lake McConaughy – is testament to the tremen-

dous gains in producers’ on-farm irrigation efficiency, as well as efforts by Central to improve its conveyance system over the years.

With meteorologists predicting a second year of a La Niña weather pattern (a natural ocean-atmospheric condition marked by cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures across the central and eastern Pacific Ocean near the equator that impacts weather across the world), what does that mean for snowpack development in the Upper Platte Basin this fall and winter?

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center, the central Rocky Mountains will likely see continued dry conditions this winter with equal chances of below-, near- or above-average temperatures, while Nebraska’s winter has equal chances for below-, near- or above-average precipitation and temperatures.

In other words, we’ll just have to wait and see.



Central Participates in Recharge Partnership



A water delivery point located at the Wildlife Protection Areas

Teaming up with Rainwater Basin partners Ducks Unlimited, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Tri-Basin Natural Resources District and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Central has been a part of completing Phase I of the Western Basin Recharge Project.

As part of the first phase, high-capacity infrastructure was installed from Central's canals to deliver surface water to various Waterfowl Production Areas including Cottonwood, Funk, Johnson, Linder and Victor Lakes. The infrastructure was designed to fill the wetlands with 3,000 acre/ft. of water in a seven-day period allowing sites to go from dry to ponding at levels that won't adversely impact adjacent landowners.

Also completed was restoration of the WPA's at Cottonwood, Johnson and Victor Lakes. Cottonwood restoration was one of the largest projects completed on public lands, with excavation of 87,000 cubic yards of sediment. Additional restoration is currently underway at Linder and in the Funk White-front Unit where material will be moved out of the hydric soil footprint and re-contour a waterway coming into the wetland.

Water monitoring equipment was also installed to allow the partners to quantify recharge rates through the wetlands. Results showed that a 10% ponding frequency (36.5 days/year) per acre of wetland could recharge sufficient water to provide drinking water for 265 residents or irrigate 3.5 acres with nine inches during the growing season.

EAP Exercise Completed at CNPPID Headquarters

Every four years, Central is required to conduct an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) functional exercise to simulate a failure of Kingsley Dam. Due to the pandemic, the exercise was delayed a year and was held on Oct. 26 at the Holdrege office.

Natural Resource and Compliance Manager Mike Drain coordinated the entire event that featured a tabletop exercise in the morning, then a simulated real-time event in the afternoon.

Around 15 different agencies from Nebraska traveled to Holdrege to take part in the event, including the National Weather Service, Department of Transportation, State Patrol, Nebraska Game & Parks and several Emergency Management departments.

This year's scenario presented to the participants was an earthquake occurring in western Nebraska that would cause Kingsley Dam to fail. Participants had to react in real-time, communicating with various agencies to determine plans of action during the emergency.

"I want to thank all Central employees for their help and participation during the exercise," Drain said. "I felt that it was a huge success and that was due in large part to all of the Central staff."



Mike Drain addresses the participants prior to the functional exercise portion of the Kingsley Dam Emergency Action Plan event on October 26.

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On the Lakefront



As the 2021 permitting season winds down for the land administration team and our customers, the team will be working on conducting final inspections of completed projects.

With the 2022 permitting season coming up, the team would like to remind everyone of the importance of knowing and having marked the lot

boundaries, and buildable area or Shoreline and Water Access Facilities (SWAF) placement zone prior to commencing any permitted activity.

This step, along with the required pre-construction meeting helps ensure that projects are constructed in accordance with the District's permit-

ting procedures and helps avoid costly issues that can result from violations.

If you have questions about allowable construction or the District's permitting process, please contact the appropriate land administrator listed below.

Employee Name	Project subject matter	Contact Info
<p>Luke Ritz (Senior Land Administrator)</p>	<p>Land and Shoreline Management Plan; Permit rules and regulators, Certified Contractor Program; Lease Questions</p>	<p>Office: (308) 357-3582 Cell: (308) 529-0009 lritz@cnppid.com</p>
<p>DeAnna Bartruff (Land Administrator)</p>	<p>Dwelling & Associated Construction Permit POC; Dredge, Excavate, Fill Permits, Concession Leases; Residential Lease Questions & Transfers; Pre-Construction/On Site Meetings</p>	<p>Office: (308) 995-3563 Cell: (308) 991-5565 dbartruff@cnppid.com</p>
<p>Dustin Ehlers (Land Administrator)</p>	<p>Shoreline & Water Access Facility Permit POC; Erosion Control Permit POC ; Pre-Construction/On Site Meetings</p>	<p>Office: (308) 537-3582 x4184 Cell: (308) 991-9778 dehlers@cnppid.com</p>



Several members of Central's staff participated in the Market to Market Relay running from Omaha to Lincoln. Central's team covered the 75-mile course in 12 hours.

(From left to right: Devin Brundage, Josh Clark, Luke Ritz, Dustin Johnson, Jason Meints, Logan Ricley, McKinley Harm and Meredith Pierce.)

Eagle Viewing is Back!

After taking a year off, Central's eagle viewing facilities will once again be open to the public this season.



For more information, including location and opening dates, visit www.cnppid.com/eagles

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Irrigation Maintenance Projects Taking Place

During the offseason period of October through March, Central's irrigation and maintenance division focuses on repair projects within the District's canal system.

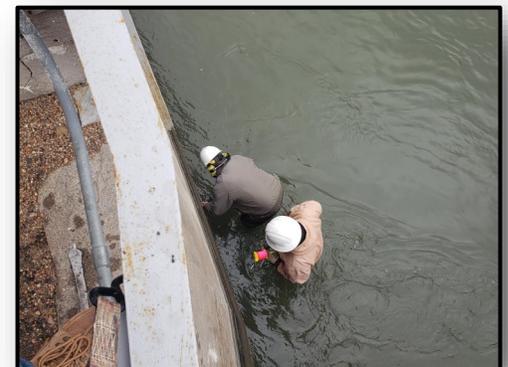
Projects underway this fall have been concrete work on the structures along the Phelps Canal, replacing the bottom seal on the Phelps Canal head gate, as well as numerous other maintenance updates including tree and silt removal in canals and turnouts.

These projects are needed to help maintain the reliability of the canal system.



Above: Concrete work being done at 7.4 on Phelps Canal

Below: Central employees work to replace the bottom seal on the Phelps Canal head gate



The CNPPID irrigation division provided meal tickets to more than 200 FFA students at several schools in the area that attended the 2021 Husker Harvest Days. Pictured is the Axtell FFA chapter.