

The Communicator

Published by The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District

Environmental Account Water Releases Completed in June

With releases from the Environmental Account ending on June 24, it is an appropriate time to refresh readers' memories about the purpose and management of the account.

The Environmental Account (EA) is a "block of water" set aside in Lake McConaughy to supplement flows in the Platte River. Water is added to the EA and stored in Lake McConaughy until the water is needed downstream. Water released from the account is tracked and protected by Nebraska water law so that the water may provide beneficial instream flows for endangered species.

The June releases provided a flow of at least 1,500 cubic feet per second at the Platte River gauge at Grand Island, while remaining below the National Weather Service's flood stage at the North Platte gauge. The flows were intended to study the effectiveness of maintaining and enhancing the wide, open, unvegetated and braided channel of the central Platte River by inundating sandbars to prevent vegetation establishment. This was the only EA release currently planned for the 2022 calendar year.

Why was the Environmental Account established?

The Central Nebraska Public Power District (Central) and the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) have five hydropower plants in the Platte River basin that require licenses from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Central and NPPD received new FERC licenses in 1998 after the original licenses expired. The establishment of the EA is a requirement in these new licenses to address threatened and endangered species issues related to Central and NPPD operations.

How is the Environmental Account related to the Cooperative Agreement?

The Environmental Account is an important part of the Platte River Cooperative Agreement. Governors of Nebraska, Wyoming and Colorado and the Secretary of the Interior



signed the Cooperative Agreement in 1997 to address the needs of four threatened and endangered species using the Platte River by developing a Recovery Implementation Program (Program).

One of the goals of the proposed Program is to provide habitat for endangered species along the central Platte River by re-timing or adding water to the river. The EA in Nebraska, along with a Pathfinder Dam modification project in Wyoming and the Tamarack groundwater recharge project in Colorado, provide about half of the needed amount while the rest comes from other water supply projects or water conservation programs.

One of the benefits for the program of the EA is the ability to store and release water from other sources. For example, water can be released from Pathfinder Reservoir on the North Platte River in Wyoming and recaptured in Lake McConaughy, which is closer to important habitat along the central Platte River. The water can then be released from McConaughy when needed.

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Central-Dawson Consolidation Study in Phase 3



The study of a possible consolidation of The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Dawson Public Power District is now in phase three of a four-phase process.

The boards of both districts voted in February to advance to phase three of the study after receiving positive findings from the latest assessment. The process has four phases before a merger could occur and each phase requires approval of both boards.

The current phase involves development of a consolidation plan, including an examination of future organizational structure challenges, such as board representation, name of the entity, new District Bylaws and policies as well as other items related to the formation of the new District, headquarters and overall organizational setup. A steering committee consisting of four directors from each board was created to develop some baselines for further consideration. Outside facilitators have been retained to help guide the process.

Phase two findings by Power Systems Engineering (PSE) of Wisconsin, the engineering firm hired to conduct the study, outlined in detail the financial benefits and opportunities to the companies and subjective value for central Nebraska as well as the hurdles to overcome in completing merger work.

PSE detailed in their consolidation assessment that a total overall savings of \$11.7 million could be realized over seven years if the two companies consolidate. The savings are derived from Dawson's ability to use 20 megawatts (MW) of power from one of Central's hydro generation plants as well as efficiencies, realignment and reduction workforce through natural attrition as employees retire.

Through consolidation, Dawson PPD will add renewable power while Central realizes a reliable, stable and local customer for the energy produced that can bring additional value in a world of increasing market volatility and change. Merging these two companies adds flexibility in how they react or manage the future of energy. The two entities can be a stronger legislative influence and economic driver for central Nebraska. Shared resources also mean more efficient use of equipment and manpower.

Environmental Account Story Continued

How much water is in the Environmental Account?

The quantity of water available in the Environmental Account varies according to how much has been added and how much has been used. Central contributes ten percent of the storable inflow to Lake McConaughy during the non-irrigation season (October through April). The amount of water contributed in this manner may never exceed 100,000 acre-feet per year. It is also possible for water to be contributed from other projects, such as the transfer of environmental water from Pathfinder

Reservoir as mentioned earlier. Any water not used at the end of the year may be carried over to the next year.

In addition to regular contributions and releases, other rules or adjustments apply to the EA. First, the EA may never exceed 200,000 acre-feet, regardless of contributions or carryover. In addition, any time Lake McConaughy fills to capacity, the EA is automatically set to 100,000 acre-feet. Finally, the EA is subject to evaporation and seepage losses in Lake McConaughy in proportion to the amount of water in storage.

How is the Environmental Account used?

The EA manager is an employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is responsible for requesting releases of water from the EA. Each year the EA manager is required to develop a plan describing the intend-

ed use of the EA throughout the year. The daily operations are coordinated among the EA manager, Central, the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) and NPPD.

Once the water is released, it is tracked downstream and protected by a Nebraska water right as in-stream flow for the central Platte River. EA water is assessed "transit losses" for evaporation and seepage along the way according to NDNR accounting procedures.

There are certain conditions that apply to the use of EA water. The most significant rule is that the EA manager may not request releases of water that will cause or add to out-of-bank flooding along the river. Another condition is that EA water may be diverted through hydropower facilities, as long as the water is returned to the river.

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On the Lakefront



Share the Shoreline

Central reminds everyone that the project lands and waters around our lakes and supply canal are generally all open for public recreation.

Public recreation within the project includes such things as boating, canoeing, swimming, fishing, walking along the shoreline of our lakes, utilizing the sandy beaches along the shoreline or bird watching and photography.

It is a minimum requirement in any conveyance issued by the District that the lessee or grantee does not restrict public access.

There are some exceptions to the availability when it involves public safety. There are many safety hazards below the water in the supply canal so swimming is not recommended. We recommend using public recreational areas at our lakes for swimming, rather than using the canals.

Paving Project Completed



Central’s Board of Directors approved the distribution of money from their Lake Improvement Funds to assist in a concrete paving project near The Nautical Rose at Johnson Lake. The new paved area of the lot is now large enough to fit five vehicles and boat trailers.

Johnson Lake Cabin-owners Tour Date

Friday, August 12

A few spots are left to attend a tour of Central’s hydro-irrigation project. Tour leaves from the Johnson Lake EMS building at 7 am and returns around 5 pm. Lunch and transportation is provided.

For reservations contact Alex Linden: alinden@cnppid.com or 308-995-3560

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

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Projections for Lake Elevations

Predicting the future water level at Lake McConaughy is not an easy task and many variables are at play when trying to determine where the elevation may end up at the end of the summer.

Historically low inflows, along with environmental account releases from the end of May to the end of June have all contributed to elevation levels lower than the past few seasons. Around 80,000 acre feet of water was released for the environmental account.

Average inflows into Lake McConaughy are generally over 2,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) in the month of June with the median average at 1,500 cfs. This year from June 1 through July 1 the average inflow was only 243 cfs. An exact cause of the lower than normal inflows has yet to be determined.

Irrigation demand has increased towards the end of June and with lower than normal inflows, the water level is falling at a greater than normal rate.

Civil Engineer Tyler Thulin says Lake McConaughy typically drops approximately 15 feet from peak spring elevation until early September. He foresees that drop to be higher than average this summer with a drop of between 15-20 feet. This could easily vary a couple of feet if inflows into the lake change.

Employee Retirement and Position Changes at Central

Long-time employee Kenneth Beck recently retired after 41 years working for the District. He began his tenure working at Central back in 1981.

Taking over the position vacated by Beck was Jay Johnson from the Bertrand office. Johnson is now the Hydro Mechanical/Electrical Specialist in Gothenburg.

That moved caused other shuffling of positions within the District. Former Irrigation Service Specialist Dallas Roemich is now working as an equipment operator at the Bertrand location.

The newest employee at Central is Jordan Browitt who is an Irrigation Service Specialist replacing the spot formerly held by Roemmich.