



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) -- The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors approved a request at Monday's monthly meeting for a \$25,000 contribution to two weed management areas to help control invasive aquatic vegetation in the Platte Valley.

The contribution to the Platte Valley and West Central Weed Management Areas (WMAs) was made in response to a request from The Nature Conservancy, which is working with the WMAs to control phragmites. Since 2008, the WMAs have expended more than \$4.5 million to control the reed-like vegetation over about 32,000 acres along the Platte River. Phragmites form dense thickets of vegetation that chokes river channels, reduces the river's capacity to convey water and creates unsuitable habitat for native wildlife. Phragmites also quickly displace native plants species and form a monoculture (areas dominated by a single plant species).

Although most of the work to clear the river and stream channels of the vegetation has been accomplished, yearly maintenance is necessary to prevent re-infestation.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program has contributed \$200,000 per year to the efforts and requests for additional funding have been made to other natural resources entities in the Platte River basin.

Also at Monday's meeting:

- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that snowpack accumulation in the upper North Platte Basin is currently at 101 percent of normal; 121 percent in the lower North Platte Basin; and 106 percent in the South Platte Basin.

"We are in a good spot in terms of anticipated snowmelt runoff and reservoir levels," Steinke said. "If we get precipitation along with runoff this spring, I think you can expect some good flows in both the North Platte and South Platte rivers.

Lake McConaughy's elevation was 3255.6 feet (a volume of 1.4 million acre-feet, or 84 percent of capacity) on Monday morning, less than 10 feet from normal operating capacity. Inflows have recently been in the 1,100 to 1,500 cubic feet per second range, which is near normal.

- The directors approved a request from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission for \$5,000 to assist with boat ramp improvements for the public ramp at Plum Creek Canyon Reservoir.

- The board approved a proposal from Bioeconomics, Inc., of Missoula, Mont., to prepare an economic analysis of the fair market value of lease rates for cabin lots at Johnson Lake. The company will review data from Nebraska and surrounding states where residential leased lots are located on lakes.

The current leases expire at the end of 2017 and Central staff has been meeting with a committee of cabin owners appointed by Johnson Lake Development, Inc., to address concerns about the potential for a significant increase in lease fees that would occur in 2018 under the terms of the current leases.

- The board approved an irrigation committee recommendation to seek an easement for construction of a 10-inch pipeline through a pasture north of Bertrand where a wasteway has created erosion problems. Central has maintained the channel above an existing stock pond over the years, but a 1,370-foot-long pipeline would minimize future maintenance needs and eliminate the erosion, while allowing drainage to continue.

- The board approved a request to begin advertising intended water rights transfers for 299 acres in the Phelps and E65 Canal service areas.

- The directors were informed that staff is evaluating a new five-year agreement with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for maintenance of three automated weather stations in the irrigated area. The stations provide weather and evapotranspiration data that Central makes available to producers on its web site and through a network operated by UNL. The agreement provides for annual payment to UNL of \$2,000 per station in 2016 and \$2,600 per station thereafter.

- The board authorized staff to conduct a "snapshot appraisal" of the fair market value of lots in Lake McConaughy's cabin areas prior to 2017. The cost of the appraisal is estimated at \$9,000.

- The board approved an extension until Dec. 31, 2019 of authorization for funding to construct the J-2 Regulating Reservoir.

- The board approved four variance requests for construction projects at Johnson Lake.

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