



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors received an update on groundwater levels in the area during its board meeting on Monday.

Nolan Little, water resources manager with the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, presented data and hydrographs from several observation and irrigation wells that the NRD monitors groundwater levels throughout Gosper, Phelps and Kearney counties.

Little said there are areas within the NRD where groundwater levels are relatively stable, showing normal irrigation season declines, followed by off-season recovery. Other areas show more of declining trend.

"We've seen that groundwater levels are trending downward in some parts of the NRD, but the sky is not falling," Little said. "There are a few areas in southeastern Kearney County and southern Gosper County that have raised concerns, but generally we're in pretty good shape."

Little reported that District-wide the average decline from readings taken in the spring of 2012 and spring 2017 was 4.1 feet. In the Platte Basin portion of the NRD, average declines since last spring were 3.6 feet; 3.5 feet in the Republican Basin portion of the NRD; and 6.7 feet in the NRD area that lies in the Little Blue Basin.

Central and TBNRD share information about groundwater levels from a combined network of about 200 wells that are measured each spring and fall.

In another board action, the directors approved, subject to legal review, some minor modifications to a water service agreement for diversion of excess flows from the Platte River Basin to the Republican River Basin. The original agreement was approved at the July board meeting.

The Tri-Basin and Lower Republican Natural Resources Districts are proposing a project that would divert excess flows from the Platte River and deliver the water through Central's E-65 Canal to Turkey Creek, a tributary of the Republican River that begins near Smithfield, Neb. The project is intended to help reach objectives related to the NRDs' Integrated Water Resources Management Plans and to assist in compliance with the Republican River Compact between Nebraska and Kansas.

Construction of a pipeline from the E-65 Canal to Turkey Creek and a diversion structure is pending, subject to acquisition of the necessary water appropriations from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and easements from landowners along Turkey Creek.

The board also approved a water service agreement with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, subject to legal review, for a project that would divert water from the Phelps Canal to adjacent property in northern Phelps County known as Cottonwood Ranch for groundwater recharge and Platte River base flow augmentation.

The agreement is subject to approval by the Governance Committee of the Platte River Program.

Also at Monday's meeting:

- The board approved work orders to purchase and install video surveillance equipment for the Johnson No. 1, Jeffrey and Kingsley Hydroplants to monitor the areas around the plants and switchyards. The total of the work orders is \$98,983.
- The directors approved a revision to the 2017 budget, adding \$40,000 for purchase of additional weed control chemicals.
- Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford informed the board that irrigation deliveries are entering the last three weeks of the season. Recent precipitation across the irrigated area and cooler temperatures have slowed demand for deliveries, Ford said, although he is expecting increased demand as crops near maturity.
- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy's elevation is currently at elevation 3,249.9 feet (76 percent of capacity). Rainfall above Lake McConaughy has helped increase inflows and reduced irrigation demand has led to reductions in releases from the reservoir.

"Given that it's the middle of August, we're in pretty good shape at Lake McConaughy and storage in the Bureau of Reclamation's reservoirs on the North Platte River in Wyoming is also pretty good," Steinke said.

He expects the reservoir to reach the end of irrigation season in September at an elevation around 3,245.0 feet, about 13 feet lower than its peak in mid-June.

- Gothenburg Division Manager Devin Brundage reported that the dredging project at Jeffrey Reservoir will conclude on Aug. 11 and the dredge recently purchased by the District will be moved to the Supply Canal near the North Platte Diversion Dam.

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