



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors approved a water service agreement, subject to legal review, with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program for groundwater recharge.

The approval during Central's monthly board meeting on Monday provides for Central to divert water from its Phelps Canal during the non-irrigation season to an area just south of the Platte River in northern Phelps County known as Cottonwood Ranch. The Platte River Program manages the area to improve habitat for threatened and endangered species.

The water will be diverted through a diversion structure into a 1.5-mile-long pipeline that will carry the water to a holding basin. As the water percolates into the ground it will help augment and re-time return flows to the Platte River. The total amount of water diverted to Cottonwood Ranch will be subject to terms of the appropriation and the availability of water in the river.

Construction can commence after the necessary permits and appropriations are obtained. The agreement is subject to approval by the Platte River Program's Governance Committee and acquisition of permits from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

The agreement will remain in effect until June 30, 2038 and is renewable if agreeable to the two organizations.

Also at Monday's meeting:

- Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford provided an end-of-irrigation season summary to the board. Deliveries to Central's 1,075 customer accounts averaged 7.2 inches/acre with more than 60,500 acre-feet of water delivered. The 2017 average was about two inches less than average over the past 20 years. More than 101,800 acre-feet of water during the irrigation season went to groundwater recharge.

On the Supply Canal's 74 accounts, 3,843 acre-feet were delivered for an average of 8.2 inches/acre.

Rainfall during the six-month growing season at the Holdrege rain gauge (approximately in the middle of the irrigated area) totaled 19.04 inches, compared to a 20-year average of 18.35 inches and a 60-year average of 18.84 inches.

Ford said diversion and delivery amounts vary from year to year depending upon temperatures and precipitation in the irrigated area, but that the trend over the last 30 years shows that diversions into the irrigation system have been decreasing.

However, he added, the crops' water demands are being met with significantly less total diversions because of increasing on-farm irrigation efficiency and improved conveyance efficiencies in the canal system.

"The bottom line," Ford said, "is that our customers are growing more crops with less water."

- The board approved a request from the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to partner on a project to purchase and erect signs at Lake McConaughy that urge the public not to litter on the beaches. The "Leave Only Your Footprints Please" signs will be placed at various locations at the lake frequented by beach visitors. Central's contribution was \$1,195.
- Charlie Brooks, Tri-Basin Natural Resources District's land coordinator, briefed the board on activities to control invasive vegetation along the Platte River and thanked Central for its contributions of \$50,000 over the last two years to the Platte Valley Weed Management Area. The PVWMA is a group of public and private agencies and individuals concerned with stopping the spread of noxious and invasive plants located in the central Platte River drainage area.
- Civil engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy's elevation is currently at elevation 3,249.7 feet (1.31 million acre-feet or 75 percent of capacity) and rising about an inch per day. He reported that releases from the reservoir have been halted for the time being to facilitate maintenance projects on facilities owned by Central and the Nebraska Public Power District.

###

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 2, 2017

Contact: Jeff Buettner
Public Relations Coordinator
Office: (308) 995-8601
E-mail: jbuettner@cnppid.com