

The Communicator

Published by The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District

Long Term Recharge Agreements Solidify to Keep the “Mound”

The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (Central) recently finalized two long-term agreements to enhance groundwater recharge from its system of canals and laterals in Phelps, Kearney and Gosper counties.

“We believe that these agreements may represent the largest commitment to groundwater recharge ever in Nebraska, possibly the United States,” said Devin Brundage, Central’s general manager. “The agreements will yield significant benefits to the irrigated area, to the Platte River basin and associated wildlife habitat along with all of the stakeholders who rely on water resources in the basin from McConaughy to Minden.”

Under the agreements, the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP) will provide \$9.15 million for groundwater aquifer recharge services associated with the Phelps Canal and Elwood Reservoir for up to 20 years. The PRRIP also provided Central \$2 million to assist with the Elwood Dam Seepage Mitigation project to help support those recharge activities.

In addition, the State of Nebraska – through the Department of Natural Resources and partnerships with Tri-Basin and Central Platte Natural Resource Districts – will provide up to \$19.1 million to divert water into the E65 Canal, Phelps Canal, Elwood Reservoir and several Waterfowl Production Areas to provide groundwater recharge over the next 15 years.

Groundwater recharge that occurs from diverting water into Centrals canal system for irrigation deliveries is referred to as “incidental recharge.” Over the last 80 years, this incidental recharge has resulted in an artificially high water table in the area referred to as the “groundwater mound.”

Recharge can also occur intentionally during the non-irrigation season when water that is in excess to target flows (as determined by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) in the



Waterfowl Production Areas, like the Funk Lagoon pictured above, will be utilized to provide groundwater recharge through the Department of Natural Resources

Platte River is diverted into the E-65 Canal, Elwood Reservoir and the Phelps Canal. These recharge efforts are the basis for the agreements with the State of Nebraska and the PRRIP.

Maintaining the mound is important to groundwater irrigators because it helps to reduce pumping costs and supports groundwater pumping activities up and down the Platte River basin, said Tom Riley, director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. “Additionally, recharge helps to support baseflow for both the Platte and Republican rivers. These long-term recharge agreements are a critical water service that establishes a foundational management tool for Nebraska’s water portfolio and solidifies groundwater resources in central Nebraska.”

The two agreements will be carried forward as part of the new Platte River Public Power and Irrigation District (PRPPID) following approval and implementation of Central’s merger with Dawson Public Power District. PRPPID’s greater resources will only further and expand these intentional recharge services in its irrigation service area and the Platte River basin.

Central and Dawson PPD Prepare to Refile Merger Petition

The Nebraska Power Review Board has held that it cannot approve the merger petition between The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Dawson Public Power District based on a technical issue in the charter documents. The denial was without prejudice, meaning that the merger documents can be re-submitted for approval. Both districts are committed to working together to update the charter language and move forward with the merger as Platte River Public Power and Irrigation District.

The PRB found that Central’s Charter Amendment must include a statement that Central does not have the power to issue general obligation bonds. Central’s current charter does not include the language in question, nor do the charters of 14 other public power and public power and irrigation districts in Nebraska. This was discovered by the PRB during its consideration of Central’s proposed charter. Finding that it had no discretion, the PRB denied Central’s petition on this technical basis. It did not address the merits of the merger or the substance of Central’s petition.

“Central has always done things the right way and will continue to do so by amending the documents to comply with the technical requirements of our authorizing statutes,” said Central Board President Dave Rowe.

Central General Manager Devin Brundage agreed, saying “Our excitement for PRPPID continues to grow as Central and Dawson PPD prepare to join together to serve our region and its economy. Driven by agriculture, more effectively and efficiently, securing our water resources, generating and delivering energy to our customers, and ensuring continued delivery of low cost, reliable irrigation water to south central Nebraska guaranteeing prosperity into the future - just like the visionaries that came before us began.”

The PRB is a state agency created in 1963 to regulate Nebraska’s electrical utility industry. Central and Dawson PPD held a joint board meeting on October 24, 2022, and voted in favor of the merger. The final step is to receive approval from the PRB.

Kingsley Dam Maintenance Could Begin This Fall

A maintenance project on the protective facing of Kingsley Dam is moving forward after Central received reports from a consulting firm.

Areas of the dam’s slope protection sustained riprap and filter blanket damage during the winter of 2021-22 from wind-driven wave action.

Central retained RJH Consultants to evaluate the issue and develop alternatives for temporary and permanent methods of repairing the dam’s protective materials. Temporary repairs could begin this fall to 12 areas of primary concern and another ten areas with lower levels of damage. The damaged areas are currently located at water levels at or above 3,240 feet.

The temporary repairs should allow short term storage above the damaged areas elevation, but permanent repairs will be required in the near future, with construction possibly commencing in 2024 or 2025. Those permanent repairs could entail an engineered replacement of much of the dam’s protective face.

Central’s board is discussing potential financial tools that might be considered for financing the permanent repairs depending on the costs, in order to maintain adequate operational and reserve funds.

Irrigation Customer Appreciation Lunches Held

Central’s irrigation department hosted a pair of customer appreciation lunches on March 30. Events were held at the community centers in both Axtell and Bertrand. Customers were invited to enjoy a lunch and were given the opportunity to meet their irrigation service specialist before the upcoming growing season.



Lunch was served to customers at Axtell Community Center



Customers gathered at the Bertrand Community Center



General Manager Devin Brundage grills up burgers while Kirk Goldfish and Cory Steinke gather them up.

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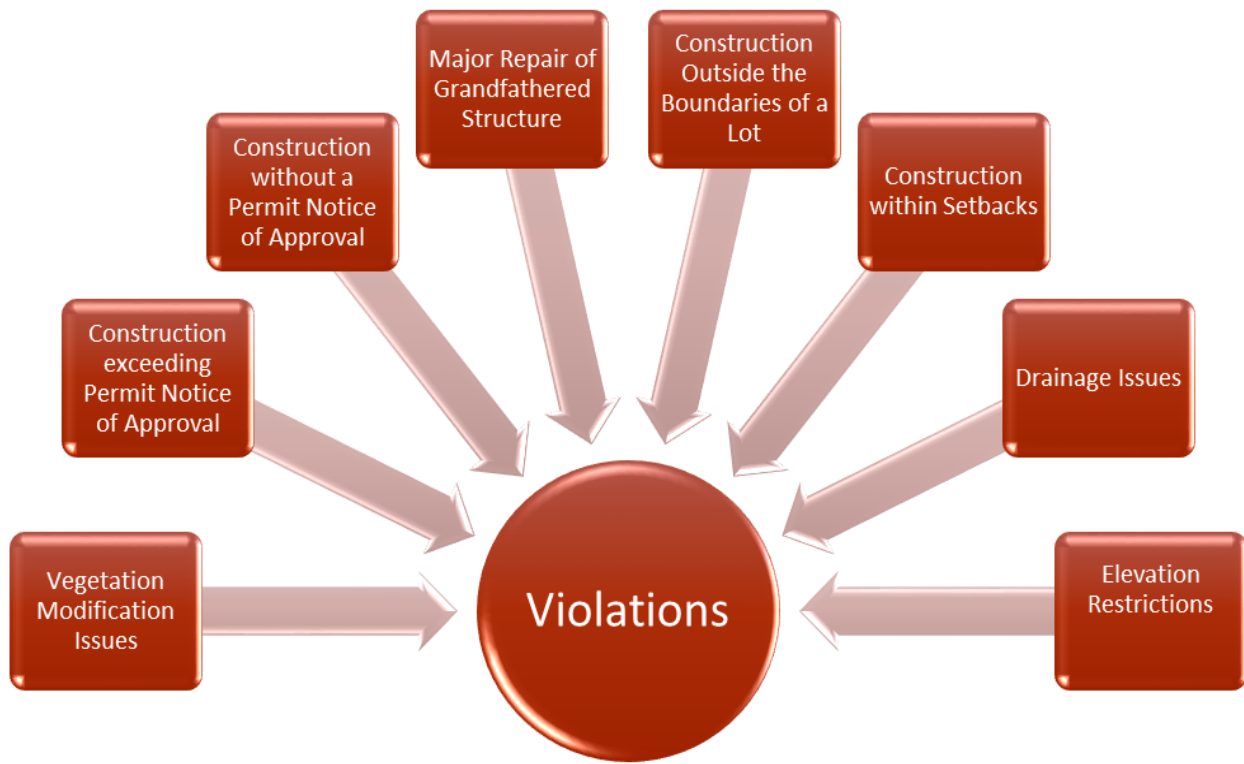
On the Lakefront



Opportunities to Avoid Future Issues

As we enter the 2023 permitting season, the Land Administration team would like to take a moment to look back on the past year with our customers in an effort to avoid many of the common violations that occurred in 2022. By doing so, we hope to avoid costly violations and after-the-fact permitting issues that were frequently identified in the previous permitting season.

Below is a diagram of the frequent violations from the last year that the Land Administration team is optimistic that we can reduce by working closely with our customer and their contactors.



| 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) 537-3582x4186 Cell: (308) 529-0009 lritz@cnppid.com |
| DeAnna Bartruff (Land Administrator) | Dwelling & Associated Construction Permit; 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 (SWAF); erosion control permit; pre-construction/on-site meetings | Office: (308) 537-3582x4184 Cell: (308) 991-9778 |

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and Irrigation District
P.O. Box 740
Holdrege, NE 68949-0740

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New Director Joins Central's Board

Brent Soneson of Holdrege was seated as a new Phelps County board member in January. Soneson was elected to replace long-time Phelps County director Gordon Soneson, his grandfather, who served as a board member from 2005 until his death.

Soneson is a fourth-generation farmer and Central District water user. He also has a cattle operation that he manages with his brothers, and is co-owner of Soneson Seeds, LLC.

“From the very beginning Central has been aware of the importance of the resources they manage,” Soneson said. “The district has a long and successful history with very good employees. As a water user in Phelps County, I look forward to ensuring the efficiency of the district continues for generations to come.

A graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, he also serves on the board of directors for the Prairie Home Cemetery and Wells 20 Foundation.

Soneson and his wife Abbie have three children. They reside east of Holdrege.



Brent Soneson

Johnson Lake Cabin-owners Tour Dates

Friday, June 16

Monday, July 17

Friday, August 11

Tours of Central's hydro-irrigation project leave from the Johnson Lake EMS Building at 7 a.m., and return around 5 p.m. Lunch at Ole's Big Game Steakhouse and transportation is provided.

For reservations contact

Alex Linden:

alinden@cnppid.com or

(308) 995-3560

Special Insert



PLATTE RIVER PUBLIC POWER & IRRIGATION DISTRICT



Water-Energy-Security-Prosperity, Today and in the Future

COMMITTED TO SURFACE WATER

Central has, throughout its history, ensured reliable surface water delivery at the lowest cost possible, and south central Nebraska has thrived as a result. **Nothing changes with Platte River Public Power and Irrigation's commitment to surface water** – not the use of hydropower revenue to keep it at a low cost, not the operation of the system seasonally to ensure delivery for irrigation, and especially the commitment to achieve sustainability of our water resource into the future for our customers. The same management and directors that have governed and delivered surface water, as well as managed generation facilities and energy delivery to our producers, will be doing so far into the future. Speculation to the contrary simply looks to generate fear with no basis in fact. Actions speak louder than words.

LOW COST STABILITY FOR OUR CUSTOMERS

Platte River PPID's electrical operations will benefit from using its own hydropower generation, long term wholesale agreements with our public power partners and access to the Southwest Power Pool, while its irrigation, groundwater recharge and recreational operations will benefit from a steady revenue stream and enhanced financial capacity. All of this will **enable Platte River PPID to keep its irrigation and electric rates among the lowest in Nebraska and the nation, saving customers real money and ensuring water supplies for the future.** This diversification is an advantage that no other single stream irrigation district or public power district in Nebraska can offer, an advantage built on Nebraska's most vital resource - water and energy - and an advantage that will only multiply opportunities for our people in the future.

MAKING DECISIONS HERE

The best decisions for our customers, residents, and area are those informed by our regions' needs and made by those who live, work, and value this region, not in eastern Nebraska or Washington D.C. Platte River PPID's board will represent the same counties Central's does – Dawson, Gosper, Kearney, Keith, Lincoln, Phelps - while adding Buffalo and very small portions of a few adjacent counties. **Those who live here have shared interests**, that benefit us and our descendants, making decisions locally, not folks to the east of us or thirsty developers in Colorado or environmental activists in Washington, but by those who have a real stake in them - south central Nebraskans. As a public entity governed by an elected board, Platte River PPID will put our citizens, our region and our area's economic interests first.

SECURING OUR MOST IMPORTANT RESOURCES

Our greatest resource is our people and Platte River PPID will have the financial resources and scope to enable it to **attract high quality talent**, including many of our daughters and sons who grew up here, **to serve our customers and live in our communities**. Platte River PPID will partner with all our counties and communities to **grow our local economy**, providing clean energy and low cost power, a key factor in economic development recruitment. With greater financial strength, Platte River PPID will be able to **maintain, improve and expand its nearly 80 year old reservoir, dam, and canal system** without having to spend all of its reserves to do so. After all, that infrastructure is the key to ensuring the project can deliver water for the next 80 years.

MAKING THE FUTURE

Platte River PPID will be a vital voice and important partner in economic development throughout its area. It will have the opportunity to not only ensure that our agricultural based economy not only continues to succeed, but thrives in south central Nebraska and ensure that our region maximizes the attraction and development of new opportunities, including those previously that seemed out of reach or not contemplated altogether in the area. **This will directly impact job creation and employment**, expand opportunities for residents in an increasing number of careers and professions, and increase overall economic output to benefit its people, communities, and counties, strengthening the region to be increasingly vibrant and robust regardless of general economic conditions.

STRONGER TOGETHER

Platte River PPID will realize benefits that neither Central nor Dawson could do alone, increasing its impact on and contribution to all of south central Nebraska. Bringing them together in a single entity under a shared governance and administrative structure will maximize the fit of surface water irrigation and electrical power. As a single district, **Platte River PPID will comprehensively manage surface water, power distribution, and hydropower generation together for the good of surface and ground water irrigators, energy customers, recreationalists, and the entire south central region of Nebraska**. Some argued the development of our Districts was wrong in the 1930s - they may have been putting something first, but it wasn't south central Nebraska.

Platte River Public Power and Irrigation District will be the fulfillment of Sen. George Norris' original vision for his "little TVA" project in his home state –

"in the revival of these ancient river valleys, in the security and stability which irrigation provides, and in the cheap electricity of the years ahead, I am sure this river plan will justify itself."

Ready for your future – now is the time for Platte River Public Power & Irrigation District to begin working for you.

