



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) -- The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors approved two water service agreements with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program at Monday's monthly board meeting for diversions of excess flows for groundwater recharge.

The agreements, which are subject to legal review, are a continuation of similar arrangements over the past several years to divert water from the Platte River during times when flows are above targets set by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The water recharges the aquifer and gradually returns to the river to augment base flows.

Central has obtained temporary permits from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources for such diversions on an annual basis in the past. The new agreements are for five years and cover diversions into the Phelps Canal, the E65 Canal, several Waterfowl Production Areas, the Cottonwood Ranch Complex and Elwood Reservoir. The agreements also raise the cap on the number of acre-feet that can be diverted and simplify the notification process for the parties to initiate such diversions.

Also at Monday's meeting:

- Civil engineer Tyler Thulin informed the board that inflows to Lake McConaughy have been on the upswing in response to rain above the reservoir and contributions from melting snowpack. He also reported that Glendo Reservoir on the North Platte River in Wyoming has entered the flood pool and releases of excess water are likely to begin this week. In addition, flows in the South Platte River have been high recently and are likely to increase as the snowpack in Colorado continues to melt.

Lake McConaughy was at elevation 3257.9 feet on Monday (1.5 million acre-feet, 88 percent capacity) with inflows around 3,000 cubic feet per second. Thulin projected that the reservoir's peak elevation is likely to exceed 3,260 feet in the next few weeks. He was not ready not ready to give a more exact number on a projected peak elevation because of several variables, other than to say that the lake is not currently projected to reach the 3,265.0 feet maximum.

- Colby Gray and Scott Kroll, representing the Phelps County chapter of Pheasants Forever, were in attendance to ask the board to consider a partnership on habitat improvement projects on District land adjacent to irrigation canals. Pheasants Forever is looking for areas where vegetation that provides attractive habitat for pheasants can be planted.

Board President Dave Rowe said the District is interested in participating in such a project and Irrigation Division Manager Dave Ford said Central will see if suitable land can be identified along its system.

- The board approved the transfer of water rights for 268.5 acres of land to the same number of other acres.
- Ford reported that rainfall totals for the month of May in the District's service area was well above normal with 6.8 inches in Holdrege, 7.8 inches in Minden and 5.7 inches in Bertrand. Normal monthly precipitation in the area is 4.3 inches. The first scheduled run of irrigation deliveries is June 10, although damp conditions will likely mean few deliveries will be needed.
- The board approved progress reports for two bridge replacement projects on the Supply Canal. The Snell Canyon bridge in Lincoln County is open to the public and nearly complete and construction of a new bridge over the canal near the Canaday Steam Plant in Gosper County is underway, but progress has been delayed by wet weather.
- The board approved a staff recommendation of terms for permitting hunting deer and waterfowl at the Jeffrey Island Habitat Area. For deer hunting, as has been done in the past, Central will advertise in July that applications for a hunting lease may be made, and a lottery drawing will be conducted in early August to select individuals for each of the five hunting areas for a three-year term (2019-2021). Each lease would allow up to five hunters per area.

For waterfowl hunting at Jeffrey Island, Central will implement a transition from the "grandfathered" leases to a revolving five-year term. The first five-year term will be awarded to the existing waterfowl lessees for the 2019 -2023 hunting seasons. New five-year leases would then be advertised in March of 2024 and awarded through a lottery drawing in May for each of the seven available leases.

- The board approved a change of location for the June 21 committee of the board meeting. It will be held at 9 a.m. (MDT), at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Visitor Center at Lake McConaughy.

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