

OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Public land should remain accessible

I am writing this to alert your readers of yet another threat to access to public land. Perhaps they have not heard of the controversy surrounding Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's proposal to restrict the public's use of a large portion of

the beaches (possibly 40 percent or more) on the south side of Lake McConaughy. Their plan calls for the area to be designated for daytime use only. This would eliminate camping in the area and would also ban vehicular traffic. This could mean that you may have to carry your gear a quarter-mile or more to get to the water's edge during low-water years.

Several civic-minded groups as well as concerned residents have banded together to protest the adoption of this plan. They include the Ogallala/Keith County Chamber of Commerce, the Big Mac Sports Club, and The Lake McConaughy Association.

It is not too late to stop the adoption of this plan, but time is running out! If you are one of the

many thousands of visitors who have enjoyed the activities at Big Mac, please sit down today and write to: Big Mac Sports Club, P.O. Box 364, Ogallala NE 69153, or e-mail: jlanka@lakemac.net.

Please send a copy of your letter to: Mr. Jay Maher, Central Nebraska Public Power, P.O. Box 740, Holdrege, NE 68949.

There is precious little public

land left in Nebraska (3 percent of total state land) and it is essential that what we have be kept for public use.

Please express your objection to the individuals listed above immediately. Your help is needed if we are to squelch this proposal.

**Bob Burkhalter
Lemoyne**

Big Mac Sports Club opposes CNPPID management plan

The Big Mac Sports Club officially went on record Tuesday opposing the Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District Land & Shoreline Management Plan.

The plan proposes to restrict an estimated 30 to 40 percent of the Lake McConaughy shoreline to "day use" only, meaning no overnight camping.

On Tuesday, the sports club heard a report from John DeTuerk, a CNPP&ID director, outlining the new regulations.

A general consensus of sports club members felt the regulations now in force are adequate to protect the health and safety of the public. The sports club opposes any new regulations restricting accessibility for campers and other sportsmen groups on the beaches of Lake McConaughy.

Rod Lanka was appointed chairman of a sports club committee to coordinate and monitor the club's opposition to Central's proposed plan.

On Friday, Lanka said five or six members were appointed to the committee and plans are in the works to

release a one-page flyer detailing the club's opposition to the plan. The flyer will be distributed at area sports and home shows, Lanka said.

Thom Barkes, owner of Junie Mae's and president of the Lake McConaughy Association, said a common sense approach to any further regulations should be adopted.

The Lake McConaughy Association also met on Tuesday and discussed Central's proposed plan. The association did not take an official stand for or against the proposal, Barkes said.

Barkes did call for an exchange of real information involving Central, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the public in hopes that all involved could become more informed and make better decisions.

Central released the plan to public at a meeting on Jan. 17 meeting at the Eagle-Viewing building at Lake McConaughy. More than 50 people attended that meeting.

At the Jan. 17 meeting, Central

(Continued on Page 2)

Sports Club opposes...

(Continued from Page 1)

Environmental Resources Manager Jay Maher emphasized that as much as 70 percent of the beaches would be available for overnight camping. Only 1 to 2 percent is presently closed to camping, those areas shut off to protect endangered or threatened species such as piping plovers and least terns.

Maher said the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is pressuring Central to design a plan that protects all uses at Lake McConaughy. Central's relicensing by FERC requires Central to submit a Land and Shoreline Management Plan for FERC

approval.

The plan must provide for a "diversity of uses" and provide for "environmental issues," Maher said at the Jan. 17 meeting.

A draft of the plan is scheduled to be finished by the end of March and will be submitted to a number of entities, including the Game and Parks Commission, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and county governments.

Those interested in writing to Central in regard to the new plan may do so by mailing those comments to Maher at PO Box 740, Holdrege, NE 68949-0740.

Report slated on lake shoreline management

Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District will hold information meetings in January at Ogallala, Gothenburg and Lexington to present a progress report on the Land and Shoreline Management Plan and Recreation Use Report required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission as part of Central's license.

A draft of land use maps, results from earlier public meetings, and results from Central's surveys will be part of the report.

Central officials said the power and irrigation district is also seeking input on safety issues, recreation use, shoreline development, endangered species, wildlife habitat preservation and marina and commercial services.

The Ogallala meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 17, at the Eagle-Viewing Building at Lake Ogallala.

Meetings are also scheduled Jan. 13 at Lexington and Jan. 18 at Gothenburg.

The meetings are scheduled to last two hours.

Central and Duke Engineering & Services (DE&S), the firm producing the land and shoreline management plan for Central, are developing a list of opportunities, concerns and questions for the public to comment on at the January meetings.

The formal presentation of the management plan to the public will be presented in May. Central said it would solicit ideas, comments and sugges-

tions following the formal presentation.

Some of the issues brought up during earlier meetings concern erosion and shorelines stabilization, boating safety and jet ski safety and recreational access.

Issues specifically relating to Lake McConaughy included:

—Preservation of historical sites and trails.

—Consideration of National Historic Preservation Act strategies.

—Concern with protecting private property right while ensuring public access to water.

—Concern about continued public access to the south side of Lake McConaughy that may be impacted by development pressures in that area.

—Concern about potential development pressures with marinas and other structures placed in the lake which could impact safety and access to lake waters for public recreation.

Clean water, good lake boating and good camping/picnic facilities were the top factors in decisions to vacation at Lake McConaughy, Lake Ogallala, Johnson Lake and the Supply Canal, according to a recreational use survey conducted of approximately 500 people over Labor Day weekend.

Relaxing, camping, beach activities, swimming, power boating, the scenery, fishing, water skiing and jet skiing led the listing of activities in which visitors participate.

Keith Co. News 12-20-99

Plan Eases 'Big Mac' Fears

Access to some beaches could be restricted, but they would not be closed, under proposal to be aired at three public hearings

BY TODD VON KAMPEN 4/17/80
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Ogallala, Neb. — A plan for controlling access to Lake McConaughy near here appears to

have calmed local fears that endangered-species concerns and new housing developments might close long stretches of beach to the public.

The "land and shoreline development plan" would maintain public access to Nebraska's largest lake but would permit short-term restrictions near least-tern and piping-plover nests on the beaches, said Jay Maher, environmental resources manager for the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District.

Central, which owns and operates the lake known as "Big Mac," will hold a public hearing on the plan at 7 MDT

tonight at the Ramada Limited at Ogallala's Interstate 80 Interchange.

It's the first of three hearings on Central's plans for managing public use of its Nebraska lakes and canals, including Jeffrey Lake near Brady and Johnson Lake near Lexington.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission required the Holdrege, Neb.-based Central to adopt a shoreline plan as a condition of its 1978 relicensing of the district's operations, most notably Kingsley Dam at the east end of Lake McConaughy. Central's board may vote on the plan in July, Maher said.

Other hearings are set for Wednesday at the Gothenburg Senior Center and Thursday at Kirk's Restaurant at Lexington's I-80 interchange, both at 7 p.m. CDT.

Maher said Central prepared the plan after consulting federal, state and local agencies and after holding public meetings in August and January.

Controversy over Central's plans for Lake McConaughy emerged in January, when officials sought comments on whether parts of the lake's 105-mile shoreline should be permanently closed to overnight camping and motor vehicles.

The shoreline plan designates "species-protection zones" on the northeast end of McConaughy's north shore — the lake's most-heavily used area — and in the middle of the south shore around the Lakeview area.

The latter zone lies in front of Bayside Country Estates and Trails Crossing, two of four subdivisions that are planned or under construction along McConaughy's south shore.

Least terns, an endangered species, and piping plovers, which are classified as "threatened," dig nests into the sand in the species-protection zones during

See McCONAUGHY Page 14

McCONAUGHY Lake Proposal Soothes Fears On Beaches

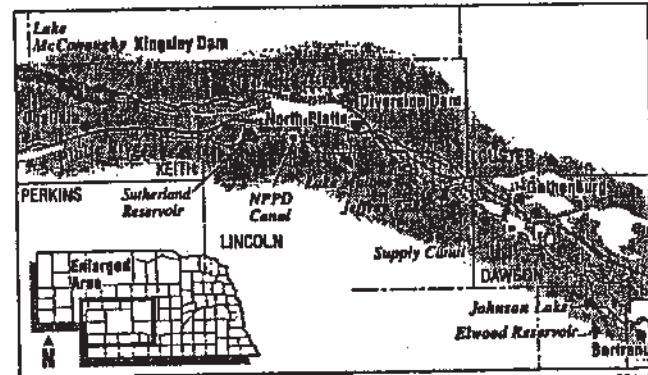
Continued from Page 11

the spring, Maher said. Nests have been fenced off when found, but Central's licenses require it to consider extra steps, he said.

The plan would allow Central to ban vehicles, overnight camping or both near the nests if fences won't provide enough protection. Central would have to notify government agencies, homeowners and the public in advance. The bans would be lifted after the birds leave, usually in early summer.

Some residents at the January meeting objected to permanent bans, citing Central's status as a public agency and its policy of allowing recreational access to the lake since Kingsley Dam was finished in 1941.

Also at the meeting, some home and cabin owners backed an overnight camping ban at the January meeting, saying campers blocked their lake view and hindered their privacy.



THE WORLD-HERALD

Their comments alarmed some who feared that developers might exploit a camping ban to reserve beaches in front of the subdivisions for their upper-income clients, said Central board member John DeTuerk of Ogallala.

Maher replied that Central, not the developers, owns all of McConaughy's traditional shoreline. The plan would require developers wanting to install marinas, boat ramps or other facilities along the shoreline to get Central's

permission to build and to allow the public to use the facilities.

DeTuerk and Rod Lanka, a member of the Big Mac Sports Club, said local residents probably will accept temporary limits to protect birds.

"If they stick with that, everybody's kind of going to back off," Lanka said.

Bonnie Nemecek of Ogallala, manager of Bayside Country Estates, said she doesn't want public access cut off, either. A marina is planned for her 48-lot development west of Lakeview, where the 11 lake-front lots are selling for \$100,000 per lot. The first nine holes of an 18-hole golf course will open July 1.

"I feel the beach should be open to the public," Nemecek said. "Everyone here is paying their taxes. They should be able to use it."