

## **Regulation of Returns for Instream Flow Objectives**

The central Platte River is considered to be important habitat for a number of wildlife species, including but not limited to the whooping crane, the interior least tern, and the piping plover. Resource agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service, have identified certain desired river flow amounts or patterns as being desirable for environmental purposes. These flows are often known familiarly as “target flows”, “pulse flows”, etc. Actual flows in the river are at times either more than or less than these desired environmental flows.

Central returns a significant amount of water to the Platte River at the upstream end of this habitat area through the J-2 Return. Water returned to the river by Central includes water diverted for power production, water originally intended for irrigation use but which is no longer needed, and water intended for instream flow purposes. At times, Central returns water to the river when the river flows already exceed what is desired.

The J-2 Project will provide Central with the ability to regulate the return of water from its system so that it can better match environmental flows needs, such as by delaying the return of water until a later time that may be more beneficial, or by “staging” water in the reservoirs in advance of an anticipated future instream flow need.