



News Release

(HOLDREGE, Neb.) - The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's board of directors voted Tuesday to renew a water leasing agreement with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP) for five more years.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 4, 2018

Under the agreement, Central will offer to lease surface water from its customers during the 2019 irrigation season provided the customer agrees to not irrigate those lands with either groundwater or surface water. Water that is leased will be credited to the environmental account in Lake McConaughy – managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to benefit endangered species habitat along the central Platte River – in October of 2019.

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Central and PRRIP have been using annual contracts for the Water Leasing Program for the past three years, with a growing number of irrigation customers choosing to participate each year. The new contract ensures the PRRIP that Central will work with irrigation customers over the five-year period on leasing possibilities, provided that there are not any years during which customers are allocated less than their contracted amount of water because of low storage conditions at Lake McConaughy.

Central's board can negotiate with PRRIP on changes to the price per acre and/or maximum allowed acres to be contracted each year.

Central will accept proposals beginning November 20, 2018, from customers identifying the acres to be leased next year. Under terms of the agreement for next year, up to 3,000 acres may be enrolled in the program. Acres typically enrolled during recent years have been pivot corners or odd-shaped parcels that are difficult to irrigate.

Also during Tuesday's meeting:

- Bids were awarded for work to begin on wetlands pipeline projects that Central has been working on with the State of Nebraska and Tri-Basin Natural Resource District. The four wetlands included in this bid were Johnson, Victor, Cottonwood and Linder Waterfowl Production Areas. Central's board awarded the bid for purchase of pipe for \$410,449.36 to Diamond Plastics of Lincoln, Neb., and the bid for installation to BSB Construction of Curtis, Neb., for \$323,027.00. Central is responsible for 40 percent of the project cost, while the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources is responsible for the remaining 60 percent.

Water will only be used to fill these wetlands when flows in the river are in excess of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service target flows in the Platte River. The project is designed so that when water is available, the wetlands can be filled in a 7-10 day window. Diversions are intended to benefit wildlife habitat and provide groundwater recharge.

- Work orders were approved for the purchase of new standby diesel generators for Kingsley Hydroelectric Plant for \$108,000, and the Jeffrey, Johnson No. 1 and Johnson No. 2 Hydroplants for \$347,773.
- The board approved use of \$10,000 in Lake Improvement Funds to assist the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission with a shoreline access project near the northwest corner of Lake Ogallala.
- The board also approved use of \$3,500 in Lake Improvement Funds to the Keystone Lemoyne Fire and Rescue Department to assist with the purchase of a utility vehicle and a medical slide-in unit for emergency responses around Lake McConaughy.
- The board approved a Lake Lot Consolidation Policy for staff to use in consideration of requests to consolidate lots around all District-owned lakes.
- Civil Engineer Cory Steinke reported that Lake McConaughy currently is at elevation 3252.5 feet above sea level, or 1.4 million acre feet and just under 80 percent capacity. Irrigation demands picked up last week and releases were higher, but with the irrigation season soon coming to a close, Steinke said the water supply is in good shape going in to the fall. Steinke mentioned that water releases from upstream reservoirs for the Environmental Account will be arriving at Lake McConaughy this week. In October, Central will begin releasing water from the Environmental Account down the river to coincide with the arrival of migratory birds.
- Central's Jeffrey and Johnson Lakes will be experiencing drawdowns beginning in September and extending into the beginning of October for shoreline inspections and to allow for maintenance and inspection at the hydroelectric plants. Jeffrey Lake will begin to decline on Sept. 10 and be about seven feet lower for at least a few days. If shoreline inspections indicate a need for additional work, the lake's level could possibly be down until October.

At Johnson Lake, the water level will begin to drop on Sept. 25 to a level about ten feet lower than normal operating levels. The lake will begin to refill on Oct. 8 and take about 11 days to return to normal levels.

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