

September 28, 2017

NEWS RELEASE

Central Platte NRD Approves Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

(GRAND ISLAND, NE)- The Central Platte Natural Resources District's (CPNRD) board of directors adopted a resolution to approve the updated CPNRD Hazard Mitigation Plan during their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday. CPNRD sponsored both the initial development of the plan in 2010 and the current updated Plan. Local cities, towns, villages, schools, and fire departments that participated in the planning process and adopted the plan locally are now eligible to apply for FEMA grants aimed at implementing mitigation projects to reduce future losses from natural hazards.

OTHER ACTION/AGENDA ITEMS

-Kearney Whitewater Association Bruce Karnatz presented an update on the Association's efforts to remove litter, promote water safety, and improve public access to the 2.5-mile water trail on the Platte River/Turkey Creek. Karnatz said the board is working to extend the water trail another 13 miles to the Bassway Strip Highway 10 bridge and requested the NRD's assistance with flood prevention and mitigation, invasive species control, bank stabilization, stormwater solids reduction, hazard removal, and improved public access. The Association was provided CPNRD's new Urban Conservation Cost Share Program which assists sponsors with the acquisition of land, or land rights, and to establish, develop and improve public recreational areas.

-Platte River Program Mark Czaplewski, biologist, gave an update on the Program's Governance Committee's effort to continue planning for a 13-year extension of the First Increment of the Program; which is set to expire at the end of 2019. In support of that effort, the Bureau of Reclamation is preparing for the required National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental assessment process. One of the first steps is to hold public meetings that are scheduled for October 4 in Torrington, WY; October 5 in Loveland, CO; October 11 at the Grand Hotel in Grand Island, NE; and October 12 at the offices of Headwaters in Kearney, NE. The meetings will be an open house format lasting from 6:00-8:00 p.m. The public may also provide written comments by November 2, 2017. The environmental assessment will evaluate a "No Action" alternative, the proposed extension alternative and possibly other alternatives.

In addition, Czaplewski said the US Fish and Wildlife Service will need to develop a supplemental Biological Opinion (BO) in compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. The BO will determine if the actions of the Program's extension are likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the listed target species or adversely modify their critical habitat. These two separate federal processes are hoped to be completed by the fall or winter of 2018.

Czaplewski also reported on plans for the next water supply projects replacing the J2 Reservoir Project. Land rights efforts are underway, an engineering contractor has been hired, preliminary infrastructure designs are being developed, and necessary state and federal permits are being obtained. Demonstration water projects being planned include a broad-scale recharge project on NPPD's Cottonwood Ranch property and slurry-wall sandpits in the Overton-Elm Creek area. Czaplewski said these initial efforts could be under construction by late 2018 or early 2019; and would be the first of several such projects needed to meet Program water goals.

-Natural Resources Conservation Service Joe Krolikowski, district liaison, reported a summary of FY 2017 Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) activity in the CPNRD:

Water Conservation: \$1,233,467.05 (28 contracts/2,793.8 acres)

Grazing Lands: \$388,832 (14 contracts/5,309.3 acres)

Forestry: \$32,353 (3 contracts/31.9 acres)

Soil Health: \$46,746 (7 contracts/810 acres)

Field Office Summary

Central City – 18 contracts - \$414,267.37 – 1,645.8 acres

Grand Island – 5 contracts - \$173,202.12 – 471.7 acres

Kearney – 16 contracts - \$391,820.30 – 1,870.4 acres

Lexington – 18 contracts - \$818,882.74 – 5030.0 acres

Totals – 57 contracts - \$1,798,172.53 – 9,017.9 acres

Krolikowski said the FY 2018 EQIP cutoff date is November 17, 2017. Applications received by November 17th will be ranked by February 2, 2018.

-Long Range Implementation Plan The board approved the CPNRD's Long Range Implementation Plan for FY 2017-2022. The Plan is updated annually to summarize planned district activities and includes projections of financial, manpower, and land right needs for the next five years.

-High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC) The board approved a letter of support to the Nebraska Federal Delegation to help secure full funding for the continued operation of all six Regional Climate Centers. The HPRCC, which is part of the UNL's School of Natural Resources, provides critical climate research, data, and information products to resource managers and farmers in a six-state region covering Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Wyoming, South Dakota, and North Dakota. CPNRD relies on HPRCC data for its water and resources management operations. Information daily disseminated by the HPRCC directly effects decisions on agricultural and livestock production, energy consumption, and water use throughout the six-state area. Advance warnings from climate centers aid citizens and communities to prepare for drought, heat waves, flooding, wildfires and other natural calamities. President Trump's FY 2018 budget reduced funding to the Regional Climate Centers by 82%. Without funding, the RCCs will be forced to cease service operations on March 6, 2018.

-Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Jim Bendfeldt reported that the NARD has received dozens of requests from other states for NRD representatives to present about the Natural Resources Districts system established by the Legislature in 1972. Nebraska is the only state that has a system of local government in place; which allows for better management practices to be applied to similar topography and enable districts to respond best to local needs.

Bendfeldt also reported on the NARD's annual conference held this week. The NRDs celebrated the 45-year anniversary on July 1st. Award: Ken DeFrank, Grand Island Senior High Success Academy, received the Master Conservationist Award for Youth Education for efforts in establishing Monarch butterfly and pollinator habitat in Grand Island.

-Cost Share The board approved six applications through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation and CPNRD cost share programs in the amount of \$4,949.10. Practices funded were grassland conservation, flow meters, cover crops, and well decommissioning.

-Upcoming Board Meetings October 26, November 30, and December 21st.