

June 28, 2018

NEWS RELEASE

Spring Groundwater Levels Down Slightly in Central Platte NRD

(GRAND ISLAND, NE) Spring 2018 static groundwater levels are down 0.31 feet in comparison to groundwater levels in 1982. Luke Zakrewski, GIS image analyst, presented the results to the Central Platte Natural Resources District's directors at their board meeting on Thursday. The 1982 levels were established as the standard for CPNRD's Groundwater Management Plan with maximum acceptable declines and a margin of safety calculated for each of the District's 24 Ground Water Management Areas (GWMA).

The accumulated change from 1982 to 2017 was 0.85' lower district-wide. Groundwater levels are measured annually from mid-April to mid-June. Six of the 24 GWMA's are currently in the 25 percent decline suspension. If the water table would fall to 50 percent of the maximum decline, Phase II would go into effect requiring mandatory reductions in irrigated acres. CPNRD serves 11 counties including all of Dawson and parts of Frontier, Custer Buffalo, Hall, Howard, Nance, Merrick, Hamilton, Platte and Polk. *Interactive maps are available at <http://cpnrd.gisworkshop.com>.*

OTHER ACTION/AGENDA ITEMS

-Budget The board approved the 2019 Fiscal budget of expenditures for the purpose of holding a public hearing at 1:45 p.m. on July 26, 2018, prior to the board of directors meeting. Lyndon Vogt, general manager, reported that the preliminary budget is approximately \$5 million lower and the property tax request down nearly \$1 million compared to last year.

-Levee Bids Van Kirk Bros. Contracting of Sutton, Nebraska, was selected to build the levee for the Upper Prairie/Silver/Moores Flood Control Project in northwest Grand Island in the amount of \$572,170.19. Van Kirk submitted the low bid of three. Construction will include a reinforced concrete box culvert, earthen embankment, site grading, storm drainage piping, surfacing, seeding and any other work necessary to provide a complete working system. Work will begin September 1, 2018 and is scheduled to be completed by November 20, 2018.

-Crane Decks The board approved a contract with JEO in the amount of \$31,840 for design and permitting for bank stabilization improvements at the Alda and Gibbon crane viewing decks.

-Canal Transfers Memorandum The board approved a one-year temporary memorandum of understanding with Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District to participate in a pilot program to exchange surface water. The agreement states that during the 2018 irrigation season, CPNRD agrees not to deliver surface water to 25,491 acres from the three irrigation canals that CPNRD partners with (Cozad, Thirty Mile, & South Side canals) in exchange for Central crediting the Environmental Account with the resulting additional storage water in Lake McConaughy.

-Nitrate Website Contract The board approved a contract with GIS Workshop in the amount of \$21,500 to update the nitrate website producers use to fill out their Water Quality Management Forms.

-Platte River Implementation Program Mark Czaplewski, biologist, reported that the Governance Committee (GC) met in Cheyenne on June 12-13 and discussed details of the planned Program First Increment Extension. The draft federal legislation has been advanced to Governors and congressional delegations of the three Platte Basin states. Discussions continue regarding whether the legislation can be moved forward this year.

Formal Endangered Species Act consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service should be wrapped up by this August or September. The Service are drafting a Biological Opinion (BO) on the Extension which they hope to have to the Bureau of Reclamation by the end of June. The plan is that the Bureau would discuss the draft BO with the GC at a special meeting in mid-August in Denver and then the BO could be finalized by late August or September and the entire NEPA process could conclude this September.

Headwaters staff updated the GC on Water Action Plan projects including the Cottonwood Ranch Broad-scale Recharge Project and Lakeside Slurry Wall Pit Pilot Project. A draft Water Service Agreement with Central NPP&ID was discussed at length. Also, a Cottonwood Ranch Land Use Agreement with NPPD was discussed and needed revisions noted. Rather than moving the Slurry Wall Project to a final design phase and construction, the GC tabled moving forward given concerns on increasing costs and the amount of water potentially provided by the Project. The matter will be discussed at the special GC meeting in mid-August.

-Tree/Weed Barrier Sales Kelly Cole, programs coordinator, reported that sales for 2018 through the Conservation Tree Program included 41,225 seedlings and 8.42 miles of weed barrier. Tree sales were up nearly 6,000 seedlings from last year, while weed barrier fabric sales were down one mile.

-IMP Meeting Contracts The board approved contracts with the Holiday Inn/Younes Center of Kearney to host Integrated Management Plan meetings with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and stakeholders on 8/14/18, 9/18/18, 11/13/18, and 1/15/19.

-Natural Resources Conservation Service Joe Krolkowski, District liaison, reported that NRCS is in the process of evaluating and writing the Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP) contracts. The application process with field verification is scheduled for completion by July 15, 2018. Nebraska's current acreage allocation for the CStP program is 456,601 acres. NRCS has requested more acres from national headquarters, since Nebraska currently has 800,000 acres in applications, with the hope that Nebraska will have around 600,000 acres allocated to contract for the 2018 sign-up.

Krolkowski also reported that in May, 75 status reviews were completed to evaluate each of these 75 tracts for potential wetland and/or highly erodible land issues in the CPNRD as part of the Food Security Act (FSA) of 1985. The purpose of these annual status reviews is to determine

if the conservation compliance provisions of the current farm program legislation are being followed on each tract randomly selected that year.

-Cost-Share Three applications totaling \$2,500 were approved through the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation and the Central Platte NRD cost-share programs for cover crop and well decommissioning.

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