

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

November 14th, 2023, 10:00 a.m. (Central Time)

Lower Platte South Natural Resource District

3125 Portia St, Lincoln, NE 68521

1. Welcome and Introductions

- A. Meeting start at 10:04
- B. Attending:
 - Daryl Andersen
 - Lower Platte North NRD
 - Dick Ehrman
 - Lower Platte South
 - Jeremy Gehle
 - NeDNR
 - Caitlin Kingsley
 - NeDNR
 - Gene Siadek
 - MUD
 - Rick Kubat
 - MUD
 - Tyler Martin
 - NeDNR
 - Jack Mensinger
 - NeDNR
 - Madeline Johnson
 - NeDNR
 - Steve Owens
 - LWS
 - Philip Paitz
 - Papio-Missouri River NRD
 - David Potter
 - Lower Platte South NRD
 - Ryan Chapman
 - Lower Platte North NRD
 - Mike Sousek
 - Lower Platte South NRD
 - Gary Aldridge
 - Public

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

2. Approval of April 4th ILCA minutes (Attachment 1)
 - A. Motion to approve - brought forth by Mike S
 - i. Moved by Tyler Martin
 - ii. Seconded by Daryl Anderson
 1. Passed unanimously
3. Condition Updates
 - A. NRDs: Static Water Levels Data
 - i. LPN got down to low fall water levels, not great outlook going into the winter, 2 foot decline along the Platte. Areas in Fremont to Columbus may enter as a quality management area if conditions continue
 - ii. PMT - still working on acquiring readings
 - i. Upland areas down, from 1/2 - 6 feet down
 - ii. Only a few wells are currently active
 - iii. LPS – currently half way into taking fall levels due to staff reassessments.
 - iv. Water levels around the Platte and Missouri are down, as expected.
 - B. Municipalities
 - i. LWS:
 - i. Data collection efforts will continue throughout the year, as to be forecast in coming meetings, river is below the median
 - ii. Did not recover last year as expected
 - ii. MUD
 - i. Some outdoor usage persisting
 - ii. No current conditions on well fields, assuming all is well
 - C. NeDNR: Dashboard
 - i. PDSI: = -4.5 extreme drought
 - ii. Platte at Ashland – 4,000 cfs
 - iii. Areas of severe and extreme drought are persisting through the central part of the basin.
 - i. Drought primarily in the downstream reaches
 - iv. Seasonal outlook is showing warmer than normal conditions in the upper half of the US
 - i. Also showing above average precipitation chances in southern Nebraska
 - ii. New outlook will be released on Thursday 11/16
 - D. Current conditions/ Administration updates
 - i. Flows in the Platte may be slightly elevated due to releases from res.
 - ii. Above Mc flow rates have been average
 - iii. South Platte is around 1/3 of average flow compared to last year
 - iv. Other major rivers are hovering around average for the year

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

v. Historic lows in the Upper, Lower, and Little Blue NRDs

4. Discussion of potential mitigation actions/projects ideas

A. WaterSense Program

- i. Summary of previously discussed EPA WaterSense Program
- ii. Potential to work with the city of Waverly to test the effectiveness of the program
 - i. DNR would like to work with LPSNRD to reach out and coordinate with Waverly.
 - ii. Waverly has had some discussions with LWS
 - iii. Second source for LWS has caused some volume anxiety
 - iv. LPN has \$10,000 in potential rebates for smart sprinkler systems through 319 grant
 - 1. Clean water act-319
 - a. Primary goal is water quality, but it can potentially be used for other purposes.
 - v. Source water protection funds are easily available in eligible areas.
- iii. OPPD has rebates for energy efficient appliances, potential partnership
- iv. SRF funds could be available to the city of Waverly and other sub 10,000 population cities.
 - i. Some restrictions may apply

B. Decertification's

- i. Common way of reducing demand and increasing supply
- ii. Irrigators forgoing allotted water to "increase" available flow in the basin
- iii. Partnerships
 - i. NGO's have programs we could potentially partner with to increase efficacy and education.
 - ii. Rick brings up that the cost benefit analysis is a large portion of the deciding factor.
 - 1. Retired acres have no guarantee to increase stream flow during certain years.
 - iii. How close would programs like this need to be to have effective implantation action and substantial flow contributions.

C. Other

- i. Potential project to store water for flood control and to release water in years of need.
 - i. Any storage would be subject to closure and need rights to utilize.

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

- ii. Would the release from structures be "protected" from the rights between the release and the point of measurement
 - 1. Water released would most likely be considered natural flow post release
- iii. Game and parks flow considerations for recreation
- ii. LWS - reestablishing flow on the east side of the Platte to increase connectivity to the LWS well field
 - i. Shouldn't have issues with DNR, considered river restoration project
 - ii. HDR looking at project details
 - iii. Additional wells are going to be implemented, increasing consistency of flow is paramount
- iii. LPN - if we start looking at taking irrigated land out of production between Skyler and Richmond, how much would flow increase
 - i. Interest in water below Fremont, but aquifer is likely to shallow, and folks will make a big racket about the dewatering of lakes.
 - ii. During a dry year, the flow contribution would be minimal as well due to aquifer recharge being lessened
- iv. LWS- interested in keeping flows higher year round.
- v. LPN - NRCS programs to create structures for flood prevention which could be multi-purpose for storage as well in dry years.
 - i. Adjacent land owners have been interested in using flood prevention structures.
- vi. LWS is doing ground water modeling to correspond with the JEDI lake project, and would like to contribute to the DNR ground water modeling effort.
 - i. DNR is working with the three NRDs to create a model that would most likely already be integrating JEDI analysis.
- vii. NeDNR - can start looking into the impact of different locations being decertified and how it would impact in stream flow.
 - i. Effort to look at the impact of flow loss and the rate of loss as the decertification move upstream

5. Communication Plan Trigger discussion (Attachment 2)

- A. During the last meeting, new triggers were discussed for implementing into the updated plan
- B. Drought triggers require an area to monitor;
 - i. Three NRDs in the consortium to use as triggers
 - i. Could attach it to the IMP area instead of just NRD
 - ii. Pros:
 - 1. Target to audience
 - iii. Cons:
 - 1. Limited impact on the people in basin
- ii. Entire Central climate division

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

- i. Most folks are probably not familiar with this region, but is defined in the plan
 - iii. Lower Platte HUC 6
 - i. Matches NRDs but does not consider upstream conditions
 - iv. Entire Platte River Basin
 - i. More representative of basin status
 - ii. But consideration of the entire basin can inflate the impact on the target audience.
- C. Mike brings up potentially bringing up the trigger level to assume that D0 - D1 are constants
 - i. DNR brings up adjusting the start of communications to 2 and 3
 - ii. If any area is hitting D3-4, communications area going to be district wide.
- D. PMT - How do we want to start looking at the basin as a whole and consider the impact on our districts, upstream conditions are going to impact in stream flows regardless of Consortium area conditions.
- E. Communications are targeted to the general public, not necessarily to those impacted directly by drought conditions. The communication triggers are oriented to that audience
- F. LWS - Thoughts that customers are not too concerned about drought conditions. Looking at communicating that a greater need is held to conserve water
 - i. Providing actions to take in municipal areas to conserve water.
- G. LPS brings up combining areas to certain conditions for certain actions
- H. LWS - looks at conditions locally (Lincoln) and then looks at conditions in the basin to get an idea of the supply going forward and the larger picture.
 - i. 30 vs 90 precipitation forecasts and conditions
- I. Ryan brings up the question of if LWS had its second source sorted, but any action on the LPDC part be necessary
 - i. Rick (MUD) the continued conversation about the Platte is important, and the stability of LWS brings the whole of the group up.
 - i. Where is the action going to happen, we are likely going to act only in emergency, but we should at least have plans and projects in place.
 - ii. Dick (LPS) we struggle with carrot vs stick. How much can we convince people to reduce use, and how are they going to react to mandatory restrictions.
 - i. LWS - voluntary reduction is helpful, higher demand is doable, but after implementing voluntary restrictions, water usage stayed comfortable
 - 1. Voluntary likely saved ~5M gallons a day
 - 2. Mandatory Likely saved ~ 10M a day

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

3. Previous conditions showed that those differences can make a big impact in tough years.
- ii. LWS - having these restrictions (voluntary) has increased awareness and changed individual usage of water.
- iii. Gene (MUD) have we seen that communication through traditional media channels have had a lessened impact in recent years, Steve mentions that social media is increasingly effective.
 - i. LWS - looked at impact analysis of media and found it to be highly effective at communication dissemination
- iv. LPN - We should decide on one or two projects and get some weight behind them instead of kicking them down the road.
 - i. Water conservation program will be included as an option
- v. Steve concludes that we would still be here if water 2.0 was settled, things would be less anxious, but the issues over all would remain for the basin.
 - i. Mike mentions that even if we needed to make a call, doesn't mean there is any water.

6. East Fremont/Elkhorn Township Project support letter (Attachment 3)
 - A. Two large detention basins in the Fremont area
 - i. Letter of support from members
 - ii. Motion to support - Rick
 - i. Seconded - Steve
 - iii. LPN - abstains
 - iv. All others in favor
 - v. Motion passes.

7. Updating the ILCA
 - A. 1-year amendment (Attachment 4)
 - B. Previous signatures were on the old agreement instead of amendment

8. Public comments
 - A. None

9. Upcoming Meetings:
 - A. February 14th 10 AM
 - i. Zoom

10. Adjourn: 11:36