

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

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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 reassignments.
 - 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

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- 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.

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- 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

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- 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

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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