

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

March 27th, 2025, 10:00 a.m. (Central Time)

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources Ogalala Conference Room

(245 Fallbrook Blvd Lincoln, Nebraska 68521)

MINUTES

1. Welcome and Introductions (Meeting Start: 10:02)

In-Person

- Daryl Andersen
- Tyler Martin
- Jack Mensinger
- Madeline Johnson
- Steve Owen
- Philip Paitz
- David Potter
- Mike Sousek

Online:

- Dr. Eric Hunt
- Amanda Grint
- Troy Schaben
 - From the city of Fremont: Acting City Engineer, Assistant GM of Utilities.
- Daryl Anderson
- Gene Saidek

2. Approval of November 19th ILCA Minutes ([Attachment 2A](#))

A. [Motion to approve November 19th ILCA Minutes](#)

- i. Motion: Philip Paitz
- ii. Seconded: Steve Owen
- iii. [Discussion: No discussion](#)

3. Update from State Climate office

- A. Winter conditions have been dry with average temps. No drought to moderate drought along most of eastern Nebraska but has seen recent improvements with previous and expected rain fall. Eastern Nebraska had an average to slightly dry winter with worsening conditions as you move west across the state. 3-4 week outlook shows above average temperatures across the country. The Seasonal outlook shows equal chances above and below average temperatures for the spring and summer, with above average chance of dry conditions.

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4. Condition Updates

A. NRDs: Static Water Levels Data

i. PMT

1. Planning to start spring water level checks first week in April. Philip has been hearing that it is dry in fields outside of low spots. Upcoming weather may improve soil moisture profile.

ii. LPN

1. They started water levels this week 3/23 and are 1/3 of the way done.

iii. LPS

1. LPS is not forecasting any drastic changes, with expectations of average conditions

B. Municipalities

i. LWS

1. Lincoln has calculated 87% of full operational volume. There has been an increase in flows on the east side of the Platte "island" with improved channel conditions after cleaning out.

ii. MUD

1. Well fields are in good shape after power outage from blizzard the previous week. Entering maintenance mode to maintain plants with no unusual conditions.

C. NeDNR: Dashboard

- i. The Dashboard indicates that there are D2 conditions in the consortium area, with the entire LP basin at 40% D2. Neither of which conditions meet the press release criteria. There have been 43 appropriations shut down to meet Grand Island's needs.

D. Current conditions / Administration updates

5. Augmentation well study scope ([Attachment 5](#))

A. Presented by Daryl Anderson of LPN

- B. The proposal is for a project to utilize the dewatering of Fremont to supplement the flow of the Platte River. Daryl reached out to JEO for a RFP, JEO then reached out to LRE for development of SOW. Troy Schaben from the city of Fremont has been included for discussion. Troy highlights the surface water and drainage issues of Fremont and would support any actions to help alleviate those issues. The study if pursued would be open to grant funding. Daryl mentions that he did not have intention to include it in the budget for 2025.

- C. Mike Sousek mentioned that he would need to bring this item before his board for discussion. Dave Potter mentioned that the budget for the study is relatively high, and includes the issue that this project is oriented for

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times when it is wet, rather than when the Platte is in the most need for augmentation.

- D. Philip reflected the concerns of LPS, and highlights concerns about the impacts to Fremont's wellfields if this project would be implemented. But Philip supported the idea of a study to better understand the impact of pumping from Fremont in dry conditions. Philip offset that their model may be able to bring light to this issue once their GW model is finished.
- E. Tyler (NeDNR) supported the use of the 3D model to give more information about the impacts of pumping around Fremont.
- F. Gene Saidek echoes the concerns about dry conditions. Gene would like to be more informed about the situation of Fremont and how the Dry vs Wet conditions issue could be addressed.
- G. Steve reminds the group that the LPDC was initially very interested in the project during the original presentations by HDR a few years ago. Projects for Platte augmentation need to be relatively close to show effective impact. There has been evidence that year-round implementation of recharge is impactful to summer flows. Steve mentioned that LWS could be interested in matching funds.
- H. David encouraged looking into the water smart grant criteria.
- I. Troy stated that there is currently ARPA money being used to address storm water issues, as well as the flow away from Fremont. They would like to have a resolution as soon as possible but understand the delays with the costs involved.
- J. Tyler asked Steve to discuss the needs of the city at the moment.
 - i. Steve discusses that LWS is still investing in the Platte well field, and that the Missouri river pipeline will be needed by the mid 2040's. The city will continue to rely on the Platte.
- K. There are no estimates for the amount of flow that would be contributed by the augmentation project at the moment.
- L. Troy briefs the group about the implementation of a horizontal well near Ashland that would be roughly 1,200 ft from the river. The city of Fremont has never had a substantial issue with their wellfields, never seeing a Dip of more than 3 ft in their wells.
- M. Tyler has talked to John Engel about the initial study of the project and would like to distribute information to the group as it becomes available.
- N. Mike has stated that it seems like there is no strong concern for a quick turnaround, and encouraged runs through the developing model and collecting conversations over the next year.

6. 2025 Budget

- A. Discussion: Madeline reviewed that the budget can be amended later in the year if so moved.

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- B. Adoption (Attachment 6B)
 - i. Motion: Tyler Martin
 - ii. Second: Steve Owen
 - iii. Motion Passed Unanimously.

7. Drought Dashboard utility

- A. USDM map data availability
 - i. The DNR has offered to omit USDM Data any older than the last 13 months. The retention of only the last 13 Calendar months would increase the loading speed of the dashboard.
 - ii. Philip offers that the main dashboard contain the most recent values, with a secondary page containing all historic values.
 - iii. DNR will talk to their IT to check the feasibility of Philip's proposal but will retain their proposal if not feasible.
- B. Necessity of monthly emails
 - i. Tyler asks if the group would still like to receive regular conditions updates while information is available on the dashboard. The LPDC is aggregable with discontinuing the regular monthly emails but encourages check ins during worsening conditions.

8. Lower Platte Drought Consortium plan discussion.

- A. DNR presents this item as a standing Agenda item moving forward.

9. Upcoming Meetings: Discuss calendar for 2025

- A. Mike opens discussion to the point of reducing the number of meetings compared to prior years. Mike proposes that we retain the obligated meetings as highlights in the plan and in the ILCA.
- B. The October ILCA meeting would be the only other required meeting for the Calendar year.
- C. October 8th Proposed for the Fall LPDC ILCA Meeting. 10 AM, The meeting will be required to be in person, located in the NeDNR office. If drought conditions worsen, more meetings will be scheduled.

10. Public Comment Period

11. Adjourn 11:04 pm