

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

November 19th, 2024, 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
 - A. Meeting start: 10:00 AM
 - B. Attending:
 - i. Daryl Anderson
 1. Lower Platte North
 - ii. Dick Ehrman
 1. Lower Platte South
 - iii. Jeremy Gehle
 1. Department of Natural Resources
 - iv. Gene Siadek
 1. Metropolitan Utilities District
 - v. Jack Mensinger
 1. Department of Natural Resources
 - vi. Madeline Johnson
 1. Department of Natural Resources
 - vii. Philip Paitz
 1. Papio-Missouri river
 - viii. David Potter
 1. Lower Platte South
 - ix. Mike Sousek
 1. Lower Platte South
 - x. Eric Hunt
 1. Nebraska State Climate Office
 - xi. Steve Herdzina
 1. Lower Platte South
 - xii. Kaitlyn Bargen
 1. Lower Platte North
 - xiii. Jacob Stover
 1. Lower Platte North
2. Approval of April 24th ILCA Minutes (Attachment 2A)
Motion to approve: Mike Sousek
Second: Philip Paitz
Discussion: None
Motion passed unanimously.

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

3. Update from State Climate office.

Dr. Hunt: September and October were record warm and dry months by a country mile. The soil moisture levels for November are currently looking to be above normal. There has been a degradation in drought categories over the last 8 weeks, but we will likely see relief. Drought condition improvement likely due to recent precipitation. With that recent precipitation, Nebraska is on the wet side for the water year and has had a record warm and wet fall. In the last 30 days, we have experienced good precipitation in the east, but have had dry conditions in the western third of the state. The 90-day average precipitation is below average, with soil moisture improving, and soil temperatures higher than average for this time of year. Stream flow in the Eastern portion of the state has been near average. NASA Groundwater moisture projections show dry soil conditions across much of the United States, as well as elevated soil temperatures.

Outlook: CPC is projecting warm and dry conditions across much of the US. Expect drought to persist, with a chance for improvement. There are equal chances for above or below average temperature and precipitation over the next three months. Oceanic temperatures are warm across the globe, we are still in an ENSO neutral condition, but looking to enter a weak La Niña. There are neutral to above average snow levels expected for the upcoming winter.

4. Condition Updates

A. NRDs: Static Water Levels Data

i. PMT

Philip Paitz (PMT): No update

ii. LPS

Dick Ehrman (LPS) Almost finished with fall water level measurements to be finished in next few weeks. Down anywhere from 3ft- 1 ft, expected water level declines.

iii. LPN

Daryl Anderson (LPN) Juan basin is down 3/10s of a foot compared to fall. District wide down almost a foot, from Petersburg to Ashland. There are still a few wells to measure.

B. Municipalities

i. MUD

Gene Siadek (MUD) Entering the winter demand season. Irrigation demands have diminished. We are seeing a record September and October demands, so demands are

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

persisting through the season. 25-year-old records on demand broken. The big wildcard is irrigation loads, and given the hot and dry conditions, load demands persisted late into the fall. As we enter the winter mode, we start our maintained operation to prep for next summer.

Mike Sousek (LPS) asks about load in record months. Gene talks about how even though there were record months, the demand is still under control as these records were still less compared to peak summer demand.

ii. LWS

Steve Owen (LWS) Similar demand to MUD, September was 3rd highest level. With many waters main breaks happening over the last few months

Gene: Main brakes just started increasing the last few days with the rain. Anything that can cause the soil conditions to vary can cause brakes. As Missouri river levels change, we may start to see more main brakes as well.

Steve: in 2006 /7 we had terrible years for water main brakes, constantly changing soil dynamics caused a dramatic issue on delivery infrastructure. Even though demand is high this season, it is within operational demand. And getting to good water levels in the spring relies on at least average off season stream flows.

C. NeDNR: Dashboard

Madeline Johnson (NeDNR): The upper right-hand box that is blank is intentional, the widget on the left showing drought category of the entire basin. The new widget will show the percentage of the consortium area in drought conditions. Other aesthetic improvements are in the pipeline.

D. Current conditions / Administration updates

Jeremy Gehle (NeDNR): Platte River hit all its flow goals for the year. Fisheries also hit its target flows this year. Allowing for the approval of excess flows. There are still drought conditions in the hat creek areas, but we are still seeing good flows on the Platte. Lake Mac is at 61% capacity, there will be the dam refacing project, the project resolution has yet to be decided on. The fix could take 2-3 years to repair, resulting in increased streamflow due to lowering water levels in lake McConaughy. Erosion damage requires a certain level of water to protect from having further excess erosion. Lake Mac is one of the highest "fetch" lakes in the world.

5. Adopt 2024 Budget (Attachment 5A)

Motion to approve: Daryl Anderson

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

Second: Gene Siadek

Discussion: Madeline makes a comment that this is the 2024 budget, and a 2025 budget will need to be approved at the spring ILCA meeting.

Motion passed unanimously.

6. ILCA 5-year renewal (Attachment 6A)

Madeline: The ILCA does not need voting, takes effect at date of last signature.

Discussion: Mike said there have been changes, moving from a 1 year to a 5-year agreement, as well as including drought in the language. LPS has taken this to the board and should have no issues clearing. Daryl has the signed copy for collection. Steve: There will be a public hearing on Dec. 2 to get approval which then the mayor will need to sign prior to the Dec. 4th deadline.

7. Proposed Plan update Adoption (Attachment 7A)

Motion to approve: Mike Sousek

Second: Phil Paitz

Discussion: Mike Sousek: we have been talking about this for the last year with no budget to do so, but it is done. It is in the final stage of development. No other discussion. LPS will be taking this up in December. Daryl asks if this needs to be approved by all boards. David Potter says that they may go through the same process as they did with the initial adoption. Madeline states that the ILCA as written empowers consortium members to adopt this plan for their agencies. Gene: is this a yearly update. Madeline: no, 5 years as needed.

Motion Passed unanimously.

8. Upcoming Meetings: Discuss calendar for 2025.

A. Spring meeting to discuss municipal water source levels.

Mike states that there has been a request to potentially meet twice a year rather than the current schedule unless drought conditions persist. Gene: is it every other year at the moment?

Madeline: the only thing we are required to do is a spring and fall ILCA Meetings, we have had only calls during irrigation season in the past. The DNR is ok with only hosting in person meetings if drought conditions call for it. All other agencies agree with that schedule. Mike: the plan will be to have only the two in person ILCA meetings as of now. Madeline: the ILCA spring meeting is typically in April. Steve: as far into April as possible is good to gather greater

LOWER PLATTE DROUGHT CONSORTIUM MEETING MINUTES

conditions information. Madeline: April 24th at the DNR Daryl: may host the fall meeting.

9. Adjourn

Daryl: the city of Fremont is looking at the study as is in the plan; they want to know if this group would be willing to help support the wellhead protection study. They are also looking at a horizontal well in the Platte with unknown effects. The Fremont project is a large wellhead east of Fremont to assist the Platte River flow during drought conditions. The well is corresponding to the dewatering wells, but primarily for supplementing the Platte during drought conditions. Mike: when you get done with the next phase of study, an update to the group would be beneficial. Philip: how much help is being looked for? Daryl: depends on what kind of the study we want. Daryl: the water would likely be added to the Elkhorn, which may not be of help to MUD. Gene: the downstream pumps may be able to take some advantage of that. Mike: the conveyance of the water during a drought would be a major issue as well. Daryl: there is also the political issue of folks with houses around the lakes up there not wanting to drop the water level of the lakes. Steve: as it's in the plan, it may be something we want to run to ground. Daryl: depending on how we may want to expand the study area, we can expand the area to see what it may impact. Mike: and seeing what the CFS impacts would look like if it's worth the investment. Steve: and the numbers we saw a few years ago were significant, so seeing if the projections would be similar would be impactful. Madeline: once we have more specifics on their plan, we have tools that would show conveyance losses. Mike: I don't think its dead Daryl. Daryl: well, we should get after it in the next 5 years, otherwise why include it. Daryl: was there a press release that went out or not? Madeline: Yes, but we are unsure if the papers picked it up due to the election and rain present. It is on social media and the webpage.

10. Adjourned: 10:54 am