Integrated Management Plan Stakeholders Meeting
Twin Platte Natural Resources District
October 15, 2007

Stakeholders present: Phil Armstrong, Don Colvin, Mike Drain, Jim Goeke, Frank Kwapnioski, Jim Meismer, Dudley Oltmans. Roric Paulman, Robert Petersen, Page Peterson, Dennis Schilz, Kenneth Schilz, Doug Teaford, Joe Wahlgren, T.J. Walker, Jerry Weaver, Mike Wheeler, Robert Wiseman.
Stakeholders absent (excused): Burdette Cooley, Jim Hawks, Steve Krajewski, Marion Kroeker, Tina Kurtz, Jerry Steinke, Steve Van Boening.
Stakeholders absent (unexcused): Lisa Dominisse, Mike Svoboda.
Resource People: Ann Dimmitt, Kent Miller, Kevin Spelts.

The Stakeholders Meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. CDT.

Announcements and Presentations

Mike Drain distributed a long and short version of a basin-wide proposal drafted over a year ago to generate discussion at the Water Policy Task Force meeting. This is for information only.

Ann Dimmitt explained information behind a map of irrigated acres by county for 2004. With from 70% to 86% of certified acre reports returned, TPNRD was able to verify infrared aerial photography flown in 2004 and compare it to registered wells. NRD figures compared to FSA numbers showed just a 1.09% difference in numbers. Based on this work, estimated percentage of acres irrigated with ground water wells is as follows: 2.67% in Arthur County; 15.87% in Keith County; 14.32% in Lincoln County; and 2.69% in McPherson County. The percentage of ground water irrigated acres in the TPNRD is 12%. One stakeholder asked how these numbers compare to DNR numbers. Ann said that they differ considerably but that DNR is updating their records to match this new information from TPNRD. Another stakeholder suggested that these numbers also be compared to COHYST information for additional verification.

Jim Goeke explained three ground water-level change maps provided to Stakeholders: 1) from Predevelopment to Spring 2007; 2) from Spring 2006 to Spring 2007; and 3) in TPNRD from Spring 2006 to Spring 2007. Water level maps have been produced since 1960 and are drawn from three different databases: a Spring to Spring database; a Predevelopment to Spring database; and Continuous Recorder wells. Maps are most helpful when compared with other relevant time periods. The Predevelopment maps depend on a subjective assessment of the time period defined as predevelopment. Precipitation plays a big role in shifts in groundwater levels. Jim noted that knowing the data points used for the maps is important and that he will provide this information to the group at the next meeting.

Kent Miller provided a handout prepared for the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Fall Conference showing one example of how COHYST data could be used to analyze “what if” scenarios. This example shows the likely impact of converting 144,100 acres of ground water irrigated land upstream of Lake McConaughy to dryland. The results: 32,754 acre foot gain.

At the November meeting, Kevin Spelts, TPNRD ground water modeler, will share with Stakeholders what he is working on and ask for input as to what else you would like to see modeled.

One Stakeholder asked about DNR’s reaction to the request for an extension of this process. Kent said TPNRD originally proposed a 12 month extension but agreed to go along with DNR’s request to limit the extension to eight months. The statutes provide for possible extensions up to two years, which would be September 2009.

Roric Paulman would like to make a 15 to 20 minute presentation next month on a six month study commissioned by the West Central Water Users Coalition. They used all available information sources to study an area under allocation for 25 years with minimal surface water impact to determine the ground water impacts on an area that is highly irrigated. They are making final clarifications and will have conclusions, ideas, and processes to recommend. They hope to hand this work off to the University or another entity to continue.

Discussion of IMP Management Scenarios

Discussion of possible management scenarios continued.

Conditioning of Permits

This would include any conditions tied to receiving a permit to use a well. Examples of the kinds of requirements or management practices that could be imposed in order to get a permit include things like time limitations for use, approval for special circumstances (like temporary use during construction), low volume use (wells under 50 gallons), etc. Conditioning of permits could be used in partnership with other requirements (e.g. a mechanism used in metering, well spacing, etc.). In an IMP, the goal of conditions for permits would be to eliminate new depletions without offsets in fully appropriated areas.

PROS	***CONS***
If the current moratorium on new wells was lifted, conditions for new permits could be used to control future drilling. This would provide a mechanism for future development.	If conditioning is limited to new wells, how does this help to solve issues with existing wells?
May make enforcement of requirements more workable.	Adverse economic impacts.
This could be a way to get away from the moratorium – a more specific tool which may be preferable to blanket control of an entire area.	Cumbersome to track permits – especially if conditions are changed periodically.
If you set time limits on permits, this would allow you to revisit and change the conditions for a permit in the future as better information is available.	If permits are limited by time or other factors, it increases a developer's risk and therefore may reduce their interest in development projects.
	May be relying on subjective information to set conditions for permits.

Incentive Programs

Financial inducements or management concessions to produce a desired outcome. (e.g. voluntary reduction in use of water). You must first define the end result desired and then develop incentives to accomplish this result. There may be two types of objectives: 1) to promote the greater good; and 2) to give producers a reason to change to meet a specific goal. Different incentives may be required to address these different objectives.

PROS	***CONS***
May have significant mitigation potential if managed properly.	Could result in a new bureaucracy to implement and pay for this type of program.
Federal money is now available for some of the current incentive programs.	Existing programs (CREP/EQIP) were initiated for different purposes so are not managed for reduced water consumption.
Voluntary program – not forced on users.	Costly for taxpayers & producers (penalties).
Superior to government management if structured so farmers can respond creatively. Set the goal – provide incentives – allow producers to determine how to reach goal.	Program may not be managed for reduction in depletions. Some current incentives have actually been counterproductive in terms of water consumption.
If the goal is for the general good, then this is one way to let the general public help to pay for it.	Incentives are often temporary (10-15 years). Use returns unless payments are renewed.
	Changing from irrigated to grass changes the tax base - negative tax consequences.
	What's in it for the larger percentage of operations that do not have irrigated land?
	How do we get a government program in place to meet our objectives in a timely fashion?

Retiming and New Storage

Changing the time distribution of water. Taking water from the stream when it is in excess and returning it at a more advantageous time.

PROS	***CONS***
If we actually have excess water, then this approach doesn't require a reduction of existing consumption, doesn't deprive producers of water, and doesn't harm the economy.	Disagreements about what constitutes "excess" water. Difficult to determine given all the requirements on stream flow.
May be a unique opportunity with South Platte Compact – winter time flow may potentially be reserved for Nebraska use.	Potentially in competition with others who also want "excess" water.
Could potentially use existing facilities for retiming (e.g. the canal system).	Costs to implement – especially if building new storage.
Keeping excess water from leaving the state could help us meet current needs or perhaps even new needs.	Difficult to quantify or track benefits of this management approach.
Recharge possibilities where we are seeing ground water declines.	Recreation use of storage water is seen as an entitlement rather than an incidental benefit.
Surface storage (lakes) offer recreation possibilities which has a positive economic benefit.	

Meeting Schedule

All meeting times are from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m. CT and ***will be held at the Holiday Inn Express***. Future meetings:

October 15
November 19
December 17
January 14
February 11
March 17

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.