

Integrated Management Plan Stakeholders Meeting

Twin Platte Natural Resources District

November 19, 2007

Stakeholders present: Phil Armstrong, Don Colvin, Burdette Cooley, Lisa Dominisse, Marion Kroeker, Jim Meismer, Dudley Oltmans, Roric Paulman, Robert Petersen, Page Peterson, Dennis Schilz, Kenneth Schilz, Jerry Steinke, Mike Svoboda, Doug Teaford, Joe Wahlgren, T.J. Walker.

Stakeholders absent (excused): Mike Drain, Jim Goeke, Jim Hawks, Tina Kurtz, Frank Kwapnioski, Steve Van Boening, Mike Wheeler.

Stakeholders absent (unexcused): Jerry Weaver, Robert Wiseman.

Resource People: Ann Dimmitt, Kent Miller, Kevin Spelts.

The Stakeholders Meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. CST.

Announcements and Presentations

Kent Miller discussed three scenarios that Kevin Spelts (TPNRD ground water modeler) is working on using the COHYST model, for the TPNRD area : 1) surface water impact if all wells are shut off; 2) surface water impact if all post-1997 wells are shut off; 3) once impact of post-1997 wells is known, reverse the process and determine how many acres would need to be taken out of production one and two miles from the river to achieve a quick response in surface water. Kent emphasized these are just scenarios and not necessarily what TPNRD intends to do. He urged Stakeholders to suggest other scenarios they would like to see modeled.

Kevin Spelts shared other projects he is working on: an extensive joint effort to complete a cycle well computer model to determine what effect wells have on stream depletion, and to determine a more precise location for the 28-40 line and the 10-50 line. It could take a year to complete this effort.

He is also working with a group on conjunctive management that will merge western, central, and eastern COHYST models into one seamless model that can predict impacts on the entire Platte valley. The methodology used in the three models is the same, but each area has markedly different climates, soils, and land management practices. This work should be completed in January.

Roric Paulman distributed a report of a recent study completed by Brown and Caldwell. The purpose of the study, commissioned by the West Central Water Users Coalition, was to demonstrate the viability of a consumptive use based method of water management, and to show how a water balance for a selected area could be estimated and used for water management. The report also proposed a definition of full appropriation based on a water balance. Conclusions:

- The water balance can be understood and quantified with reasonable accuracy and can be constructed with information that is currently collected and publicly available.
- Water level declines in aquifer storage and surface water outflow may be due to several factors, including supplemental ground water irrigation, conversion of dryland crops to grasslands or CRP, and implementation of water conservation measures (terracing, reuse pits, etc.).
- Dryland crops and native vegetation consume as much as 95% of the water supply. Irrigation only increases overall consumptive use by approximately 5%. Because the additional consumptive use attributable to irrigation is relatively small in comparison to total consumptive use, the economic costs of retiring irrigated lands may outweigh the benefits of retirement.
- A water balance can be used to evaluate new water management alternatives.

For more information about the results of this study, please see the entire report enclosed.

Results of this study were presented at a recent meeting of the OA Basin Subcommittee working on trying to define what over appropriated means. The law is currently driving the definition of over appropriated, but there was some agreement that from a practical standpoint

using a water budget made some sense. The study information will be presented to Senator Loudon in mid-December.

Discussion of IMP Management Scenarios

Discussion of possible management scenarios continued.

Water Banking: Water banking is an accounting system that determines demands and supplies of water in order to identify unused water that can be “banked” for future use. This is not physically banking the water. Instead “credits” are given for reductions in consumptive use. A water banking system establishes the parameters for buying or retiring current water uses and banking the savings for future use. Incidental recharge would not result in water bank credits. Examples of incidental recharge include natural springs increasing surface water, or seepage from canals and rivers recharging ground water. To earn credit for recharge in a water banking system, water would have to be intentionally transferred from ground water to surface water.

Central Platte NRD is actively working on building a water bank. They are buying water rights on small, inefficient, oddball acres that could be retired from irrigated use to build a pool of water for future development or environmental use without offsets. Water rights closer to the river would have a different value. Tax funds would be used to buy acres to mitigate offset requirements rather than forcing all users to reduce use. This approach is a more viable option for CPNRD which must offset 17,000 acres of development, than for TPNRD which must offset approximately 60,000 acres developed since 1997.

PROS	CONS
Provides a system to track water to be used for new development or other uses.	Not a water savings if you bank and transfer 100% of the water rights.
Establishes an accounting system for use by willing buyers and sellers of water if a single organization is used to validate the transaction.	Possible for a very small number of people to control a great deal of ground water and lease it to others if they can buy up the land.
A voluntary program – not mandated.	In CPNRD they are not offering a lease, but a permanent easement so land could never be irrigated.
If you view the entire over appropriated river basin as a water bank, you can set a level needed to reach a goal and then determine how much consumption overall must be reduced.	Currently ground water users can pay for water and put it in the river, but surface water users can divert it so it may not lead to the achievement of stream flow goals.
	Water in bank is not measured amounts – it is modeled amounts.
	New concept which may be difficult or expensive to track, police, enforce.
	A costly approach.
	To work, someone has to be willing to sell their water rights.

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:

- There will be NO meeting in December**
- January 14
- February 11
- March 17

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.