

Integrated Management Plan Stakeholders Meeting

Twin Platte Natural Resources District

February 13, 2006

Stakeholders present: Phil Armstrong, Don Colvin, Burdette Cooley, Jim Goeke, Jim Hawks, John Kilpatrick, Frank Kwapnioski, Jim Meisner, Dudley Oltmans, Roric Paulman, Robert Petersen, Page Peterson, Dennis Schilz, Jerry Steinke, Steve Van Boening, Joe Wahlgren, Jerry Weaver, Mike Wheeler, Robert Wiseman.

Stakeholders absent: Ann Diers, Lisa Dominisse, Steve Krajewski, Marion Kroeker, Todd Kramer, Tina Kurtz, Kenneth Schilz, Mike Svoboda.

Resource People: Ann Dimmitt, Kent Miller.

The Stakeholders Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. CDT.

Stakeholder Discussion – Goals

At the last meeting two similar goals statements were drafted. After discussing the merits of each statement, the following was adopted with the understanding that language related to “fully appropriated status” would be included in the objectives: ***Manage water resources in the Twin Platte Natural Resources District in a manner to balance water use and water supply, optimizing economic, social and environmental benefits, for the near and long term.***

Educational Presentation:

IMP Concept Presentation– Roric Paulman (Producer and President of West Central Nebraska Water Users Coalition) and Frank Kwapnioski (NPPD)

This presentation was designed to stimulate thinking about an alternative approach to issues facing this district and to generate interest and assistance in further development of the following ideas:

Roric and Frank began with the presumption that as we move forward with an IMP, we don't want...

- To kill surface water as a resource
- To kill ground water as a resource
- Over-regulation and bureaucracy (enforcing number of acres, reading meters, etc.)
- Lost development potential and waste (looking out 30 years)
- More precision than accuracy

Instead, they suggested what we do want is a plan that...

- Has state-wide acceptance by all water users
- Is equitable across the basin and to all water uses
- Protects the sustainability of the available resource
- Defines the balance between the supply and effective utilization of the available resource
- Recognizes the difference in source and effect between surface and ground water. (Source of ground water is local, source of surface water is upstream.)
- Recognizes local and regional use differences and needs.

To this end, they believe a Fresh Approach is needed with the goal of accomplishing the following:

- Fair recognition of the similarities and differences between surface water and groundwater
- Uniform process across the entire state based on common factors and equations
- Simple and straight-forward process that recognizes physical realities
- Process that establishes a common baseline that can be uniformly applied and then built on to deal with local issues
- Recognition that for a process to be generally applied; it can't be too complex or cumbersome

The process they identified included the following tenets:

- They want your input
- Many of the tools are available
- Should a subcommittee be formed?
- How are funding needs provided?

They believe that allocation does not quantify supply or demand or encourage reduction in actual consumption. Allocations focus on wells and do not take into account the entire water supply (including precipitation) or non-irrigated cropping practices. It is currently unclear what fully appropriated really means. To establish a baseline to work from we should physically inventory water supply and demand. It was believed that sufficient data and tools are currently available (through COHYST, cropping patterns, precipitation records, etc) to determine a roughly accurate water inventory, which can be further defined as we improve our knowledge base. Additional information should be gathered about current uses (from agriculture to municipal to industrial and recreational uses). Then values could be assigned to different uses. For example, some dry land crop rotations have a lower consumption of water than natural grasslands or CRP land. Those using less water should be credited for conservation efforts. We need a better understanding of cause and effects using measurable, physically based management tools that would allow people to predict the impact of various water uses on total supply and demand. This should be considered a long-term process to avoid negative impacts on the overall economy.

Stakeholder group discussion included the following points:

- Concern was voiced about the apparent emphasis on agriculture and dollars with no thought of stream flows for recreational purposes. Others contended that stream flow is also a priority for power production and ESA requirements.
- Even if existing tools and available information are adequate to begin assembling a physical inventory of water supply and demand, additional information would be very valuable. It was suggested that the University of Nebraska is well suited for assisting with this project and could provide excellent support and expertise.
- There was discussion about the need to do this on a statewide basis rather than as a district, Funding and additional legislation or regulations may be needed to facilitate the process.
- While clearly everyone is a water user, we don't have a good understanding of the extent to which different interests use or conserve water. This information could be invaluable when making recommendations for an integrated management plan.
- Continuing confusion about what "fully appropriated" means could be better addressed if we had a physical based, measurable system for determining current and future uses of water.

These concepts will also be presented at the basin-wide meeting on March 22nd. Interested parties will explore these concepts further at meetings in early March. Funding needs to be addressed. If interested in attending this meeting, please contact Frank Kwapnioski at fskwapn@nppd.com for information about date, time and place for the proposed meeting.

Stakeholder Discussion – Objectives

With agreement on a Goals Statement, the group moved on to draft Objectives, which are general steps to be taken to achieve desired goals. Objectives provide overriding guidelines for actual management tools this group will recommend. Stakeholders reviewed objectives drafted by other districts and listed their own concerns individually. The following list of possible objectives was compiled and will be modified in future meetings into a list acceptable to all Stakeholders:

- Educate the public about why the District is developing an IMP and how it will help to sustain water supplies in the region.
- Education on new cropping innovations
- Provide NRD-wide educational plan and encourage research for sustainability, economics and environmental concerns.
- Help citizens of the district analyze and understand the activities that have developed over this period of time, to understand the hydrological consequences of these activities.
- Conduct studies to define fully appropriated status.

- Conduct data collection and analysis including (1) information on current water uses, (2) availability of the water resources in the region, (3) determination of level of sustainable use, (4) develop/utilize appropriate scientific and technical tools to guide decision making.
- Develop a thorough inventory of water assets
- Work with ESA to convince them to utilize better data in their management.
- Maintain records of segments of the total water supply such as precipitation, stream flows, ground water levels, reservoir storage
 - Define and protect existing uses.
 - Avoid taking away from one entity and giving to another that will result in financial hardships
 - Manage water to sustain profitable farming and ranching, commercial, municipal and industrial operations, while maintaining and, where possible, enhancing environmental health of the district's fish, wildlife and human communities, recreational uses, and quality of life.
 - Implement management process to reach fully appropriated status
 - Develop a quantifiable measurement tool to determine what is fully appropriated.
 - Reach and maintain fully appropriated status.
 - Manage the total water supply in the TPNRD to reach and maintain a fully appropriated status.
 - Work to maintain and improve fisheries and wildlife habitat and recreation
 - Enhance recreational resources
 - Maintain stream flows in the entire Platte Basin and tributaries.
 - Water pooling or banking for future uses
 - Minimum pool levels in McConaughy?
 - Mechanism for water transfers
 - Periodically update information on a regular basis and as conditions and demands change and additional information is available
 - Flexible approach to take into account changes in precipitation and drought
 - Develop a flexible IMP that allows for economic and environmental growth in the district
 - Reward practices with lower consumptive use of water
 - Develop incentives to reward water conservation
 - Encourage efficient use of water to maximize benefits to the economy and ecology of the area – minimize wasteful or unnecessary uses of water
 - Consider restricting water on most marginal land first
 - Define near and long term
 - Promote infinite sustainability of the basin
 - Manage the total water supply in the TPNRD to achieve sustainability of the supply
 - Foresee future water demands
 - Manage the water supply in the TPNRD to allow for growth or changes in uses
 - Look into new sources of water and enhancement or development of the water that we have – look upstream and recycle/reuse
 - Insure water quality is maintained or improved as we improve or increase the quantity of water supplies. Recognize and manage water chemistry concerns.
 - Manage the water supply in the TPNRD to maintain water quality suitable for all uses
 - Coordinate with basin-wide IMP

NOTE: There are duplications in the above list as well as some ideas that may fit better in the recommended "tools" for this IMP. The group needs to insure that all interests have been included in this list and then work to combine, simplify and streamline in future meetings.

Future Meetings

Monday, March 20, 2006 at the Holiday Inn Express in North Platte from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. CDT

- Continue discussion of Objectives for the TPNRD Integrated Management Plan.

Upcoming meetings: April 24, May 15

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m. CDT.