

N-CORPE

Nebraska Cooperative Republican Platte Enhancement Project

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Oct. 26, 2015 3 p.m.

Curtis Community Center, Curtis, NE

Agendas were sent to all Board Members and all others requesting agendas. Agendas were posted at www.ncorpe.org and in the following offices: Twin Platte NRD; Lower Republican NRD; Middle Republican NRD; and Upper Republican NRD.

Board Members Present: Brad Randel (Middle Republican NRD); Terry Martin (Upper Republican NRD); Jerry Weaver (Twin Platte NRD); Tim Kahrs (Lower Republican NRD).

Others Present: Scott Dickey, Mike Clements, Jack Russell, Kyle Shepherd, Jasper Fanning, Nate Jenkins, Jim Meismer, Kent Miller, Sylvia Johnson, Bob Merrigan, Mike Keller.

Information Sent to Board Members: Agenda

Information Available at Board Meeting: Agenda

Chairman Terry Martin called the meeting to order at 3 p.m. and designated NCORPE Manager Kyle Shepherd to run the meeting. It was noted a copy of the Open Meetings Act was in the back of the room. Roll call was taken. Voting representatives from the URNRD (Terry Martin); Middle Republican NRD (Brad Randel); and Twin Platte NRD (Jerry Weaver) and LRNRD (Tim Kahrs) were present.

Management Plan – Augmentation Policy Workshop:

The Board discussed 2015-2016 operations for the Republican Basin, how they coincide with the existing operations policy and parameters for possible modifications to the operating policy at the request of the Twin Platte NRD. Jerry Weaver suggested project pumping should be limited to historic consumptive use that occurred before the project property was bought by the NRDs and Fanning said that the Board had previously discussed the likelihood that historic consumptive use would not be exceeded based expectations of how much water would be needed from the project in the future. Weaver said Twin Platte would need approximately 5,000 acre feet annually and Fanning indicated that would be 125% of Twin Platte's 4,000 acre foot share of historic consumptive use using the assumption that consumptive was 12" per acre or a total of approximately 16,000 acre feet for the project property. Kent Miller said Twin Platte's consumptive use share was 4,687 acre feet.

Jim Meismer suggested that the Board consider not exceeding consumptive use over a 10-year period basis, and annual historic consumptive use could be exceeded in one given year so long as the total over a 10-year period was not exceeded. Weaver indicated that pumping volumes by year 5, for example, should not exceed 10-year historic consumptive use. Fanning said analysis done during the project development phase indicated pumping volumes at 145% of what was pumped in 2013-2015 and what is expected in 2016 could occur without causing a significant reduction in the saturated thickness of the aquifer around the wellfield in 10-20 years. The Republican Basin NRDs plan to generate approximately 32,000 acre feet of water from the project by June 1, 2015 and operations have begun. While the project has been operated the first three years, history suggests that it will need to be operated 1/3-1/2 the time to maintain Republican River Compact compliance. Fanning said recent analysis of aquifer conditions in and near the wellfield compared to conditions outside the wellfield suggests there is not a problem currently.

Wellfield declines from the time shortly before NCORPE began operating until now are about 1' less than declines in approximately six nearby Twin Platte wells during the same time period. Wellfield declines were about 2.3' less during that same time period compared to several Middle Republican wells in the same area.

Declines in all wells on the NCORPE property from spring of 1981 to fall of 2015 were, on average, almost 5' less than Twin Platte wells during the same time period and about 2.6' less than declines in MRNRD.

Fanning said over time pumping will be limited to what needs to be done to protect the aquifer but nothing he sees suggests that an arbitrarily chosen pumping volume or time period needs to be imposed. Meismer asked that if the Republican NRDs had to pump 10 consecutive years if they would continue to pump or choose not to allow aquifer recovery and said a specific timeframe needs to be chosen. Fanning said that if forecasted needs are pumped in 2016 an average of 22,000 acre feet annually will have been pumped since NCORPE purchased the project property. Nate Jenkins said that if the project was in place earlier, it wouldn't have been needed from 2007-2012. With agreements in place now and the U.S. Supreme Court ruling, no pumping would have occurred in 2013, pumping in 2014 would have been cut in half and there would have been less pumping in 2015. It is likely moving forward that in years when project water is needed, the average amount needed may be between 15,000 and 25,000 acre feet.

Fanning and Twin Platte representatives had a discussion about the mechanics of compact compliance forecasts and accounting.

Weaver and Meismer relayed concerns about pumping levels from constituents and said the concerns support the need for an operations policy. Jack Russell said that to mitigate impacts on Medicine Creek pumping should be spread out over a longer time period. Brad Randel said that creating a policy with specific pumping volumes within specific time periods would conflict with fluctuating needs within the Republican Basin that can't be estimated over the long term.

The Board discussed the possibility of modeling pumping impacts to help develop a policy and Meismer said he wanted more monitoring wells. Existing wells on the property can be measured and on the previous Friday 85 non-augmentation wells on the NCORPE property were measured.

Mike Clements said because of annual variability in weather and compact needs his District would not support a policy that would prevent the District from meeting its compact obligations. Weaver asked if there should be a point where compact compliance may not be met in order for the wellfield to recover and Meismer said that if a policy is developed it can be modified over time to reflect changing conditions. Fanning said that observed recovery rates suggested that the wellfield could withstand pumping at volumes that had occurred the previous two years – an average of about 30,000 acre feet a year – without causing declines more significant than areas outside the wellfield not influenced by the project. Weaver disagreed and Jenkins said project pumping that has occurred so far is approximately the same that would have been pumped had it remained an irrigated farm. There was a discussion about what consumptive use may have been on the farm.

The Board discussed development of a calibrated model that uses data that has already been collected. Kyle Shepherd said a response to constituents interested in pumping levels is that the amount of water pumped from the project so far is close to the same amount that would have been pumped had it been farmed. Weaver said that part of the pumping that has occurred could be considered pumping of Twin Platte credits. Fanning said it is prudent to assess what levels of project pumping can occur without jeopardizing wellfield capacity and causing regional impacts.

It was agreed that a model should be developed using Twin Platte staff and an engineering firm to develop a model for planning purposes that could be finalized within a year or so.

- Weaver moved to allow management to enter into a contract to do NCORPE modeling work and request a cost proposal. Roll call vote: 3-yes. 1-no (Randel). Motion approved.

There was no other business and the meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Brad Randel, Board Secretary_____

Date_____