

Compiled stakeholder written comments following August 2017 stakeholder meeting

Comments about draft plan language for goal 5

(Gray text = the draft plan language the comments are referring to, for reference)

Goal 5: When possible, pursue projects that not only benefit water supplies and uses, but also create benefits for fish, wildlife, conveyance, and recreation within the Republican River Basin	
Objectives	Action Items
5.1. Where feasible and beneficial, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and public outdoor recreational opportunities	5.1.1. Partner with wildlife-focused organizations on projects that benefit the organizations' habitat and wildlife interests while also helping to fulfill other goals of this Plan
	5.1.2. Promote public recreation-on the river, when doing so can also help to fulfill other goals of this Plan
	5.1.3. Cooperate in projects to assess and restore riparian wetlands while also helping to fulfill other goals of this Plan
5.2. Where feasible and beneficial, reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance	5.2.1. Cooperate in removing undesirable vegetation impacting water conveyance and managing reinfestation

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Action Item 5.1.1: Partner with wildlife-focused organizations on projects that benefit the organizations' habitat and wildlife interests while also helping to fulfill other goals of this Plan

If it is feasible and beneficial to do so as part of actions taken to benefit water supply and use in fulfillment of this Plan's other goals, NeDNR and the NRDs will partner with wildlife-focused organizations on projects that benefit wildlife and their habitat. Some examples of wildlife and habitat-focused groups operating in Nebraska include the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Audubon Nebraska, the Nature Conservancy, and the Crane Trust. The level of involvement of partner organizations may vary according to the needs and circumstances of each individual project, ranging from, for example, consultation on

Comment [CJMF1]:

Comment from Stakeholder #1:
Delete Objective 5.1. and its action items.

Imported water should not be held up unless and until all existing water rights have been met from the point of entry to the Hardy gauge.

The Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers work to enhance the fisheries and allow fishing contests and the like in the reservoirs; these efforts are appropriate but should not be part of a Basin Plan.

Promoting tubing, etc. recreational opportunities

Comment [CJMF2]:

Comment from Stakeholder #1:
I think 5.2 should be included.

questions related to their area of expertise, to collaboration on project planning and design, to sharing project costs for projects that benefit the groups' wildlife and habitat-related interests.

Projects undertaken to fulfill this objective may involve establishing new or utilizing existing infrastructure. One example of a type of project that could benefit both the Basin's water supplies and wildlife habitat would be to use water diverted through an interbasin transfer project during periods of high flows to enhance wildlife habitat.

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Action Item 5.1.3: Cooperate in projects to assess and restore riparian wetlands while also helping to fulfill other goals of this Plan

NeDNR and the NRDs will participate in projects to assess and restore riparian wetlands if it is feasible and beneficial to do so as part of actions taken to benefit water supply and use in fulfillment of this Plan's other goals, such as for aquifer recharge (Objective [placeholder for cross-reference to the relevant objective, currently 3.2]). As appropriate, they will do so in cooperation with organizations with interest and expertise in wetland restoration. Because of the wide-range of benefits wetlands provide, such as groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat, flood control, and water quality, the primary focus of potential partner organizations for mutually beneficial wetland assessment and restoration projects also varies widely.

Action Item 5.1.3 includes two parts: wetland assessment and wetland restoration. Wetland assessment involves evaluating wetland condition and function. This may be done for many purposes, such as to identify and inventory existing wetlands, to compare and prioritize wetlands for development and mitigation purposes, or to establish a baseline condition and then monitor changes in condition and function over time. Wetland restoration involves rehabilitating the hydrology, plants, and soils of a degraded wetland or reestablishing a wetland that has been destroyed.

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Comment [CJMF3]:

Comment from Stakeholder #1:

A new water right for this purpose should not be issued for imported water as long as current water rights in the basin are not being filled. This plan is tasked with achieving and sustaining a balance between existing uses and supplies.

Comment [CJMF4]:

Comment from Stakeholder #1:

Imported water should not be held up unless and until all existing water rights have been met from the point of entry to the Hardy gauge.

Other comments

Comment from Stakeholder #2:

The one thing I see missing here that may be somewhere else is a way to retire or reduce the number of underground irrigated acres because like it or not at the end of day that is the problem, and it has to be addressed. You will not ever be able to increase surface flow without doing that and the sad truth is it might not be able to be restored anyway, and that includes upland wells as well because they are at fault just as much because they have stopped the natural spring flow of water and I do not care what a stupid computer model shows this is just the real facts of what has happened. Ignoring this fact is just kicking a can down the road as it has been for 40 years. You will never have water for recreation, wildlife etc, till you have surface water surplus and it is stupid to think pumping underground water to replenish surface water is a viable solution or transferring surface water from one basin to another may not be a viable solution either.

Comment from Stakeholder #3

I don't have anything to add to Goal 5 but would like to mention something that I think is still missing from the overall plan. A method to measure progress or achievement of the overall plan goal of sustainability. I would suggest we use "ground water level measurements" to evaluate where we are and where we want to be long term. Tri Basin NRD has experience with this and the management system seems to be working. It is adaptable and allows for some declines and raises within its implementation. It also allows for varying implementation depending on the severity of the declines or no declines. A presentation by Tri Basin would be educational and something close to their plan could be implemented basin wide. If implemented to achieve an overall goal of "NO MORE DECLINES" it would be a big first step toward sustainability.