

Republican River Basin-Wide Plan
Stakeholder Advisory Meeting Minutes
January 19, 2016 | Community Center; Cambridge, Nebraska

Stakeholder Advisory Committee members in attendance were:

Kurt Bernhardt	Max Kaiser	Nate Schneider
Mike Delka	Curt Kayton	Richard Siel
Brad Edgerton	Jim Kent	Daniel Smith
Troy Fletcher	Bradly Knuth	Shad Stamm
Josh Friesen	Jerry Kuenning	Aaron Thompson
Wayne Haarberg	Kent Lorens	Ted Tietjen
Dale Helms	Jeff Loschen	Marcia Trompke
Bill Hoyt	Gale Lush	Jerda Garey Vickers
Michael Kahrs	Cedric McDaniel	Tom Vickers

Plan Development Team members in attendance were:

John Thorburn	Jack Russell	Phyllis Johnson
Ray Winz	Nate Jenkins	Jesse Bradley
Mike Clements	Amy Zoller	Carol Flaute
Scott Dicke	Emily Bausch	Jennifer Schellpeper
Sylvia Johnson	Patti Banks	

Individuals from the community present during the meeting included:

Hal Walker	Mark Clersfaser	Jean Eickhorst
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Note: See Attachment A for a copy of the sign-in sheets.

NOTICE OF THE MEETING

Notice of the meeting was published on the Department of Natural Resources web site (dnr.nebraska.gov) and in the following newspapers: Holdrege Daily Citizen, McCook Gazette, Imperial Republican, and Benkelman Post & News Chronicle.

INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

The following informational materials were distributed via stakeholder notebook:

- January 19, 2016, Meeting Agenda
- August 18, 2015, Meeting minutes
- Basin-Wide Management Plan Stakeholder meeting topics, activities and accomplishments
- Goals sheet graphical
- Goals sheet conceptual
- Olsson/Vireo presentation
- DNR Presentation Stream and Aquifer depletion
- Surface water highlighted statutes

- Ground water highlighted statutes
- Stakeholder comments received
- Upcoming meeting dates calendar

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Patti Banks welcomed the group back for the Republican River basin-wide plan stakeholders' meeting. Stakeholders present introduced themselves to the group. Each member of the RRBWP development team, including the Lower, Middle, Upper Republican and Tri-Basin Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) and the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR), also introduced themselves. Patti Banks reviewed materials provided for the Stakeholder notebooks. She noted that minutes from the August 18, 2015, meeting were available for comment for the next 15 days, and that after that date, minutes will be accepted as presented.

Patti Banks discussed the format of the meeting and reviewed the agenda with the group. The morning session would include an education session about the Bureau of Reclamation, hydrology, and water use, and the work session would focus on discussion of best management practices (BMPs). Additionally, the sustainability survey was open until after lunch and results to be reviewed during the afternoon session.

Basin-wide Planning updates

Jesse Bradly discussed the ongoing three state meetings and updated the group on the latest meetings. Jesse Bradly also discussed modifications of the Integrated Management Plans (IMPs). He noted the United States Supreme Court ruling that set the methods for accounting for groundwater depletions. He also discussed the recent agreements with Kansas to provide augmentation crediting and more flexible delivery, but the compliance standards remained unchanged. The NRDs recently voted to change reduction in pumping from 25% to 20%. Stakeholders asked the following questions:

- Why did DNR accept the change in pumping reduction from 25% to 20%? 3 options were originally set out as ways to meet compliance standards. The original IMPs selected the option with 25% reduction and a narrow management area. The recent revisions adopted the option with 20% reduction and a wider management area. Both options are able to meet the same compliance standards.
- Why were 1998 to 2002 pumping levels changed in the IMPs? The underlying data did not changed, but how it was clipped out in the model did.

Mike Clements with the Lower Republican NRD discussed a high flow diversion project near Smithfield via CNPPID's E-65 canal. The Platte would be diverted to Turkey Creek through a 24 inch diameter pipe under the highway and railroad. The total volume expected is 40 cfs. Meetings with landowners will continue. The water right would be junior to other existing rights. The water will be metered and the NRD would like to get the project going as soon as possible. The majority of diversions would be in the off season. There is no plan to use eminent domain to secure land for the project.

EDUCATION SESSION

Bureau of reclamation project in the Republican River Basin by Aaron Thompson

The Bureau of Reclamation is an agency within the Department of Interior. The Bureau covers the western 17 states. The Bureau has conducted studies and reviewed studies completed by other agencies including the army corps of engineers. The Bureau has completed many reservoir projects within the basin in order to provide improved management and flexibility of the basin's water supply.

The Bureau has the jurisdiction to store water from specific streams and for specific uses. The Bureau maintains water contracts with irrigation districts, municipalities and other users. Stakeholders asked a broad range of questions including:

- Does the Department of Interior have any studies on transferring water from the Platte, or on recharge studies? Yes, the Department of Interior has commissioned studies on recharge, there have been inter-basin transfer studies; however, there are no recent studies on this topic.
- Is it the agency's responsibility to be more efficient (e.g. lining canals)? Since the 2001 contract renewals, the Bureau of Reclamation has spent millions of dollars on cost shares for buried pipe, etc.
- The dam structures were initially built for flood control, right? Who owns the canal system? Initial driver was flood control, but additional uses were found including irrigation. The canals were built at the same time as the reservoir and the Bureau owns the projects, irrigation districts pay a repayment contract (repaying for initial construction) and irrigation districts maintain the canals, whereas the Bureau maintains the dams.
- Is there a time table laid out for the repayment of the dam projects? The dam projects have payout dates that have been extended out 20-40 years. However, there are still operations and maintenance responsibilities that will continue after payout.
- Were repairs on Red Willow under these contracts? It was a difference contract—under dam safety provisions.
- Was availability of water ever considered when setting up projects that would be paid back via water use? Yes. How about conservation practices such as terraces and no-till? The economics changed from surface water uses to groundwater use. A lot could not be foreseen on when/if water would be available.
- Is there a possibility of storing augmentation water, we were told that would be difficult due to climate change, limited flood storage. Has that possibility changed? That position has not changed. Usually we have excess capacity in our systems, so we are able to store water under Warren Act contracts.
- What are the benefits of throwbacks to Swanson Reservoir? Unknown by speaker he was not as familiar with that report.
- What would it take and how about transportation losses if N-CORPE wastewater was moved to Harlan County Dam? Is it stored in irrigation pool? It would need to be contracted out, under a Warren Act contract, transportation losses, would work with DNR. The water could be stored in the irrigation pool.
- Concerning changes to IMPs, has the Bureau had a chance to review the IMP changes and form any opinion on effects? A positive aspect is Department of Natural Resources is looking at changes throughout year, but otherwise not prepared to outline pros and cons of IMPs.

Hydrology and Water Use by Jesse Bradley DNR

Information about the cone of depression and its relationship to ground water wells was presented and explained. The presentation focused on the effects of a well's location to the rate of stream depletion. The graphical data showed that the farther away the well was from the stream the later the cone of depression would reach the stream and the longer the length of time the groundwater would be the primary source for the well. The data also showed that streamflow depletion from the further away the wells happens later in the well's pumping life than the wells that are closer to the stream.

After the presentation the following questions were posed by stakeholders.

- Does NRD have power to regulate different stream zones differently? Yes, they do have authority to manage different areas differently.
- What is the percentage of groundwater wells that also have surface water rights? Irrigation districts would have the best data on that. It could be a number such as 40%.
- Last spring, there was unexpected water flow on the South Fork, why is this? There were some good sized rain events that contributed.

Information about aquifer depletion was outlined in the presentation with graphs and information about the depletion in aquifer depletion over time. Questions from stakeholders included:

- Explain runoff reduction. What affect do these farming practices have? Refer to the summary streamflow peaks from pre-development phase, and compare against sum of peaks from post-development. There is sparse data prior to 1930s.
- What would it look like with unbroken ground, grassland, etc? We don't have that information.
- Is there data out there that shows what the streamflow did prior to 1950s? The groundwater model goes back to 1918, and utilizes data from stream gages that were in place at that time.

Overview of Relevant Statutes by Jennifer Schellpeper DNR

Stakeholders were provided a compilation of statutes regarding the Nebraska Ground Water Management and Protection Act (Chapter 46, Article 7) and selected Nebraska statutes regarding Surface Water (Chapter 46 Article 2). The following comment was made by a stakeholder:

- When we talk about sustainability in the basin-wide plan, why is there reference to a "finite" supply in § 46-706, when we talk about sustainability we shouldn't have the word "finite" in the statute. It was noted that the Legislature would have to change the statute in order for that word to be changed.

Stakeholders were reminded to take the sustainability survey.

Lunch Break

At noon there was an hour lunch break. Lunch was provided for the Coordination Committee and the Stakeholder group.

WORKING SESSION:

The stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide input on the sustainability survey by either electronic submission or paper survey. The results of the survey are attached.

The Stakeholders then reviewed the draft of combined goals and objectives. The color coded sheet showed where the goal/objective originated from (stakeholders, DNR, NRDs). The goals and objectives will be discussed at a future meeting.

The stakeholders were divided into small groups for the afternoon discussion. The groups were divided up randomly and asked to discuss best management practices and how effective those practices were.

What Best Management Practice (BPM) do you use?	How is this BMP helping?
retiring acres	bringing water tables up or maintaining
cover crops	helping the soil water holding capacity
soil sensors	more efficient use of watering
on pivots possible removal of end guns	end guns are the least efficient part of the pivot
check sprinkler packages every 4-5 years	more efficiency
pump efficiency test	more efficiency
no-till	less erosion
sub-surface drip	more efficient
variable rate irrigation	better management
continue local control	better decisions
municipalities (city usage)	better usage of water in peak usage times such as summer
efficiency in general range is from re use pits to precision is	reduce use/better efficiency
city many requirements/rates	reduce use
farming practices dry land yields	better yields - less run-off
buried laterals, surfaces water pivots, lining canals	better efficiency/less recharge
water bank - producer buys everything over 6 inches (only works in a groundwater system)	future consideration
putting in pivots and drip systems	
clearing trees	
converting to buried pipe	
minimum water user before starting canals	
cutting least efficient acres	
automate canals	
variable frequency drives	
crop variations milo-corn, drought tolerance	
soil moisture monitors	
funk lagoon	
water monitor probes	1"-2.5" less water
pivot automation remote monitoring controls	
water meters and allocations	using less water today
local control VS statewide or water master	"Better"
pivot sprinkler packages and drops	already doing today
pivots VS gravity	already doing today 40% more efficient
being the most efficient in the use of the resources we have including soil probes, low psi, drops, re-nozzeling, new seed hybrids, weed control, no till minimum till cropping practices, water meters	
using government funds to measure the water levels of wells in a natural resources district Bureau of Reclamation	Helping to implement strategies to stabilize
practices that do not negatively impact others or funds	

Stakeholder comments

Dale Helms-Presented ideas on inter-basin transfers, his full written comments are attached.

Questions Included:

- How long would that canal have to be? Mr. Helms estimates about 5 miles, perhaps use one of the large Sutherland canals, use for recharge and anything left divert.
- Also would hydropower water be worth more as recharge?

Ted Teitjen (Republican River Restoration Partners) - Discussed the Water SMART project, and a recent meeting with Kansas, and said it was a delight to see the two states working together. His full written comments are attached.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The public attending the meeting was invited to provide comments. There were no public comments; however, stakeholders had some additional questions:

- When is the planning process expected to be complete? It is possible to be complete by the end of the year, but it depends on the level of consensus reached throughout the coming months.
- Can stakeholders approve a plan without DNR and NRD? The plan is a product of consensus within this group (stakeholders, NRD, DNR). If consensus is not reached, DNR and the NRDs ultimately decide what the plan contains/recommends. For the purpose of moving forward, can the stakeholder group recommend removing the word "finite" from statute? There is a process for changing legislation and that opportunity is available to all Nebraskans, including the stakeholders.
- Does the process include provision for a minority report? Yes

NEXT MEETING

On behalf of the entire basin-wide plan development team, including the four NRDs and NDNR, Patti Banks thanked the stakeholders for attending and participating in this process. The next meeting will be held at the Cambridge Community Center from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on March 15, 2016. The meetings are scheduled to occur on the third Tuesday every other month at the same location. Meeting agendas, presentations, and meeting minutes will be available on the project website (dnr.nebraska.gov/RRBWP). Stakeholders are asked to provide any further input to Karen and/or Patti, and their contact information is on the website as follows:

Karen Griffin, kgriffin@olssonassociates.com

Olsson Associates
601 P Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Patti Banks, patti@bevireo.com
Vireo
1111 N. 13th St., Suite 116
Omaha, NE 68102

Attachment A – Sign-In Sheets

OLSSON
ASSOCIATES

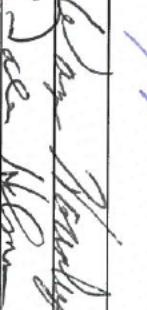
Republican River Basin-Wide Plan
OA Project No. (014-3270)

STAKEHOLDER ATTENDANCE RECORD

January 19, 2016

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Community Center -Cambridge, NE
10:00AM

NAME	SIGNATURE	Check here if NDNR, Olsson, and Vireo can use your name and photo in printed materials	EMAIL	PHONE NO.
Kurt Bernhardt				
Vesta Dack				
Mike Delka				
Brad Edgerton		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Jerry Ehrke				
Chris Flaming				
Troy Fletcher				
Josh Friesen				
Mike George				
Wayne Haarberg				
Dale Helms				
Dick Helms				
Robin Hinrichs				
Bill Hoyt				
Michael J. Kahrs				
Max Kaiser				
Curtis Kayton				
Jim Kent				
Bradly Knuth				

OLSSON
ASSOCIATES

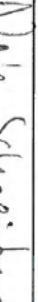
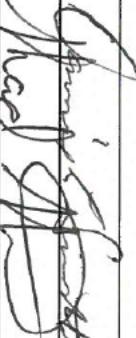
Republican River Basin-Wide Plan
OA Project No. (014-3270)

STAKEHOLDER ATTENDANCE RECORD

December 15, 2015 January 19, 2016

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Community Center-Cambridge, NE
10:00AM

NAME	SIGNATURE	Check here if NDNR, Olsson, and Vireo can use your name and photo in printed materials	EMAIL	PHONE NO.
Jerry Kuenning		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Kent Lorens		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Jeff Loschen		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Gale Lush		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Scott Lutz				
Timothy McCoy				
Cedric McDaniel				
Dan Nelsen				
Doug Ohlson				
Dave Oxford				
Roric Paulman				
John Rundel				
Nate Schneider				
George Schortberger				
Richard Siel				
Kevin Slocum				
Steve Smith				
Daniel Smith				
Shad Stamm		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

STAKEHOLDER ATTENDANCE RECORD

December 15, 2015 January 19, 2016

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

Community Center -Cambridge, NE

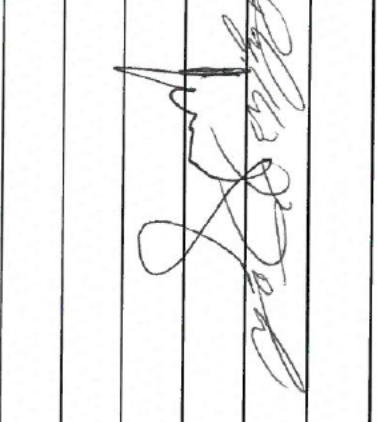
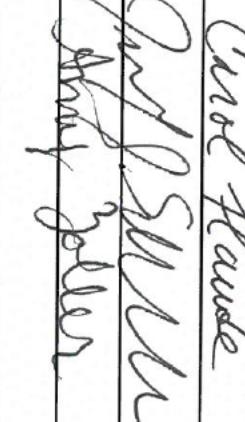
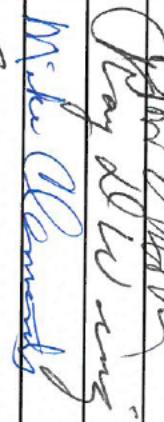
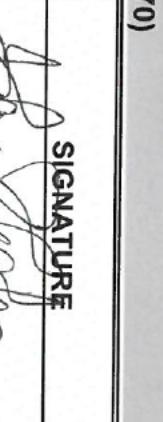
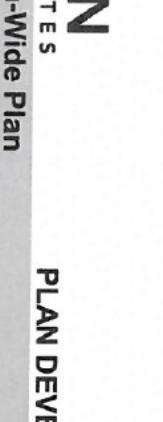
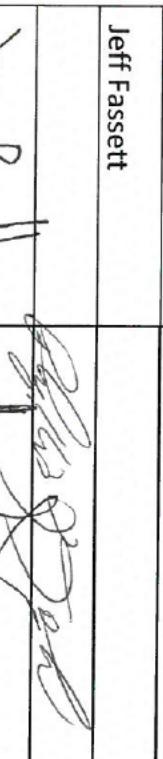
OLSSON
ASSOCIATES

Republican River Basin-Wide Plan
OA Project No. (014-3270)

PLAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM ATTENDANCE RECORD

January 19, 2016
10:00AM
Cambridge, NE

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

NAME	SIGNATURE	AGENCY	EMAIL	PHONE NO.
John Thorburn		Tri-Basin	NRD	
Ray Winz		Tri-Basin	NRD	
Mike Clements		Lower Rep	NRD	
Scott Dicke		Middle Rep	NRD	
Sylvia Johnson		Middle Rep	NRD	
Jack Russell		Upper Rep	NRD	
Nate Jenkins		NDNR		
Jasper Fanning		NDNR		
Carol Flaute		NDNR		
Jennifer Schellpeper		NDNR		
Amy Zoller		NDNR		
Jen Rae Wang		NDNR		
Jeff Fassett		NDNR		
		NDNR		
Patti Banks		Viro		
Emily Bewisch		Olsson Associates		