

2. Goals and Objectives

Section Overview

The Goals and Objectives section of the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan (Plan) begins with a listing of the Plan’s measurable hydrologic objectives and other goals and objectives of the plan. Then, the management actions that will be taken to achieve the Plan’s goals and objectives are described in detail, including a general overview of the timeline for each.

Section Contents

List of goals and objectives	1
Measurable hydrologic objectives	1
Other goals and objectives of the Plan	2
Management activities achieve objectives	5
Measurable hydrologic objectives	5
Goal 1.....	5
Other goals and objectives of the Plan	6
Goal 2.....	8
Goal 3.....	11
Goal 4.....	16
Goal 5.....	26
Goal 6.....	31

List of Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of this Plan are separated into two categories: measurable hydrologic objectives, and other goals and objectives. The measurable hydrologic objectives are hydrologic targets related to fulfilling the Plan’s overarching mission and goal of balancing water supply and use within the Republican River Basin (Basin). The Plan’s other goals and objectives focus on more specific management actions that will help achieve both the measurable hydrologic objectives and other desired outcomes identified by stakeholders during the Plan development processes. Both types of goals and objectives are listed below. A description of the management actions that will be taken to achieve each objective begins on page 5.

Measurable Hydrologic Objectives

Table 2.1 lists the measurable hydrologic objectives of the Plan. *Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-755 (5)(b)* specifies that measurable hydrologic objectives are a requirement of this Plan, in order to ensure

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting
[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

that reasonable progress is being made toward achieving the goals and objectives of this plan. *Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-755 (5)(b)* also requires intermediate objectives and intermediate dates by which the intermediate objectives are expected to be met. General information about the timeline for and other details related to meeting these objectives can be found in the subsection *Management Activities to Achieve Objectives* (page 5), and more detailed information about how the measurable hydrologic objectives will be assessed and reported can be found in [cross reference to Monitoring section].

Table 2.1. List of Measurable Hydrologic Objectives for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan

Goal 1: Balance water supply and use within the Basin	
Hydrologic Objective 1.1	Maintain each NRD's groundwater depletions within their portion of Nebraska's allowable groundwater depletions, as specified in the IMPs
Hydrologic Objective 1.2	Maintain groundwater depletions at a relatively constant level over the long-term
Hydrologic Objective 1.3	Balance water storage for future use during drought. Evaluate existing and new management actions to determine the long-term water availability trends that provide carry-over storage supplies to meet crop-water needs during drought.
Hydrologic Objective 1.4	Take actions that help prevent special regulations in the Rapid Response area for Compact compliance
Hydrologic Objective 1.5	Take actions that help prevent administration of surface water use for Compact compliance

Other Goals and Objectives of the Plan

Table 2.2 lists the plan's other goals and objectives. Action items, a general timeline for implementation, and other information about the management actions that will be undertaken to achieve these goals and objectives are described in detail under *Management Activities to Achieve Objectives* (page 6). A more detailed timeline for implementation of these goals, objectives, and Action Items can be found in [cross-reference to relevant portion of Monitoring section].

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting
[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Table 2.2. List of other goals and objectives for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan.

Goal 2: Maintain Nebraska’s compliance with the Republican River Compact and applicable state laws	
Objective 2.1	Coordinate basin-wide plan management actions with Nebraska’s Compact compliance efforts and adherence to applicable state laws
Objective 2.2	Understand the effects of management actions for Compact compliance on water supplies
Goal 3: Positive public relations, including information sharing, within and outside the Basin	
Objective 3.1	Improve information sharing with decision-makers and the public about solutions formed within the Basin
Objective 3.2	Improve information sharing with water users who are reliant on the Basin’s water supplies
Goal 4: Increase certainty for long-range planning of water supplies to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and increase collaborative efforts among water users across the Basin	
Objective 4.1	Increase water supply through interbasin transfers during periods of high flows
Objective 4.2	Improve water availability through conjunctive management projects within the Basin, such as, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Aquifer recharge b. Streamflow augmentation projects
Objective 4.3	Improve the availability and reliability of water supplies for current surface water irrigators
Objective 4.4	<i>[Placeholder—other objectives related to increasing certainty are likely to result from discussion of the remaining challenges during upcoming stakeholder meetings]</i>
Objective 4.5	Compare the relative potential economic and environmental impacts of the types of management actions that would increase certainty for water users in the Basin through increased water supplies or improved water availability
Objective 4.6	Provide opportunities for collaboration among the Basin’s water users

(Continued on next page)

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

(Continued from previous page)

Goal 5: Basin-wide collaboration among water management entities and stakeholders to maximize Nebraska's efficient and beneficial consumptive use of its portion of the water supply

- Objective 5.1** Promote conservation programs available to the water users in the Basin
- Objective 5.2** Understand how various water management activities of independent decision-makers affect water supplies
- Objective 5.3** Evaluate the feasibility and potential outcomes of establishing water markets in the Basin
- Objective 5.4** *[Placeholder for any other objectives related to this goal that may arise from further stakeholder discussion.]*

May include: studies, grants, recommendations, education, promotion of best management practices, sharing information, or any other type of activity that involves supporting or promoting a desirable management action indirectly.]

Goal 6: 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

- Objective 6.1** Where feasible and beneficial, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and public outdoor recreational opportunities
- Objective 6.2** Where feasible and beneficial, reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance
-

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting
[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Management Activities to Achieve Objectives

A description of the management activities to achieve the Plan's measurable hydrologic objectives follows. A description of the management activities to achieve the Plan's other goals and objectives begins on page 6

Measurable Hydrologic Objectives

The purpose of this Plan's measurable hydrologic objectives is to ensure that reasonable progress is being made toward achieving the Plan's overarching goal of balancing water supply and use within the Basin. As described in *Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-755 (5)(b)*, each measurable hydrologic objective must include intermediate objectives and dates by which those intermediate objectives are expected to be met, and the Plan must include monitoring plans to measure the extent to which the objectives are being achieved.

A detailed timeline and monitoring plan for each of this Plan's measurable hydrologic objectives is described in the *[Cross reference to Monitoring Section of the Plan]*. The general timeline for each measurable hydrologic objective is as follows:

1. Intermediate objectives for each measurable hydrologic objective are set at five-year intervals, to correspond with each five-year technical analysis.
2. NeDNR and the NRDs will exchange any data required to evaluate progress towards each measurable hydrologic objective annually, as part of each annual review.
3. Progress towards each intermediate objective will be evaluated as part of each five-year technical analysis.
4. If the evaluation of any measurable hydrological objective indicates a need to revise this Plan, the resulting Plan modifications will be made following the procedures described in *[Cross reference to Modifications to the Plan section]*.

The Plan's measurable hydrologic objectives are listed on page 1. An overview of each measurable hydrologic objective is given below.

Goal 1: Balance water supply and use within the Basin

The overarching purpose of this Plan is specified in statute (*Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-755 (4)(a)*), and the purpose outlined in statute served as the basis for the Plan's mission statement, which is "to sustain a balance between water uses and water supplies so that the economic viability, social and environmental health, safety, and welfare of the Republican River Basin can be achieved and maintained for both the near term and long term." The purpose described in both statute and the mission statement form the basis of this central, overarching goal for the Plan to balance water supply and use within the Basin.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

The measurable hydrologic objectives described below are hydrologic targets related to the fulfillment of this overarching goal.

Hydrologic Objective 1.1. Maintain each NRD's groundwater depletions within their portion of Nebraska's allowable groundwater depletions, as specified in the IMPs

[Placeholder for description of Measurable Hydrologic Objective 1.1]

Hydrologic Objective 1.2. Maintain groundwater depletions at a relatively constant level over the long-term

[Placeholder for description of Measurable Hydrologic Objective 1.2]

Hydrologic Objective 1.3. Balance water storage for future use during drought. Evaluate existing and new management actions to determine the long-term water availability trends that provide carry-over storage supplies to meet crop-water needs during drought.

[Placeholder for description of Measurable Hydrologic Objective 1.3]

Hydrologic Objective 1.4. Take actions that help prevent special regulations in the Rapid Response area for Compact compliance

[Placeholder for description of Measurable Hydrologic Objective 1.4]

Hydrologic Objective 1.5. Take actions that help prevent administration of surface water use for Compact compliance

[Placeholder for description of Measurable Hydrologic Objective 1.5]

Other Goals and Objectives of the Plan

The goals and objectives listed on page 2 and described on the following pages provide a framework for how the plan will be carried out and what specific outcomes we hope to achieve. In contrast, the measurable hydrologic objectives that are described beginning on page 5 focus more broadly on overall hydrologic indicators of the success of this Plan.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

A timeline with intermediate objectives for each objective and details about how the implementation of each objective will be reported and evaluated are given in the *[Cross-reference to monitoring and reporting section]*.

The following framework was followed to set the timeline for each objective:

1. Intermediate objectives are set at five-year intervals, to correspond with each five-year technical analysis.
2. NeDNR and the NRDs will exchange any data required to evaluate progress towards each objective annually, as part of each annual review.
3. Progress towards each intermediate objective will be evaluated as part of each five-year technical analysis.
4. If the evaluation of progress made toward any objective indicates a need to revise this Plan, the resulting Plan modifications will be made following the procedures described in *[Cross reference to Modifications to the Plan section]*.

The following pages list the action items associated with the Plan's goals and objectives, provide details about how each goal, objective, and action item will be implemented, and indicate how various goals, objectives, and action items relate to one another and to other parts of this Plan.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting
[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Goal 2: Maintain Nebraska’s compliance with the Republican River Compact and applicable state laws	
Objectives	Action Items
2.1. Coordinate basin-wide plan management actions with Nebraska’s Compact compliance efforts and adherence to applicable state laws	2.1.1. Review each basin-wide plan management action prior to implementation to ensure it does not negatively impact efforts to achieve Compact compliance in the most efficient and cost-effective way practicable while adhering to state laws
	2.1.2. Implement appropriate offsets for any basin-wide plan action that would exceed Nebraska’s allocation under the Compact
2.2. Understand the effects of management actions for Compact compliance on water supplies for Nebraska’s water users	2.2.1. Qualitatively evaluate the net effect on water supplies of any management actions that are taken for Compact compliance

Goal 2: Maintain Nebraska’s compliance with the Republican River Compact and applicable state laws

Goal 2, maintaining compliance with the Republican River Compact (Compact) and state laws, is an overarching goal for this Plan that must be considered throughout implementation of all other goals, objectives, and action items for this Plan. Compliance with the Compact, including consistency with Compact accounting procedures, applies to implementation of both this Plan and also to the individual integrated management plans (IMPs).

Objective 2.1: Coordinate basin-wide plan management actions with Nebraska’s Compact compliance efforts and adherence to applicable state laws

Objective 2.1 means that all actions of this Plan must be evaluated in the context of both Nebraska’s obligations under the Compact and applicable Nebraska laws; therefore, the action items associated with Objective 2.1 must be carried out any time an action is taken in pursuit of any other goal, objective, or action item found within this Plan. Action Items 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 provide details about how to coordinate management actions with Compact compliance and adherence to state laws.

Action Item 2.1.1: Review each basin-wide plan management action prior to implementation to ensure it does not negatively impact efforts to achieve Compact compliance in the most efficient and cost-effective way practicable while adhering to state laws

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Action Item 2.1.1 specifies that before any management action may be taken under this Plan, NeDNR and the NRDs will evaluate the potential action to ensure that two criteria are satisfied: no negative impact on Nebraska's efforts to achieve Compact compliance in the most efficient and cost-effective way practicable, and adherence to state laws. This evaluation is described in more detail in the following paragraphs.

One criterion that must be satisfied under Action Item 2.1.1 is that each proposed management action will adhere to all Nebraska's state laws. Examples of state laws to consider include, but are not limited to, the laws protecting existing surface water and groundwater users and laws related to permits required for water management projects.

The other criterion that must be satisfied under Action Item 2.1.1 is that each proposed management action will not negatively impact Nebraska's efforts to achieve compliance with the Compact in the most efficient and cost-effective way practicable. These efforts include any management actions undertaken by NeDNR or the NRDs for the purpose of Compact compliance in accordance with the joint integrated management plan (IMP) for each NRD.

In situations where one aspect of a project would have a negative impact on Nebraska's efforts to achieve compliance and another aspect of the same project would have a positive impact, then the final evaluation of the project's impact on Compact compliance efforts described under Action Item 2.1.1 should consider the cumulative impacts of the project as a whole. For example, a management action that increases consumptive use of water might be expected adversely impact Nebraska's Compact compliance efforts; however, if the same project includes a component that reduces consumptive use in another location in the Basin, the net effect might be to reduce overall consumptive use in the Basin, which would have a positive effect on Nebraska's Compact compliance efforts.

Action Item 2.1.2: Implement appropriate offsets for any basin-wide plan action that would exceed Nebraska's allocation under the Compact

If any basin-wide plan action does cause Nebraska to exceed its allocation under the Compact, appropriate offsets will be implemented during the same accounting period following the procedures detailed in the IMPs for the Basin's NRDs.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Objective 2.2: Understand the effects of management actions for Compact compliance on water supplies for Nebraska's water users

The purpose of this objective is to ensure that for any management actions undertaken for Compact compliance, the effects of those management actions on the water supplies available to Nebraska's existing surface water and groundwater users are understood.

Action Item 2.2.1: Qualitatively evaluate the net effect on water supplies of any management actions that are taken for Compact compliance

For any management action undertaken for the purposes of complying with the Compact, NeDNR or the NRDs will not only evaluate the effect of those actions on Nebraska's Compact allocation and balance, but will also qualitatively evaluate the net effect of those management actions on the water supplies available to Nebraska's existing surface water and groundwater users. This information will be reported at each annual meeting as a generalized, qualitative description.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Goal 3: Positive public relations, including information sharing, within and outside the Basin	
Objectives	Action Items
3.1. Improve information sharing with decision-makers and the public about solutions formed within the Basin	3.1.1. Use existing resources to share information about Basin progress and activities with outside entities
	3.1.2. Educate civic leaders and the public on implementation efforts within the Basin
	3.1.3. Educate civic leaders and the public about the policies and institutional infrastructure that contribute to the development and implementation of solutions
3.2. Improve information sharing with water users who are reliant on the Basin's water supplies	3.2.1. Share data and information related to the Republican River Compact with the public in an easily accessible, user-friendly format
	3.2.2. Annually prepare and exchange reports containing data and information about water supplies and uses in the Basin, and make these reports publically accessible
	3.2.3. Regularly communicate with the Plan's Stakeholder Advisory Committee about implementation progress and potential Plan revisions
	3.2.4. Encourage and support water users to share information about their management practice improvements with other water users and the public
	3.2.5. <i>[Placeholder for additional actions related to Objective 2.2, if the group determines other kinds of information they think should be shared within the Basin and how]</i>

Goal 3: Positive public relations, including information sharing, within and outside the Basin

Goal 3 and its associated objectives and action items are focused on promoting positive public relations by improving information sharing, with both outside decision-makers and the Basin's water users, about the Basin's water supplies and use as well as management efforts of the Basin's water users and managers.

Objective 3.1: Improve information sharing with decision-makers and the public about solutions formed within the Basin

The overarching focus of Objective 3.1 is sharing information about the Basin's water management solutions, and also about the challenges those solutions are intended to address, with people who are not directly involved in developing or implementing those solutions. Sharing information with the Basin's water users is addressed separately in

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Objective 3.2. Part of Objective 3.1 is to improve information sharing about the Basin's water management solutions with decision-makers, especially those outside the Basin. This is because during Plan development, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee expressed concern that Legislators, the Governor's Office, and other decision-makers were unaware of many of the achievements, efforts, and overall progress that water users and managers in the Basin have already made toward addressing the Basin's water management challenges. Sharing information about implementation efforts with the general public is also part of Objective 3.1. The following action items provide details about how Objective 3.1 will be achieved.

Action Item 3.1.1: Use existing resources to share information about Basin progress and activities with outside entities

Action Item 3.1.1 specifies that outreach about Basin progress and activities will be undertaken using existing resources. Some examples of existing resources include NeDNR and the NRDs' staff, websites, and other outreach, education, or lobbying mechanisms.

Action Item 3.1.2: Educate civic leaders and the public on implementation efforts within the Basin

Action Item 3.1.2 clarifies that the "outside entities" mentioned in Action Item 3.1.1 include both civic leaders and the public. Some examples of civic leaders include the Legislature, the Governor's Office, and municipal leadership.

Some examples of potential topics for public relations campaigns or education about implementation efforts within the Basin and the challenges those solutions are intended to address are:

- Efficiency improvements
- The NRDs' allocations systems and resulting successes
- Other management activities and successes
- Factors that have contributed to streamflow reduction in the Basin
- Variations in groundwater management that reflect natural wet/dry cycles
- Realistic expectations for outcomes

Additional details can be found in *[placeholder for cross-reference to Monitoring and Reporting section]*.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Action Item 3.1.3: Educate civic leaders and the public about the policies and institutional infrastructure that contribute to the development and implementation of solutions

Policies and institutional infrastructure have contributed and will continue contribute to the development and implementation of water management solutions for Nebraska and this Basin. During Plan development, stakeholders identified that civic leaders and the public may not be aware of what those policies and institutional infrastructure are, how they can contribute to effective water management, or how they differ from those of other states. Therefore, as part of plan implementation, efforts will be made to educate civic leaders and the public about how existing and new policies and institutional infrastructure contribute to the development and implementation of water management solutions for the Basin.

Examples of the types of policies and institutional infrastructure that could be addressed in outreach efforts include:

- The NRD system
- Correlative groundwater rights
- Integrated management plans
- This Plan
- The Republican River Compact
- Other aspects of Nebraska's surface water and groundwater statutes
- Other NRD Rules, Regulations, and Plans

Objective 3.2: Improve information sharing with water users who are reliant on the Basin's water supplies

Whereas Objective 3.1 is focused on sharing information with outside entities, Objective 3.2 is about sharing information internally, with the Basin's water users. The action items associated with Objective 3.2 describe multiple specific ways that information sharing within the Basin will be improved.

Action Item 3.2.1: Share data and information related to the Republican River Compact with the public in an easily accessible, user-friendly format

NeDNR and the NRDs already gather and share a considerable amount of data and information about Nebraska's water supplies and uses in the Basin with the states of Kansas and Colorado as part of the Republican River Compact

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Association's (RRCA's) annual data exchange process for the purposes of RRCA accounting. These data are currently available on the RRCA website; however, they are not easy to find and are not very user-friendly for users outside the RRCA. In accordance with Action Item 3.2.1, data and information related to the Compact will be shared with the public in a user-friendly format in an easily accessible, centralized location. Specific categories of RRCA data to be shared are listed in the *[Cross-reference to Monitoring and Reporting Section]*.

Action Item 3.2.2: Annually prepare and exchange reports containing data and information about water supplies and uses in the Basin, and make these reports publically accessible

As specified in 4.6.1, NeDNR and the NRDs will hold an annual public meeting to discuss Plan implementation and exchange information about the Basin, as described in the *[placeholder for cross reference to part of plan that describes the annual meetings]*. For this meeting, NeDNR and the NRDs will exchange reports containing data and information about water supplies and uses in the Basin, management activities, and progress towards the goals, objectives, and action items of this Plan, as described in *[placeholder for cross reference to part of plan that describes monitoring and reporting]*. Following the annual meeting, the reports exchanged will be made available to the public.

Action Item 3.2.3: Regularly communicate with the Plan's Stakeholder Advisory Committee about implementation progress and potential Plan revisions

Action Item 3.2.3 specifies that after this Plan goes into effect, NeDNR and the NRDs will continue to communicate with the Plan's Stakeholder Advisory Committee on a regular basis about Plan implementation progress and any potential revisions to the Plan. NeDNR and the NRDs will:

- Invite the members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to each annual meeting and five-year technical review meeting
- Notify the members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee of potential plan revisions
- Notify the members of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee when annual reports, five-year technical reviews, or other new reports related to implementation of this plan are published

Additional information about meetings, reports, and the plan-revision process can be found in *[placeholder for cross-reference to Monitoring and Reporting section]*.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Action Item 3.2.4: Encourage and support water users to share information about their management practice improvements with other water users and the public

Throughout implementation of this Plan, NeDNR and the NRDs will encourage and support water users to share information about their management practice improvements with other water users and the public. Various methods of implementation of this action item may be employed to fit specific circumstances. Examples of opportunities for individuals to share their successes with other water users include, but are not limited to, articles for NeDNR or NRD newsletters, websites, or social media, presentations or reports shared at the annual meeting to review implementation of this Plan, presentations at annual water user conferences or other outreach events, or coverage by external news media. NeDNR and the NRDs will discuss opportunities to implement this action item at each annual meeting.

[Placeholder for additional actions related to Objective 2.2, if the group determines other kinds of information they think should be shared within the Basin and how]

[Placeholder for details about any additional Action Items under Objective 2.2]

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Goal 4: Increase certainty for long-range planning of water supplies to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and increase collaborative efforts among water users across the Basin	
Objectives	Action Items
4.1. Increase water supply through interbasin transfers during periods of high flows	4.1.1. For each new project, study hydrologic and regulatory feasibility and evaluate potential economic and environmental impacts
	4.1.2. Where feasible and beneficial, apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, then begin operations
	4.1.3. Operate Implement interbasin transfers as opportunities arise
4.2. Improve water availability through conjunctive management projects within the Basin, such as, but not limited to: a. Aquifer recharge b. Streamflow augmentation projects	4.2.1. For each new project, conduct a feasibility study and evaluate potential economic and environmental impacts
	4.2.2. Where feasible and beneficial, apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, then begin operations
	4.2.3. Operate Implement conjunctive management projects as opportunities arise
	4.2.4. Where appropriate, work with partners such as the US Bureau of Reclamation, irrigation districts, or private landowners to identify, evaluate, and operate potential new projects
4.3. Improve the availability and reliability of water supplies for current surface water irrigators	4.3.1. Work with irrigation districts to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of the Basin's surface water delivery systems, when it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska's Compact accounting balance to do so
	4.3.2. Encourage the conversion of surface water irrigated acres to a more efficient and reliable method of irrigation, when it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska's Compact accounting balance to do so
4.4. <i>[Placeholder—other objectives related to increasing certainty are likely to result from discussion of the remaining challenges during upcoming stakeholder meetings]</i>	

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Goal 4: Increase certainty for long-range planning of water supplies to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and increase collaborative efforts among water users across the Basin	
Objectives	Action Items
4.5. Compare the relative potential economic and environmental impacts of the types of management actions that would increase certainty for water users in the Basin through increased water supplies or improved water availability	4.5.1. Within the first five-year increment, conduct a study comparing the predicted economic and environmental impacts of likely potential management actions identified in Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?] and jointly develop recommendations based on the results of the study
	4.5.2. Consider the results of this study, once it is available, when making decisions about which potential future management actions to pursue in fulfillment of Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?]
4.6. Provide opportunities for collaboration among the Basin’s water users	4.6.1. Hold an annual public meeting to discuss Plan implementation and exchange information about the Basin
	4.6.2. Work cooperatively to identify, investigate, and address conflicts between water users resulting from implementation of this Plan by following the procedures for addressing conflicts that are outlined in this Plan

Goal 4: Increase certainty for long-range planning of water supplies to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and increase collaborative efforts among water users across the Basin

Goal 4 is comprised of two distinct but related ambitions: to increase certainty about the availability of water supplies for long-range planning to reduce the need for regulatory actions, and to increase collaboration among the Basin’s water users. The next three paragraphs provide some background information about regulatory actions for Compact compliance and how the regulatory burden of Compact compliance has at times contributed to conflicts among the basin’s water users.

Under the Republican River Compact (Compact), Nebraska has an allocation that limits how much water from within the Basin can be used. This allocation varies each year with available water supplies and consumptive use within all three states (Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado). To comply with the terms of the Compact, Nebraska’s water use must remain within its allocation over specified averaging periods. To assist with ensuring long-term Compact compliance, certain ongoing regulatory controls have been established for both groundwater and surface water in each the IMP for each NRD, including groundwater allocations, certification of irrigated acres, moratoriums on new wells and new surface water permits, and metering of all wells and surface water diversions in the Basin.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

In years designated by the State as Compact Call Years, Nebraska must take additional action to meet its Compact obligations by either reducing consumption or generating additional streamflow. These potential actions can be regulatory or non-regulatory, and are outlined in the joint IMP for each NRD. For surface water, NeDNR may need to regulate and administer surface water in the Basin to ensure compliance. For groundwater, potential additional groundwater regulatory actions to ensure compliance for the Lower Republican, Middle Republican, and Upper Republican NRDs include establishing more restrictive one-year allocations and curtailment of groundwater pumping within a designated portion of each NRD. The IMP for Tri-Basin NRD also allows for additional regulatory actions as needed to maintain a hydrologically balanced condition (i.e., no net depletions to streamflow).

Regulation to ensure Compact compliance has contributed to a lack of certainty among water users about whether sufficient water supplies will be available in a given irrigation season. In addition, for most of the history of regulation of water rights in Nebraska, state legislation considered surface water and groundwater separately without recognizing that they are hydrologically connected resources that impact one another (*cross-reference to legislative and regulatory history appendix*). Together, these and other factors have contributed to a history of conflict between surface water and groundwater users in the Basin. This basin-wide planning process represents an opportunity to decrease conflict and increase collaboration among the Basin's water users, beginning with the exchange of ideas that has taken place at stakeholder meetings throughout Plan development and continuing through Plan implementation.

Objective 4.1: Increase water supply through interbasin transfers during periods of high flows

Objective 4.1 relates to increasing water supply through interbasin transfers. This idea of diverting available water to the Republican Basin from other basins during periods of high flows has garnered much support from stakeholders throughout the plan development process. The most likely basin to serve as a suitable basin or origin for an interbasin transfer project would be the Upper Platte Basin in Nebraska, but other basins within and outside the state have also been suggested at times during Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings. Interbasin transfers would benefit the Republican Basin by bringing additional water into the Basin, and may also benefit the basin of origin (such as the Upper Platte Basin) by potentially reducing the impacts of flooding downstream of the diversion site.

Action Items 4.1.1 through 4.1.3 outline the steps that would need to be taken in order for each potential new interbasin transfer project. In other words, for new interbasin transfer projects, Action Item 4.1.1 must precede Action Item 4.1.2, which must precede Action Item 4.1.3.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Action Item 4.1.1: For each new project, study hydrologic and regulatory feasibility and evaluate potential economic and environmental impacts

For each potential new interbasin transfer project, the project proponents will study hydrologic and regulatory feasibility and evaluate potential economic and environmental impacts.

In addition to examining technical feasibility, the feasibility study will, in accordance with Action Item 2.1.1, include an examination of whether the project adheres to applicable state laws and whether it negatively impacts Nebraska's Compact compliance efforts. As part of this evaluation, any factors outlined in statute for the Director of Natural Resources' evaluation of interbasin transfer applications will be included in the feasibility study and evaluation of impacts (as of *[date of plan draft]*, these factors are listed in *Neb. Rev. Stat. §46-289*).

For any potential new interbasin transfer projects initiated after completion of the comparative study of economic impacts of various potential management actions (Action Item 4.5.1), the evaluation of economic impacts required under Action Item 4.1.1 will include consideration of the results of that study, as required by Action Item 4.5.2.

Action Item 4.1.2: Where feasible and beneficial, apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, then begin operations

For each potential new interbasin transfer project, Action Item 4.1.2 is recommended to be preceded by Action Item 4.1.1. For any project where circumstances do not allow adequate time for Action Item 4.1.1 to be completed before implementation of the project, the project proponents will, at a minimum, report on and discuss the considerations outlined in Action Item 4.1.1 at the annual meeting, allowing time for questions from the public.

As noted in this Action Item, interbasin transfer projects implemented under this Plan may involve either the construction of new infrastructure or utilization of existing infrastructure.

Action Item 4.1.3: ~~Operate~~ Implement interbasin transfers as opportunities arise

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

For implementation of existing interbasin transfer projects, evaluate whether Action Items 4.1.1 or 4.1.2 have been satisfactorily completed before proceeding to Action Item 4.1.3.

Objective 4.2: Improve water availability through conjunctive management projects within the Basin, such as, but not limited to:

- a. Aquifer recharge
- b. Streamflow augmentation projects

Objective 4.2 examines whether more efficient use can be made of water within the Basin by retiming availability of water resources through conjunctive management projects. There are generally two categories of conjunctive management activities: storing water during periods when water is naturally abundant and using stored water during dry periods. Aquifer recharge and augmentation projects are listed within Objective 4.2 as examples of potential conjunctive management projects and are discussed in further detail in the next two paragraphs. These are intended to be examples only; other types of conjunctive management activities are also permissible for fulfilling this objective. Action Items 4.2.1 through 4.2.4 outline the steps that would need to be taken for each potential conjunctive management project.

Aquifer recharge projects fall within the category of conjunctive management activities related to storing excess water when it is available. Specifically, aquifer recharge projects are those that hold surface water in infrastructure such as canals, reservoirs, or terraces to encourage infiltration to recharge the underlying aquifer. Aquifer recharge projects undertaken to fulfill Objective 4.2 may include creating new infrastructure for the purposes of recharge, utilizing existing infrastructure for this purpose, or improving existing infrastructure to enhance its recharge capabilities. Canals and large reservoirs that existed within the Basin during Plan development are shown in Figure [x].

In contrast to aquifer recharge projects, augmentation projects fall within the category of conjunctive management activities related to using stored water during dry periods. Specifically, augmentation projects involve pumping groundwater out of the aquifer for the purposes of enhancing streamflow. Augmentation projects that exist in the Basin during development of this Plan include N-CORPE, Rock Creek Augmentation Project, and the Turkey Creek Augmentation Project (Figure [x]). Augmentation activities undertaken to fulfill Objective 4.2 may make use of these existing augmentation facilities or may involve identifying and developing new potential augmentation projects.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

As noted above, aquifer recharge and augmentation are listed in Objective 4.2 as examples of potential conjunctive management projects, not as an exhaustive list. Other types of conjunctive management projects may also be considered.

Action Item 4.2.1: For each new project, conduct a feasibility study and evaluate potential economic and environmental impacts

For each potential new conjunctive management project, the project proponent will conduct a feasibility study and evaluate potential economic and environmental impacts.

In addition to examining technical feasibility, the feasibility study will, in accordance with Action Item 2.1.1, include an examination of whether the project adheres to applicable state laws and whether it negatively impacts Nebraska's Compact compliance efforts.

For any potential new conjunctive management projects initiated after completion of the comparative study of economic impacts of various potential management actions (Action Item 4.5.1), the evaluation of economic impacts required under Action Item 4.2.1 will include consideration of the results of that study, as required by Action Item 4.5.2.

Action Item 4.2.2: Where feasible and beneficial, apply for necessary permits, establish new or utilize existing infrastructure, then begin operations

For each potential new conjunctive management project, Action Item 4.2.2 is recommended to be preceded by Action Item 4.2.1. For any project where circumstances do not allow adequate time for Action Item 4.2.1 to be completed before implementation of the project, the project proponents will, at a minimum, report on and discuss the considerations outlined in Action Item 4.2.1 at the annual meeting, allowing time for questions from the public.

As noted in this Action Item, conjunctive management projects implemented under this Plan may involve either the construction of new infrastructure or utilization of existing infrastructure.

Action Item 4.2.3: Operate Implement conjunctive management projects as opportunities arise

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

For operation of existing conjunctive management projects, evaluate whether Action Items 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 are needed before proceeding to Action Item 4.2.3.

Action Item 4.2.4: Where appropriate, work with partners such as the US Bureau of Reclamation, irrigation districts, or private landowners to identify, evaluate, and operate potential new projects

Action Item 4.2.4 recognizes that other entities, such as the US Bureau of Reclamation, irrigation districts, or individual landowners, own and operate some of the existing infrastructure that may be suitable for conjunctive management projects. Examples of existing infrastructure that may be suitable for this purpose include wellfields, canals, reservoirs, or small dams and terraces. For conjunctive management projects that utilize existing infrastructure owned and operated by other entities, NeDNR and the NRDs will always first pursue voluntary cooperation with the partner who owns and operates the existing infrastructure.

Objective 4.3: Improve the availability and reliability of water supplies for current surface water irrigators

As available surface water supplies in the Basin have decreased over the last several decades due to a variety of factors, the amount of water available to surface water irrigators has decreased, which has resulted primarily from a combination of decreased runoff and increased groundwater pumping (Appendix [X]). During Plan development, surface water irrigators identified both the availability and reliability of surface water supplies as challenges. This objective and its associated action items focus on pursuing opportunities to improve availability reliability for existing surface water irrigators.

Action Item 4.3.1: Work with irrigation districts to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of the Basin's surface water delivery systems, when it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska's Compact accounting balance to do so

NeDNR and the NRDs will work with irrigation districts to identify opportunities to improve the efficiency of the Basin's surface water delivery systems. At the time of this Plan's adoption, irrigation districts in the Basin include Nebraska Bostwick Irrigation District, Frenchman Valley Irrigation District, Frenchman-Cambridge Irrigation District, H & RW Irrigation District, and Pioneer Irrigation District [placeholder: reference to map]. Such improvements will only be undertaken as part of implementation of this Plan if it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska's Compact accounting balance to do so.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Action Item 4.3.2: Encourage the conversion of surface water irrigated acres to a more efficient and reliable method of irrigation, when it is both feasible and beneficial to Nebraska's Compact accounting balance to do so

Groundwater irrigation is generally a more reliable source of water than surface water irrigation, because the aquifer is sheltered from the variations in weather and climate that cause surface water supplies to vary widely, both within a season and from year to year. Because of the variability and uncertainty of, surface water supplies, surface water irrigators in the Basin have found it difficult to plan in recent years. Some surface water-only acres are located in areas where it would be feasible to convert them to commingled or groundwater-only acres if they were allowed to drill new wells and obtain new groundwater permits; however, there are currently moratoriums on new wells in most of the Basin. Because of this, allowing these surface water users to drill wells would require a variance. If any new depletions result from use of the new wells, they will be offset following the procedures outlined in the IMPs, in accordance with Action Item 2.1.2.

[Objective 4.4: *[Placeholder—other objectives related to increasing certainty are likely to result from discussion of the remaining challenges during upcoming stakeholder meetings]*

[Placeholder for discussion of other objectives and associated action items related to increasing certainty]

Objective 4.5: Compare the relative potential economic and environmental impacts of the types of management actions that would increase certainty for water users in the Basin through increased water supplies or improved water availability

The purpose of Objective 4.5 is to provide NeDNR and the NRDs with a better understanding of the comparative magnitude of the potential economic and environmental impacts of various management actions that could be taken to fulfill Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?]. NeDNR and NRDs will conduct a study comparing the predicted economic and environmental impacts of likely potential management actions and develop recommendations based on the study (Action Item 4.5.1). NeDNR and NRDs will consider the results of the study when deciding which potential future management actions to pursue (Action Item 4.5.2).

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Action Item 4.5.1: Within the first five-year increment, conduct a study comparing the predicted economic and environmental impacts of likely potential management actions identified in Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?] and jointly develop recommendations based on the results of the study

NeDNR and the NRDs will conduct a study comparing the predicted economic and environmental impacts to the Basin of potential interbasin transfer (Objective 4.1), conjunctive management (Objective 4.2), and *[Placeholder; other potential management actions related to increasing certainty may be added as a result of discussion of the remaining challenges during upcoming stakeholder meetings, Objective 4.4]* projects. Additional types of management actions that would increase certainty for water users may also be included in the analysis for comparative purposes, even if they are not specifically mentioned in Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?]. For example, the management actions allowed under the joint IMP for each NRD may be included.

NeDNR and the NRDs will jointly develop recommendations based on the results of the study. The study and jointly developed recommendations will be completed before the first five-year review of Plan progress.

Action Item 4.5.2: Consider the results of this study, once it is available, when making decisions about which potential future management actions to pursue in fulfillment of Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?]

The results of the study described in Action Item 4.5.1 and the recommendations jointly developed by NeDNR and the NRDs will be used to help NeDNR and NRDs prioritize potential management actions to pursue under Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?].

Action Item 4.5.2 only applies to potential management actions being considered after completion of the study described in Action Item 4.5.1; therefore, NeDNR and the NRDs are not required to wait for this study to be completed before taking management actions in fulfillment of Objectives 4.1 through [4.4?].

Objective 4.6: Provide opportunities for collaboration among the Basin's water users

Objective 4.6 includes two avenues for increasing collaborative opportunities for the Basin's water users: opportunities for discussion and information exchange at an annual

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

public meeting (Action Item 4.6.1) and collaboration to address conflicts between water users that result from implementation of this Plan (Action Item 4.6.2).

Please note that in addition to the opportunities for collaboration outlined in the action items associated with Objective 4.6, Goal 4 and its associated objectives and action items contain additional opportunities for collaboration among the Basin's water users.

Action Item 4.6.1: Hold an annual public meeting to discuss Plan implementation and exchange information about the Basin

Information about the annual meeting can be found *[Placeholder for cross-reference to section about the Annual Meeting]*.

Action Item 4.6.2: Work cooperatively to identify, investigate, and address conflicts between water users resulting from implementation of this Plan by following the procedures for addressing conflicts that are outlined in this Plan

Conflicts between water users resulting from implementation of this Plan will be identified, investigated, and addressed following the Procedures for Addressing Conflicts between Water Users for the Republican River Basin-Wide Plan (Appendix *[x]*).

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Goal 5: Basin-wide collaboration among water management entities and stakeholders to maximize Nebraska’s efficient and beneficial consumptive use of its portion of the water supply	
Objectives	Action Items
5.1. Promote conservation programs available to the water users in the Basin	5.1.1. Work together to identify, investigate, and discuss existing and potential new water conservation programs
	5.1.2. Collaborate to promote conservation program opportunities to the Basin’s water users
5.2. Understand how various water management activities of independent decision-makers affect water supplies	5.2.1. Study the effects of conservation practices on streamflow, if feasible
	5.2.2. <i>[Placeholder for any other related action items based on future discussion]</i>
5.3. Evaluate the feasibility and potential outcomes of establishing water markets in the Basin	5.3.1. Cooperate in determining the feasibility of water markets in the Basin
	5.3.2. Test conclusions through implementation of a water market program in a pilot area, if feasible
5.4. <i>[Placeholder for any other objectives related to this goal that may arise from further stakeholder discussion.</i> <i>May include: studies, grants, recommendations, education, promotion of best management practices, sharing information, or any other type of activity that involves supporting or promoting a desirable management action indirectly.]</i>	5.4.1. <i>[Placeholder for action item(s) related to additional objectives]</i>

Goal 5: Basin-wide collaboration among water management entities and stakeholders to maximize Nebraska’s efficient and beneficial consumptive use of its portion of the water supply

Goal 5 focuses on collaboration among NeDNR, the NRDs, other water management entities, and stakeholders to improve water management in the Basin by supporting and promoting desirable management actions. “Water management entity” refers to any entity that makes independent decisions about water use within the Basin. This includes, but is not limited to, the NRDs, NeDNR, irrigation districts, the Bureau of Reclamation, municipalities, and individual

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

water users. So the first part of Goal 5, "basin-wide collaboration among water management entities and stakeholders," means that this goal encompasses any objectives and actions that involve NeDNR and the NRDs collaborating with each other and others on a basin-wide scale to support beneficial water management actions that remain under control of other entities or individuals. For actions taken under Goal 5, management decisions currently under local control will remain under local control; the purpose of Goal 5 and its objectives and action items is to support beneficial management actions across the Basin, not to mandate participation by water management entities or stakeholders in any specific beneficial management action. As an example, under Objective 5.1, NeDNR and the NRDs will collaborate to promote conservation programs to the Basin's water users, but the decision of whether or not to participate in those conservation programs remains under the control of those individual water users.

The second part of Goal 5, "to maximize Nebraska's efficient and beneficial consumptive use of its portion of the water supply," gives direction and focus to these efforts.

Objective 5.1: Promote conservation programs available to the water users in the Basin

NeDNR and the NRDs will collaborate to evaluate and promote existing and new water conservation programs related to the use of integrated water resources. These are programs that provide incentives to encourage voluntary modification by water users for the purposes of water conservation. Incentive programs may include, but are not limited to, federal programs or any program authorized by state law. Some examples of this are programs that incentivize acreage retirements or best management practices.

The IMPs for all four NRDs already include guidelines for the establishment and implementation of incentive programs to reduce beneficial consumptive use of water within each NRD. Objective 5.1 of this plan does not replace the existing incentive program guidelines contained in the four IMPs, nor does it require that all four NRDs implement exactly the same incentive programs. What it does require is that NeDNR and the NRDs share information about and evaluate water conservation programs as described under Action Item 5.1.1 and work together to promote conservation opportunities to water users as described under Action Item 5.1.2.

Action Item 5.1.1: Work together to identify, investigate, and discuss existing and potential new water conservation programs

NeDNR and the NRDs will exchange information about and evaluate existing and potential new water conservation programs available to water users in the Basin. At a minimum, this will occur at annual meetings. NeDNR and the NRDs may also

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

discuss water conservation programs between annual meetings, for example, as new opportunities are identified or as deadlines approach for a specific program. Evaluation of each conservation program opportunity should include consideration of whether and how that conservation program might help advance progress towards the goals and objectives of this Plan.

For each conservation program opportunity that NeDNR and the NRDs agree might help advance progress towards the goals and objectives of this Plan, NeDNR and the NRDs should discuss whether to promote such a program to water users on a basin-wide scale, as described under Action Item 5.1.2.

Implementation and administration of conservation programs will remain the responsibility of individual NRDs and NeDNR, following existing guidelines found in each joint IMP.

Action Item 5.1.2: Collaborate to promote conservation program opportunities to the Basin's water users

If NeDNR and the NRDs agree that a specific conservation program opportunity might help advance progress towards the goals and objectives of this Plan, NeDNR and the NRDs may determine that the program should be collaboratively promoted users on a basin-wide scale (Action Item 5.1.1).

Potential opportunities for collaboration on the promotion of conservation programs include, but are not limited to:

1. Collaborative development of educational materials about the program, such as written materials or presentations,
2. Sharing or joint development of implementation tools such as forms or databases, or
3. Joint applications for funding to support and promote conservation program opportunities.

Objective 5.2: Understand how various water management activities of independent decision-makers affect water supplies

NeDNR and the NRDs will improve their understanding of how various water management activities of independent decision-makers affect water supplies. Independent decision-makers in this context include any water management entities in

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

the Basin other than NeDNR and the NRDs, such as producers, irrigation districts, municipalities, and other government agencies.

Action Item 5.2.1: Study the effects of conservation practices on streamflow, if feasible

NeDNR and the NRDs will study the effects of various agricultural conservation practices on streamflow, if and when enough funds and staff resources are available to make it feasible to do so. The results of and recommendations based on the results of any such study will be shared with producers in the Basin. NeDNR and the NRDs may also use the results of this kind of study to inform discussion and promotion of conservation incentive programs (Objective 5.1).

Action Item 5.2.2. *[Placeholder for any other related action items based on future discussion]*

[Placeholder for description of any other related action items based on future discussion]

Objective 5.3: Evaluate the feasibility and potential outcomes of establishing water markets in the Basin

During Plan development, stakeholders were enthusiastic about the idea of trying a water market in the Basin for the purposes of exchanging water among groundwater and surface water users. Much is still unknown about the logistics, feasibility, and desirability of such water markets; therefore, the purpose of this objective is to conduct a study and possible pilot program to evaluate the feasibility and potential outcomes of establishing a water market or water markets within the Basin.

The intent is to complete this evaluation (Action Items 5.3.1 through 5.3.2) within five years of this plan taking effect and to report on findings from the evaluation as part of the first five-year technical review, provided that sufficient funding and staff resources are available to do so.

Nothing about this objective or its listed action items precludes NRDs or other entities from pursuing water markets in the Basin outside of this planning process.

Action Item 5.3.1: Cooperate in determining the feasibility of water markets in the Basin

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

This action item would include studying existing water markets, as well as working cooperatively with the US Bureau of Reclamation, water users, and irrigation districts, to evaluate the feasibility of water markets for surface water and groundwater users in the Basin. This feasibility analysis will include such considerations as Compact compliance obligations, program costs, regulatory framework, and water user interest. If the conclusions from these efforts indicate that water markets in the Basin would be feasible, then NeDNR and the NRDs may choose to proceed with testing their conclusions in a pilot area (Action Item 5.3.2).

Action Item 5.3.2: Test conclusions through implementation of a water market program in a pilot area, if feasible

If the evaluation in Action Item 5.3.1 indicates that water markets in the Basin would be feasible, and if sufficient funding and staff resources are available to do so, then NeDNR and the NRDs will work cooperatively with the US Bureau of Reclamation, the Basin's irrigation districts, and water users in the Basin to conduct a water market pilot program within a portion of the Basin.

Objective 5.4. *[Placeholder for any other objectives related to this goal that may arise from further stakeholder discussion.]*

May include: studies, grants, recommendations, education, promotion of best management practices, sharing information, or any other type of activity that involves supporting or promoting a desirable management action indirectly.]

[Placeholder for discussion of any other objectives and associated action items related to this goal that may arise from further stakeholder discussion. May include: studies, grants, recommendations, education, promotion of best management practices, sharing information, or any other type of activity that involves supporting or promoting a desirable management action indirectly.]

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Goal 6: 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
6.1. Where feasible and beneficial, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and public outdoor recreational opportunities	6.1.1. 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
	6.1.2. Promote public recreation on the river, when doing so can also help to fulfill other goals of this Plan
	6.1.3. Cooperate in projects to assess and restore riparian wetlands while also helping to fulfill other goals of this Plan
6.2. Where feasible and beneficial, reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance	6.2.1. Cooperate in removing undesirable vegetation impacting water conveyance and managing reinfestation

Goal 6: 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

During the development of this Plan, stakeholders expressed that it was important to them that this Plan provide benefits to fish, wildlife, conveyance, and recreation within the Basin. While these potential areas of benefit do not directly relate to integrated management of the Basin's water supplies and uses, there are likely to be opportunities for projects that can benefit fish, wildlife, or recreation while also benefiting water supplies and uses according to the Plan's other goals and their associated objectives and action items. The objectives and action items that fall under Goal 6 outline ways in which projects to manage water supplies and uses can provide additional benefits to the Basin's fish, wildlife, conveyance, and recreation.

It is important to note that for any action taken in fulfillment of any objective or action item under Goal 6 to benefit fish, wildlife, conveyance, or recreation, the action must also benefit water supplies and uses in fulfillment of one or more of the Plan's other goals, objectives, or action items. Actions that only benefit fish, wildlife, conveyance, or recreation without also benefiting hydrologically connected water supplies fall outside of the statutory authority of this Plan.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

Objective 6.1: Where feasible and beneficial, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat and public outdoor recreational opportunities

NeDNR and the NRDs will pursue opportunities to protect and enhance wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation opportunities, if it is feasible and beneficial do to so as part of projects that also benefit water supply and use. Further details are given in the action items below.

Action Item 6.1.1: 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 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.

Action Item 6.1.2: Promote public recreation on the river, when doing so can also help 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 promote public recreation on the river. Some examples of recreational floating include recreational floating such as tubing, kayaking, and canoeing.

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

For promotion of public recreation, it may be beneficial for NeDNR and the NRDs to partner with organizations with an interest in public recreation, such as the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission or local river outfitters.

Action Item 6.1.3: 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 and objectives, such as for aquifer recharge (Objective 4.2). 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 6.1.3 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.

Objective 6.2: Where feasible and beneficial, reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance

NeDNR and the NRDs will pursue opportunities to reduce the effects of undesirable vegetation on water conveyance, if it is feasible and beneficial do to so as part of projects that also benefit water supply and use. Conveyance is the transport of water from one location to another. Further details are given in the action item below.

Action Item 6.2.1: Cooperate in removing undesirable vegetation impacting water conveyance and managing reinfestation

NeDNR and the NRDs will participate in projects to remove undesirable vegetation impacting water conveyance, if it is feasible and beneficial to do so as

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder

part of actions taken to benefit water supply and use in fulfillment of this Plan's other goals.

A summary providing background information about the relationship between removal of invasive vegetation and evapotranspiration is included as Appendix [X]. This information should be taken to consideration when considering projects involving riparian vegetation removal and management.

DRAFT

Formatting Key

Highlighted = added since the June 2017 stakeholder meeting

[Italicized text in brackets] = placeholder