

NRD develops new cost share program to fight invasive species

Written by gothenburgtimes
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After the Central Platte Natural Resources District's board of directors adopt a new Invasive Species Program next month, money will be available to help landowners rid riparian areas adjacent to the Platte River of phragmites, cottonwood trees, cedar trees and other invasive species.

The Programs Committee approved the proposed program and reviewed it with the entire board of directors during their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday. The board plans to take action on the program guidelines on April 22.

Bob Schanou, committee chairman, reported that possible changes to the NRD's cost share program may include eliminating the center pivot program and initiating a drip irrigation program, starting in 2012. The committee approved requests for the fiscal 2011 cost share and information/education budgets, advancing them to the Budget Committee.

Western Projects Committee—Jerry Kenny, Headwaters, discussed how two projects within the district may be beneficial to the Platte River Recovery Program:

a) Buffalo B-1 Reservoir: The committee discussed the option of filling the reservoir every year, instead of every other year, taking water from Buffalo Creek to the Platte River. Milt Moravek, assistant manager, said the NRD plans to acquire bore samples to ensure that the dam is safe.

b) Elm Creek Project: The committee discussed how the proposed project could allow flows to be released at prime times for threatened and endangered species. Kevin Prior, Olsson Associates, reported that the dam would have a maximum storage capacity of 24,235 acre/feet with the surface area of 1,500 acres. The board approved a contract for \$116,400 with Olsson's to finish the prefeasibility investigations. The PRRP will pay a percentage of that cost and the rest is already itemized for in the 2010 budget.

c) Budget : The committee approved the requests for the fiscal 2011 budget, advancing it to the Budget Committee.

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Presentations—Suat Irmak, UNL, and Dave Russ, USGS, gave presentations to the board on their work with evapotranspiration of crops and riparian vegetation.

Legislation—Moravek reported on natural resources legislation. Of interest is a case involving LB 862, which was ruled constitutional in Lancaster County District Court. The court case is important because the occupation tax in question is a valuable tool to manage water resources to keep Nebraska in compliance with compacts, decrees and agreements. Another is LB 785, which would provide an exception to required approval for certain water transfers. This bill is now in general file.

Water Resources Subcommittee—Scott Woodman reported that the subcommittee reviewed the certified acres rules extensively and decided not to make any changes. In question was the grandfathering of certified acres. The subcommittee directed staff to continue publicizing the rule that all irrigated acres must be watered at least two times within ten years or lose irrigated acre status. If landowners do not want to irrigate and would like to keep their irrigated acre status, then they have the option to place those acres in the NRD's Water Bank.

Public Relations—The board of directors went into closed session to discuss impending lawsuits by Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) against several NRDs. While the board was in closed session, they discussed a video produced by CNPPID titled "Inside Nebraska Water" in which states that "NRDs mostly are not motivated to do anything about water." The board directed staff to immediately contact other NRDs in the basin to develop a response and a plan to tell what NRDs are doing about water issues, including developing individual Integrated Management Plans, Basin-Wide Integrated Management Plans, the Water Resources Taskforce, etc. The board also requested that staff invite CNPPID to the April board meeting to show the video that was developed.

Cost Share—26 applications were approved through the Central Platte NRD Cost Share Programs in the amount of \$27,058.67. Practices approved include: underground pipeline, flow meter, tree planting and well decommissioning.