

# Comments Being Accepted for Platte River Program

CPNRD board members, management, and staff have been actively involved in Governance and Advisory committees for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program since it was signed in 2006. The Program was developed by the federal government along with the Platte River Basin states of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming to build a framework for a long-term Program that will satisfy Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements for water users in the basin.



The first increment, planned to last 13 years, includes the ongoing development of water projects planned to improve flows in the central Platte by an average of 130,000-150,000 acre/feet annually. A second Program element is the protection and maintenance of 10,000 acres of habitat during the first increment, ultimately working toward a 29,000-acre goal.

CPNRD has a big stake in the Program's goal to improve and conserve habitat for three threatened and endangered species on the central Platte (the whooping crane, piping plover and least tern) and the endangered pallid sturgeon on the lower Platte. The Program was developed as the states and federal governments face stiff challenges to protect threatened and endangered species using the Platte River and their habitats. The signatories to the Program hope to equitably provide greater certainty for water users facing ESA requirements. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) plays a major role in enforcing the ESA. Authorization legislation for federal funding was passed by Congress in 2008 and associated appropriations are addressed in an ongoing process.



A plan to review of the FWS's target flows for the Platte River is being developed. Ongoing research and monitoring on the Platte River is showing the FWS's current target flows to be ineffective in accomplishing the objectives they have set out. The Program's Water Action Committee is looking at intentional groundwater recharge through diversions through the canal systems to aid in the goals.

Set to expire at the end of 2019, the Bureau of Reclamation is working with the partners to extend the First Increment of the basin-wide, cooperative Recovery Program by 13 years. The

proposed extension would allow partners to continue implementing projects that provide additional water to accomplish the following:

- Reduce flow shortages in the Platte River aimed at conforming with FWS target flows
- Continue land management activities necessary to provide habitat for target threatened and endangered species
- Continue integrated monitoring, research, and adaptive management to assess the progress of the Program and inform future management decisions.

**Written comments are due by close of business November 2, 2017.** Members of the public may submit comments via email to [platteriver@usbr.gov](mailto:platteriver@usbr.gov), or by mail to: Bureau of Reclamation Attention: Brock Merrill, P.O. Box 950, Torrington, WY 82240

For additional information, contact **Mark Czaplewski (308) 385-6282** or email: [Mark@cpnrd.org](mailto:Mark@cpnrd.org).

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# Change in College Scholarships



Central Platte NRD is accepting applications for the CPNRD-Ron Bishop College Scholarship Program. Starting this fall, only junior and senior college students are eligible to receive a scholarship. Five college students will be awarded \$1,000 scholarships. Applicants must be pursuing a natural resources degree and reside within CPNRD's boundaries; which reach from Gothenburg to Columbus along the Platte River. Application deadline is April 15, 2018.

To download an application or receive additional information, visit: [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org) or contact **Marcia Lee** at (308) 385-6282 or email: [lee@cpnrd.org](mailto:lee@cpnrd.org).

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# In Perspective Newsletter

215 Kaufman Ave. Grand Island NE (308) 385-6282 [www.cpnrd.org](http://www.cpnrd.org)

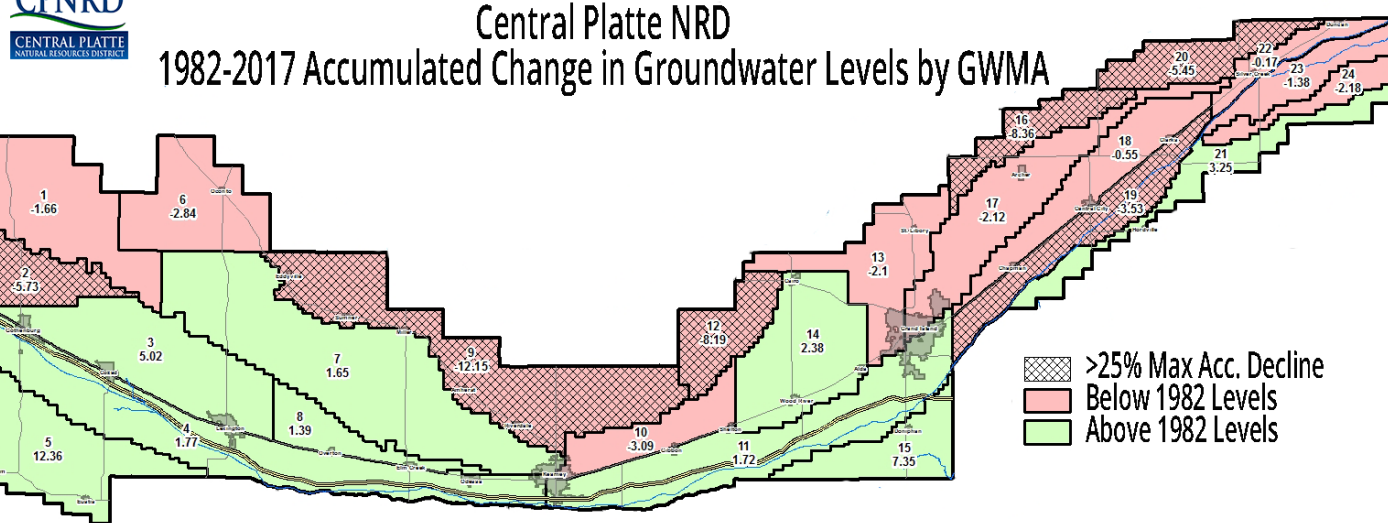
## Spring Groundwater Levels

The spring average static water level results were down slightly this year. The accumulated change since 1982 is 0.85 feet lower district-wide. Groundwater levels are measured annually from mid-April to mid-June.

CPNRD's Groundwater Management Plan uses 1982 static groundwater levels as the base levels. Implemented in 1987, the Plan established maximum acceptable declines and a margin of safety for each of the District's 24 Ground Water Management Areas (GWMA). This year, 15 of the GWMAs are above the 1982 groundwater levels and the remaining nine areas are below the set standards. Dawson County had both the largest decline and the largest increase with northern Dawson and Buffalo counties (GWMA #9) down 12.15 feet, and southwest Dawson (GWMA #5) had an increase of 12.36 feet since 1982.

As a proactive measure, the Management Plan has a trigger set that suspends supplemental wells and transfers into areas that have reached a 25 percent acceptable decline. Merrick County has one management area (#18) with two consecutive years above the 25% acceptable decline trigger and will now allow new transfers of irrigated acres and supplemental wells; while the southern management area (#19) has reverted to the 25% acceptable decline trigger regulations. **Results of each county in CPNRD are available at: [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org).**

Six of the 24 GWMAs are currently in the 25% decline suspension. If the water table would fall to 50% of the maximum decline, Phase II would go into effect requiring mandatory reductions in irrigated acres and spacing limits for new irrigation wells would be established.



Central Platte NRD serves 11 counties including all of Dawson and parts of Frontier, Custer Buffalo, Hall, Howard, Nance, Merrick, Hamilton, Platte and Polk.



## New Urban Conservation Cost Share

CPNRD has implemented an Urban Conservation Cost Share Program to assist cities, villages and counties with a wide range of conservation recreational opportunities. The cost share rate is up to 50% of eligible project costs, with a maximum of \$40,000 available for each of the programs below:

### Recreation Area Development

This program is designed to assist sponsors with the establishment, development, and improvement of public recreation areas. Applications will be ranked by the NRD based on conservation priorities. The highest-ranking priorities would include the development and preservation of greenspace, lake dredging, native grass and prairie seeding, rain gardens, shoreline stabilization, and wildlife habitat.

### Trails Assistance

This Program is designed to cost share with sponsors on trails projects that have received approval for funding under the Transportation Enhancement Program administered by the Nebraska Department of Roads or the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

The Central Platte NRD has implemented these Urban Conservation cost share programs to partner with local communities to improve quality of life. Parks and public lands are proven to improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve air quality, produce habitat for wildlife, and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature.

Contact **Jesse Mintken at (308) 385-6282** or email: [mintken@cpnrd.org](mailto:mintken@cpnrd.org).  
Additional details and program applications are available on the NRD website at: [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org).

## Property Tax Request Down Nearly \$468,000

Central Platte NRD's 2018 fiscal year budget was approved by the board at \$22.5 million. The property tax request is down \$467,542.73, compared to last year's budget. The levy is also down from 0.03582. Below is the property tax required:

Property Tax Required		
	Fiscal 2017	Fiscal 2018
General Fund	\$4,841,431.20	\$5,639,132.09
Sinking Fund	\$1,265,243.62	-0-
Total Both Funds	\$6,106,674.82	\$5,639,132.09
Levy	0.03582	0.03239

The money that the NRD receives from local property taxes provides funding for flood control, nitrate management, soil health, tree planting, cost share to producers, recreation, education, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources benefits.

## Cedars: A Pasture Problem

by David Carr, Range Management Specialist

Farmers and ranchers from Dawson, Lincoln, and Custer counties in the Central Platte NRD joined together for the third year to burn pastures. This practice, known as prescribed burning, is being done by ranchers for a purpose: to combat the Eastern Red Cedar tree invasion as cost effectively as possible. These ranchers, known as the Central Platte Range-land Alliance, burned 6,500 acres during 12 burns conducted from February through April 2017. In three years, this group has burned over 20,000 acres.

The Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) is a native tree to Nebraska, however, over the last 50 years the population has exploded. Thus, all pastures in the NRD are now under constant invasion by this tree. Cedar trees will form a 100% closed canopy forest if left untreated. If the cedar tree problem is not addressed, the consequences will be economic loss to producers, habitat loss for wildlife, reduced tax base for counties and political subdivisions, and large destructive wildfires.

Prescribed burning on a landscape scale is the only cost effective way to reclaim pastures that are severely infested. The key is volunteer labor: neighbors-helping-neighbors. The commitment in labor and dollars to get ready for a burn is significant. Central Platte NRD has cost share programs to assist with boundary cutting and grazing deferment. The tree cutting cost share program is funded by a grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust; which will expire in 2018.

*How do pastures benefit from burning?* Spring prescribed burns are most



effective killing all sizes of cedars on the flat tops and bottoms or on moderate to gentle slopes. Large cedars growing on steep slopes or banks are usually not burned by the fire, unless dead trees are piled (stuffed) at the base.

For best results and safety, one thing has been learned by the Dawson County burn team: *"Preparation is the Key!"* The results from a well-prepared burn are outstanding. Nearly all of the small trees are wiped out and significant reduction is possible in the large trees.

Native grass species are increased after the fire and habitat is improved, and the threat of destructive summer wildfire is greatly reduced. But as one burn professional put it: prescribed burning is not a silver bullet. It is a lead bullet. You reload and keep firing.

If you are interested in joining a Rangeland Alliance, or would like more information on prescribed burning, contact:

**David Carr at (308) 385-6282, email: [carr@cpnrd.org](mailto:carr@cpnrd.org). or visit: [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org).**



*Photo taken 8/4/17 of a burn unit illustrating the distinct line between the cleared and burned unit on the left, compared to the unburned area with numerous cedars on the right.*

## Orders Open for Trees on November 1st

The NRD will begin taking orders for trees and weed barrier for Spring Planting on November 1st. If you've considered establishing a new windbreak or improving your current windbreak, *NOW* is the time to order.

**Tree Cost:** \$0.90/each + tax **SOLD IN BUNDLES OF 25 ONLY**  
Cost Share is available for trees & weed barriers at 50%. A minimum of 200 trees must be ordered to receive cost share funds.

**Small Acreage Packages:** These packages are for landowners that want to plant trees, but want fewer of each kind. Packages come with 50 total trees: 5 species (10 trees each) included in each package. The four types of packages cater to the following: Eastern Nebraska, Western Nebraska, Flowering, and Wildlife. The cost is \$50 per package.

**District Planting:** The NRD will plant orders of 200 trees or more for a service fee.



**Weed Barrier Cost:** \$0.50 per lineal foot (minimum 50 feet)  
Weed barrier is a black polypropylene fabric with the appearance of tightly-woven burlap. Moisture is able to penetrate the weed barrier fabric, but it prevents moisture loss from the soil beneath the fabric. Once the material is in place, post-planting maintenance is virtually eliminated and the material has a minimum service life of five years guaranteed.

### THREE WAYS TO ORDER:

- Print off an order form from our website: [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org) to bring in or mail in your order.
- Visit your local NRCS office.
- Visit the CPNRD office in Grand Island.

Visit [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org) for a list of trees available and to view photos and descriptions of each tree.  
You may also contact **Kelly Cole at (308) 385-6282** or [cole@cpnrd.org](mailto:cole@cpnrd.org) to have a tree booklet mailed to you.

**\*\*All orders received by December 31st will receive a 10% discount on trees, weed barrier and District planting.\*\***

## Updated Water Management Rules & Regulations

In August, the board approved changes to the NRD's Groundwater Management Rules & Regulations. The changes combine and update the Rules and Regulations for all of CPNRD's groundwater management programs into one document- the *General Provisions & Procedures for Enforcement*.

The new plan includes the following: Fully and Over Appropriated Plan, the Water Quality Program, the Water Quantity Program, and the Chemigation Program.

The two major changes made were cease and desist enforcement procedures and removal of the 2 in 10 irrigation rule. The *General Provisions & Procedures for Enforcement* is available on request and published on the CPNRD website's water quality and water quantity pages at: [cpnrd.org](http://cpnrd.org).