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Natural Resources District

NEWS RELEASE

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Agencies Reach Agreement to Deliver Water to Elwood Reservoir

Tri-Basin Natural Resources District directors approved an agreement Tuesday night so that water will be delivered to Elwood Reservoir this spring. The agreement is a cooperative effort among the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, and Tri-Basin NRD. It describes the terms for diverting Platte River water that may be available if melting Rocky Mountain snowpack or rain events cause Platte flows to exceed targets set by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. According to the agreement, Tri-Basin NRD and the Game and Parks Commission will evenly split payments to CNPPID for water diverted into Elwood Reservoir.

“This groundbreaking agreement will provide benefits for the residents of Gosper County and for all Tri-Basin NRD constituents,” said John Thorburn, Tri-Basin NRD General Manager. “The cooperation among Central, the Game and Parks Commission, and Tri-Basin NRD has made it possible to restore the benefits provided by this reservoir.”

Among those benefits is the protection of the fishery at Elwood Reservoir. Low water levels in recent years have dramatically reduced the number of game fish in the reservoir and, in turn, caused large die-offs of prey species.

Delivering water to Elwood Reservoir will also provide additional groundwater recharge to the area. Observation wells measured by Tri-Basin NRD and Central in the area have shown a drop of 10 to 20 feet in the last five years.

The streamflows in Platte and Republican tributary streams will also be augmented through this agreement. This will provide offsets for any depletions caused by groundwater irrigation and will also help Nebraska comply with the Republican River Compact.

“This agreement is truly a win-win for all parties involved and for the environment,” said Thorburn.