

Manager's Report
February 10, 2025

January was dry, but it usually is a dry month anyway. It was also colder than normal. Regardless, it's nice to have that gloomy month behind us as the days get longer, anticipating the arrival of spring.

We will have a work session for the board on the morning of February 19, starting at 9:30 AM. We originally planned a 10 AM start, but we moved it up to accommodate Devin Brundage's schedule. Devin will speak to us first thing about the Perkins County Canal project and implications for CNPPID's water supply. There is growing pressure to cut funding for this project as our state budget forecasts get negative, so I think that it's important for directors to understand its implications for water management in the Platte Basin.

The rest of the work session agenda items are focused on details of district operations. I divided up the work session agenda into topical categories (groundwater quantity, groundwater quality and land management). Under groundwater quantity management, Nolan and I will generally review the requirements of our water management rules and our integrated management plan requirements. I also listed the proposed sustainable aviation fuel plant. I would like to discuss the information that the board wants to have to evaluate the water supply impacts of that project.

Also under that topic I would like to review the status of the Water Conservation Incentive Program and applications for the "commingled option" (see application list in packet). Finally, I think that the board needs an update on the status of our certified irrigated land management database. We moved our data from PCS to Longitude 103 last year, along with several other NRDs. We are having challenges using the database, however, because much of the data needs review and revision. It's a technical topic, but an important one. Data is the currency of water management. Our vast data reserves need to be protected to preserve their value, both for the district and our constituents. I will recommend a short-term technical assistance contract with Longitude 103 to help us start the process of upgrading our data.

Under the category of groundwater quality, the main topic will be applications for the Nitrogen Reduction Incentive Program (NRIP). Thanks to the efforts of Carrie Putnam and Pat Nott, with a lot of help from Sasha in promoting the program, Tri-Basin received the third largest number of applications for the NRIP program among Nebraska NRDs. Even though we limited applicants to 280 acres per entity, which some NRDs didn't do, we received applications for more than double the amount of money that we were allocated. DNR is hoping to access additional funds that will enable us to approve all, or nearly all the applications that we received. Since we don't know the exact amount of additional funds that we will receive, I will ask the board to approve applications that will be equivalent to our original allocation. Since final determinations of eligibility need to be made by NRDs by March 15, I may also ask the board to approve all remaining eligible applications, contingent on funding

availability. Also under the water quality category, I will ask Nolan to give a short report on the status of our chemigation program.

We have four items listed under land management. The board asked Dalton and I to look at alternatives to hiring a full-time land management technician. We propose to hire two people to work seasonally (April- mid September). I would like to budget 1000 hours for each person, with a starting wage of \$18/hour. These employees would see no other benefits, aside from three paid holidays. Also under this category, we will discuss IPA annual meetings, Dalton will give a briefing about the planned prescribed burn in Gosper County and I will share a plan, requested by the Building Committee, for adding office space and other improvements to the Armory. All this morning discussion will take awhile, but it should shorten up our regular afternoon meeting.

January was a gloomy month, but also very busy. Our annual recognition banquet was held at the Windmill Event Center in Minden and it went very well. The South-Central Water Conference was also well-attended (about 100 people were there for the lunch). Our keynote speaker, Ms. Joy Hayden, spoke about the 1935 Republican River flood. Her talk was both fascinating and entertaining. All the speakers did a great job and provided good information for those who participated. Next up was the NARD Legislative conference. This is always an interesting and informative meeting. This year, Tri-Basin hosted the Republican Basin banquet, which was very well-attended. I really appreciate Sasha's efforts to make all these events successful. Sasha and I plan to meet with the Information and Education committee on February 25 at 1:30 PM at the NRD office to review plans for events and educational efforts in the upcoming year. By the way, we will participate in a Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Ag Industry Symposium at the Ag Center on Wednesday, March 12, starting at 8:30 AM. Contact Carrie Putnam to RSVP, if you're interested in that meeting.

This past month, staff supervisors and I have been conducting annual evaluations of employee performance. Evaluations are primarily intended to help employees better understand and figure out how to satisfactorily perform their job tasks. Evaluations are also great opportunities for problem solving. The main benefit for me, however, is having an opportunity to talk one-on-one with employees. I usually take more information away from an evaluation meeting than the employee being evaluated.

That's all that I have to mention this month. I look forward to seeing all of you next Wednesday morning.