

Points for Opposition of Water Transfer

CNPPID, LRNRD, and the Tri-Basin NRD are proposing transferring up to 11,000 acre/ft. of water from the Platte River Basin annually through Turkey Creek to the Republican River Basin to decrease that Basin's obligations to Kansas. This water would be removed from the Platte River before it reaches the critical habitat for whooping cranes. They are indicating that this would be "excess water" in the Platte. They are also indicating that they would keep this water right junior to all other permits in the basin now and in the future. It is unclear if water rights laws will even allow that.

Audubon and other Conservation Organizations are opposed to transferring water out of the Platte River Basin for the following reasons:

1. The "term excess water" is not realistic in that the portion of the Platte River they wish to remove water from is designated as over-appropriated. Which means there are already more permits and uses of water than there is water to fill them.
2. Water transferred from the Platte Basin would be detrimental to reaching the water goals of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. (An agreement between CO, NE, and WY as well as the Federal Government and water users in the Platte River Basin to meet Endangered Species Act requirements).
 - a. The water goal for the first thirteen-year increment was to reduce the deficit to target flows in the Platte River by 130,000 to 150,000 acre/ft. of water annually by the end of that time period.
 - b. During the first ten years, the program has been able to reduce those deficits by approximately 90,000 acre. /ft. This still leaves 40,000 to 60,000 acre/ft. yet to be realized.
 - c. It has been determined that the program will not reach this goal by 2019 and the Governance committee has drafted and will seek an 10-13 year extension to this first increment in order to meet these water goals and stay in compliance.
 - d. Water goals continue to be met by finding ways to retime water to fill shortages during certain months. Any water that is pulled out of the system to another basin would be eliminated and not available for retiming. This is in direct conflict with program goals.
 - e. Any water permitted for removal now, is not available for use in the basin of origin in the future when it is needed.
3. Moving water from one basin to another will transfer invasive species such as Purple loosestrife and Phragmites all along the watercourse costing taxpayers and landowners large sums of money to control them.
4. Current estimates show 70% of the Platte Water is already gone before it reaches the Central Platte and because of this 90% of the original open sand habitat for cranes and other birds is now gone.
5. A successful transfer application would open the door to even more attacks on what little water is left.

Benefits to water in the river.

1. Water in the river protects city well fields all long the Platte River from nitrate infiltration as described in the following paper.

EFFECTS OF NO-FLOW RIVER CONDITIONS ON THE PLATTE RIVER WELL FIELD¹

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¹Paper No. 87030 of the *Water Resources Bulletin*. Discussions are open until October 1, 1988.



Abstract

ABSTRACT: Effects of no-flow river conditions on the quantity and quality of water in the Platte River well field of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska, were examined utilizing a finite-difference computer simulation model specifically developed for this well field. Results suggest that the effects of these no-flow periods on water quality may be most important. In particular, the no-flow periods eliminate the hydraulic barrier between the well field and an area north of the River that is contaminated with nitrate (concentrations in the 20 to 40 mg/1 NO₃-N range). They also change the direction and velocity of movement of the contaminated ground water. Simulation results indicate that contaminated ground water moves toward the well field with a velocity of 0.42 ft/d after 30 days of no-flow and 1.43 ft/d after 180 days of no-flow. Limiting no-flow conditions to 10 consecutive days would protect the well field.

2. Higher flows in the 15,000 cubic feet per second range will scour and widen channel. This is above the “target Flows” and are what CNPPID and others are calling “Excess flows”.
3. Water is beneficial to wildlife and provides habitat for wintering geese and ducks that also provides recreation to hunters and fisherman.
4. Water in the river replenishes ground water to be used by irrigators and other water users.
5. Water in the Platte River replenishes water supplies for city well fields as far downstream as Lincoln and Omaha.
6. Maintains spring migration of cranes, which brings \$14.3 million in the economy each year.
7. Keeping water in the basin allows for use of it in the basin of origin in the future if it is deemed necessary
8. Invasive species will be transferred along with the water.
 - a. Purple loosestrife, phragmites, Asian carp will be transferred along with the water all along the transfer route. Landowners along Turkey creek will then become responsible for control of these species.
 - b. In addition to the plants, Asian carp that are now found in the Platte River will be transferred into Harlan County Reservoir and into Kansas. This will be detrimental to the fisheries in these waters.

What to do once the application has been filed:

1. Contact your NRD representative and ask politely that they oppose this transfer.
2. Write letters to the editor
3. Contact Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and ask politely that they oppose this.
4. Talk to local farmers to engage them in protecting their water supply in the Platte River Basin

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