



## Special Report

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### IMPORTANT PUBLIC NOTICE AT THE END OF THIS LETTER

#### DIABOLICAL PLATTE RIVER ENDANGERED SPECIES RECOVERY PROGRAM

#### aka COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT AWAITS GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

• After nearly ten years, and countless meetings of committees and subcommittees, the dreaded Cooperative Agreement (CA) is now completed and will become a chilling reality if Governor Heineman signs off on it.

• If the CA is approved, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) will have succeeded in pulling off probably its most extreme power grab in its seventy-year history. The sole cause of this incredibly expensive and intrusive program is the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and specifically as it concerns the whooping crane, piping plover, least tern and pallid sturgeon.

• A group called the Governance Committee (GC) which is comprised of representatives from Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado, USFWS and various environmental groups devised the plan. Nebraska's representatives are the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and to specifically represent "downstream water users", Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID). Both these entities are subdivisions of state government and cannot deal with the USFWS at arm's length because the operation of their hydro power turbine generators falls under federal government oversight and licensure (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission). Therefore, the fact that both NPPD and CNPPID support the CA should come as no surprise, and cannot be given all the weight DNR and GC want to assign it. Both have a gun to their heads. These two governmental subdivisions do not represent or speak for the vast majority of

Nebraska irrigators. What might be good for them and their operating licenses does not necessarily mean the same for all other Nebraska irrigators.

• Basically, the CA involves increasing and retiming flows of the Platte River as measured at Grand Island in order to replicate the sporadic flows and riverine habitat as existed 150 years ago, before such necessary and beneficial man-made structures such as dams and canals which provide flood control, electric power generation, and recreation, were constructed.

• In order to drag us back into predevelopment times, the CA seeks to somehow come up with an additional 417,000 acre feet of Platte River flows as measured at Grand Island. They plan on achieving this in three phases, each phase being ten or so years in duration. The cost to taxpayers for just phase one of the program is \$317 million. This huge number does not include the tens of millions of dollars that will be lost from our economy as irrigation is reduced and the income it generates for our state and local economies declines. As one top economist puts it, the CA will "pull the plug on irrigated agriculture."

• Now consider this: The DNR has already declared the Platte River basin, all the way from Columbus to our western borders with Colorado and Wyoming, as fully- or over-appropriated under LB 962. So, satisfying the goals of the program would simply have to come from severely restricting and shutting down existing users.