

COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT UPDATE

We have heard that October 1, 2006, the Platte River Basin endangered species habitat enhancement program known as the Cooperative Agreement (CA) will be finalized and put out for the governors of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming, and the Department of Interior (US Fish and Wildlife Service) to sign or not. If our Nebraska governor signs off on the CA, it will effectively hand over control of the Platte River Basin in Nebraska - border to border - to the US Fish and Wildlife Service forever under what is called "adaptive management." The CA ultimately seeks to somehow generate an additional 417,000 acre feet of Platte River flows as measured at Grand Island. The CA involves three phases over a 30-year period. Phase I involves about 130,000 acre feet

of water. When you consider what is happening now under LB 962, and then factor in what the CA seeks in new flows, it boggles the mind and clearly places groundwater irrigation in great jeopardy. The cost to taxpayers of just Phase 1 of the CA has skyrocketed from 75 million dollars to 185 million dollars.

For almost ten years now we have worked to oppose the CA and we will do what we can to convince the governor not to sign over control of the Platte River Basin to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The Governor's Platte River Advisory Council is planning to hold some meetings this summer to hear what the public thinks about the CA. We will appear and testify at these meetings.

BIRD FLU THREAT IS REAL

- Every year during the spring and fall migration season, somewhere between 8-10 million waterfowl stop over in the Central Platte River valley where they commingle in massive numbers in our fields, rivers and lakes.
- The pollution to our water and land caused by these waterfowl is incredible and poses a significant health risk to all of us.
- This public health problem became very serious over the past several years as the West Nile virus reared its ugly head here in Nebraska where 2,320 cases were reported during the period 2002 - 2005, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).
- Now the health threat posed by these massive numbers of waterfowl has greatly increased with the advent of the Avian Flu.
- According to the Nebraska Health and Human Services (HHS), the Type A Avian flu virus, known as H5N1, is "highly pathogenic". Wild birds are the natural host of the flu virus, which is spread when birds shed the virus in saliva, nasal secretions and feces. According to the HHS website, health officials believe that an avian flu pandemic is likely and that such a pandemic could potentially kill millions of people.
- All of this considered, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is still pressuring Nebraska to approve a program called the Cooperative Agreement which seeks to

create massive new habitat and river flows for the alleged benefit of certain endangered birds and fish. The Cooperative Agreement will increase the number of waterfowl stopping over in our basin during the spring and fall migrations. The public health threat posed by these migrating waterfowl is real and deadly serious.

- The Cooperative Agreement was a terrible idea when it was first unveiled over eight years ago - before the West Nile and Avian flu viruses were even known to be a public health threat.
- Now the Cooperative Agreement program is nothing short of lunacy. However, our state Department of Natural Resources and the FWS are pushing our governor to sign the CA.
- We cannot sit back and allow the Cooperative Agreement to proceed. We must step up and tell the FWS that until all our public health concerns are fully addressed, Nebraskans will not permit the Cooperative Agreement Program to proceed, PERIOD!
- Contact the governor and let him know he should not sign off on the CA.