

NEWS RELEASE

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

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Platte River Water Flows Being Monitored *State Officials provide update on spring snowmelt potential*

(Lincoln, NE) High water conditions are occurring along the North Platte River in Nebraska and conditions are expected to continue to intensify throughout the spring, according to Brian Dunnigan, Director of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and Al Berndt, Assistant Director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) indicates there is limited storage space in the Wyoming reservoirs along the North Platte River and its tributaries to capture all of the expected snowmelt runoff from the mountains in Colorado and Wyoming.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is reporting snowpack in the Upper North Platte area at 134 percent of average (with some areas having as much as 182 percent of average) and in the Lower North Platte area (including Sweetwater and Laramie rivers) at 114 percent of average.

The total conservation storage capacity of the Wyoming reservoirs is 2,787,800 acre-feet of water. At the end of February, the reservoirs were near their maximum capacity with 2,258,801 acre-feet of water. The estimated snowmelt runoff potential in the North Platte system above the lowest reservoir is approximately 1,475,000 acre-feet. In response, the Bureau of Reclamation began releasing storage water downstream in early March to make room in the Wyoming reservoirs for expected spring runoff.

In Nebraska, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID), the owners and operators of Lake McConaughy, are currently bypassing some inflows and are also storing some water in Lake McConaughy. CNPPID may request a temporary variance from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to allow an increase in the amount of water that can be stored in Lake McConaughy to help alleviate flooding downstream.

DNR is in daily contact with the USBR and CNPPID officials as water is released and share information on its downstream effects in Nebraska. DNR and NEMA officials are working together to monitor conditions will continue to provide updates.

Currently there is moderate flooding at North Platte, Nebraska and minimum flooding at Lewellen, Nebraska. Landowners along the North Platte River should keep a watchful eye on the river over the next few months. Information on what may be expected at different high water levels is available for certain sites along the North Platte River on the National Weather Service website at <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lbf/>.

General flood safety tips include:

- **Stay informed** and keep a battery operated radio for receiving local news and storm information
- **Safeguard possessions** and consider removing them from flood prone areas if time permits
- **Develop an emergency plan** including a safety kit and evacuation route to higher ground if necessary
- **Have a designated location** for family members to meet if they become separated
- **Do not attempt** to drive, walk or swim in flooded areas
- **If you must evacuate** your home turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if possible

Those with questions about flooding in their area and anyone needing assistance should contact their local county emergency manager. A directory of all local managers is available on the NEMA website at <http://www.nema.ne.gov/director-lists/directors.html>.

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