

NEBRASKA WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION

2020 PROPOSED POLICY POSITIONS

Adopted November 23, 2020

I. CLEAN WATER ACT

NWRA supports amendments to the federal Clean Water Act which preserve existing water rights and uses and retains Nebraska's authority to define the uses of water which are to be protected under the Act. NWRA supports the limitation of the Clean Water Act to defining waters of the United States as traditionally navigable waters and opposes efforts to expand federal jurisdiction. (Originally adopted November, 2015; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

II. CONSERVATION MEASURES

NWRA supports any and all voluntary conservation measures which, when adopted by natural resources districts, municipalities, irrigation districts, private companies or individuals, result in more efficient use of both ground water and surface water supplies without jeopardizing flows or affecting current water rights, and which facilitate economic benefits and minimize adverse environmental impacts. NWRA supports the application and implementation of new research and technology to facilitate informed decisions by political subdivisions. (Originally adopted November, 2012; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

III. ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

NWRA supports implementation of the federal Endangered Species Act and the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act in a manner that will provide effective protection for endangered species, while recognizing the primary authority of the states in water rights issues; providing due process to individuals, states, and others who suffer losses for the greater good of the American public through implementation of state and federal acts; and allowing reasonable use of natural resources. (Originally adopted November, 2015; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

IV. INNOVATIVE CONJUNCTIVE MANAGEMENT EFFORTS

NWRA supports public and private cooperation in the designation and administration of conjunctive water management areas, and supports laws which provide the institutional framework for the equitable assessment and imposition of fees and taxes associated with integrated water management efforts. NWRA supports innovative management of surface delivery, ground water recharge, and underground storage and recovery projects to supplement ongoing efforts to conjunctively manage surface and ground water resources. (Originally adopted November, 2015; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

V. INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF GROUND WATER AND SURFACE WATER

Management, conservation and beneficial use of hydrologically-connected ground water and surface water are essential to Nebraska's agricultural industry, public water suppliers, and to the continued economic prosperity and well-being of the state. NWRA supports policy decisions and water management actions at the state and local levels which:

- recognize, define, and manage hydrologically-connected surface water and ground water based upon sound scientific principles;
- address current conflicts between surface water and ground water users;
- provide for the continued use and development of surface water and ground water in accordance with responsible management planning;
- facilitate participation of surface water and ground water interests and assure their perspectives and legal responsibilities are considered when developing integrated management planning and program implementation; and
- provide adequate state and local funding to:
 - meet the needs for planning and implementation of integrated water management;
 - address federal water policy mandates;
 - develop controls to supplement or re-time available surface water supply;
 - resolve, prevent, or minimize conflicts; and
 - coordinate the use and development of water supply.

(Originally adopted November, 2012; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

VI. INTEGRATED WATER MANAGEMENT DATA

NWRA supports the Nebraska Legislature's continued funding of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), including for DNR to research, study, and collect data to facilitate the sound joint management of integrated surface and ground water sources by DNR and NRDs and to implement management of hydrologically-connected surface and ground water. (Originally adopted November, 2013; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

VII. LOCAL CONTROL OF NATURAL RESOURCES

NWRA supports the continued management of natural resources by natural resources districts, irrigation districts, reclamation districts and other local entities. Local control enables those most affected by management actions to have a direct role in their development. (Originally adopted November, 2009; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

VIII. NEBRASKA ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

The Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) was approved by the state's voters and enacted by the Nebraska Legislature to provide funding to assist landowners, organizations and public agencies to develop and preserve the state's environmental resources. NWRA supports the purposes and goals of the NET and opposes efforts to divert these funds for other uses. (Originally adopted November, 2012; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

IX. NEBRASKA WATER SUSTAINABILITY FUND

NWRA supports long-term funding for water sustainability projects administered by the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission. NWRA supports continued funding of the Water Sustainability Fund. (Originally adopted November, 2015; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

X. PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

NWRA supports Nebraska's participation in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP). Without this program's existence, individual consultation actions under the Endangered Species Act or the Nebraska Nongame and Endangered Species Conservation Act

may have been required for all water related activities within or upstream of the central Platte River valley. In conjunction with one another, components of the Program are intended to serve as reasonable and prudent alternatives for such consultations. NWRA specifically supports Nebraska's Platte River Program obligations to offset new depletions, and it supports the appropriation of state funding and dedication of other funding sources.

The 1st increment of the PRRIP was established and funded through Congress in 2007 for a 13 year period extending through 2019. NWRA supports the proposed 13 year extension of the 1st increment through 2032 to achieve all of the water, land and science based goals. Nebraska has continued to receive regulatory certainty for all water related activities. NWRA supports the efforts of the Governor and Nebraska's Congressional delegation to secure approval of the extension to this successful recovery program. (Originally adopted November, 2018)

XI. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

NWRA supports the development of sound water policy on a statewide and national level by focusing on how legislators, agencies, water managers, local governments, and communities solve problems and protect the interests of Nebraska's residents. NWRA supports public notice and participation, and the continued influence of a wide range of stakeholders on Nebraska's water management efforts. (Proposed November, 2019)

XII. APPROVALS FROM DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Land acquisitions, purchase agreements for center-pivot sprinkler systems, and other financial activities are among many important private-sector investment decisions which often prompt proposed changes in location where surface water-project sponsors are requested to deliver irrigation water. NWRA supports prompt action by DNR on all applications, including by setting time limits on applications to conduct water in streams, or to transfer the location of use. (Originally adopted November, 2012; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

XIII. FEDERAL FUNDING FOR WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

NWRA supports federal funding for water resources planning, and construction, operation, and maintenance of water management projects in Nebraska. (Originally adopted November, 2016; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)

XIV. WATER SUPPLY ENHANCEMENT

NWRA supports the enhancement and rehabilitation of existing surface water storage facilities and the development of new water storage supplies for the purposes of direct use, augmentation of stream flows, flood damage reduction, ground water recharge, recreation, fish and wildlife, and water quality improvements. (Originally adopted November, 2015; Proposed/Revised November, 2019)