

1 **GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION ITEMS**

2 **Goal 1:** Incrementally achieve and sustain a fully appropriated condition while maintaining economic viability, social and environmental health, safety, and welfare of the basin.

3 **Objective 1.1:** Maintain previous increment mitigation efforts.

4 **Action Item 1.1.1:** Keep policies, projects, and practices in place that provide offsets or supply equivalent offsets so that the current level of depletions is not exceeded.

5 **Objective 1.2:** Offset impacts of streamflow depletions to (A) surface water appropriations and (B) water wells constructed in aquifers dependent on recharge from streamflow to the extent those depletions are due to water use initiated after July 1, 1997.

Action Item 1.2.1: The identification of pre- and post-1997 levels of development and associated depletions includes assessment of the following:

- changes in irrigated acres;
- changes in municipal and domestic uses of water;
- changes in livestock use of water;
- changes in industrial uses of water;
- changes in the amount of surface water and groundwater applied on commingled irrigated land; or
- any other relevant changes in water consumption that affect streamflows.

6 **Action Item 1.2.2:** Identify, quantify, and proportion the source and quantity of water used on acres irrigated with both surface water and groundwater. Gather data on water use on such lands (both why and when irrigators use surface water or groundwater).

7 **Action Item 1.2.3:** Continue to identify and implement projects that may be used to enhance water supply. These projects shall be pursued on a basin-wide level, when such projects will help achieve sustainable levels of supply and use and address water shortages in one NRD that affect more than one NRD.

Action Item 1.2.4: Continue to reduce consumptive water use through retirement of irrigated lands, water use allocation, and/or other management options.

Action Item 1.2.5: Ensure that offsets of depletions occur at the appropriate time, amount, and location to mitigate the impact of the depletion. Allow for flexibility in providing offsets when appropriate.

Action Item 1.2.6: Apply current methodologies, and continue to refine these methods of estimating depletions and accretions. Gather and evaluate data that could be used to estimate depletions and accretions to streamflow using tools as agreed on by NeDNR and the NRDs. Apply these methods for calculating depletions and offsets uniformly across the basin.

Objective 1.3: Make progress toward a fully appropriated condition.

Action Item 1.3.1: Understand the economic impacts of supply variability on water users.

Action Item 1.3.1.1: Identify who is affected (hydrologically and economically), and to what extent, by water supply variability.

Action Item 1.3.1.2: Partner with impacted water users and other entities to gather data and study economic impacts of supply variability as well as regulatory and management actions.

Action Item 1.3.2: Assess short- and long-term basin water supply and demand.

Action Item 1.3.2.1: Evaluate expected natural flows of the Basin and available storage water.

Action Item 1.3.2.2: Identify specific locations and flow targets critical to water users in the basin.

Action Item 1.3.2.3: Forecast location and timing of shortage and excess within the basin.

1 **Action Item 1.3.2.4:** Develop protocols for assessing and communicating available excess flows

2 **Action Item 1.3.3:** Explore and implement potential measures to mitigate impacts (hydrologic and economic) of basin supply variability due to human-made depletions on surface water and groundwater users.

3 **Action Item 1.3.3.1:** Evaluate options to maintain economic viability of surface water and ground water infrastructure.

4 **Action Item 1.3.3.2:** Identify conjunctive management opportunities.

5 **Action Item 1.3.3.3:** Study potential for developing markets and transfer protocols for annual surface water and groundwater supplies.

6 **Action Item 1.3.3.4:** Study management options of storage water (both surface water reservoirs and aquifer storage; and existing and potential new storage) to provide flexibility and increase resiliency of water supplies.

7 **Action Item 1.3.3.5:** Support diversity in revenue streams of water users within the basin.

8 **Action Item 1.3.4:** Develop a basin drought contingency plan for management of supplies during times of shortage.

9 **Action Item 1.3.4.1:** Develop a basin drought monitoring protocol for defining and determining drought conditions.

10 **Action Item 1.3.4.2:** Identify potential basin-wide mitigation and response actions to drought conditions and opportunities for cooperation across the basin (that is, management of storage water).

11 **Action Item 1.3.4.3:** Conduct a drought simulation workshop with NeDNR, NRDs, and water users to assist in developing and testing of protocols during a drought.

1 **Action Item 1.3.4.4:** Identify roles for administering and implementing basin drought contingency plan.

2 **Objective 1.4:** Conduct technical analyses to support and evaluate effectiveness of plan and adequacy in sustaining progress toward a fully appropriated level of water use.

3 **Action Item 1.4.1:** NeDNR and the NRDs will continue to assemble and share data annually on any permitted new and expanded uses of surface and groundwater and any associated mitigations in the basin.

4 **Action Item 1.4.2:** An evaluation (robust review) of the impact of pre- and post-July 1, 1997, development and progress towards plan's goals/objectives/action items shall be conducted for each plan increment.

5 **Action Item 1.4.3:** Continue to refine the methodology used to determine the difference between the current and fully appropriated levels of development in each NRD.

6 **Action Item 1.4.3.1:** Continue to study the effects of conservation measure effects on the overall difference between current and fully appropriated conditions.

7 **Action Item 1.4.3.2:** As part of understanding the difference between the current level of development and a fully appropriated level of development, an evaluation of the balance of water supplies and demands shall be conducted for each plan increment.

8 **Action Item 1.4.4:** The NRDs and NeDNR will continue to cooperate on the development of the necessary modeling tools or technical analyses that are aimed at providing updated or refined estimates for the robust review.

9 **Objective 1.5:** Use available funds and actively pursue new funding opportunities to offset depletions as well as to develop, maintain and update data and analytical tools needed to implement this plan.

Action Item 1.5.1: Cooperate with the federal government to use programs such as the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and others that promote reductions in consumptive use and enhance water supplies.

Action Item 1.5.2: Encourage Platte River Basin NRDs, agencies, and water users to participate in these programs.

Action Item 1.5.3: Work to secure necessary funding for existing and proposed projects that will advance the goals of this plan.

Action Item 1.5.4: Maintain, improve, or acquire data and modeling tools, as agreed by NeDNR and the Platte River Basin NRDs that will be useful for assessing progress and further implementing this plan.

Objective 1.6: Update and continue implementing IMPs in each Platte River Basin NRD.

Action Item 1.6.1: Update individual NRD IMPs to be consistent with this Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan.

Action Item 1.6.2: Monitor and amend individual IMPs as needed to keep the IMPs current.

Action Item 1.6.3: As prescribed by Nebraska Revised Statute 46-715(5)(d)(iv), a consultative and collaborative process shall identify goals and objectives for subsequent increments, if necessary, of the Individual NRD IMPs.

Goal 2: Prevent or mitigate human-induced reductions in the flow of a river or stream that would cause non-compliance with an interstate compact or decree or other formal state contract or agreement.

Objective 2.1: Prevent human-induced streamflow depletions that would cause non-compliance by Nebraska with the Nebraska New Depletion Plan included within the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, for as long as the Program exists.

Action Item 2.1.1: Ensure that the groundwater and surface water controls adopted in the individual NRD IMPs are sufficient to ensure that the state will remain in compliance with the Nebraska New Depletion Plan.

1 **Action Item 2.1.2:** Collectively, as defined in the Nebraska New Depletion Plan, offset the new depletions caused by new uses within the Platte River Basin NRDs.

2 **Action Item 2.1.3:** Prepare reports to Governance Committee of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program on status and activities related to Nebraska New Depletion Plan.

3 **Goal 3:** Partner with municipalities and industries to maximize conservation and water use efficiency.

4 **Objective 3.1:** Continue to collect data on water use and existing conservation plans of municipalities and industries within the basin.

Action Item 3.1.1: To advance understanding of water usage by municipalities and industries, gather information on total pumping, consumptive use, and timing of any return flows and collect data on water use efficiency and conservation methods being employed.

Action Item 3.1.2: Uniformly assess consumptive use, impacts on streamflows, and requirements and responsibilities for offsets due to current and expanded municipal and industrial uses, using agreed upon modeling tools. Consistent methods for tracking municipal and industrial consumptive use will be specified in individual NRD IMPs.

Action Item 3.1.3: If any municipalities have formal conservation plans in place, review these for strategies that can be applied to other municipalities in the basin.

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6 **Objective 3.2:** Invite municipalities and industries to the annual meetings.

Action Item 3.2.1: To improve communication among all entities in the basin regarding water uses and facilitate the sharing of data, all municipalities and industrial users in the basin will be invited to the annual basin-wide meetings.

Action Item 3.2.2: Solicit feedback from municipalities and industries on impacts of water regulations, restrictions, and conservation on their development, ability to attract new industries and accommodate economic growth.

Action Item 3.2.3: Communicate to municipalities and industries the changes that will occur when relevant statutes change in 2026, making sure expectations and requirements are clear, and work with them to develop strategies.

Action Item 3.2.4: Keep open conversations going about what is being done and what can be done to conserve water and what impacts conservation has on streamflows.

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Objective 3.3: Establish baseline water use levels for each municipal and industrial user by January 1, 2026.

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Action Item 3.3.1: Use data collected from the municipalities and industries to develop water use baselines, incorporating feedback and input received. In accordance with statute, the base amount of the allocation for a municipality shall be determined as the greater of either a) the amount of water authorized by a permit, or b) their greatest annual use for governmental, commercial, and industrial use prior to January 1, 2026, plus a per capita allowance.

Action Item 3.3.2: In accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute 46-740, prior to January 1, 2026, the NRDs will continue to offset increases in municipal and industrial consumptive water use that result in depletions. The NRDs are responsible for offsetting any new depletions that occur from 1997 to 2026 due to new or expanded municipal and industrial uses, with the exception of industrial consumptive uses greater than 25 million gallons per year.

Action Item 3.3.3: On and after January 1, 2026, after municipal and industrial baselines have been established, the requirement to offset any new uses beyond the baseline that cause depletions to streamflows will be assumed by municipalities and industrial uses. This can be addressed in the individual NRD IMPs.

Action Item 3.3.4: Any reductions in consumptive use by municipalities or industrial users, prior to January 1, 2026, that result in accretions to streamflow will accrue as benefit to the NRDs (and go toward offsetting post-1997 depletions or returning to fully appropriated condition). Any reductions in consumptive use by municipalities or industrial users on and after January 1, 2026 that result in accretions to streamflow may accrue as benefit to the NRDs.

Goal 4: Work cooperatively to identify and investigate disputes between groundwater users and surface water appropriators and, if determined appropriate, implement management solutions to address such issues.

Objective 4.1: Identify disputes between groundwater users and surface water appropriators.

Action Item 4.1.1: Surface water appropriators or groundwater users may present data and other supporting information identifying the nature and scope of potential disputes at the annual meeting.

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Action Item 4.1.2: The Platte River Basin NRDs and NeDNR may present data and other supporting information identifying the nature and scope of potential disputes at the annual meeting.

Objective 4.2: Investigate and address issues between groundwater users and surface water appropriators, based on investigation results.

Action Item 4.2.1: NeDNR and the Platte River Basin NRDs shall determine whether specific disputes identified via Goal 5, Objective 1, have a hydrologic impact.

Action Item 4.2.2: NeDNR and the Platte River Basin NRDs will investigate a given dispute to determine whether the issue should be addressed through modification of the Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan, individual NRD IMPs, or by other means.

Action Item 4.2.3: If it is determined, as a result of the investigation, that the issue is not a basin-wide issue, the issue will be turned over to the appropriate affected NRD(s) or NeDNR.

Action Item 4.2.4: NeDNR or the affected Platte River Basin NRD(s), as determined in Action Item 4.2.3, working with the affected water user(s), shall develop management solutions, as appropriate, to address the issue(s).

Action Item 4.2.5: NeDNR and the affected Platte River Basin NRD(s) shall update the Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan and/or individual IMP, as appropriate.

Goal 5: Keep the Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan current and keep stakeholders informed.

Objective 5.1: Meet at least annually to review progress toward achieving the goals and objectives of this Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan and those portions of individual NRD IMPs that implement this plan.

Action Item 5.1.1: Regular presentations are anticipated to include an annual forecast of basin water supply and demand, current understanding of economic impacts of supply variability on water users as well as impacts to social and environmental health, safety and welfare, and summary of conservation efforts of municipalities and industries.

Action Item 5.1.2: Present summary of conservation plans of municipalities and industries within the basin.

Objective 5.2: Improve information sharing with interested stakeholders.

Action Item 5.2.1: Maintain a database of interested stakeholders; it is the responsibility of interested parties to keep their contact information current by notifying NeDNR or their respective NRD of changes.

Action Item 5.2.2: Send notice of annual meeting to interested stakeholders, municipalities, and industries.

Action Item 5.2.3: Send electronic notice when new reports pertinent to this plan have been published to the internet.

Objective 5.3: Conduct planning for subsequent increments of the plan, as necessary.

Action Item 5.3.1: As prescribed by Statute, a consultative and collaborative process shall identify goals and objectives for subsequent increments, if necessary, of the basin plan.