



Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

District IV Fisheries Division/ 301 E. State Farm Rd. / North Platte, NE 69101

January 25, 2005

Greg Pelster, Board Chairman
Upper Republican Natural Resources District
PO Box 1140
Imperial, NE.69033

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DEPARTMENT OF
NATURAL RESOURCES

Dear Greg,

This letter is a follow-up to an oral request made myself at your December 7, 2004 board meeting asking that the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) have the opportunity to participate in the Upper Republican Natural Resource District's (URNRD) Integrated Management Plan development. Through its stewardship role the NGPC has a responsibility to manage and protect our state's wildlife, fishery, park and outdoor recreation resources in the best long term interests of the people. As a result of this mission, the NGPC invests public funds toward the preservation, maintenance and improvement of these outdoor resources and consequently has a vested interest in management of both the surface and groundwater resources of the region.

In Southwest Nebraska four large Bureau of Reclamation (BOR.) reservoirs highlight a key element of our District IV management responsibilities. Smaller waterbodies such as the Champion Mill Pond, Rock Creek, Wellfleet and Hayes Center State Lakes contribute to the diversity of our local outdoor resources and our management responsibilities.

At Enders Reservoir alone we have recently invested nearly \$500,000 toward fish habitat improvement, boater access and shoreline stabilization projects. Of that amount more than \$259,000 came from the Nebraska Aquatic Habitat Program, over \$190,000 from the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund, nearly \$40,000 from the BOR and almost \$12,000 from Sport Fish Restoration Funds. Multiple funding sources such as this accentuate the partnerships involved and the commitment made in protecting our State's outdoor resources.

More recently, in excess of \$600,000 was spent by some of the same partners on a major Aquatic Habitat Program rehabilitation project on Rock Creek State Lake. Over time, similar resource investments are planned for Red Willow Reservoir, Swanson Reservoir and Hayes Center State Lake. Expenditures described here do not include the public funds which were invested in these facilities when they first came on line. Nor do these expenditures include the cost of development and maintenance of recreation facilities, e.g., boat ramps, campgrounds and the cost of developing and maintaining a fishery, including stocking.

The NGPC, and its financial partners, feel that is critical to protect and enhance our state's outdoor resources not only because of the dedicated responsibility but also because of the need to protect a quality of life for its residents. A quality of life which is crucial in keeping people, both young and

old, living in an area and ultimately enticing others to relocate there.

According to the most recent 2001 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation Survey, Nebraska's 173,000 hunters and 296,000 anglers spent more than \$455 million on their sport. Economists note that a majority of these dollars are spent in rural areas. Those same survey results indicate that this spending supports approximately 8,800 Nebraska jobs and \$182 million in salaries and wages. It also creates a \$751 million ripple effect on the State economy. A diversified economy which is so important to our State.

Declining groundwater levels and stream flows within the boundaries of the URNRD, and in the entire SW Nebraska region threaten the future of fisheries, all water based recreational opportunities and the economy. With this in mind, the NGPC respectfully requests the opportunity to participate in the Integrated Management Plan development.

Sincerely,



Darrol Eichner, Dist. IV Fisheries Mgr.
Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
1500 Hwy. 61 N.
Ogallala, NE 69153

cc: Jasper Fanning, Manager URNRD
Rex Amack, Director NGPC
Roger Patterson, Director NDNR