



2026 Upper Platte River Basin-Wide IMP Report

Covering 2025 Activities

Annual Report of the Department of Water, Energy, and Environment

To Meet the Requirements of the North Platte, South Platte, Twin Platte, Central Platte, and Tri-Basin Natural Resources Districts' Upper Platte River Basin Integrated Management Plans for the 2026 Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Meeting

Sixth report for the second 10-year increment of the IMPs and Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan, adopted in September 2019

Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment
August 20, 2026



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I. Introduction

This report, presented at the annual basin-wide meeting on August 6, 2026, is intended to satisfy the tracking, reporting, and evaluation requirements of the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (Department) as described in the Monitoring and Studies section of the North Platte, South Platte, Central Platte, Twin Platte, and Tri-Basin Natural Resources Districts' (Upper Platte Basin NRDs) integrated management plans (IMPs). The tracking, reporting, and evaluation processes are described in more detail in the Monitoring and Studies section of the IMPs. This is the sixth report to be filed following adoption of the second increment IMPs in September 2019 and contains information on activities from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025.

Each of the five Upper Platte Basin IMPs require the Department to annually track and report on the following items: 1) any surface water permits issued; 2) any dam safety permits issued; 3) any groundwater permits issued; and 4) the associated offsets/mitigations for any new permits issued. These items are included in this report. The IMPs also discuss the inclusion of information on the location, amount, and timing of the depletions caused by each permitted new or expanded water use as well as the same information for the associated offset/mitigation. To facilitate the exchange of information between the Department and the NRDs, the Department reports on the cancellation of surface water permits each year.

In addition to reporting on annual permitting activities, the Department is also required to report the following items every five years: 1) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) livestock data; 2) U.S. Census Bureau population data; 3) inventory of sandpits; 4) inventory of reservoirs of less than 15 acre-feet; 5) any retirements of irrigated acres or other activities in the NRDs by the Department for the purpose of returning to a fully appropriated condition; and 6) offsets/mitigations for depletions resulting from increased consumptive use related to the items listed. These items, as well as the items reported annually, were analyzed as part of the 2019 and 2023 Robust Reviews, which were completed as part of the IMP requirements. The Robust Review analysis is described in more detail in the IMPs. The full 2019 Robust Review report is available on the Department's website.¹ The 2023 Robust Review results are available in presentations given to each NRD's Board of Directors and to the Governance Committee of the Platte River Recovery

¹ Appended to the Second Increment Upper Platte Basin-Wide Plan as Appendix B https://dwee.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/waterplanning/upper-platte/Appendix%20B_Robust%20Review_updated20190612.pdf and available online at <https://upjointplanning.nebraska.gov/>.

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Implementation Program (<https://dwee.nebraska.gov/water-planning/upper-platte-river-presentations>).

The items tracked and reported here will be used by the Upper Platte Basin NRDs and the Department to measure the success of the controls, incentive measures, and other action items in meeting the goals and objectives of the IMPs. Two evaluation processes for measuring success are described in the IMPs. The first is a yearly evaluation of the data contained in the annual report that will include a forecast of the balance of depletions and accretions for permitted new activities using analytical methods. The second evaluation process involves updating and running groundwater models with any of the relevant data from the annual exchange along with the data that is to be collected and considered every five years (Robust Review). In addition to these evaluation processes, the information that is tracked and reported will also be used by the State to help meet requirements of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP).

II. Upper Platte Basin Activities to be Reported Annually (January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025)

A. Summary

When a surface water or groundwater permit is reviewed, the Department assesses the potential for the permitted action to increase, decrease, or have no effect on consumptive water use. Depending on the circumstances, the applicant may be required to take action that would offset/mitigate the effect of any increase in consumptive use. Described in each section below are the permits issued by the Department and the associated review of potential changes in consumptive use.

The Department issued twenty (20) new surface water permits and one (1) new dam safety permit in 2025. Copies of the applications and orders for each permit are available in Appendix 1. More detailed information on each permit is available from the Department upon request.

B. Surface Water Applications Approved – Table 1, Pages 6-8

The Department approved twenty (20) new surface water applications in 2025. Nineteen (19) were temporary permits for groundwater recharge, and one (1) was a temporary manufacturing permit utilizing storage water from an existing water right. Temporary recharge permits only allow the diversion

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of streamflows in excess of already permitted uses and target flows when they are available during non-irrigation periods, and are intended to supply baseflow accretions back to the river. All temporary permits expire one year from the issued date. The conditions under which each permit can operate are specified in the order for each permit (see Appendix 1).

C. Dam Safety Applications Approved – Table 2, Page 8

The Department approved one (1) dam plan in 2025, P-21566, for stilling basin replacement at Oliver Dam. This permit did not modify the storage capacity or hydraulics of the dam and therefore does not result in a new consumptive use.

D. Groundwater Permits Approved – Table 3, Page 8

There were no Groundwater Permits approved by the Department in 2025.

E. Offsets/Mitigations for Issued Permits

No offsets were necessary for the nineteen (19) surface water applications approved for the purpose of groundwater recharge because the permits contained limitations that would ensure that these diversions would not impact state protected flows or species target flows. Permit A-20084 is a temporary permit to appropriate up to 150 acre-feet of Environmental Account water (A-17695) stored in Lake McConaughy (A-2374) for infrastructure testing at the PRRIP Cottonwood Ranch Complex. The permit does not increase Environmental Account storage, but repurposes water already consumed under A-17695 for a temporary use.

F. Additional Reporting of Cancelled Permits – Table 4, Pages 9-11

To facilitate the exchange of information between the Department and the NRDs, the Department is also reporting on the cancellation of twenty (20) temporary groundwater recharge permits issued for one year. Copies of the applications and orders for the cancelled surface water permits can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

G. Net Effect due to New or Expanded Permitted Activity and Offsets/Mitigations

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Management actions for the purpose of providing accretions to the river to offset depletions were analyzed as part of the 2023 Robust Review. Based on the analysis conducted for the Robust Review of the projects in place through 2020, the total of Nebraska's offset/mitigation efforts and depletions from new uses within the basin result in a net increase to streamflow. Since 2020, each annual report for newly permitted activities has also shown either a neutral impact or net increase to streamflow resulting from the balance of depletions from new or expanded uses and accretions from management actions. The depletions and accretions analysis was performed following the guidance document developed by the technical committee for the Platte Overappropriated Basin Committee. The guidance document for the annual calculations, *Basin-wide Technical Committee Guidance Document – Procedures for Annual Accounting Review and Robust Review to Assist Integrated Management Planning and Facilitate Reporting to the Platte River Recovery and Implementation Program*, can be found on the Department's website at

<https://dwee.nebraska.gov/sites/default/files/waterplanning/upper-platte/basin-wide-technical-committee-guidance20120814.pdf>.

III. Activities to be Reported on a Five (5) Year Basis

For the five (5) year tracking requirements, the Department reports on changes in livestock and human populations and may conduct an inventory of sandpits and reservoirs less than 15 acre-feet. The Department also reports on retirements of irrigated acres and other activities conducted for the purpose of returning to a fully appropriated condition and any offsets/mitigations necessary for depletions resulting from increased consumptive use by the items reported in this section.

Human and livestock population analyses were updated as part of the 2023 Robust Review. The inventory of sandpits and reservoirs less than 15 acre-feet for 2005 to 2010 was reported in the 2019 Robust Review report.

Recent reports can be found at <https://dwee.nebraska.gov/water-planning/upper-platte-basin-wide-meetings-and-annual-reports>. All reports prior to 2024 are available from the Department upon request.

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IV. Other Technical Analyses

The Department and NRDs used the updated Western Water Use Management Model (WWUMM) and COHYST Model to complete the 2023 Robust Review analyses as required by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 46-755(5)(d), the Upper Platte Basin-Wide Plan, and the IMPs. In 2024, the Department and NRDs presented the results of the 2023 Robust Review to each NRD's board. These presentations are available on the Department's website at: <https://dwee.nebraska.gov/water-planning/upper-platte-river-presentations>.

The reports, technical analyses, and modeling files that guided development efforts for the second increment basin-wide plan and IMPs are available at <http://upjointplanning.nebraska.gov/> for the 2019 Robust Review. The update on technical analyses and modeling files from the second increment will be reported in the 2023 Robust Review report.

IV. Summary

In 2025, the Department issued twenty (20) new surface water permits and one (1) dam safety permit. These permitted activities resulted in no new net depletions to the basin.

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Table 1: Surface Water Applications Approved by the Department during Reporting Period January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025

Appropriation Number	Approval Date	S-T-R W	Source or Canal	Use	Grant in CFS	Grant in AF	Surface Water or Groundwater Mitigation	Associated Variance
A-20061	2/21/2025	S14-T18N-R47W	Lisco Canal	Temporary Recharge	40	-	*	VAR-10928
A-20062	2/21/2025	S03-T21N-R54W	Castle Rock Canal	Temporary Recharge	88	-	*	VAR-10922
A-20063	2/21/2025	S10-T23N-R60W	Gering (Mitchell-Gering) Canal	Temporary Recharge	75	-	*	VAR-10914
A-20064	2/21/2025	S01-T20N-R53W	Chimney Rock Canal	Temporary Recharge	27	-	*	VAR-10912
A-20065	2/21/2025	S10-T23N-R60W	Mitchell (Mitchell-Gering) Canal	Temporary Recharge	100	-	*	VAR-10927
A-20066	2/21/2025	S27-T23N-R57W	Enterprise Canal	Temporary Recharge	40	-	*	VAR-10921
A-20067	2/21/2025	S10-T23N-R58W	Farmers (Tri-State) Canal	Temporary Recharge	294	-	*	VAR-10913
A-20068	2/21/2025	S32-T22N-R54W	Minatare Canal	Temporary Recharge	40	-	*	VAR-10915
A-20069	2/24/2025	S18-T14N-R36W	Keith-Lincoln Canal	Temporary Recharge	80.56	-	*	VAR-10966

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Appropriation Number	Approval Date	S-T-R W	Source or Canal	Use	Grant in CFS	Grant in AF	Surface Water or Groundwater Mitigation	Associated Variance
A-20070	2/24/2025	S13-T14N-R34W	North Platte Canal	Temporary Recharge	201	-	*	VAR-10963
A-20071	2/24/2025	S18-T14N-R33W	Paxton-Hershey Canal	Temporary Recharge	102.78	-	*	VAR-10964
A-20072	2/24/2025	S12-T14N-R33W	Suburban Canal	Temporary Recharge	77.47	-	*	VAR-10965
A-20073	2/24/2025	S14-T12N-R43W	Western Canal	Temporary Recharge	176.26	-	*	VAR-10962
A-20074	2/21/2025	S10-T23N-R58W	Northport (via Tri-State) Canal	Temporary Recharge	150	-	*	VAR-10920
A-20075	2/21/2025	S18-T10N-R23W	Dawson County Canal	Temporary Recharge	100	-	*	VAR-10992
A-20076	2/21/2025	S19-T12N-R26W	Gothenburg Canal	Temporary Recharge	100	-	*	VAR-10994
A-20077	2/21/2025	S08-T13N-R36W	Korty Canal	Temporary Recharge	1,200	-	*	VAR-10993
A-20078	2/27/2025	S08-T13N-R29W	Tri-County Canal	Temporary Recharge	950	-	*	VAR-11049
A-20079	2/27/2025	S28-T22N-R55W	Central Canal	Temporary Recharge	33	-	*	VAR-11045

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Appropriation Number	Approval Date	S-T-R W	Source or Canal	Use	Grant in CFS	Grant in AF	Surface Water or Groundwater Mitigation	Associated Variance
A-20084	4/4/2025	S03-T14-R38W	Kingsley Reservoir Environmental Account (A-2374, A-17695)	Temporary Manufacturing	75	150	**	VAR-11093

* Variance granted pursuant to 457 Neb. Admin. Code Ch. 23 § 001.03

** Variance granted pursuant to 457 Neb. Admin. Code Ch. 23 § 001.04

Table 2: Dam Safety Permits Approved by the Department during Reporting Period January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025

Plan Number	Order Date	Dam Status	S-T-R W	Project Name	Source	Use
P-21556	3/31/2025	Existing	S36-T15N-R57W	Oliver Dam Stilling Basin Replacement	Lodgepole Creek	Irrigation

Table 3: Groundwater Permits issued by the Department during Reporting Period January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025

There were no Groundwater Permits issued by the Department during 2025.

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Table 4: Surface Water Permits Cancelled by the Department during
Reporting Period January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025

Appropriation Number	Modification Number	Cancellation Date	S-T-R W	Source	Use	Cancellation in CFS	Cancellation in AF	Begin Acres	Cancelled Acres
A-19974	VAR-10128	3/1/2025	S18-T14- R36W	Keith-Lincoln Canal	Temporary Recharge	80.56	0	0	0
A-19975	VAR-10129	3/1/2025	S14-T12- R43W	Western Canal	Temporary Recharge	176.26	0	0	0
A-19976	VAR-10130	3/1/2025	S18-T14- R33W	Paxton- Hershey Canal	Temporary Recharge	102.78	0	0	0
A-19977	VAR-10131	3/1/2025	S13-T14- R34W	North Platte Canal	Temporary Recharge	201	0	0	0
A-19978	VAR-10132	3/1/2025	S12-T14- R33W	Suburban Canal	Temporary Recharge	77.47	0	0	0
A-19980	VAR-10138	3/1/2025	S18-T10- R23W	Dawson County Canal	Temporary Recharge	100	0	0	0
A-19981	VAR-10139	3/1/2025	S19-T12- R26W	Gothenburg Canal	Temporary Recharge	100	0	0	0
A-19979	VAR-10140	3/1/2025	S8-T13- R29W	Tri-County Canal	Temporary Recharge	950	0	0	0
A-19987	VAR-10175	3/1/2025	S8-T13- R36W	Korty Canal	Temporary Recharge	1,200	0	0	0

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Appropriation Number	Modification Number	Cancellation Date	S-T-R W	Source	Use	Cancellation in CFS	Cancellation in AF	Begin Acres	Cancelled Acres
A-19999	VAR-10196	3/1/2025	S3-T21- R54W	Castle Rock Canal	Temporary Recharge	88	0	0	0
A-20000	VAR-10197	3/1/2025	S28-T22- R55W	Central Canal	Temporary Recharge	33	0	0	0
A-20001	VAR-10198	3/1/2025	S1-T20- R53W	Chimney Rock Canal	Temporary Recharge	60	0	0	0
A-20002	VAR-10199	3/1/2025	S27-T23- R57W	Enterprise Canal	Temporary Recharge	40	0	0	0
A-20003	VAR-10200	3/1/2025	S10-T23- R58W	Tri-State Canal	Temporary Recharge	500	0	0	0
A-20004	VAR-10201	3/1/2025	S10-T23- R60W	Gering (via Mitchell- Gering) Canal	Temporary Recharge	75	0	0	0
A-20005	VAR-10202	3/1/2025	S14-T18- R47W	Lisco Canal	Temporary Recharge	40	0	0	0
A-20006	VAR-10203	3/1/2025	S32-T22- R54W	Minatare Canal	Temporary Recharge	40	0	0	0
A-20007	VAR-10204	3/1/2025	S10-T23- R60W	Mitchell- Gering Canal	Temporary Recharge	100	0	0	0
A-20008	VAR-10205	3/1/2025	S10-T23- R58W	Northport (via Tri-State) Canal	Temporary Recharge	150	0	0	0

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Appropriation Number	Modification Number	Cancellation Date	S-T-R W	Source	Use	Cancellation in CFS	Cancellation in AF	Begin Acres	Cancelled Acres
A-20009	VAR-10206	3/1/2025	S17-T22- R55W	Winters Creek Canal from North Platte River	Temporary Recharge	50	0	0	0

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Definitions

Depending on the types of permits issued or cancelled in a given year, not all definitions may be relevant to the current year's report.

Accretion	Addition to streamflow that results from an offset/mitigation action or project.
Acre-Feet (AF)	A unit of volume, commonly used to measure quantities of water used or stored equivalent to the volume of water required to cover 1 acre to a depth of 1 foot and equivalent to 43,560 cubic feet, 325,851 gallons, or 1,233 cubic meters.
Annotation	Modification numbers or appropriation numbers also associated with the appropriation.
Application/Appropriation Number	Appropriations having docket numbers (D-) refer to claims covering rights which existed prior to April 4, 1895, or those rights that existed on the Missouri River that were covered by the law passed in 1980. Those appropriations having application numbers (A-) were filed after April 4, 1895.
Begin Acres	The amount of acres included in an original appropriation, prior to any acres being cancelled.
Cancelled Acres	The amount of acres in an appropriation that have been cancelled.
CFS/Cubic Feet per Second	The USGS defines cubic foot per second (cfs) as "the flow rate or discharge equal to one cubic foot of water per second or about 7.5 gallons per second."
Depletion	Reduction to streamflow that results from a new use of either groundwater or surface water.
Flood Control	This refers to water withdrawn from the surface water source for the purpose of protecting health and well-being of society.
GPD/Gallons per Day	This refers to the number of gallons pumped per day.
Grant in AF	This refers to the approved amount of acre-feet of water legally allowed to be pumped from a surface water source, as long as all other conditions are met.

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Grant in CFS	This refers to the approved amount of cubic feet per second of water legally allowed to be pumped from a surface water source, as long as all other conditions are met.
Instream Use	This refers to water that is appropriated for use within the stream and is not withdrawn from a surface water source.
Offset	A reduction in water use that corresponds with an increased use of water. An offset may be used as a management strategy to balance uses and supplies. The offset will have a corresponding amount, time, and location. Also referred to as mitigation.
Order Date	This is the date the Department acted upon an application for a permit to appropriate water or a modification of an existing appropriation.
Permit Number	This refers to the number of a groundwater permit, assigned by the Department. The first letters in the permit number denotes type of permit.
Plan Number	This is a unique identifier assigned by the Dam Safety Division for the required plans of dams filed in the Department.
Project Name	This name is provided by the applicant.
Relinquishment (REL)	The voluntary yielding of a surface water appropriation by the owner. By relinquishing a surface water appropriation, the owner surrenders all claims to the right to divert water and apply it to the property in accordance with the appropriation. Relinquishments may be for part or all of an appropriation. A form must be filed with the Department for any relinquishments.
Section/Township/Range	This is the legal description of where a dam, well, or water appropriation is located.
Use	This is the legally accepted and beneficial use of the water impounded by a dam, well, or water appropriation.

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Variance (VAR)	An applicant may petition the Department to file an application for a new surface water appropriation within a moratorium or stay area. This petition, also known as a "variance," if granted, would allow the applicant to file the application, and does not bind the Department to approve any application to which it relates. The variance petition must include sufficient information to indicate the proposed project is for a non-consumptive use, the applicant has a plan to offset any consumptive use, there may be unappropriated flows, the use existed prior to the moratorium, the project address a public safety issue, or the project is a temporary use less than ten (10) acre-feet for public construction.
Water Division	The State of Nebraska is divided in two water divisions by statute, denoted Water Division No. 1, and Water Division No. 2, respectively. Water Division No. 1 consists of all the lands of the state drained by the Platte Rivers and their tributaries lying west of the mouth of the Loup River; and also all other lands lying south of the Platte and South Platte rivers that may be watered from other superficial or subterranean streams not tributary to the Platte River. Water Division No. 2 consists of all lands that may be watered from the Loup, White, Niobrara, and Elkhorn rivers, and Hat Creek and their tributaries, and those lands drained by the Platte River and its tributaries lying east of the mouth of the Loup River. For convenience in the administration of the surface water laws and the distribution of water, the two water divisions have been subdivided into 12 water divisions, denoted: 1A Platte River basin, 1B Republican River basin, 1C Little Blue River basin, 1D Big Blue River basin, 1E Lodgepole Creek basin, 1F Nemaha River basin and Lower Missouri River and tributary basins, 2A Loup River basin, 2B Elkhorn River and Salt Creek basins, 2C Niobrara River basin, 2D White River and White Clay Creek basins, 2E Hat Creek basin, 2F Upper Missouri River and Tributary basins.

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Once finalized, the completed document and appendix are available from the Department website: <https://dnr.nebraska.gov/water-planning/upper-platte-basin-wide-meetings-and-annual-reports> or may be requested in paper or electronic format by contacting Sam Capps at (402) 471-0376 or sam.capps@nebraska.gov.

Listing of Appendices and Documents:

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2023 Robust Review Presentations to NRD Boards of Directors & the PRRIP Governance Committee:

- <https://dnr.nebraska.gov/water-planning/upper-platte-river-presentations>

Appendix 1

- Applications and Orders for Department issued surface water permits.
- Applications and Orders for Department issued dam safety permits.
- Applications and Orders for Department cancelled surface water permits.
- Notices and responses from the Department regarding groundwater transfer notices received.