

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: --started. Thank you for coming to the third of three public hearings for the STAR WARS Committee. The STAR WARS Committee was created by LB406 this legislative session. It stands for State Tourism and Recreation, STAR, Water Access Resource, WARS, STAR WARS Special Committee. This committee was chosen by the Executive Board of the Legislative Council and we'll, we will begin with committee introductions. My name is Mike Hilgers. I currently serve-- I represent northwest Lincoln and Lancaster County, District 21. I currently serve as Speaker of the Legislature and I am Chair of this committee. We'll start with committee introductions on my far left.

WISHART: Hi, everyone. My name is Anna Wishart. I represent District 27, which is the western portion of Lincoln.

MCDONNELL: Mike McDonnell, Legislative District 5, south Omaha.

BOSTELMAN: Bruce Bostelman, District 23: Saunders, Butler, and Colfax Counties.

CLEMENTS: Rob Clements, District 2, which is Cass County, where you are now, and parts of Sarpy and Otoe.

GRAGERT: Tim Gragert, District 40 in northeast Nebraska.

BRANDT: Tom Brandt, District 32: Fillmore, Thayer, Jefferson, Saline, and southwestern Lancaster County.

HILGERS: The committee also includes Senator McCollister, Senator Flood, and Senator Hughes and some of those senators will be joining us here shortly. I'd also like to acknowledge our committee staff, Beau Ballard, who is the committee clerk, as well as Katie Bohlmeier, who is the clerk of the Natural Resources Committee who is assisting in this. In addition, the Legislature appropriated almost \$2 million for the-- for this committee to retain consultants and we did so. We retained HDR and so the HDR team-- and there's a lot of them-- are in the back. If you don't mind raising your hand? They have been with us at all of the hearings and they are helping this committee develop our plan for next year. So we, we're going to start in a second, but I would say the purpose of this committee is to help identify a statewide plan to help build off of our water and recreational resources around the state. The first-- the three subject areas of the committee are Lake McConaughy, which is where our first committee hearing was, in the Keith County region. Our second was in the Niobrara/Knox County region. We were-- we went two weeks ago to visit

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

that area. And then the third is the Lower Platte region, which is where we are here today. Before we start also, I would like to acknowledge and thank Game and Parks for hosting us in this facility. They've actually hosted us at our last meeting as well and this is, as I understand it, just opened September 1, so this is, as I also understand, is that-- the first public event that's been held at this facility and I will say this is a-- it's a gorgeous view and a gorgeous facility. We're very grateful for you to host us. This is going to operate pretty similar to a legislative hearing that you may have seen at the Capitol with a couple exceptions. We will take informational testimony. Here, there is no opponents. There's no proponent testimony or neutral testifier. It is our goal to hear from the community and stakeholders in this area. We are going to try to keep people roughly to five minutes, but we don't, we don't have a light system. Again, we're, we're here to hear from people and so we're not trying to cut people off. However, we do want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to be heard and so I'd, I'd ask people to try to keep-- be concise and not duplicative of testifiers who come before you and try to keep it in about five minutes. If you go much beyond that, I will, I will politely ask you to wrap up. And in that regard, can you-- if you intend to testify, at least right now, could you raise your hand just so I have a sense of testifiers? OK. We should have more than enough time to get through everyone. So with that, we will start our hearing, our LB406 hearing in the Lower Platte South region. We'll take our first testifier.

_____ : Oh, yes.

HILGERS: If you are testifying, please have a-- a little administrative issue. Thank you, Senator Bostelman. We have green sheets in the back. If you're testifying and you don't have one, please go get one in the back. Fill it out and give it to the clerk when you come up. And also, I would ask when you please-- when you come up, please state your first and last name and then spell it for the record. That's probably the only other time I'll interrupt you is if you don't spell your name when we start. So with that, our first testifier. Welcome.

JOHN WINKLER: Thank you, appreciate it. Good afternoon, Speaker Hilgers, members of the STAR WARS Committee. My name is John Winkler, J-o-h-n W-i-n-k-l-e-r. I'm the general manager of the Papio Missouri River Natural Resources District in Omaha and today I'm testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts. First of all, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide

testimony on this once in a generation effort. From 2010 to 2020, Nebraska has experienced 23 extreme weather events, from the 2012 flash flood or flash drought to the historic flood of 2019, costing the state over \$20 billion in damages. As a society in general, we are constantly in a reactive mode of recovery, especially when it comes to natural disasters like floods and drought. How do we as a state proactively mitigate these extremes and their devastating impact on our citizens, on our economy, and our quality of life? A step further, how do we mitigate these extremes while simultaneously creating resilience and sustainability in a way that improves our citizens' safety, strengthens our economy, enhances our environment, and makes our quality of life better? The intent of this effort is to formulate proactive options to mitigate the devastating impacts of flooding and drought, create recreational opportunities, foster economic and community development, create jobs and investment, as well as improve the natural environment. The historic flood of 2019 was all about the uncontrolled tributaries of the state like the Platte, Elkhorn, and Loup Rivers. Preliminary analysis illustrates that if a significant reservoir or several reservoirs were in place in the Lower Platte Basin during the March 2019 flood event, the federally certified levee system south of the mouth of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri would have been within their design capacities and potentially wouldn't have been overtopped or failed. At a minimum, over \$2.5 billion in damages to critical public and private infrastructure and property could have been prevented. This figure does not include damages to agricultural land, homes, businesses, lost income, entire communities destroyed, and future productivity of thousands of acres of farm ground compromised all from one single event. In stark contrast to the impacts of flooding, it is estimated that the duration and intensity of droughts will increase. Flash droughts like the one in 2012 may become more frequent. Throughout the state's history, there's always been stresses on our drinkable and irrigated water supplies that test the resiliency and sustainability. Several significant reservoirs that can provide enough surface water augmentation on demand and enhance aquifer recharge all year round would be a tremendous boost to the resiliency of the Lower Platte corridor water supply, where nearly 70 percent of the state's population resides. In fact, the most recent statewide groundwater report published by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources highlighted that groundwater, wells, [INAUDIBLE] reservoirs, and canals continue to show increases as they benefit from seepage or groundwater recharge. Groundwater levels have risen as much as 60 feet near Lake McConaughy due to recharge from the lake. In

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

south-central and western Nebraska, groundwater has risen by more than 100 feet over limited areas due to the influence of canals and reservoirs. This type of sustainable water supply would be especially beneficial to the city of Lincoln, who rely solely on the Platte River Basin for its water needs. Vulnerability to drought and iffy water supply can hamstring community and economic development opportunities immensely. Finally, reservoirs would add a tremendous amount of recreational benefits, both land and water based, to the Omaha/Lincoln metro area. It is consistently reported that the urban areas of our state and country lack sufficient outdoor recreation opportunities. With 4,000 to 8,000 acres of flat water recreation, it is reasonable to conservatively expect 500,000 to 1 million visitors per year and several hundred million dollars in annual economic impact to the state's economy. In closing, we can simply continue to react to one natural disaster after another or we can muster the will to proactively mitigate a great percentage of them and prevent damages from occurring at all. I'd be happy to answer the questions the committee may have and thank you once again for the opportunity to testify.

HILGERS: Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Winkler. Are there questions? Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. Winkler, for testifying. Four thousand to 8,000 flat surface acres is how many dams?

JOHN WINKLER: It could be one. It could be four. It could be eight. It could be two. So it just depends what size of a reservoir the, the watershed would sustain.

HILGERS: And let me, let me just break in just briefly to make very clear that as part of LB406, we are not studying any damming in this area.

JOHN WINKLER: Right. This would be tributaries to the Platte.

BRANDT: Right, yeah. Yeah, so--

JOHN WINKLER: So it-- I mean, it-- so it, it would depend, Senator, on, on, again, the subbasin, how, how it would support-- what size of a reservoir? So it could be a number of them. It could be, it could be one.

BRANDT: All right, thank you.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Senator Bostelman.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you. Could you tell me what, as you talked about, 2019 and the damage of that-- how much-- two questions-- one-- or one really-- Corps of Engineers' lack of lowering the dams upstream on the Missouri to eliminate the problems we had down here so it's-- it's, it's-- the upstream-- it's not only these two, but we're talking up on the Missouri up--

JOHN WINKLER: Right.

BOSTELMAN: --in South Dakota, up through there, that, that their lack of preparation for such an event really added to this as well.

JOHN WINKLER: Yes, so it-- I mean, it's a system, right? And so Missouri obviously contributed, you know, to that, everything south of the confluence. What was amazing during this flood event that I have never seen and, and many of my engineers that have been with us for 40 or 50 years is that the, the Platte River was running at the same volume or higher than the Missouri River. And so, and so basically, when those two rivers collided, there was really nowhere for the water to go but up and out and it-- obviously, Plattsmouth and all the communities south were just-- those, those levees were never designed to hold that type of capacity. And so, you know, obviously, the more you could control the Missouri and would have lessened that volume, would have helped. But the, the majority of that really did come from the interior of Nebraska, the Elkhorn, the Loup, and I think you'll hear some testifiers behind me that some of the, the volumes they experienced in their district, that was, that was never-- it, its historic. And so obviously, Senator, yeah, if they would have kept more water, hold more water, it would have helped further south of the, of the confluence, so for sure.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Bostelman. One question, Mr. Winkler. In your testimony, you talked about groundwater recharge and you referenced Lake McConaughy. What, what, what size of a reservoir or what would be needed here to have comparable recharge?

JOHN WINKLER: I think any reservoir obviously contributes to, to recharge. Obviously, the bigger the, the surface area, then the more recharge you're going to get from that, so-- you know, McConaughy is a huge reservoir. So if you had several or, or one larger one, obviously that's going to continue to contribute to the groundwater here. Also, it's a water quality issue. The more groundwater recharge you have, it

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

tends to dilute nitrates and other pollutants and so not only do you have a water supply issue, it helps with your water quality issues as well. So it, it, it's-- again, it's a whole system approach. I would think-- you know, sometimes it's-- Platte River is so dry you can walk across without getting your feet wet. And so if you have that-- those-- that recharge there, then you can obviously put a river-- or put water back into the river or, for example, Lincoln, they're pulling it out of the aquifer of the Lower Platte Basin. So any time you can contribute to that, make that more sustainable, especially during drought periods, the, the better for everyone.

HILGERS: So in that 4,000 to 8,000 range, would that have a material impact?

JOHN WINKLER: It, it would have, it would have a material impact. And again, I'm-- I'd, I'd have to, to defer to the engineers as far as what that would be, but, but it, it's a long-term process.

HILGERS: Thank you. Oh, Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Thank you. Real quickly, do you, do you know how far up the Platte River this 40,000-- 4,000 to 8,000-- how far are we talking upriver?

JOHN WINKLER: So I think that's part of the study is, is where would the-- where are the locations to, to build something like that? So you have to deal with geography, right? And so-- which were good reservoir sites probably 80 years ago are still good reservoir sites, though, just because of the geography of the land. So that's part of the analysis that HDR will have to do and find out what are the locations for not only the reservoir, but also what will the subbasin, what will it, it support? If you build a huge reservoir and you don't have enough water coming in, you obviously can't support something that's, you know-- if it's 8,000 and your basin only supports 4,000, you're going to have 4,000 foot of water and so-- or 4,000 acres of water. That's just-- there's not enough flows to do that.

GRAGERT: So they're looking, I, I mean, from, from here all the way to the McConaughy-- the area.

JOHN WINKLER: Well, or, or you could, you could look at the-- you could look at Salt Creek, you could look at the Elkhorn, you could look at the Loups. You don't, you don't have to put it right here--

GRAGERT: Right.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

JOHN WINKLER: --to have a controlling factor. So, so there is, there is probably a number of locations. And I think, again, you'll hear from testifiers after me there's a number of locations that have significant reservoirs or planned-- have been planned for a long time that if they were built, they would have contributed immensely to the 2019 event of keeping that water in, in that, that local subbasin instead of throwing it all into the Platte.

GRAGERT: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Gragert. Senator Wishart.

WISHART: Thank you for being here, John.

JOHN WINKLER: Thank you.

WISHART: So if we were to build an 8,000-acre flat water recreation site, big, big lake, really big lake--

JOHN WINKLER: Right.

WISHART: --what is the cost to do that?

JOHN WINKLER: I couldn't give you a, an accurate estimate. For example-- I can just say, for example, what we've experienced building other reservoirs, significantly smaller. You know, you could build a 1,000-acre reservoir for \$50 million, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it was going to-- that you take every 1,000 acres and multiply it by \$50 million, so-- again, it, it has a lot to do with the location, you know, soils, all of those types of things that go into an analysis to, to-- cost and all of those types of things, so I couldn't even give you an accurate-- unless we knew exactly where it was and what we were dealing with. So it would be hugely speculative to try to come up with a number.

WISHART: OK and just to give me an idea of what an 8,000-acre lake would be, what is the-- what's, what's another reservoir that is the-- similar in size?

JOHN WINKLER: So are you familiar with Lake Okoboji in Iowa?

WISHART: Yes.

JOHN WINKLER: Triple that.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

WISHART: Triple that, OK.

JOHN WINKLER: Roughly.

WISHART: And then what is the timeline? What-- how long would it take, from your experience in, in developing reservoirs, for us to go from shovel-- site location to floating, floating on the lake?

JOHN WINKLER: Again, depends on where you build it and how it's constructed. Federal permitting is always a challenge. It will take you longer to get the federal permit than actually to build the reservoir.

WISHART: OK.

JOHN WINKLER: And so those, those things are all, all challenges that we'll have to overcome. I mean, we, we build-- you know, a-- smaller reservoirs, from actual planning to funding to permitting, we build them in our, our district ten years or less. Not to say that this would not be a little-- this would be bigger, but we, we can get it done-- at least I'd say it's smaller areas in the Omaha metro area in ten years or less from, from the initial plan all the way up to construction.

WISHART: If we had five years to spend the dollars, could we get it done?

JOHN WINKLER: You better hurry.

WISHART: OK.

JOHN WINKLER: But not to say it can't be. I mean, anything can be done, right? But again, I think the biggest issue is, is permitting and that's always, especially at the federal level-- not necessarily the state-- federal level, it's always, it's always the trickiest part.

WISHART: OK.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Wishart. Senator Bostelman.

BOSTELMAN: Kind of follow up to Senator Wishart's question, I've talked-- we've talked to the Regional Corps of Engineers in Kansas City and they've told us that there's been no major dams built on any

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

river in any current history. What's your comments to that because now-- what you're talking about is building a dam on a major river.

JOHN WINKLER: Right.

BOSTELMAN: And they say that hasn't been done for-- so back to the permitting question--

JOHN WINKLER: Right.

BOSTELMAN: --I think-- what's your thought on that?

JOHN WINKLER: Well, so the, the corps is-- at least-- and this is my opinion. I'm only speaking my opinion. The-- I-- the corps has abdicated the responsibility a little bit for, for flood control. And, and the reason is, is-- and even looking at the climate debate is, you know, if, if we stopped producing carbon today and-- it's going to be hundreds of thousands of years before that kind of balance comes back to, to the, to the system. And so when, when you talk about mitigating floods and mitigating droughts, shutting off the spigot of quote unquote, climate change really does nothing for hundreds of years, so you, so you still have this risk of floods. And, you know, dams were, were a, a big thing, you know, back in the day, I guess, and now they're kind of falling out of favor. Heck, levees have fallen out of favor with FEMA and the corps, but the simple truth is they work and we've got data and we've got perfect examples. And just what we do in the small microcosm of the Omaha metro area, dams and levees, they simply work. And so there, there's-- now-- and all of a sudden, now FEMA is starting to come back to saying-- with their BRIC program, building resiliency in communities, that, you know, well, maybe we ought to spend a little more money mitigating these disasters instead of responding to them. It's whack-a-mole. Flood here, flood here, drought here, drought here. Wouldn't it be-- wouldn't it be nice to say you-- we can't stop them all, but can we control 75 percent of them, 90 percent of them? And so the, the federal government has become-- it's just-- it's so tied up that there's, there's no help coming from the federal government. The last BRIC round of FEMA, Region VII, which I sit on the advisory committee, did not receive one grant funded. It was all East Coast, West Coast, and so no one's coming to help us. This is going to have to be done locally. That has been my experience with, with the federal agencies.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

BOSTELMAN: Well, part of that is, is because we don't have a statewide flood mitigation plan that's current. So we have-- we don't score well when we apply for those grants.

JOHN WINKLER: Right.

BOSTELMAN: So if we get our statewide flood mitigation plan updated in the current and that's in there, that should help us score better on those, I would hope.

JOHN WINKLER: Well, I hope so. And, and all the other states in the, in the-- in Region VII, they received zip, too. And so I brought that up at the meeting. I said what-- so why-- we had, we had great applications. We had tribals. We had, you know, disadvantaged populations. That was supposedly the big push and not-- I go, how does not one application from the Midwest, where we just experienced the flood in '19, how does that not get funded? And obviously there's no answer, but it, it literally was-- I have the numbers-- all East Coast, all West Coast. The mountain states did worse than we did and they've got some of the worst water problems on the planet. And so it's just, it-- we're, we're here on our own a little bit. And, and it'd be great to get the federal government to ride in on a horse and-- but sometimes that's not necessarily the best thing either, so--

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Bostelman. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony.

JOHN WINKLER: All right, thank you.

HILGERS: While the next testifier is coming down, for the record, we did have two, two members of the committee come in. Maybe we do a quick introduction, Senator Flood? Senator Flood.

FLOOD: Mike Flood. I'm from Norfolk, District 19.

HILGERS: Senator McCollister.

MCCOLLISTER: John McCollister, District 20, central Omaha.

HILGERS: Thank you both. Next testifier. Welcome.

PAUL ZILLIG: Good afternoon. I'm Paul Zillig, Z-i-l-l-i-g, general manager at the Lower Platte South NRD in-- out of Lincoln. Welcome to the Lower Platte South NRD. Lower Platte South NRD includes 26 miles along the south bank of the Platte River, primarily in Cass County

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

from Ashland to Plattsmouth. This reach includes communities of Ashland, South Bend, Louisville, Cedar Creek, and Plattsmouth, Lincoln's Platte River well field, state highway bridges for Highway 6, 50, 34/75 and I-80, the Mopac trails, Lied, Platte River Bridge, Mahoney, Platte River, and Louisville State Parks, BNSF railroad line and bridges, sand and gravel and mining operations, numerous sandpit lake communities in the southern portion of the western Sarpy Clear Creek Levee and Camp Ashland. The, the area is rich in natural resources, wildlife, scenic beauty, and it is a vital corridor for transportation and utilities. It's a great place to work, visit, recreate, and live. Many of these facilities were extensively damaged by the March 2019 flood and the owners have taken measures to repair these facilities where possible, make improvements to make them more resilient to future flood events. In most cases, state and federal assistance has been available to assist with restoring these facilities. Without this assistance, many of these repairs would not yet be completed. We'd like to think that the 2019 flood was-- is unlikely to occur again. Unfortunately, history is very likely to repeat itself and if future climate projections are correct, flood events will worsen and additional flood mitigation measures will be needed. We appreciate this committee's interest and to look at the entire Lower Platte River Watershed and identify solutions to reduce future flood damages. Locally, this NRD and the city of Lincoln have looked into floodplain resiliency measures for our primary watershed, that being Salt Creek, which is directly behind you at the base of the bluff as it enters the Platte River. The Salt Creek Watershed currently has over 100 flood control dams, including ten U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood control dams and 13 miles of the levees in the Lincoln area that's maintained by the NRD. We've identified many floodplain best management practices and continue to implement those practices. We have also identified a number of nonstructural flood resiliency measures and a conceptual system of additional structural flood management measures to reduce future flood elevations. We plan to continue to work with the city of Lincoln pursuing further evaluation and study of these additional structural flood management measures for the Salt Creek Watershed. We would appreciate state funding assistance with this study and potential project. We do appreciate the opportunity to testify at this hearing and we look forward to working with you on reducing flooding, protecting natural resources, and providing recreation along the Lower Platte River. Thank you.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Zillig. Are there questions? Senator Wishart.

WISHART: Thank you, Paul, for being here. So in terms of the study, do you-- what, what is the cost of that?

PAUL ZILLIG: We, we just have a conceptual look--

WISHART: OK.

PAUL ZILLIG: --at it right now. It was \$100-- and I think \$134 million as far as the conceptual structural solutions.

WISHART: OK, \$134 million for the, for the study?

PAUL ZILLIG: Well-- excuse me, that was for the entire project.

WISHART: That's for the entire project.

PAUL ZILLIG: Yeah, the, the study would not be that much--

WISHART: OK.

PAUL ZILLIG: --that's for sure.

WISHART: But you're looking for assistance with the study and potential project, so how much would the study be, Paul?

PAUL ZILLIG: Put down \$1 million.

WISHART: OK.

PAUL ZILLIG: We have, we have to develop a scope exactly and obviously there's different levels of depths of study as we get into it, but--

WISHART: OK.

PAUL ZILLIG: --right now, the city and, and NRD each have \$100,000 in our budget for it, so it's-- it-- let's, let's downgrade that to--

WISHART: OK.

PAUL ZILLIG: --you know, quarter of \$1 million or so.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

WISHART: And could that be done within the next-- that study, if it were funded by the state, be completed within the next three to five years?

PAUL ZILLIG: Oh, yeah. Yes.

WISHART: Yes. OK. Do you-- the one last question I have is, you know, we heard from another NRD, John-- with John. Do you share their sentiment about the potential benefits of a reservoir located near Lincoln?

PAUL ZILLIG: Near Lincoln? Well, we don't have anything like that in the plan as far as a, a reservoir. Ashland is in our NRD, so we are very receptive to Ashland's concerns about previous proposed lakes--

WISHART: Yes.

PAUL ZILLIG: --anyway.

WISHART: Yes.

PAUL ZILLIG: --but they're-- again, I guess the, the bottom line is, you know, if you, if you want to do something to reduce flooding, you got to reduce the flood flows and you've got to store some water somewhere.

WISHART: OK.

PAUL ZILLIG: And, you know, that's, that's kind of the-- one of the facts of the-- what we got going on.

WISHART: OK and I will also emphasize what the Speaker said, that we're not looking at all at doing away with the beautiful community of Ashland. So if we are looking at a reservoir, it would be in a place that would be welcomed by the community.

PAUL ZILLIG: OK.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Wishart. Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Paul. What is-- Lincoln and Omaha own well fields in specific. What extent did the '19 flood impact those facilities?

PAUL ZILLIG: I know Liz Elliott from the city of Lincoln is here along with Rick Kubat from MUD, so Liz can probably answer better. The, the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

Lincoln well field is just right behind you and I-- they had a lot of damage and-- as far as millions of dollars and I'll let Liz go into more detail. But it was, it was damaged severely from the, the flood and they were still able to have water supply, but it was limited.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator McCollister. Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Zillig. I think a big concern for Ashland is the volume of water that-- increasing from Lincoln and those flows. The structural management, are you just-- are you working with levees to keep it from flooding people in Lincoln or are you going to-- are you working-- on some of the structure plans, are you thinking about slowing down some of that flow coming toward Ashland and the Platte?

PAUL ZILLIG: Well, twofold; obviously reducing flows through Lincoln, which would also mean reduced flows downstream through Ashland, so that's the, the, the study that we're looking at that would-- it would have been-- it would benefit both.

CLEMENTS: What kind of a project can you imagine that would be slowing down the flows? I would be very interested to know what you think could be done.

PAUL ZILLIG: Well, the conceptual is they looked at about 15, 16 of detention cell kind of reservoirs, not the typical dam per se, but anyway, dams that would reduce or store water and hold back more water and release it slower.

CLEMENTS: Is that on Salt Creek or on tributaries that run into Salt Creek or--

PAUL ZILLIG: Tributaries.

CLEMENTS: OK, but Salt Creek itself, too much flow there to put a reservoir in it, is that right?

PAUL ZILLIG: Oh, you know, I, I-- there again, you've got more issues just with the Salt Creek sewage treatment plant discharge and, you know, lots, lots of other items in there, so no, Salt Creek was not, not looked at.

CLEMENTS: All right, thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Clements. Senator Gragert.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

GRAGERT: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you for your testimony. Real quickly, in reference to your well, your wells, which are located pretty much near or in the Platte River right now for Lincoln by-- and Ashland. Has there been or do you plan to study the relocation or is there a possibility of relocation of, of those wells to get them out of the Platte River?

PAUL ZILLIG: My, my-- Liz is here to answer those questions, but basically they've got two wells on the island right behind you and I, I'm not aware of any plans to relocate the wells. It's a great well field. It's just a few days out of the year it gets a little spicy and in 2019, it got really spicy, so--

GRAGERT: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Gragert. Senator Bostelman.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to follow up a little bit on Senator Clements' question. As you move water out of Lincoln faster-- Dead Man's Run, I think, is the next project perhaps you're going to do-- as that water comes out faster, it comes down here to Ashland that much faster. So when we get a rain event in central-eastern part of Saunders County and a rain event in Lincoln, we flood from, from the guard camp. We go all the way back up into Memphis and that I've been there and seen. So I think to his point is that is if we continue to move water out of Lincoln faster-- this direction, we've got to look at some, some way to slow that water down. We need to look at some way to contain that water. Other-- I just-- I guess I mention that just as a, as, as an aside or an encouragement that if that's not already being done, we really need to do that because where we come down, there's, there's just that short span of-- along the highway here where all that water is going to go through and it's too much for it to handle. So we've got to, we've got to slow it down somehow before it gets here and I just encourage-- I think you really need to take a good look at that, so thank you.

PAUL ZILLIG: OK.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Bostelman. I have one question. You referenced a \$134 million project. Can you describe what that relates to?

PAUL ZILLIG: Yeah, that is the Salt Creek Floodplain Resiliency Study that was done looking at conceptual structural measures. That was 15,

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

15, 16 detention cells, dams basically upstream, upstream of Lincoln and that was the conceptual cost for it that's listed in that study.

HILGERS: And when-- that study was completed when?

PAUL ZILLIG: Completed a couple of years ago.

HILGERS: So the \$134 million was related to the--those-- they would put those dams--

PAUL ZILLIG: --into those, yeah.

HILGERS: Where would those dams be located?

PAUL ZILLIG: That's correct.

HILGERS: Where would they be located under the study?

PAUL ZILLIG: They were upstream of Lincoln. You know, they just looked all around. Lincoln's drainage area comes from a number of different directions, so they just looked at all the tributaries around there.

HILGERS: OK, thank you. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony.

PAUL ZILLIG: OK, thank you.

HILGERS: Next tesifier. Welcome.

MIKE SOUSEK: Good afternoon, Speaker Hilgers and members of the STAR WARS Committee. My name is Mike Sousek, S-o-u-s-e-k, and I'm the general manager of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource District. Our district office is located in Norfolk, Nebraska, and our district encompasses all or parts of 15 counties in northeast Nebraska. First, I'd like to thank the STAR WARS Committee for allowing me to testify this afternoon on the Lower Platte Basin component of LB406. While I'm confident this committee understands the effect that climate cycles have caused in the state of Nebraska, I want to highlight a few startling facts from northeast Nebraska. The Elkhorn River Basin provides 32 percent of all the water reaching the Missouri River during the summer season. The Loup River Basin provides 46 percent of the Lower Platte Basin and the Lower Platte Basin provides the final 22 percent of the water reaching the Missouri River. Over the last 12 years, we have had watersheds experience a 100-year storm on average every four years. While some of these storms surpassed 100-year

threshold and peaked past the 500-year storm, the most recent 500-year storm was in 2019 during the March bomb cyclone. It may come to us-- it may come as a surprise to this committee, but during the March flooding, the city of Norfolk had as much water in the bypass channel running through the city that is usually flowing in the Missouri River. This amount of water stressed the diversion channel to its limit and the only reason it survived was due to an NRD dam structure 15 miles upstream, which held back 18,000 acre-feet of water. That's 5.8 million gallons. Think of that. A tributary to the Elkhorn River, two hours west of Omaha, became the size of Missouri River as it was flowing and gaining volume, navigating and destroying the region from Elkhorn River to the Platte River and ultimately ending in the Missouri River. During the same 12-year period, we have experienced the most extreme flash drought in the last seven years, which occurred in 2012. This extreme drought brought to the forefront the vulnerability in our agriculture system that has such a reliance on irrigation. Should the drought have lasted another year, catastrophic environmental and economic ramifications would have been realized. The extremes we are experiencing in weather cycle-- cycles is unprecedented. For example, the flash drought followed two years that were plagued with flooding along the Elkhorn River. The Lower Elkhorn Natural Resource District in recent years has shifted our priorities to better plan for these unprecedented weather extremes. While I can talk to you about the changes we have made in our groundwater management plan reinforces-- reinforced by changes we have made in our rules and regulations, I'm going to focus my testimony today on a potential infrastructure mitigation project to address the extreme weather in the Battle Creek Watershed, a tributary to the Elkhorn River. This singular project could address flood control, drought mitigation, water quality, and recreation opportunities for the immediate area and be part of a larger plan to address these concerns in eastern Nebraska. First, water quality. While this aspect often gets overlooked, a dam structure brings water quality to the forefront and is addressed in designing implementation of a project. Large river-- reservoirs improve water quality immensely because they do it in both above and below the reservoir. The large reservoir and the in-lake structure features such as water quality basins built within it will allow sediment from the watershed above to settle out and keep it from being transferred downstream, but the benefits do not stop there. The creation of the reservoir actually allows us to focus on the contributing watershed in order to improve water quality and aquatic habitat function and fisheries in the reservoir. Through these-- through the reservoir design process, we assess sediment

loading to the reservoir and by focusing on opportunities to improve water quality in the reservoir, can partner with NRCS, EPA, and other agency stakeholders to use funding such as EPA Section 319 funding and NRCS numerous conservation practices to improve water quality above the reservoir. Often NRCS can identify the watershed as a priority watershed and further reduce landowner project cost share and improving upstream water quality. Flood protection: downstream of the potential Battle Creek reservoir, there are 190 structures, 168 urban and 22 businesses, in the 100-year floodplain, with an estimated value of \$11.2 million. If the dam was constructed, it would remove all of them from the 100-year floodplain. Additionally, there is 1,169 total farm-- formable acres in a two-mile stretch between the reservoir and the Elkhorn River and the floodplain, with estimated annual crop value of \$219,000. The dam would remove 698 acres or \$120,0000 in potential damage to crop value. These values do not account for any savings downstream once the water reaches the Elkhorn River. Infrastructure such as highways, bridges, rail lines, and agriculture ground would continue to see benefit-- benefits downstream, with the water being held back in the flood pool of the reservoir. The potential flood risk reduction project would provide \$500,000 in annual flood damage avoidance in the project area, in addition to a savings of approximately \$450,000 annually in required flood insurance premiums for a total of approximately \$1 million annually. Drought mitigation: this, this project's water supply pool sits at 1,671 feet above sea level. The conceptual Battle Creek dam would provide 12,205 acre-feet or 1,033 surface acres of water. If this structure is to be used for streamflow augmentation, water could be released for 13.8 days using a release rate of 400 cf-- cfs, assuming an initially full reservoir. This in conjunction with potentially other reservoirs could supply MUD and the Lincoln Water System during a flash drought to keep their well fields functional. These types of projects bring resiliency to a system that currently has none. If the water is kept in the reservoir, it also provides resiliency to the agricultural demand on irrigation. This site is ranked as a high potential for aquifer recharge. It will provide water to the Elkhorn River through its connection with groundwater and keep the local aquifer recharge, providing water at a time when it will be needed most. Recreation: a recreation-- a reservoir of this size could provide recreation opportunities in an area of Nebraska that is lacking such quality-of-life benefits. The economic benefits to the local economy and its attractiveness to bring people to northeast Nebraska cannot be understated. One of the recently constructed reservoirs in eastern Nebraska has shown annual average benefits of \$700,000. This proposed site, which would be twice

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

the size, I believe it is safe to say could provide a minimum-- a similar amount of benefit. Current estimates as shown in the chart below have identified \$782,437 of recreational benefits from the Battle Creek project. I'd be happy to answer any questions that the committee may have. Thank you once again for this opportunity.

HILGERS: Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions? I have a couple of questions.

CLEMENTS: Go ahead.

HILGERS: Go ahead, Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: OK.

MIKE SOUSEK: Thought you were going to let me through.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Mr. Sousek. I am just wondering if you've got an estimate for the cost of the dam reservoir you're talking about?

MIKE SOUSEK: Right now, it's currently just about \$50 million. It might be a little more, maybe \$55 million. There were-- actually have consultants working-- fine-tuning that right now.

CLEMENTS: And it would be 1,000 surface acres?

MIKE SOUSEK: It was somewhere between 1,000 and 1,200 surface acres, yes.

CLEMENTS: All right and this is on-- what, what creek or stream is this?

MIKE SOUSEK: Battle Creek.

CLEMENTS: On Battle Creek, OK--

MIKE SOUSEK: Yes.

CLEMENTS: --which flows into the Elkhorn?

MIKE SOUSEK: Yes, it's about-- 10 miles west of Norfolk is where it jumps into the Elkhorn River.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Clements. I have a couple of follow-up questions. This recreation benefit that you've got on your chart, are-- is that-- what is that? Are those tax dollars from rec--

MIKE SOUSEK: No, those are dollars that are used as a-- to show benefits of the project. Back when there was the Nebraska Development Resource Fund, that's the formula that was used to do that cost benefit ratio, so the consultants have put that together for us.

HILGERS: And so is this net benefit to the community, to businesses--

MIKE SOUSEK: To the area, yes.

HILGERS: And then what would be the-- obviously, there are some challenges to be-- have this shovel ready, but if you were to-- let's say you had the \$50 million. How long would it take to get this project complete?

MIKE SOUSEK: Well, I, I would believe we'd probably be in the same time frame as Mr. John Winkler stated, probably that ten years, mainly due to the federal permitting. There's, there's some issues going through the process, you know, to purchase the ground and, and have the local board make some decisions, but I see the big hang-up is going through the federal permitting process, which is going to take the largest amount of time.

HILGERS: And can you say who the consultants are that you're working with on it?

MIKE SOUSEK: On this particular one, we have JEO and FYRA Engineering. They're a team. We also have two other studies going on, each about \$750,000, looking at other sites throughout our district.

HILGERS: OK, thank you. Other questions? All right, seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

MIKE SOUSEK: Thank you.

HILGERS: Next testifier. Welcome.

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Hi there. Speaker Hilgers and members of the committee, thank you very much for allowing me to provide testimony today. My name is Eric Gottschalk, G-o-t-t-s-c-h-a-l-k. I'm the general manager of the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District. As you are all aware, Nebraska's NRDs are watershed based. Lower

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

Platte North runs from Ashland to northwest of Newman Grove with all our water running to the Lower Platte River from west of Schuyler to Ashland. I'm here today to inform your committee of the Lower Platte North NRD's ongoing plans to reduce flooding in the Wahoo Creek Watershed to be specific. The Wahoo Creek Watershed is approximately 300,000 acres and comprises nearly one-third of our district. It runs from Ashland, north and west, and includes the communities of Wahoo, Prague, Malmo, Weston, Colon, Ithaca, and Memphis, not to mention the multitude of farm subdivisions and lake properties. Flood reduction in the watershed has been an important issue for over 50 years and in the late 1990s, Lower Platte North NRD partnered with NRCS to develop a comprehensive Wahoo Creek Watershed plan. However, due to lack of funding at the time, the plan was shelved. Several years ago, federal RCPP, Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and WFPO, the Watershed Flood Prevention Operations programs, provided us the opportunity to activate our flood reduction efforts in Wahoo Creek. We have updated our watershed plan, identified ten flood reduction locations, and secured federal, state, and local fundings, \$4.1 million to date, for the design of all ten structures and construction of the first three sites in the upper reaches of the watershed. Projected completion of these three initial structures is fall of 2024 and depending on available funds, completion of the remaining flood reduction structure is estimated at \$19 million, have the potential of taking ten to 12 additional years to complete, which brings me to why I am here today. If Lower Platte NRD had availability to the needed funds to complete our entire watershed project, the remaining seven structures, we would have the ability to realize the immediate Wahoo Creek flood reduction benefits of up to 34 percent throughout the Wahoo Creek Watershed to complete the construction in today's dollars rather than future unknown construction costs, combine permitting and land rights efforts for all sites, potentially build all ten structures in the same, in the same construction window or within a year of the first three, and allow our district to move on with other flood reduction projects throughout our NRD. Wahoo Creek Watershed data, some of the data that I've just-- will supply with you today, it's approximately 300,000 acres in the Wahoo Creek Watershed. There are ten structures ranging from 30 to 125 acres of permanent pool. All sites are in the final design phase, \$24.1 million total project cost for all ten structures, up to a 34 percent flood reduction across the watershed, directly treating approximately 65,000 acres, the environmental, economic, recreational, private and public infrastructure benefits and currently has at 1.25 to 1 cost benefit ratio. Thank you all very much for your time and providing me the

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

opportunity to testify. Please let me know if we have any other-- any further questions and if there's any additional information either I or my staff can provide. Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there questions? Senator Bostelman.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Gottschalk, for being here. So on these ten structures, this is in coordination and agreement with the landowners?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Yes and so--

BOSTELMAN: So this is--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: --these-- the sites have been identified. We've had public meetings and landowners have all been notified of our plans, yes, correct. There have been no land rights as of yet, but, yes--

BOSTELMAN: But--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: --all the sites have been identified.

BOSTELMAN: --but they have been identified and landowners have spoke--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Have been made aware.

BOSTELMAN: --agreed to it, that they know what's-- what your plan is?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: They all understand, yes. They all understand our plans and our, you know, where we--

BOSTELMAN: And this--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: --intend to have each site.

BOSTELMAN: And this is with one creek, but there are several others within this area that you could do the same thing with. So this is 1,200 acre-feet of water. You can use this on several other creeks if you had funding for it, correct?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Absolutely, we-- yes, our-- we, we believe in our district that a combination of smaller structures in the hills combined with larger structures is the most cost effective way to handle [INAUDIBLE].

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

BOSTELMAN: So we're, so we're having the same effect and I guess the point that I'm, that I'm making here is for the committee, for HDR is what we see here is a cooperation between the NRD and the landowners to put in structures which hold the water back to reduce the flooding in significant ways. When we put a large dam in anywhere, you're going to take land away from people and they're not going to, they're not going to be as supportive. So as we-- as what they're doing is something that I, that I really think works very well, is that as we slow water down getting to the rivers, whether it be the Platte or be it Elkhorn or Loup, this is a very beneficial way, both for the local area, with landowners' cooperation. We're not moving people from the land, from their livelihoods. There are also-- it does significant flooding and at a, at a decent rate [INAUDIBLE].

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Correct and each of these sites would remain in private landowners' custody.

BOSTELMAN: And they do-- that stays on the tax roll?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Yes, um-hum.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you.

HILGERS: As a follow up, the-- Senator Bostelman's question-- just so I'm-- just so the record is clear, I'm clear, his question was do they agree to it? And you said they understand it and maybe you both are saying the same thing and just used different words.

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Well, whether every landowner agrees or not, they understand the direction we're headed. We have not entered into any land rights, anything like that.

HILGERS: OK.

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: So, you know, I hate to use the, the term agree, but we are communicating our efforts. We-- all landowners within the associated sites understand what our objective and what our plan is.

HILGERS: Thank you and that's, that's what I took away from it and then Senator Bostelman referenced 1,200 acre-feet. Is that the combined because I wasn't--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Well, roughly-- they're, they're averaging about 40 acres, so it wouldn't, it would not be that much. It would be approximately 400 to 500 acre--

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: OK, OK.

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: --of, of storage.

HILGERS: OK, thank you, Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Thank you. Could we just look at this map a little bit? This-- the dark line, is that the-- is that the top of this tributary going down to-- what is this creek-- the North Fork Wahoo Creek?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: OK, yes, so the, the shaded area, of course, is the, the, the Wahoo Creek itself, along with its tributaries. The identified green areas are the sites, the located sites that the structures would be in.

GRAGERT: So there are smaller tributaries at the top of the watershed going down into the Salt Creek, Wahoo Creek that act-- eventually goes into the Elkhorn River?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: No, actually this all empties into the Platte River just north here, real close to where the Salt Creek and--

GRAGERT: But this is at the top of that tribute--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: So this is the top half of the Wahoo Creek Watershed, yes. All the structures are from roughly halfway on the map to the west and north, yes--

GRAGERT: That's very--

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: --so in the upper reaches.

GRAGERT: That's a very good plan and that's exactly how things have to happen from the top down. I appreciate that.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Gragert. Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for your testimony, Mr. Gottschalk. When you say structures, does that necessarily mean dam or does structure include [INAUDIBLE]?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: These ten sites would include-- would be flood reduction structures. The final design is not complete. They could be designed as dry structures or wet structures. There's very little differentiation between the two, but as these ten sites pertain to our watershed plan, they are flood reduction structures, yes.

McCOLLISTER: Do the farmers retain those dry so-called structures?

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: The-- in each of these sites, the landowners would maintain ownership. We would work-- our plan is now to work with the landowners in the event that one of them or two or multiple ones would, would request the dry structure. The design would be done that way. Currently, they are all preliminarily designed to be a wet structure, but we are open to, to communicating whatever the efforts and the, the request of the landowner would be.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator McCollister. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony.

ERIC GOTTSCHALK: Thank you.

HILGERS: Next testifier. Welcome.

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Speaker Hilgers and members of the STAR WARS Committee. My name is Elizabeth Elliott, E-l-i-z-a-b-e-t-h E-l-l-i-o-t-t. I am the director of Lincoln Transportation and Utilities. First, I want to thank you for creating this committee and for your efforts to ensure that Nebraska has access to sustainable water resources. Sustainable water resources have always been important to Lincoln and Nebraska, but the importance was underscored by the floods of 2019. Lincoln draws water from only one source: aquifers supported by the Platte River. The damage caused by the 2019 floods highlighted the vulnerability of our wells in the Platte River. We were lucky that although our-- the damage to our wells was extensive, we were still able to provide water to Lincoln residents. If additional steps are not taken, we may not be so lucky the next time. Floods like the one in 2019, along with droughts, impact both individuals, communities and have social, economic, and environmental consequences. This committee provides a great opportunity to protect our community while also providing opportunities for economic development. Regardless of what projects may move forward, we ask the community to be mindful of our well fields behind you in the Platte River. What may seem like minimal impact may greatly reduce the water resources for the residents of Lincoln and could have significant financial impacts on the city of Lincoln. With that in mind, we have identified four potential projects that fulfill the goals of LB406. The first potential project would be a benefit cost analysis of flood control structures. One long-term option that was previously discussed may be to create reservoir or reservoirs around Lincoln along the Salt Creek Watershed, a tributary

of the Lower Platte South River system. Such a project is not inexpensive and we would need to leverage federal funding. The first step to obtaining that federal funding or any type of grant is to complete a benefit cost analysis that investigates the value of emplacing structural measures such as reservoirs, dams, or levee systems to reduce flooding impacts to local businesses and residences. Structural measures are designed to provide intended flood risk reduction while also creating opportunities for recreation and economic development. The benefit of this benefit cost analysis is that it looks at the feasibility of constructing flood control measures in the Salt Creek drainage system that would not only reduce the risk from flood in the Salt Creek Watershed, a tributary of the Lower Platte South River system, but would also provide economic development and recreational opportunities by creating a dam and reservoir system in or near Lincoln. We estimate that such an analysis would cost about \$250,000. The second project that we think fits within the goals and measures of LB406 is a funding for a second water source. Lincoln, as I mentioned, currently has one water source, the groundwater recharge from the Platte River, so water conservation and stewardship are priorities for our community. In the past decade, Lincoln has experienced two distinct climate events, drought and flooding, that have jarred our community from a water reliability standpoint, causing us to accelerate our planning efforts to secure a redundant water system. Currently, we are investigating two options to secure a second source and financial planning must begin now, as funding presents the greatest challenge for our community. One option is to establish an interconnect partnership with Metropolitan Utilities District, MUD, a regional water supplier that also serves Omaha. Another option is to pursue an independent connection to the Missouri River. The benefits of this project are far reaching. Not only does it provide second source of water for the city of Lincoln, it also provides an opportunity for other communities in southeast Nebraska to connect to a regional water supply. It also protects agricultural producers because it reduces the chance that the city of Lincoln would be forced to exercise its water rights and make a call on the river during a water scarcity emergency. This would provide that assurance of water supply to those agricultural suppliers. What is more is that this project supports both growth and economic development along the corridor where the transmission, transmission main would be located. For example, many of you probably recall discussions of a vehicle manufacturing plant that was exploring an option of building between Lincoln and Omaha. One of the factors that played a part in this was that there was not a, a secure water source

for that manufacturing opportunity. By creating a corridor with water infrastructure in it, we create economic development opportunities such as that vehicle manufacturing plant. To build the infrastructure for either option requires significant investment. The cost to interconnect between the Lincoln Water System and MUD is estimated to be about \$350 million in 2019 dollars. The cost to pursue an inner-- an independent connection to the Missouri River is estimated at \$717 million in 2019 dollars. We know that this is a long-term project and a significant dollar amount, but we would welcome continued discussions and wanted to bring big ideas to this committee for consideration. Another option, the third option, that kind of does play a part in the second water source is investing in a pipe loop testing. To determine which second water source is viable, MUD is currently completing a capacity study and-- this year to determine whether it has adequate supply to provide drinking water to Lincoln. If the capacity is available, the next step would be to complete a two-year pipe loop testing to make sure that the water sources are compatible when mixed. This two-year pipe loop test is required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and that ultimately is resulting from the Flint, Michigan, water crisis. The purpose of that test is to measure the corrosivity, particularly as it is applied to lead service lines. We believe that such an analysis will cost approximately \$500,000. Finally, the fourth option that we would present would be to update the city of Lincoln floodplain maps. Remapping will illuminate how existing floodplain management measures can be strengthened to further reduce flooding impacts to local businesses, residences, and future developments, as well as enhance floodplain resiliency and recreation on the Salt Creek tributary of the Lower Platte South-- of the Lower Platte River. The remapping provides a more accurate flood risk assessment to protect existing residents and businesses in the floodplain, as well as future economic growth and development. Additionally, updated maps based on current hydrologic and hydraulic modeling allows planners and engineers to determine the most reliable flood control measures to protect our community, while also providing economic and recreational opportunities in the Salt Creek Watershed. We estimate that such an analysis will cost approximately \$2 million. These four projects not only further our community's efforts to protect our water resources, but they also provide opportunities for economic development that would, that would benefit all of eastern Nebraska. I would like to thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony and I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions? Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Elizabeth, for testifying today. What percent are you appropriated now on the well field that you have? Are you at 100 percent, 90 percent, 80 percent?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: We are prob-- approximately probably about 90 percent on the well fields. We do have plans to-- I believe it's two additional wells that we could put into the Platte River.

BRANDT: And that would be in that existing well field or outside of that?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: It-- at least one of those, I believe-- if I'm, I'm thinking of our future plans-- is outside of that island, that well field there--

BRANDT: And that would--

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: --in the general area.

BRANDT: And that would increase your capacity by what percent?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: I would have to get back. I don't want to misstate it. It, it does not provide us enough capacity looking into 2050. Our studies at this point show that we will be maxed out by 2050.

BRANDT: Then if you go into a partnership with MUD, where do they get their water from?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: They have an-- and I believe they'll be up to talk about this here after I am, but it's my understanding that they do have Platte well fields as well as Missouri River. So they have a number of options, unlike the city of Lincoln. We just have the Platte River.

BRANDT: So from a regulatory standpoint, is there a difference between withdrawing from the Platte River and the Missouri River?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: Without doing some additional research regulatory wise, I don't believe there would be drastic differences.

BRANDT: All right. Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Senator Bostelman.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Chairman. Question for you, just as part of the studies that you're doing-- and as we look out, part of the things we're looking at is water for Lincoln. What's your-- what plans or do you have plans or are you looking at conservation within Lincoln, use of gray water, those type of things? Are there-- is that part of some of the studies you're doing or is that something that you yet need to do?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: We did do a Salt Creek Watershed resiliency study. Actually, it was August of 2020 when they finished up that project. So there was a number of recommendations to continue pursuing different ideas. One of them was a number of regulatory steps that we could take, a drainage, a drainage criteria manual that we're currently working on and hope to have done by the end of this calendar year, but also to continue looking at those other options, whether it's gray water, floodplain remapping, as well as some structural cert-- structures that we could do as well. So there's a number of things that we're exploring and looking at. I try not to put all of our eggs in one basket.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Bostelman. Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here.

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: Yes, thank you.

McCOLLISTER: Does the Missouri River extension that you discussed include water treatment?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: It would have to include a water treatment facility closer to the Missouri River at that point, so it is a significant investment, not only structurally, but also for personnel.

McCOLLISTER: Your well field is right back here. Might you draw from the same aquifer that MUD does-- where it comes from?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: One of the aquifers they draw from, yes.

McCOLLISTER: And help me define pipe loop testing. How do you define that?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: Basically, there-- it's a, a lengthy process and I'm still learning about it, so I will completely destroy it. And I'm

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

looking to-- probably to the HDR team that would be better suited to answer this than I would. But basically it requires taking water from MUD as well as from Lincoln and then taking an actual pipe from our existing facility-- so maybe one that we remove from the system-- and actually run the water through that pipe to see what kind of issues or reactions that we have and that it has to be done over a significant period of time. That's a very dumbed down explanation for my own purposes.

McCOLLISTER: Does that take into account the different water treatment processes that both cities employ?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: It, it would, it would look at that and see how the two react together once mixed.

McCOLLISTER: Are you looking at-- which MUD plain are you looking at, Platte South or the west plain?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: Well, at this point, they're looking at the feasibility, so I, I think a lot of it is going to depend on what that feasibility study shows and where they have the most capacity.

McCOLLISTER: I see, but in terms of distance, if the Platte [INAUDIBLE] is closer-- would that be closer or--

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: I think that's fair to say. I think that one would be closer, but it, it all kind of depends on where we would connect into it. So those are discussions that we're currently having to see where that would happen and what makes the most sense for both parties.

McCOLLISTER: Based on your testimony, is that the cheapest alternative you have at this point?

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: It is at this point, yes.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator McCollister. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony.

ELIZABETH ELLIOTT: Thank you.

HILGERS: Next testifier. Welcome.

RICK KUBAT: Good afternoon, Speaker Hilgers and members of the committee. My name is Rick Kubat, R-i-c-k K-u-b-a-t, here today on

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

behalf of the Metropolitan Utilities District. Certainly grateful that Ms. Elliott from the city of Lincoln went first. She filled you in a lot of details regarding the interconnection. Just want to give you a little bit of background about MUD and how we are differently situated than Lincoln Water System. We serve just a hair under 700,000 Nebraskans and we do so by operating three water treatment facilities, one of which is Florence, which is near the Mormon Bridge. That provides us with roughly half of our water capacity. We're blessed in that sense that we essentially have two different sources of water. The Missouri at Florence is half. Then the other half of our capacity is essentially two water treatment facilities, Platte West in western Douglas County and Platte South, near the confluence of the Missouri and Platte Rivers. One of the things that we want to emphasize today because there have been previous iterations of different studies about reservoirs in this-- near and around Ashland-- and I've shared this with Senator McDonnell-- is MUD has always been, I would say, cautious and concerned and worried that nothing ever be done to the Lower Platte Water Basin that could jeopardize that critical public water supply for both the Omaha metro area and the city of Lincoln, not only in terms of water quantity, knowing that it's half of our capacity and 100 percent of, of Lincoln's capacity, but also in the sense you heard one side of the water quality analysis. And I'm sure that flood control in such reservoirs can benefit water quality, but you can also have concerns that as soon as you entrap water, you can create water quality issues. So really, our point today is that whatever analysis is done, we believe that at the very forefront of any analysis, of any analysis or any study that we look at both those things, water quality and water quantity, in terms of the public water supply. So, so that's, that's it in a nutshell. We-- Ms. Elliott did speak to us-- to the city of Lincoln and MUD looking at the potential of interconnecting the two systems. That is very much in its infancy stage. We at MUD right now are currently doing a capacity analysis to see if we could safely provide that type of water supply for the city of Lincoln. We're engaged in, in conversations with the city of Lincoln on a regular basis and we're moving along in that process. I think it's safe to say, though, at this juncture, we don't have the appropriate analysis to give, whether it's the MUD board of directors or the mayor or the city of the Lincoln-- the Lincoln City Council the appropriate information so that they can be informed decision makers, but we are, we're seriously considering it and we're looking at it at this juncture.

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: Thank you, Mr. Kubat. Are there questions? Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman. What is the peak average day usage of water at MUD?

RICK KUBAT: Peak average would be usually, you know, during the summer, I would say as high as 170 or 180. And I believe we've gone over 200 mgd in one given day before, but that would be uncommon. A really hot, dry day without any rainfall, you're looking at about 180. I believe our average mgd per-day use would be right around 80.

McCOLLISTER: I think that's right, but your, your capacity is nearly 400 million gallons. Are you doing that per day?

RICK KUBAT: I believe-- Senator McCollister, I believe it would be just north of 300 mgd. Platte South has a capacity of 60 mgd. Platte West is at 100 mgd and Florence would be-- it's either 156 or one 158 mgd, right in there.

McCOLLISTER: So you have adequate capacity to [INAUDIBLE].

RICK KUBAT: We-- right now, HDR is involved in a lot of water analysis statewide. Right now, HDR is looking at that very item, what our future capacity needs are, and we're expecting to have a more detailed analysis of just that towards the end of the calendar year.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator McCollister. Did you have a question?

BOSTELMAN: Maybe, I--

HILGERS: Go ahead, Senator Bostelman.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could you explain to me in the Platte and perhaps also in the Missouri, what's that-- what is a well-- can you-- are you able-- not that you don't know. Are you able to disclose to the public what do those well systems are? In other words, are they-- if it's sitting-- are they deep wells? Are they shallow wells? Are they wells underneath the river flow? What type of wells are those?

RICK KUBAT: The Platte River wells would be induced groundwater recharge wells, so they're, they're adjacent to the Platte River where the, the Platte River basically feeds the groundwater table and we draw water from wells adjacent to the river itself. As far as the

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

Missouri River, that would be just a straight surface water appropriation.

BOSTELMAN: So your concern-- when you were talking about the concern of quantity with dams upstream, obviously it's the flow release from that because your concern is that there would be enough release from those dams to continue to operate your wells in the Platte. Is that--

RICK KUBAT: That, that could be part of it. It's, it's complex, to, to say the least. In a sense, the Platte River basically is the recharge mechanism for our wells, so anything in terms of entrapping water, we just want to make sure that at least when we're doing the analysis of that kind of project that at the top of the list, we're making sure that that isn't going to unduly hinder necessary stream flow in the Lower Platte River, especially, I would say, during irrigation season.

BOSTELMAN: And what's your concern with quality? Can you explain that?

RICK KUBAT: And, and that's, that's broader. And I know Mr. Winkler spoke to the item that a, a, a water project could enhance water quality. I guess my only point would be as, as soon as you entrap large quantities of water, that creates a-- I'd say different biological mechanisms with that entrapped water and just-- we just want to make sure that we look at-- closely that there's no unintended consequences of that in, in terms of water quantity-- quality, in terms of the, the groundwater or if there's ingress and egress back to the Platte River from that entrapped body of water.

BOSTELMAN: Such as blue-green algae or, or whether it be pollutants from usage from people use of-- whether it be oil, gas, you know, housing, street runoff, whatever it is?

RICK KUBAT: I would say more the former than the latter, but, but all of the above.

BOSTELMAN: OK, thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Bostelman. Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Kubat. I was wondering oh, your Platte West well field, did you have damage to that-- those structures in 2019?

RICK KUBAT: We did. We had a modest amount of damage. The flooding akin to Lincoln was definitely a concern for us about our ability to

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

use those-- that specific well field and we were on high, high alert. Like Lincoln, we did sustain some damage. I would say not to the degree that Lincoln sustained damage at, at their well field.

CLEMENTS: And then Platte South is near Plattsmouth and there was a lot of water going through there. I know-- how was the damage there?

RICK KUBAT: Both facilities had, I would say, flooding up to and I'd say about two or three feet above where it should be to the base level of the well houses. And that's one of the crazier, one of the crazier things that's happened in the state of Nebraska. If I'm not mistaken, I believe it's the first time that we had simultaneous flooding in the Missouri River and the Loup and Elkhorn Systems feeding down to the Lower Platte River all at the same time.

CLEMENTS: It didn't take you very long to recover-- repair those facilities then?

RICK KUBAT: No and, and they, they remained operational during that entire period of time, but it, it was, it was certainly concerning for us.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Clements. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony, Mr. Kubat.

RICK KUBAT: Thank you.

HILGERS: Next testifier. How many people are waiting yet to testify? Can you raise your hand if you're-- are you testifying? Are you testifying? OK, one, two-- two more? We got three? All right. Welcome.

SHIRLEY NIEMEYER: Hello.

HILGERS: Hello.

SHIRLEY NIEMEYER: Senators, I am Shirley Niemeyer, N-i-e-m-e-y-e-r, speaking as myself. I do have a background, 40 years as a faculty member at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in housing and the environment and I'm on the current chamber board in Ashland and the Ashland Historic Business District Committee. That's my background-- and I volunteer, but I'm speaking for myself. First I will speak to the entertainment and recreation component of 1092 [SIC]. The essential parts are addressing mitigating flooding and flood damage--

those are the essential parts in my mind-- while protecting the natural resources and humans that make the Lower Platte corridor and its tributaries home. There appears to be a large amount of focus on expanding recreation as a part of this. However, there are already many opportunities for recreation, especially in eastern Nebraska around Lincoln and Omaha: canoeing, golfing, boating, fishing, bicycling, swimming, birdwatching, walking, theaters, movies, music venues, plays, and enjoying nature. I would suggest that river and water recreation only-- focuses only on one segment of the tourist and economic development. According to research conducted by the Universities of Nebraska, Minnesota, and Iowa State some years ago, we surveyed 1,490 people, of which 740 were tourists. They are four-- there are four specialized types of tourists and these four tourist types are ethnic, arts, and people style-- that's their focus-- history and park style-- that's what they like to do-- active outdoor style-- that's the boaters and so on-- and urban entertainment style. Part of the economic development should focus on expanding marketing and the opportunities for other tourist types in addition to recreation. Second, our dam is an ineffective method of stopping flood damage. And this is the International Rivers organizations, they quote, dams can stop regular annual floods, but often fail to hold back exceptionally large floods. Because dams lead people to believe that floods are controlled, they lead to increased development of the floodplains. When a large flood does come, damages cause-- costs are greater than what they would have been without the dam. Large dams take inordinate, long periods to build, making them ineffective in urgent crisis. The World Commission on Dams found that on average, large dams have been at best, only marginally economically viable. The average cost overrun of dams is 56 percent. This means that when a dam is predicted to cost \$1 billion, it ends up costing \$1.56 billion. An option to creating much is-- an option is creating much smaller dams and ponds to prevent water runoff from field to tributaries and larger rivers, making water available to livestock and wildlife. In addition, no till-- minimum tillage and other agricultural methods reduce runoff. The third point I want to make is this is from a study done by the Nat-- well, it was posted by the National Academies Press-- the Missouri River ecosystem exploring the prospects of recovery and it was done in 2002, major study. And I summarized it here. I'm not quite sure-- you might want to read the whole thing. This is what they basically say: widen-- it would apply to the Platte-- widen the Platte and tributaries where possible. A major study of the Missouri River conducted by the Natural-- National Research Council in 2002 indicates the types of actions that might be taken to mitigate flooding. These

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

include removing setback hardpoints on the banks and cutting banks to widen the area for water flows, increasing land areas by buying land that is for sale that could be used for flooding, adding chutes and side channels, removing some levees that constrain overbank flows and adding areas for cooling, discourage the development of flood fringe and zone areas, relocate structures that are repeatedly damaged by purchasing and by voluntary actions, increase zoning and codes to prevent more development in flood zone and fringe zones, and require housing near fringe to build up higher and for some, to raise housing on pillars, which is down in Louisiana a lot. And fourth, additional water is made more available by reducing usage. This has been mentioned. Examples can be found in California, Utah, Arizona, and Nevada. Estimates vary, but on average, each person in the U.S. uses 80 to 100 gallons of water per day for indoor home use. We can all use about 20 percent less by installing water-efficient fixtures, appliances, rain cap systems, and gray water use. Europeans on average use 53 gallons and in the Sahara, citizens use three to five gallons and that's from the USDS. I thank you very much for allowing my testimony.

HILGERS: Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions? Seeing none, thank you for coming down.

SHIRLEY NIEMEYER: Thank you.

HILGERS: Next testifier. Welcome.

TIMOTHY McCOY: Good afternoon, Chairman Hilgers, members of the committee. My name is Timothy McCoy, T-i-m-o-t-h-y M-c-C-o-y. I'm the deputy director of Nebraska Game and Parks Commission at 2200 North 33rd Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. Thank you for your initiative in LB406 to look at a variety of opportunities and to build upon the great recreation opportunities that are in the Lower Platte River. That's a region very popular because of its proximity to a lot of people and for us, runs all the way from Platte River and Mahoney State Parks to Louisville, Fremont, Two Rivers, Schramm, and Memphis State Recreation areas. Those areas all serve ever, ever-increasing demands for outdoor recreational activities in Nebraska and a lot of that is water based. We see the opportunity here to hopefully blend in with all of the work being looked at in the Lower Platte River to help expand some of those recreational opportunities and to provide access for Nebraskans and our visitors. Those could expand recreation and parks and rivers. You know, some of the things that come to mind for us are the potential for trail systems that help interconnect various park areas or also

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

can help interconnect people that have opportunities to, to utilize trails around new-- if there are new development areas, as, as well as direct water access especially. There's a lot of demand for floating on the rivers right now. There's also some demand-- if you, if you are-- there is the development of recreation reservoirs for flat water recreation, obviously boating, especially power boating. We do have, you know, some specific things that, that we'll provide the HDR just in all of this, but we just think that there are tremendous opportunities here and as you work through this and HDR does their analysis, we hope you'll keep that in mind.

HILGERS: Thank you, Mr. McCoy. Are there questions?

CLEMENTS: Yes.

HILGERS: Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. McCoy. And this area is part of the areas where I live and I know that at Louisville, there was a vendor that does floating and kayaking services and there's a really nice ramp there at the Louisville Bridge. Are there-- can you identify any other places where there are or there could be access points like that?

TIMOTHY McCOY: I am most familiar with the access points that we have as an agency. We also have one on the, on the north side of the river at Schramm State Recreation Area. We have a smaller access point that is on-- at Platte River State Park and we can work with our, our partners at Papio Missouri NRD to get you the full list because I know they also have river access locations.

CLEMENTS: Are you aware of any-- well, the Elkhorn is kind of-- is outside of your area or is the Elkhorn River something that you deal with?

TIMOTHY McCOY: I'm aware of the, the Elkhorn River because it-- our, our area-- we manage areas all across the state--

CLEMENTS: OK.

TIMOTHY McCOY: --but we don't have-- I mean we-- outside-- it would be outside of the sort of the-- we've been looking at the boundaries on the Lower Platte sort of as this committee had laid them out, so we have not went down very far into the Elkhorn Watershed of going up farther.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Clements. Seeing no other questions, thank you, Mr. McCoy. Next testifier. Welcome.

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: Thank you. Senator Hilgers and the rest of your committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify. I'm here on a, on a completely different vein than what we've heard all afternoon.

HILGERS: Can you state your name and spell--

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Carl Grotelueschen, G-r-o-t-e-l-u-e-s-c-h-e-n, 724 Road I, Schuyler, Nebraska. I'm here, I'm here to testify on a different subject than what we've heard all afternoon. And, and my, my concern is up in the Schuyler region, on the Platte River, we sustained some very extensive damage. In particular, we have one jetty structure that was, was completely decimated in the, in the 2019 flood. We've, we've looked at several different avenues to try to get that jetty system reestablished. The importance of it is it protects infrastructure for the county, but it-- more importantly, it, it's a, it's a structure that redirects water so that it doesn't try to form a new channel that directs water right into the Lost Creek channel, which comes into the southwest corner of the city of Schuyler. There's been-- it was, it was established in-- and 1994 when this jetty system was put in and it was identified at that time by NRCS and Lower Platte North NRD that it was a potential that the Platte River could cut a new channel that would, would actually come up to the southern edge of the city of Schuyler. We've exhausted a lot of-- we've gone down a lot of avenues to try to find some funding and only to find that those sources, we really don't quite fit the mold. And so I guess I'm just here today to ask for some assistance in trying to get some funding to maybe reestablish these, these jetty system. Colfax County, as a, as a board, we did vote to allow Mainelli Wagner and-- to come in and redesign a jetty system that would, that would redirect this water on this curve on the Platte River. And so we know that it's probably-- we're probably looking at a dollar amount of somewhere around \$1.5 million to achieve this project. And then secondly, if I may, just as an individual, I, I farm in the Colfax County area and I've been involved with the Shell, Shell Creek Watershed improvement group for an excess of 20 years. I was one of the founding members on that and we've made some real strides. We're-- our, our goals have been, have been flood control and our idea as a, as a, as a small group of individuals in that watershed that feeds into the Platte River is to control the runoff on the upper

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

reaches, as Eric Gottschalk with Lower Platte North referred to, a series of dams to try to control this water before it gets down to this area because when you get this quantity, it's, it's virtually impossible to control. And I think there's a lot of avenues that could be researched that would be much less costly that can control the excessive runoff. Granted, it does not create the, the recreational opportunities that a large structure would, but I think there's a lot of merit in, in trying to control these, these flows before it reaches the, the immense levels that we get when it comes-- when it gets into the Platte River. If you'd like, I do have some maps along. I, I don't do this for a living. I don't present, but I do have maps along. If any one after we're done would like to take a look, I can show you some, some more details as to what we're trying to deal with in that-- on the Platte River corridor.

HILGERS: Thank you. Are there questions? Senator Bostelman.

BOSTELMAN: Thank you. Do you have enough maps for all of us or--

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: No, I don't, Senator.

BOSTELMAN: So what we're talking about is-- I'll call a bend in the river, Platte River, so it go-- it's going east and it goes to the south. So people-- so the, so the committee understands, what happened in '19 was the river went straight. And when the river went straight it goes into Lost Creek, which goes into the south part of Schuyler. So this spring, we've already had flooding already this spring from, from water coming out. We're taking out some of the road structure that we just put in '19-- that the state did. So what Mr. Grotelueschen is talking about is just an assistance they're, they're trying to do to divert that water to keep that from happening again because this will also help as far as floodplain management, as far as taking some people on the south side of Schuyler. If you've ever gone through Schuyler, the southern portion of Schuyler flooded in '19 and this will have a significant impact, potentially-- if my understanding-- from what our conversations were before-- on significantly reducing that type of occurrence to happen again and right now it's wide open. If we get a flood through the-- if we get high water through there, that's wide open, right? Is that correct?

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: That's correct.

BOSTELMAN: And now--

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: If I may add, Senator--

BOSTELMAN: Yeah.

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: --this, this, this, this particular problem sits on, on a privately held property and, and this individual has suffered huge losses in the 1990 flood-- or excuse me, the 2019 flood to the point that he does not have the resources to correct this issue on his own. The originals were put in by the old SCS. Lower Platte North NRD and the county and the landowner contributed some to the originals. At this time, he's been tapped out so bad from, from the damages that he incurred in 2019 and so we're really looking for some outside sources to, to help us with this.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Bostelman. Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: Thank you, Senator. The-- you mentioned at \$1.5 million cost. What would that do?

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: The biggest-- that would, that would reinstall about a series of, of 14 finger dams or, or, or jetties. They'd be constructed with the sand that's been deposited at that location, but then they have to be fortified with, with rock.

CLEMENTS: All right. I think I had another question about that. Oh, this private landowner, he's willing to work with the county to-- if, if the money is available, cooperate with the county to have the structure rebuilt, is that right?

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: That's, that's correct. He would be-- he is more than willing to work with the, with the county. And in fact, I had a conversation with him again last night just to reiterate that. He is very willing to cooperate.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Clements. Senator Gragert.

GRAGERT: Thank you, Chairman. Just a quick statement, more than a question, and I'm somewhat familiar with the Shell Creek Watershed project--

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: OK.

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

GRAGERT: --and you and the others who served in that watershed should be commended for what you've done in that watershed.

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: Thank you, appreciate that.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Gragert. Are there actual other questions for the testifier? Seeing none, thank you for coming down, Mr.--

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: Thank--

HILGERS: --Grotelueschen.

CARL GROTELUESCHEN: Thank you very much for your time.

HILGERS: Thank you. Next testifier. Welcome.

JIM SWENSON: Good afternoon. Chairman Hilgers, members of committee, good afternoon again. My name is Jim Swenson, J-i-m S-w-e-n-s-o-n. I have the honor of serving as your Parks Division Administrator for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in Lincoln, Nebraska. I had the opportunity to visit with you at the other locations across the state and it's been a great experience and I, and I commend you for your efforts with all this. One topic that I've not heard discussed here in great detail today is the community infrastructure and regional infrastructure elements that are so critical as a part of these planning processes. And I know that we at Game and Parks with the many park features that we offer across the state are very reliant upon those communities. The services they provide oftentimes are well systems, infrastructure, things of that nature. So I just want to point out the, the very important aspects of maintaining-- an opportunity to maintain those structures and, and that infrastructure, road systems, communications, EMT services, so on and so forth, so that we can continue to provide the level of service that the public expects when they visit our great state parks. So I just wanted to speak to that and commend you for your efforts with this project, so--

HILGERS: Thank you, Mr. Swenson. Are there questions? Senator Clements.

CLEMENTS: In other locations, Ogallalla, Niobrara, we've seen a need for more campsites, more cabins and better roads in the parks. How about the condition of those facilities in this lower part of the Platte River?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

JIM SWENSON: There's still a great need that exists. That's a great question. If you look at the demand that there is-- are-- currently exists for a recreational vehicle use, we, we serve a fairly good niche here, fill a good niche, but there's still much more demand. A lot of our infrastructure is aging. You know, Fremont, Two Rivers, Memphis are locations we're looking to do some changes and improvements there to draw a new audience, a larger audience, and better serve the audience that's already coming there. But there is need for more and we've identified some locations in those park areas to, to expand.

CLEMENTS: I think it would be good for the committee to have a list of those items as well.

JIM SWENSON: We did. We visited with HDR already and provided them some good insight on, on what those needs are, so thank you.

CLEMENTS: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Clements. Is that part of a math-- master plan at all for this area or is that just a separate list that you provide?

JIM SWENSON: Separate, that's a separate list that we discussed with them.

HILGERS: Is there, is there a master plan for this area at all?

JIM SWENSON: We, we had a planning project put together for our venture parks and a list that identified some of that as well. But that's a whole diff-- another subject there, so--

HILGERS: Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Jim, for your testimony. First, I was struck when I came up here it said Crete Carrier Corporation on the side of this building, so obviously we're doing public-private partnerships in our parks. Can you explain how that works? Is that at all parks, but this one in particular because you're close to the population center of the state?

JIM SWENSON: This, this park is a great example of how partnership builds park. There's a plaque up in the Kiewit Lodge that, that speaks to the success we've had and we've used that template across the state of Nebraska now in other locations. We are interested in

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

public-private partnerships. We think it's key to growth in the future, given the limited resources and manpower, operational dollars that, that we often encounter. So there is opportunity, yes, and, and those are things that we can investigate through concession agreements at other locations and, and potential development, so--

BRANDT: At some of the more remote locations in the state, is it possible to leverage that just through a public outreach campaign in those communities to say we'll name this cabin after you or this lodge or you'd like these concessions at, at your local park, if you would provide them, we'll put your name on it?

JIM SWENSON: Yeah, I think it's always good to entertain those opportunities locally and regionally. You know, we've got examples across the state. I'll use the community of Fort Calhoun right now as an example with what we've done at our Fort Atkinson State Historical Park. You know, that's a local community foundation and the fort foundation that came together, started grant writing program to create some developments and, and improve infrastructure in the parks. So yes, those opportunities are there and we're open to ideas.

BRANDT: Thank you.

HILGERS: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Following up on that in terms of how these are structured, so-- I went past the Kiewit Lodge and then down Omaha World-Herald Road to the Crete Carrier Center, so are these-- is it something similar to, like, a Pinnacle Bank Arena arrangement where they just-- someone pays a yearly fee and they get naming rights? Do they pay for the, the building itself and then, and then that's it or pay for the building plus maintenance? How are those generally structured?

JIM SWENSON: Well, generally, it's-- you know, we'll, we'll start with a master planning process. So we'll identify what we want to accomplish in an area, a specific park or region, and then we will-- we have individuals that will, that will reach out to make contacts with donors or donor organizations or granting opportunities to offer, offer what it is we want to accomplish. Those funds will then come to the state, be accepted by the state, and used for construction purposes to reach that goal. Sometimes it, it may be 100 percent funded, many times it is partially funded. And then we identify naming opportunities accordingly with, with the level of, of the gift, so--

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STAR WARS Committee September 14, 2021
Rough Draft

HILGERS: So those are gifts that I think-- when I was Chair of the Exec Board, those were approved--

JIM SWENSON: Yes.

HILGERS: --by the Legislature, the Governor?

JIM SWENSON: There's a process we go through to get approved through to the Governor's Office, the Legislature.

HILGERS: OK. Do I see another hand down there? No. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony.

JIM SWENSON: Thank you.

HILGERS: Any other testifiers? Going once, going twice, three times. That closes the hear-- the last, third, and final hearing on LB406. Thank you, Game and Parks, for allowing us to be here today.