

# Public Engagement

## Round 2 Subwatershed 5 Summary



### I. Round 2 Engagement Summary for Subwatershed 5

Pawnee Watershed Supplemental Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment.

#### 1. Overview

The Pawnee Joint Watershed District No. 81, in coordination with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), held the second of three rounds of community engagement for the Pawnee Supplemental Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment during spring of 2023. The meeting focused on Subwatershed 5. The purpose was to:

- ▶ Hold the project's second in-person public meeting for Subwatershed 5 on Monday May 15, 2023.
- ▶ Utilize the following tools to facilitate the meeting:
  - ▶ **A project web page.**
  - ▶ **A presentation of the project (incorporated into the web page).**
- ▶ Share information with meeting participants, specifically:
  - ▶ **Key project team members.**
  - ▶ **Purpose of the project.**
  - ▶ **Process and schedule.**
  - ▶ **Alternatives and alternatives screening.**
- ▶ Gather feedback from all participants about:
  - ▶ **Alternatives.**
  - ▶ **Screening and selection criteria.**
  - ▶ **Preferred alternative.**
- ▶ Incorporate participants' concerns and suggestions into the improvement alternatives and the plan/environmental document.

Notice of the public meeting was provided via press release, USDA NRCS social media, advertisement in the *Jetmore Republican*, and letters sent to property owners. Anyone with an interest in the project was encouraged to attend the meeting. Approximately 15 people attended the meeting including representatives from Kansas Department of Wildlife Parks and Tourism, the Kansas Water Office, and board members of the Pawnee Watershed District and landowners, in addition to the consultant team and NRCS staff. A total of nine board members and two staff were in attendance at the Watershed District Board meeting.

The following is a summary of the notes taken during the public open house meeting and the Watershed Board meeting.

### Questions and Comments – Public Meeting

1.) What size pipe is being used for each dam?

**Response:** The pipe size in the principal spillway for each dam is:

- Frusher – 48” RCP for 200’
- Lehmen – 30” RCP for 250’
- Blattner – 48” RCP for 250’

2.) How many days after rainfall fills the dam to the top will it take to get to normal pool?

**Response:** The timeframe for drawdown is a maximum of 10 days.

3.) Kansas Dept. of Wildlife Parks and Tourism staff (Aaron Baugh and Lowell Aberson) expressed concern that constructing flood control dams is contrary to the mission of avoiding environmental damage to natural systems and protecting the natural function of streams. They question how much downstream flow is lost. They also noted the need to consider what is the ideal balance between controlled flow and natural stream function (i.e., is there a value in and need for scouring flows?).

**Response:** The design of the dams include the riser as part of the principal spillway, which will provide flow discharge until the water in the impoundment reaches the lowest outlet point (crest) of the riser. This means that during drought conditions, water flowing into the impoundment will not discharge until it reaches the riser crest, however, it should discharge most of the time. Releases from the impoundments, drought or no drought, will generally mimic whatever the stream conditions are in the surrounding landscape, with maybe a little lag until the impoundment water hits the riser crest.

4.) Mitigation requirements and costs seem excessive.

**Response:** Correspondence with and a site visit by the USACE in the fall of 2022 resulted in USACE stating that the streams and wetlands within the project boundaries are jurisdictional. Therefore, mitigation credits were calculated for each dam site and costs for credits in Kansas applied. At this stage of planning, the team has to include costs for the mitigation to be completed through a mitigation bank. Further discussions with USACE staff should be conducted to confirm total impacts and mitigation requirements as the project moves into design.

5.) Does mitigation have to be spent in the watershed and can it cover stream obstructions?

**Response:** The USACE generally directs mitigation dollars to the same watershed as the impacts. The USACE prioritizes mitigation as follows: 1) banking, 2) in-lieu fee, and 3) permittee responsible. If there is no mitigation bank within the watershed that is being impacted, one within an adjacent watershed can be used.

Mitigation banking and in-lieu fee can both be used for wetland and stream mitigation. Details related to mitigation fees and how they would be allocated will need to be determined during the design of the dams.

6.) What about groundwater recharge?

**Response:** Groundwater recharge was looked at but, is very difficult to quantify. It was not quantified for this project.

7.) How does construction of the dams either benefit or harm the landowners?

**Response:** The dams will provide a reduction in flooding in the area while also providing a water source for irrigation and recreation. The team does not know if there are any tax implications to these improvements.

8.) The costs for the road raises presented seems low.

**Response:** The costs shown in the presentation are annualized over the lifespan of the project (100 years), rather than the total cost for construction.

9.) What makes Blattner a high-hazard potential dam?

**Response:** Hazard potential is based on potential impacts to property and loss of life if the dam were to fail (breach). Frusher and Lehmen are both considered significant dams. The table below provides a comparison of design criteria for each dam.

	Frusher 5-11A	Lehmen 5-28A	Blattner 5-29A
Dam Height (ft.)	32	34	38
Normal Pool (ac.)	13	19	39
Maximum Pool (ac.)	82	128	387
Drainage Area (ac.)	2,832	4,032	7,287
Storage Capacity (ac./ft.)	830	1,567	4,803

10.) The Board reminded the team that there are 4 pipelines that go through the greater project area. One of the lines belongs to White Cliff. Board members noted one location as being below the proposed Frusher dam site 5-11A, and that the pipes are periodically uncovered, which creates a potential risk for rupturing. Would like the team to incorporate any benefits the dams could provide in helping reduce erosion and exposure of these pipes. The Board will provide a map of the pipeline route.

**Response:** The team will evaluate the cost and benefit of protecting these pipes.

- 11.) Randy Still discussed his impression that the local sponsor is being “punished” by the funding process for purposefully choosing dam sites that were removed from population centers. In consciously trying to only take property that is at lower valued use for the dam sites, the sponsor has been left with no downstream threats that can increase the benefit/cost ratio. He believes this to be counter to the original spirit of the act.
- 12.) The team was asked to check the overall flood damage reduction percentages as these appear to be too high.

**Response:** The team checked the 1988 Work Plan Update and the 2014 Amendment. The value assumed for annual flood reduction with all improvement projects built (all 73 dams) is 61%.