

Platte projects' future in doubt

OMAHA (AP) — A proposed cap on development projects along the Platte River is putting in doubt the future of two major proposals for using the river's water.

A proposal from the Central Platte Natural Resources District calls for removing water from the Platte to recharge depleted groundwater reserves in Buffalo and Hall counties.

Ron Bishop, manager of the NRD in Grand Island, said he didn't know how or if a cap would affect the Prairie Bend project.

A cap has been under discussion in Nebraska and Wyoming as the states try to persuade the federal government to renew permits and licenses for scores of irrigation, power and municipal water projects.

Ross Lock, a program manager for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, is not sure how a project cap

would affect his agency's proposal to designate certain Platte flows between Overton and Plattsmouth for wildlife.

"I think people have a lot of questions about the ramifications of a cap," Lock said.

There also are questions about how a cap might affect Grand Island, Kearney, Lincoln and Omaha permit requests to use Platte water to protect and enhance municipal water systems.

Federal officials want to be assured before continuing these projects that Platte River wildlife in central Nebraska has enough water to survive. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said that could be accomplished best by assuring certain flows in the river at various times of the year.

But neither Wyoming nor Nebraska likes that idea. Instead, they

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ROSS LOCK
Nebraska Game and Parks
Commission program manager

wonder if a pledge to stop development of the river would pacify federal officials.

Although details have not been worked out, a cap has drawn fire from Colorado, another state in the Platte River Basin.

Colorado officials say they cannot stomach a cap because they need more projects to generate drinking water for their growing population.

Omaha, Idaho similar in engineering

By The Associated Press

The engineering education system in Idaho bears striking similarities to the system in Nebraska, which is among three states still in the running for Micron Technology Inc.'s \$1.3 billion expansion.

Omaha, Oklahoma City and Utah's Utah County are finalists for the Boise-based company's new computer-chip manufacturing plant and the 3,500 jobs it will create.

Micron's decision to expand outside Idaho follows criticism from company executives that engineering education in Boise is inadequate. But what Micron would find in Omaha is, in some ways, similar.

Micron considered access to engineering education important enough that it offered the state \$6 million to establish an independent engineering college at Boise State University. The existing program is operated cooperatively with Boise State but is administered by the University of Idaho, 200 miles north in Moscow.

The state Board of Education voted 5-3 last month against creating a separate college at Boise State. It endorsed expansion of the cooperative program in Boise instead.

University of Nebraska regents, also by a 5-3 vote in December, rejected a proposal for an engineering college at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

A full range of engineering degrees are offered at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but options are more limited at UNO. The Omaha program is administered from Lincoln.

The Idaho Board of Education last year agreed to ask the Legislature for \$2 million to expand engineering education in Boise. But new Republican Gov. Phil Batt did not include money for those plans in his budget request.

Robin Dodson, chief academic officer for the Board of Education, said Micron's short list, pared from 13 sites on Monday, raises questions about what the company is looking for in terms of educational opportuni-

ties.

"There's not actually an engineering college in any of the cities they've chosen," Dodson said.

Mike Erhart, director of management information systems for the Oklahoma Regents for Higher Education, said the University of Oklahoma offers the engineering disciplines Micron requires at its Norman campus about 30 miles from Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma State University operates an Oklahoma City technical branch, which is linked to its Stillwater campus by fiber optics.

Utah County has no university of its own, but three universities nearby offer a wide range of engineering degrees.

Payson is about 20 miles south of Provo, home of Brigham Young University. The University of Utah is about 50 miles north of Provo in Salt Lake City, and Utah State University in Logan is about 125 miles from Payson.

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NEBRASKA BRIEFS

Men send golf putter to Clinton

OMAHA (AP) — The next time President Clinton misses a putt by a mile or chalks up a double-bogey, he can blame it on a putter from Nebraska.

Two Nebraska businessmen mailed Clinton a putter Wednesday night after learning that he had misplaced his favorite putter, a 35-year-old Titleist Bullseye that he thinks he accidentally stowed in someone else's bag.

Jim Arbogast, president of Superior Metal Products of Omaha said the "Scout" putter was aluminum with brass weights.

Engraved into the club are "Limited Edition" and "Nebraska Cornhuskers — 1994 National Champions," which commemorates the NU football team's champi-

onship season.

Its serial number is 0042 — picked especially for Clinton, the nation's 42nd president.

"I'm pretty excited," Arbogast said. "I guess I feel like you don't get an opportunity like this every day."

Norm Stokes, the company's vice president, got the idea to send the president the putter after hearing a news report about Clinton's misfortune, Arbogast said.

Clinton joined former Presidents George Bush and Gerald Ford and comedian Bob Hope to open the first day of the Bob Hope Classic tournament in Indian Wells, Calif., on Wednesday.

Principal shaves head for Internet

OMAHA (AP) — Blumfield Elementary School principal Jerry Rutherford had a hair-raising idea for funding the school's access to the Internet computer network.

Make that hair-cutting idea.

Rutherford told Blumfield pupils eight days ago that he would have his hair cut in a trendy, buzz-cut style if they raised 84,480 pennies — enough to stretch a mile — to be used toward bringing the Internet to the school.

The students gathered 107,616 pennies. On Tuesday, they marched a mile around

the school as a symbol of their fund-raising efforts.

Then they walked through the auditorium, where Rutherford sat getting the letters "B" for Blumfield and "I" for Internet shaved on either side of his head.

Doug Gorham, 11, a fifth-grader with a blond, spiked 'do, said that Rutherford's new coif was pretty cool.

Blumfield will hold its grand Internet opening March 1, Rutherford said. The school has raised about 80 percent of its \$6,000 goal for hooking up the computer system.

Tax

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said he feared cutting income taxes this year would result in raising taxes two or three years down the road.

Sen. Bob Wickersham of Harrison asked one person testifying in support of the bill if it was more important to address the more costly problem of personal property tax.

John Jordison, of the Nebraska Tax Research Council, said the property tax problem still needed to be addressed.

"There is little question in my mind we rely

too heavily on property taxes," Jordison said.

Wickersham also asked Jordison how an income tax reduction would affect the average family as determined by Jordison's organization.

The Nebraska Tax Research Council has developed a statistical family based on the average Nebraska family.

That family of four making \$41,827 per year and paying \$937 per year in income tax would have a savings of \$42.17 per year.

Jordison said he had questions about what money was being used to fund the the income tax cut, but he still supported it.

"How can anyone not support a tax cut?" he said.

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