For the first time in almost a decade, Lake McConaughy surpassed 1 million acre-feet of water, reaching the seven-digit figure on Wednesday.

Lake McConaughy has not held more than 1 million acre-feet of water in nine years, since 2002. On Monday (today), Lake McConaughy held 1,008,600 acre-feet, with an elevation of 3,236.4 above sea level.

Cory Steinke, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District civil engineer, said Lake McConaughy is expected to peak at 3,250 feet above sea level, or 1.3 million acre-feet, at the end of May or in early June.

Currently, Lake McConaughy contains about 59 percent of its 1.7 million acre-feet capacity. At the 2010 projected peak of 3,250, Lake Mac will be near 77 percent capacity.

Steinke said South Platte River flows are helping Central officials meet diversion requirements. With work on the Kingsley Dam hydro plant and gates associated with the delivery system, releases from Lake McConaughy have been halted.

However, in mid December, water will begin being released for the Nebraska Public Power District for the operation of Gerald Gentleman Station at Sutherland.

Between 300 and 4000 cubic feet per second will be required from Lake Mac during “on-and-off” releases through the winter months to maintain water levels in Sutherland Reservoir, Steinke said.

As for 2010, Steinke said, for the first time in many years, he is predicting normal flows for both the North Platte and South Platte rivers. Wyoming snowpack also is near normal thus far.

“I think we’ll have near normal inflows into Lake McConaughy next year,” Steinke said.

The civil engineer attributed the near normal inflows to improved precipitation patterns.

Steinke said he also was cautiously optimistic that should the Wyoming area receive above normal precipitation during the winter months, Lake McConaughy could receive an overflow spill from Wyoming for the first time in many years.

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