



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Conference Call
November 28, 2011

Attendees (conference call)

Mark Czaplewski, Interim Chair, Local Nebraska Rep (Central Platte Natural Resources District)
 Bruce Sackett – ED Office
 Justin Brei – ED Office
 Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
 Tim Tunnell – ED Office
 Matt Rabbe – U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
 Brock Merrill – U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
 Ted LaGrange – State of Nebraska, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
 Jennifer Schellpeper – State of Nebraska, Nebraska Dept. of Natural Resources
 Harry LaBonde – State of Wyoming, Wyoming State Engineer’s Office
 Suzanne Sellers – State of Colorado, Colorado Water Conservation Board
 John Shadle – Downstream Water Users, Nebraska Public Power District
 Jim Jenniges – Downstream Water Users, Nebraska Public Power District
 Kent Aden – Downstream Water Users, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
 Mark Peyton – Downstream Water Users, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
 Jonas Davis – Environmental Groups, Ducks Unlimited
 Bill Taddicken – Environmental Groups, Audubon Rowe Sanctuary
 John Heaston – Environmental Groups, The Nature Conservancy
 Jim Bendfeldt – Local Nebraska Rep (Joint CPNRD/TBNRD)
 John Thorburn – Local Nebraska Rep (Joint CPNRD/TBNRD)

Welcome and Administrative

Chairman Czaplewski called the meeting to order at 9:00 am Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

Czaplewski asked for agenda modifications. None were provided.

Shadle made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 26, 2011 LAC meeting, as modified. The motion was seconded by LaBonde and passed unanimously.

Review Budget and Recommend Approval to GC

Sackett, Merrill, and Farnsworth updated the LAC on the funding challenges the Program may face in 2012. Merrill said that currently, \$16 million is obligated to the Program. If the budget is approved as-is for 2012, available funding is not likely to be sufficient for 2013 as projected. Farnsworth said the big issues are not day to day operational expenses, but the large influx of cash necessary over a short period of time to fund the J-2 Reservoir project. The Governance



Committee and Finance Committee are working to find alternative ways to ensure all projects can keep moving forward.

Sackett walked the LAC through the budget work plan presented in the meeting packet. The work plan has a line-item summary of budgeted 2012 dollars, as well as a breakdown of specific activities by complex.

Thorburn asked for more information about the LP-6 special advisors. Sackett said they are farm management firms that take care of ag responsibilities such as FSA requirements, writing and administering leases for both cropping and grazing, advising and administration for crop leases and sharecrops, etc. They help ensure tenants are using appropriate chemicals, grazing rotations and stocking rates, etc to keep land uses in line with Program objectives.

Shadle asked for more information on the plan for flow consolidation at Cottonwood Ranch. Farnsworth said the plan for 2012 is to plug two channels that opened up during the high flows in 2011. One channel is west of CWR and diverts flow to the north channel; one channel is an eroded plug that NPPD placed several years ago and is losing water to the south channel. Another activity is to begin design and analysis of potential flow consolidation scenarios for full implementation. Shadle said it seemed like a lot of excess study when the necessary actions seem straight-forward. Farnsworth said most of the work results from the need for a 404 permit, but it will also contribute to the adaptive management structure. By implementing activities in this fashion at CWR, the overall benefits can be better assessed and exported to other river locations where consolidation is not as straight-forward.

LaGrange asked for more information about the Fish & Wildlife Coordination task in each of the complex breakdowns. Farnsworth said this item covers species surveys (Platte River caddisfly, river otters, etc), and footprint consultations which are necessary for Program land management plans and work projects.

Czaplewski asked for some acknowledgement in relation to LP-3 that prioritizes the acquisition of non-complex wetlands lands. This doesn't affect budget numbers, but the need should be documented. Farnsworth said the ED office will add a summary sheet that will detail 2012 priorities on these line items. Heaston said it may be useful to form an ad hoc group to examine the Program's progress on land objectives more closely and look at priorities moving forward. Czaplewski asked that this discussion be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

Shadle asked for an update on sediment augmentation. Farnsworth said it is still held up in permitting. The permit has been submitted and been through a couple comment periods. A request for public hearing was received by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Program is currently awaiting a Corps decision on whether or not a public hearing is required, and subsequently the final decision on the permit. If the permit is approved this winter, trial scale sediment augmentation activities will begin in the spring. The trial scale activities include 50,000 tons of sand to be pushed into the river at Cottonwood Ranch and 50,000 tons to be pumped into the river at Program property 2009003 near Overton, NE.



Heaston moved to recommend that the GC approve the 2012 land budget and work plans as presented. LaBonde seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

1111 Land Exchange

Sackett presented a summary of the land exchanges that have occurred in the past at 2009003. Previous land exchanges have resulted in a leftover parcel of land, approximately 0.9 acres, that this exchange will tie up. The land that this exchange covers is not irrigated, and there are currently no fences. Once the exchange is completed, fences will be installed on the final boundary.

Thorburn moved to recommend GC approval of the land exchange at 1111/2009003. Motion seconded by Heaston and passed unanimously.

Review Committee Work on 2009008 Disposition

Heaston presented a document and gave an overview of the discussions of the ad hoc committee. The committee separated the excess property at 2009008 into three parcels. Parcel A is the irrigated half-pivot cropland with riparian woodland adjacent to the north channel, encompassing approximately 286 acres. Parcel B is a 26 acre tract in the southeast corner of the property, separated as potential sale/trade land for an easement access through the southern neighbor's property. Parcel C is approximately 12 acres of riparian woodland and river channel that borders Nebraska Game & Parks Commission's Bassway Strip WMA.

On Parcel A, the committee discussed the certified irrigated acres and felt that the water should be removed from the property before the Program sells it, whether this occurs by sale to the CPNRD water bank or another method.

On Parcel B, the committee recommends that the Program seek an easement for access from the south so approximately 1 mile of trespass easement across retained Program property would not be required. If an agreement for access from the south does not seem feasible, Parcel B would be combined with Parcel A.

Heaston said the ad hoc committee and the LAC still need to discuss the logistics of the sale, such as offering it through open auction, preferred conservation buyer, etc. Given the location adjacent to the NGPC Bassway Strip WMA, NGPC may be interested in purchasing the property. Heaston asked LaGrange if NGPC would have an interest in this property. LaGrange said NGPC always prioritizes looking at parcels adjacent to existing WMAs. Heaston said the ad hoc committee discussed offering NGPC an opportunity to purchase the land, but give a deadline for the process to be completed so the land is not held indefinitely – possibly three years. LaGrange said that sounds reasonable and a deadline may serve to keep the process moving.

Heaston said the ad hoc committee will reassemble before the next meeting and form a recommendation for the LAC to address in February.

**Review Prescribed Fire Plan**

Tunnell provided the LAC a copy of a request for proposals that will be released in early 2012 to acquire services for spring burning. Tunnell has tracked down several regional and national contractors to assess interest and received responses from about 10 contractors. Czaplewski asked if there was any way to build more flexibility into the time window for the burn as presented in the RFP. Farnsworth said some language can be inserted that asks if the contractor can be flexible or not, and that can be considered to separate proposals that are otherwise ranked closely. Heaston asked if the TAC has looked at the goals that the Program is looking to achieve by burning. Farnsworth said the TAC's main objective is to provide short-stature vegetation for whooping cranes during the spring and fall migration periods. Tunnell said that the time window is more fixed for the RFP since it's likely they will be travelling from a great distance. Local crews can allow for greater flexibility and experimentation with timing, but so far the availability has been very limited.

Election of Officers

Peyton moved to appoint Mark Czaplewski as LAC Chairman for 2012. Heaston seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Aden moved to appoint John Shadle as LAC Vice-chairman for 2012. LaBonde seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Public Forum/Next Meeting

Chairman Czaplewski asked for public comments, none were offered.

The next meeting of the LAC will be held Wednesday, February 1, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. central time.

Closing Business

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Czaplewski at 10:45 a.m.