# PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
## Water Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Conference call/Webex
October 16, 2012

## Meeting Attendees

**Water Advisory Committee (WAC)**

**State of Colorado**
Susanne Sellers – Member

**State of Nebraska**
Pat Goltl – Member

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**
Tom Econopouly – Member
Jeff Runge – Alternate
Matt Rabbe
Eliza Hines

**Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**
Mahonri Williams – Member
Brock Merrill – Alternate

**Downstream Water Users**
Cory Steinke – Member (WAC Chair)
Duane Woodward – Member
Jeff Shafer – Member
Landon Shaw – Member
Mike Drain – Alternate
Nolan Little

**Environmental Groups**
Bill Taddicken – Member

**Executive Director's Office (ED Office)**
Jerry Kenny, Executive Director (ED)
Beorn Courtney
Matthew Welsh
Scott Griebling

**Welcome and Administrative**: *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*
Introductions were made. There were no agenda modifications. Griebling reviewed the August WAC Minutes modifications on the website provided by various WAC members. *Woodward moved to approve the August 2012 WAC minutes; Shafer seconded.* **Minutes approved with the modifications in the current website version.**

**Draft 2013 Water Plan Budget:** *Beorn Courtney, ED Office*
Courtney gave an overview of the draft 2013 Water Plan budget, explaining that the draft version has been presented to the Finance Committee and the final version will be presented to the Governance Committee (GC) in December for their approval. The format is similar to last year with a spreadsheet supported by workplans.

*WP1:Active Channel Capacity Improvements*

- *WP1(a) North Platte Channel above Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) Diversion Dam.* This task focuses on the choke point near North Platte. With a proposed budget of $500,000, this task includes the implementation of the flood proofing concepts previously presented to the WAC, improvements to bypass canals and ditches on the North Platte for use in routing flows around the choke point, and design and permitting for dredging. EA Engineering, Science, and Technology is under contract for the design and preliminary permitting of the flood proofing concepts and should complete this work by the 1st quarter of 2013. While the specific details of dredging for the choke point are not solidified, the Program anticipates some level of dredging activities being designed or initiated in 2013.
- *WP1(b) CNPPID Diversion Dam to Grand Island.* This task involves clearing biomass from the river channel between Kingsley Dam and Chapman. It is similar to what has been completed in previous years with a cost-sharing agreement with Platte Valley and West Central Weed Management Areas. The proposed budget is $200,000. Runge supported the effort in managing invasives but asked how long biomass activities were expected to carry on, considering that some of the weeds being cleared have been declared noxious weeds. ~~and t~~ The management of noxious weeds~~them is~~ may now be the responsibility of the land owners. Kenny replied that the budget for this task decreases in future years to $100,000, indicating the Program anticipates lower levels of biomass clearing. Kenny also pointed out that the Program is a land owner along the reach and biomass clearing is its responsibility as such. The management of noxious weeds outside of the channel is discussed in the Land Plan section of the Program budget. **Kenny agreed that it would be good to have Weed Management provide an update to the WAC on the status of the clearing.**

*WP4: Water Action Plan Projects WAP projects*

- *WP4(a) J-2 Regulating Reservoir.* The J-2 Regulating Reservoir (J-2) is the largest budget item, with a proposed budget of $13,000,000. As discussed in previous WAC meetings and last year's budget meeting, the J-2 project is driving the Water Plan budget

and the entire Program budget. It requires a large amount of money up-front for land acquisition, design, and construction. The $13,000,000 in the 2013 budget will primarily go toward land acquisition and design, and the $13,000,000 in 2014 and 2015 budget will primarily go to design and construction. The budget numbers for the years beyond 2015 reflect operation and maintenance costs. As of September, less than $40,000 of the $9,000,000 budgeted for J-2 in 2012 had been spent. The 2012 budget of $9,000,000 had assumed land acquisition and design initiated in 2012 which will not occur until 2013. RJH is currently under contract to review the Olsson design and recommend design modifications. They should have preliminary budget numbers to compare these numbers with by the end of the year and will present their findings to the GC in March.

- *WP4(b) Nebraska Ground Water Recharge.* $200,000 is budgeted for a water service delivery contract from CNPPID at the Phelps Canal. Drain commented that this number looks reasonable but noted that if there is not enough excess water to provide to the Program the money may not get spent. The groundwater recharge portion of the CPNRD lease is budgeted for under WP4(f).
- *WP4(c) Net Controllable Conserved Water (NCCW).* The program is investigating the economic feasibility of obtaining NCCW with George Omek, Duane Hovorka, and CNPPID as well as discussing the details of the lease with CNPPID. 2013 will be the year to decide if obtaining NCCW for the Program is possible or not. The current budget plans on leasing 6,000 acre-feet of water for $250 per acre-foot, which is lower than what has been estimated by CNPPID but higher than the Program planned for in the WAP. Runge asked if this water would come online in 2013 and Courtney explained that it could, but the cost is holding the process up at the moment. Drain indicated the water would likely be added to the environmental account (EA) in the fall if it were to be available in 2013.
- *WP4(d) Pathfinder Municipal Account.* This was not discussed in detail as upfront payment for the First Increment was provided to Wyoming this year.
- *WP4(e) Colorado Ground Water Management.* Nothing is budgeted for this project until 2016 to balance out the larger short-term budget needs of J-2. Colorado has also indicated that water might not be available from this project.
- *WP4(f) Nebraska Water Leasing.* $150,000 is budgeted for the lease of 2,000 acre-feet from Central Platte Natural Resource District (CPNRD) and 1,000 acre-feet from Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) at $50 per acre-foot. Lease rates and yields are still being refined.
- *WP4(g) Water Management Incentives.* Nothing is budgeted for this until 2016.
- *WP4(h) Nebraska Ground Water Management.* $250,000 is being used as a placeholder in the budget for a water service agreement with Tri-Basin Natural Resource District (TBNRD) for the Dry Creek Expansion project. Kenny will advance discussions regarding this project with TBNRD. Courtney noted that coupling groundwater management with groundwater recharge may be a possibility in 2013.

*WP5: Management Tools*

$50,000 is being budgeted for investigating the COHYST model, which the Program hopes will be operational in 2013. The model promises to be a good tool for investigating the combined impacts of multiple projects. The budgeted amount is intended to help the Program understand the model's capabilities and identify modifications that will be needed to evaluate Program projects. More significant amounts are budgeted in 2016 and 2018 to look at involving the COHYST model in the final scoring of multiple projects. The $50,000 for Management Tools from the 2012 budget was not used because the model is not yet available.

*WP8: Water Plan Special Advisors*
$125,000 is budgeted for special advisors to advise the Program on economics, ground water, hydrogeology, structural engineering, and permitting. Drain noted that expenditures for special advisors in 2010 and 2011 were greater than the amount budgeted in 2013. Kenny explained that the Program is moving more from studying to implementing; for example, while the Program used the ground water special advisor extensively for the ground water recharge feasibility studies in the past, current implementation activities will require less assistance. There will be a shift toward infrastructure and dam special advisors as the J-2 begins construction, but overall the Program anticipates less need for special advisors in 2013.

*WP9: Miscellaneous Water Resources Studies.*
$25,000 is budgeted for studies aimed at understanding the water balance and/or the hydrogeology of the associated habitat. This budget item is not related to any specific project but it is still important. The amount is reduced to $25,000 from the 2012 amount of $50,000, of which only $6,000 has been spent to date. Drain asked if the $25,000 amount would be too little to accomplish any type of study. Kenny replied that there isn't any specific study that drives the budget, but there are several areas where the Program might partner with other studies, such as the Colorado Water Conservation Board investigation of hydroclimatic indices discussed in the May and August WAC meetings, the study of conservation being funded by the Platte Basin Coalition Committee, and investigations into wet meadows being completed under the Program Adaptive Management Plan. Courtney noted that the $6,000 in the 2012 budget mostly went to equipment purchases.

Econopouly asked about improving tools used to model short duration high flows (SDHF), noting that there will likely be some smaller SDHF conducted this year. Econopouly referred to the 2009 Platte River Flow Routing Test report and asked if any effort would be made to support calibration of bypass accounting and bank storage tools. Kenny explained that GC approval of the alternative accounting method would be needed prior to modifying the model. The WAC had previously concluded that these modifications should be postponed to a later date. Kenny noted that data collected during future SDHF tests could be used to update bank storage calculations in the models. Courtney and Econopouly will have a separate discussion about specific modifications being requested by USFWS. Courtney added that this work and other HECRAS work will continue to be completed by the ED Office and that choke point analyses are now being performed by Justin Brei.

Runge commented that the flow routing spreadsheet used for previous SDHF tests was based on best professional judgment and actual operations, at times, did not match. Runge suggested developing a more formal process and methods ~~to address this upfront~~ for forecasting and SDHF planning. This process would facilitate improvements in forecasting by re-evaluating and revising methods. Runge also asked if there is a budget for flow bypass. Kenny noted there is $150,000 for flow bypass activities under Adaptive Management Plan line item WP-10 that should be moved to line item GFC-4. **Kenney suggested continuing the discussions regarding SDHF routing**. Courtney also suggested discussing these issues at the next EAC-RCC meeting. Runge emphasized the need to update the flow routing spreadsheet to more accurately "backcast" how much water should be released to ensure a given flow target reaches Grand Island.

Woodward asked if the new DNR gages at Shelton and Lexington have been incorporated into loss and travel time calculations. Kenny replied that he was not aware of these gages being included in loss and travel time calculations. **Kenny noted that there is enough data now for this to be done and it would be a good idea to pursue it**.

The total Water plan budget for 2013 is $16,000,000. Kenney encouraged everyone to send additional questions or thoughts on to Courtney and to communicate with their respective GC representatives regarding the Water Plan budget, providing them with their input and support.

**Additional Business**: *Cory Steinke, WAC Chair*
The draft 2013 meeting schedule was discussed. Courtney noted a two dates with reported conflicts from WAC members. The proposed October 15th meeting will be moved to October 8th to avoid traveling conflicts with Columbus Day. Other dates may be changed if multiple conflicts arise leading up to the meeting. **The schedule on the Program website will be updated to reflect these changes.**

**The next WAC meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2013, from 9:30 am – 3 pm (Mountain Time) at the Lake McConaughy Visitors Center.**

**Action Items**
ED Office

- Request the Weed Management provide an update on the status of the clearing at an upcoming WAC meeting.
- Continue discussion of SDHF routing test spreadsheet updates with USFWS.
- Update loss and travel time calculations with data from the DNR Shelton and Lexington gages.
- Update 2013 WAC meeting schedule on Program website.