PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
TAC Conference Call Meeting Notes
Conference Call
October 17, 2012

Attendees
Barry Lawrence – State of Wyoming
Chad Smith − ED Office
Jason Farnsworth − ED Office
Dave Baasch − ED Office
Jim Jenniges – Nebraska Public Power District
Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resource District
Matt Rabbe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jeff Runge - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Rich Walters – Nature Conservancy
Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Mary Harner – Crane Trust
Aaron Pearse – US Geological Survey
Suzan Sellers – State of Colorado
Kevin Urie – Colorado Water Users
Brock Merrill – Bureau of Reclamation
Pat Golte – Nebraska DNR

Welcome and Administrative
Smith called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call.

Minutes
Smith asked the group if they had any additional changes to the September TAC minutes or the September WMWG minutes. Rabbe stated he made a few changes to the WMWG minutes to clarify the intention of his statement about adding bentonite or organic soils to features in restored wetland areas. Urie stated his name was left of the list of attendees at the September TAC meeting; Baasch made the correction. **Peyton moved to approve the September, 2012 TAC Meeting Minutes and the September WMWG Minutes with suggested changes; Rabbe seconded motion; all approved.**

2013 Program Budget
Smith and Farnsworth led the discussion and went through the Program's 2013 Budget items related to Adaptive Management Plan.
- PD12 – No comment
- PD13 – No comment
- PD19 – Czaplewski asked if we had permits for flow consolidation; Farnsworth stated we did not.

- PD20 – Peyton asked what the seed source would be for the Fox Wet Meadow Restoration site; Farnsworth stated because of the size of the project we are considering using an upland commercial mix for the upland areas and a TNC Prairie Plains mix in the lowland areas.
- LP2 – No comment
- PD15 – No comment
- PD18 – No comment
- WP10 – Urie asked if bypass fees were power interference fees or if the fees were charged per acre foot; Farnsworth said it was power interference fees that were negotiated by the Service and Water Districts. Urie asked why this line item was placed in the AMP portion of the budget; Smith said it was because WP10 and LP2 are associated with AM activities; Urie agreed.
- G2 – Harner asked if the Program has considered adding a spring flight during the whooping crane migration season to document water area size within wet meadow habitats; Rabbe stated we could time the flights to coincide with SDHF releases if flown; Farnsworth said the Program would need to develop concrete objectives to determine what the best method of getting the data we want. Rabbe said imagery may be good for determining wetland area available to whooping cranes; Farnsworth stated well monitoring data may be a better method of at getting at ground water response in wet meadows. Farnsworth added that LiDAR doesn't perform well on water surfaces because it tends to scatter in unpredictable ways. Harner suggested the Program consider capturing aerial imagery; Farnsworth stated determining wetland area size is highly dependent upon vegetation stature as Harner and others found when trying to assess wetland areas for their caddisfly study. Czaplewski suggested the Program develop objectives so we could determine what the best data to collect would be; Farnsworth suggested the WMWG meet to determine what the objectives would be.
- G5 – Peyton asked why the budget was the same for 2013 as it was for 2013 when only half of the money had been spent; Farnsworth stated they had the 2012 field work done, but that the remaining 2012 money would be spent on finalizing data analysis and reporting.
- H2 – Farnsworth stated the gage at Cottonwood Ranch is very important now that the Program is considering flow consolidation.
- IMRP 2 – Smith stated this line item does not include money for the stopover site study, but that study could either be added to this line item or could be included as a separate line item. Rabbe asked how many wells we planned to place at each site; Farnsworth stated we planned to place 4 ground monitoring wells at 4 sites including Cottonwood Ranch, Elm Creek Complex, Shoemaker Island Complex, and Fox. Rabbe said the TAC had discussed adding wells to Mormon Island and asked if we planned to that; Farnsworth said the TAC or WMWG would need to decide how much effort and money the Program should spend on non-Program lands.
- IMRP3 – No comment
- IMRP4 – No comment
- IMRP5 – No comment
- IMRP6 – No comment
- PD8 – No comment
- TP1 – No comment
- WC1 – Peyton asked if the contract with West was for 3 or 4 years; Smith stated West was under contract for 4 years.

- WC3 – No comment
- WQ1 – No comment
- ISAC1 – Sellers asked how much it will cost the Program to have the 2 members that rotate of during 2012 stay on through the early part of 2013; Smith stated it will cost about $8,400 (*Smith later realized this was incorrect so for the record the additional cost would be ~$22,000*).
- PD3 – Baasch stated the Program would likely want to peer review the Whooping Crane Habitat Selection Analysis and Report during 2013.
- PD11- Smith stated the AMP Reporting session would likely be held later in the year (April-May) and would be in Omaha during 2013.

Whooping Crane Stopover Site Evaluation Study

Smith led the discussion and presented background information on the current proposal and budgets the TAC was being asked to provide input on during the meeting.

- Harner stated the Trust and USGS updated the proposal and budget to incorporate suggestions made by the TAC during the September TAC meeting.
- Sellers asked if the TAC was being asked to recommend the GC approve the entire budget for the project or only the 2013 portion; Smith said that decision was up to the TAC. Sellers stated she'd prefer recommending the GC support the 2013 budget request only; Baasch stated he wasn't sure how much would be learned if the project was only conducted for 1 year. Jenniges suggested the TAC recommend the GC approve the 2013 budget knowing up front that this likely would be a 3 year project if approved in future budgets.
- Czaplewski asked if all in-kind and real costs the USGS and Trust committed to the project were certain to be available; Pearse said as with all federal funding, he couldn't guarantee USGS would have money beyond 2013.
- Rabbe asked if the Program would receive Annual Reports; Baasch and Harner state annual reports and participation at the Program's AMP Reporting Meeting were included in the budget.
- Baasch stated the Program would also need to purchase 2 Tough-book Computers ($7,000) and pay for a data plan (~1,200/year) for each of the computers, but that the Program would own the computers and would use them for other projects such as tern and plover monitoring, ground-water monitoring, etc.
- Urie stated costs associated with purchasing computers should be included in the budget as well.
- Fritz suggested the proposal include a comparison of wet meadow sites within and outside of the Program area as well.
- Baasch stated his name should be removed from the proposal given the project would be contract work; Pearse agreed and asked if Baasch would provide input into the study; Baasch said he would likely be the Program's point of contact and would provide input.
- Jenniges asked what the total Program contribution to the telemetry project was; Baasch stated the Program would be committing approximately $1,000,000 to the project if we chose to fund this additional work. Jenniges stated with funding that much of the project, the Program needs to have access to the data; Baasch stated the EDO has access to all the data and that he downloads the telemetry data on a daily basis during the migration seasons. Jenniges asked if Program partner organizations could use the data; Baasch stated the Project team recently finalized a data sharing agreement where any organization could request the data and so long as their research didn't conflict with the project.

- Peyton asked if the TAC was being asked to recommend support of the contractor, budget, or both; Smith said the TAC was being asked to recommend GC support of a sole source contract with the USGS-Trust team for the project and proposed budget.
- Sellers stated Program benefits of conducting the work would need to be clearly articulated to the GC.
- Urie stated he supported the work, but would need to better understand issues with the Program getting access to the data. Pearse reiterated that the EDO has full access to the telemetry data so he wasn't aware there was any issue with the Program not having access to the data and asked Baasch for his perspective on the perceived issues. Baasch stated he feels the perceived issues were with associated with Program partners (NPPD, CNPPID, Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming, etc.) having access to the data. Baasch and Harner said Program partners could have access to the data by submitting a data sharing agreement to the project team so long as their research wouldn't conflict with the objectives of the study.
- Fritz stated the contract should clearly state the Program would have access to the data; Pearse stated that Program would have access to all the data.
- Urie suggested the USGS and Trust should fund a more equitable share of the project.
- Peyton moved the TAC recommended FC and GC support of the project with the study area defined by 1 days' flight distance (600 miles) of the Platte River as well as the proposed 2013 budget (including costs of 2 computers and data plans) for the project with the understanding this would be a 3-year project and that our-year budgets would be approved by the GC annually; Czaplewski seconded the motion; the TAC supported the motion; Walters abstained for potential conflict of interest reasons.
- Czaplewski and Peyton stated the research project should be included in the Program budget as separate line item rather than adding the funding to IMRP2 or WC3; Smith stated if the GC approves the project, the funding would be included as line item WC6.

<u>Summary of Decisions from October 2012 TAC Conference Call Meeting</u>

1) Approved minutes from the September 2012 TAC meeting as well as the September WMWG meeting with edits discussed during the meeting.

2) EDO will add additional detail to IMRP line item description.

3) The TAC recommended FC and GC support of the whooping crane stopover site evaluation project with the study area defined by a 1 days' flight distance (600 miles) of the Platte River as well as the proposed 2013 project budget (including costs of 2 computers and data plans) with the understanding this would be a 3-year project and that our-year budgets would be approved by the GC annually.

4) EDO will schedule a early to mid-November meeting via email for the WMWG to 1) discuss the relevance of collecting spring aerial imagery and establish objectives if the Program decides to collect this additional data, 2) discuss wet meadow vegetation monitoring, and 3) discuss ground water monitoring effort on Program and non-Program lands.