PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Governance Committee Meeting Minutes
Executive Director's Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE
September 10-11, 2013

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

Meeting Attendees

Governance Committee (GC) Table

State of Wyoming
Harry LaBonde – Member
Mike Besson – Alternate
Greg Lanning – Alternate

State of Colorado
Don Ament – Member
Suzanne Sellers – Alternate

State of Nebraska
Jesse Bradley – Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)
Mike Thabault – Member

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
Gary Campbell – Member

Environmental Entities
John Heaston – Member
Marian Langan – Member
Bill Taddicken – Member
Duane Hovorka – Alternate

Upper Platte Water Users
Dennis Strauch – Member

Colorado Water Users
Alan Berryman – Member
Kevin Urie – Alternate

Downstream Water Users
Brian Barels – Member
Don Kraus – Member
Mark Czaplewski – Member
Kent Miller – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO) Staff
Jerry Kenny, Executive Director (ED)
Beorn Courtney
Jason Farnsworth
Bruce Sackett
Chad Smith

Audience Members
Tom Econopouly – Service
Mike Besson – State of Wyoming
Brock Merrill—BOR
Mike Drain – CNPPID
Mike George – Service
Monte Macdonald –RTI
Brian Hochguitel – RTI
Dan Bigbee – EA
Cory Steinke – CNPPID

Welcome & Administrative

Ament called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m. Central time and the group proceeded with introductions.

Heaston moved to approve the June 11-12 and June 26, 2013 GC minutes; LaBonde seconded. **Minutes approved.**

Kenny asked for a count of GC members attending the PRRIP land tour on Wednesday, starting around 10:00 a.m. and concluding by 2:00 p.m.

Program Committee Updates

Land Advisory Committee (LAC)

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC met twice since the June GC meeting. The August 7 meeting included consideration of two land tract recommendations and there was no consensus on those tracts; that will be discussed today at the GC meeting. The LAC also considered three Land Management Plans. There was a LAC conference call on September 3 to further consider the management plans after getting TAC input. Those plans moved forward for GC consideration today. The next LAC meeting is November 26 in Kearney.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC met in August. Central applied for a Phelps groundwater recharge permit this week. The WAC discussed water leasing agreements that are on the GC agenda for tomorrow. Three choke point projects were discussed and two of those were approved to move forward. The EDO presented information on wet meadow monitoring. There were also discussions of preliminary water numbers for the FY 2014 PRRIP budget.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Besson provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC met twice since the last GC meeting. At the June meeting, the TAC discussed: searching for new ISAC members to fill two rotating spots but also considering the existing members for replacement; additional geomorphology and in-channel vegetation monitoring this year; additional QA/QC for the whooping crane monitoring database; and tree clearing at the Binfield property. At the August meeting, the TAC discussed: publishing PRRIP articles and peer review; revisions to the PRRIP whooping crane monitoring protocol; three Land Management Plans; the draft FY2014 budget; and potential new ISAC members. The TAC meeting scheduled for September 18 has been cancelled, and there will be an ISAC meeting October 1-3 in Kearney.

Finance Committee (FC)

Campbell provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC held two conference calls since the June 2013 GC meeting and approved:

- RFQ for in-channel disking
- Elm Creek FSM contract amendment
- Shoemaker Island complex island building bid package

The next FC meeting is right after the GC meeting on September 11.

Program Outreach Update

PRESENTATIONS

- The Program assisted the Colorado Foundation for Water Education with the logistics of the 2013 Interstate Tour of the Platte River Basin from July 10-12, 2013. Jerry Kenny, Jason Farnsworth and Dave Baasch presented on the Program to the tour participants at the Elm Creek Complex on July 11th. Many other Program people presented on a variety of topics: Don Ament, Allan Berryman, Kevin Urie, Harry LaBonde, Jim Schneider, Brian Barels, Bill Taddicken, and Ted Kowalski. Presenters from Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) and Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD) were also featured.
- Jason Farnsworth presented an overview of the Program to a group of 40 students from Kearney's Horizon Middle School After-School Program on July 12, 2013. The students toured the Elm Creek complex after a week of classroom lessons on the Platte River and the endangered species of the Platte River Basin.
- Chad Smith and Dave Baasch attended the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) in Schaumburg, Illinois from July 29 – August 3, 2013. Chad was the moderator of a panel discussion titled, "Independent Science on a Large Scale". The panel included ISAC members David Marmorek, Philip Dixon, David Galat, Robb Jacobson, Kent Loftin and John Nestler. Chad Smith also presented on the FSM Proof of Concept work at Elm Creek. NCER is an interdisciplinary conference on large scale ecosystem restoration presenting state-of-the art science and engineering, planning and policy in a partnership environment.
- Jerry Kenny presented an update on the Program to the Water Funding Task Force on August 22, 2013 in Gothenburg, Nebraska. John Heaston, Brian Barels and Dennis Strauch are members of the committee and Don Kraus and Brian Barels presented for the Surface Water Irrigation Discussion portion of that meeting.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program sponsored the Nebraska Grazing Conference on August 13-14, 2013 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- The Program exhibited and gave an airboat demonstration at the Platte Valley Weed Management Area Field Day held in Alda, Nebraska at the Whooping Crane Trust on August 21, 2013. We made 145 contacts.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

- The Program is exhibiting at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 10, 11 and 12, 2013 in the Natural Resources Districts building. Husker Harvest Days is recognized as the World's Largest Totally Irrigated Working Farm Show™ and features the most extensive state-of-the-art information and technology available for today's agricultural producers.
- The Program will be exhibiting at the Natural Resources Districts annual conference at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney, Nebraska on September 23 & 24, 2013.
- Chad Smith will be presenting to the Leadership Kearney class at Rowe Sanctuary on October 9, 2013. Chad will present on the Program's Adaptive Management plan, tying conservation to economics, as part of Leadership Kearney's Ag Energy and Environment Day.
- The Program will be exhibiting at the Society for Ecological Restoration (SER) World Conference on Ecological Restoration on October 7-10, 2013 in Madison, Wisconsin. SER will bring together an estimated 1,500 attendees from around the world interested in the science and practice of ecological restoration as it relates to natural resource management, climate change, biodiversity conservation, environmental policy and sustainable livelihoods.

- The Program will be exhibiting at the South Platte Forum on October 23 & 24, 2013 in Longmont, Colorado. The Program is also a luncheon sponsor of the event.
- The Program will be exhibiting at the joint conference of the Nebraska Water Resources Association and the Nebraska State Irrigators Association on November 24 -26, 2013 in Kearney, Nebraska.

MEDIA/OTHER

- There were a number of local newspaper articles in June, July and August regarding the J2 Regulating Reservoir project agreement. The articles covered the approval by the Governance Committee, the subsequent approval by the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District board and the Tri-Basin Natural Resources District board approval of their share of the funding.

PRRIP Budget Items

Kenny discussed the status of the FY13 PRRIP budget and associated expenditures and contracts. The Notice to Proceed on the J2 project was issued to Central on August 30. The Program has 30 days to make the initial payment of $14.7 million. Kenny also discussed the process now underway to develop the FY14 PRRIP budget. The 2014 budget will be dominated by making the J2 payments (through 2016). This year's expenditures will come in at about $25 million. Moving forward, we will try to come in at roughly this same level of expenditures through the next few years. We are being frugal with budget development, focusing on items that are essential.

On the land side, we are in a favorable position of largely being in a maintenance mode. By year end, most land acquisition will be behind us. We are not done and there may be parcels we cannot pass up. On the adaptive management side, there is a good deal of monitoring activities that need to continue to allow good, informed decisions to be made. At the TAC and EDO, there is a lot of examination of the value of data being collected, the intensity of data collection, and the approach (contracted out versus putting some efforts under the workload of the EDO). Regarding research, some items are near completion. Flow consolidation is wrapping up, the initial phase of sediment augmentation is over and a final report is pending. The FSM proof of concept experiment at Elm Creek is done and work continues at the Shoemaker Island replicate.

The PRRIP has been under heavy scrutiny from BOR auditors, not singled out for punitive reasons but that is the reality for all BOR funded programs across the country. So, work plan detail for the FY14 budget will include more extensive appendices in the back providing a higher level of detail that came about through the BOR auditing process. The FY14 budget has been through at least one round with each of the advisory committees, more interaction will follow, there is a Finance Committee meeting scheduled for October 24 to discuss the budget line by line. We hope to schedule a GC conference call in early to mid-November to discuss the budget prior to the December GC meeting.

Ament said clearly priority #1 is to make our water portfolio better and to focus on the J2 funding. Campbell said we are hearing we are likely to be under a short-term continuing resolution, and it is hard to know what will happen with the federal budget beyond that. Barels said it would be good to see an alignment between the budget and the schedule. This is a major project that we all get questions about so seeing that would be helpful (i.e. what will be done with the $14 million, and what are next steps). Kenny said that is being developed. Barels said it might make sense to have a standing agenda item as a project update for all future GC meetings. Kraus said there is a meeting next week with the engineer (RJH). Kenny said he, Mike George, and Mike Drain are going to DC to meet with FERC September 17th to discuss the J2 project.

Adaptive Management Plan

Smith discussed proposed revisions to the PRRIP whooping crane monitoring protocol.

LaBonde moved to approve the revised whooping crane monitoring protocol; Berryman seconded. **Monitoring protocol approved.**

Barels asked if the ISAC would be asked to weigh in on doing sediment augmentation or not, or just means and methods. Smith said the assessment related to Big Questions #3 (sediment augmentation) in 2012 was that there was a modeled average annual deficit of 152,000 tons/year that needed to be reduced or eliminated through augmentation. That assessment was supported by the ISAC and remains true in 2013, so the expectation is that the ISAC will continue to support the need for augmentation and it will be up to the Program to decide the means and methods. Berryman asked about sustainability over time. Smith said work is being done to determine what the amount needed for dry, normal, and wet years would be, and then to assess what is available in small islands, bars, and banks to mechanically augment those amounts over the next few years. Barels asked where sediment was needed and if there should be more than one augmentation point. Farnsworth said it is driven by hydrology and we are focused on getting into sediment balance by Cottonwood Ranch so there is a limited area where augmentation could take place. Taddicken asked if the Program had looked at freeing up any the sediment trapped in the dams. Farnsworth said no but that is something that could be evaluated for a future effort. Smith said costs were prohibitive for moving sediment in close proximity to the Plum Creek Complex, so moving sand from a greater distance from Lake McConaughy would probably be difficult to make cost effective.

Land Management Plans

Sackett discussed the three Land Management Plans (LMPs) and the key items of discussion related to these LMPs at the LAC and TAC.

Heaston moved to approve the Land Management Plans for Tracts 2012001, 2012002, and 2012004; Thabault seconded. **Land Management Plans approved.**

Public Comment

Ament asked for public comment; none offered.

Executive Session

Berryman moved to enter Executive Session; Taddicken seconded. **GC entered Executive Session at 3.55 p.m. Central time.**

LaBonde moved to end Executive Session; Campbell seconded. **GC ended Executive Session at 5:55 p.m. Central time.**

Program Land Tracts & Issues

Taddicken moved and Thabault seconded:

- *To authorize the ED Office to seek appraisal of and begin negotiations for potential acquisition of Tracts 1301 and 1303 as complex habitat.*

Motion approved.

Meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. Central time.

Wednesday, September 11, 2013

Welcome and Administrative

Ament called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. Central time and the group proceeded with introductions.

Water Leasing and Net Effects

Kenny introduced Jeff Shafer from NPPD and Duane Woodward from Central Platte NRD and the topic of water leasing and net effects. The WAC has been discussing quantification procedures and Shafer and Woodward will be presenting the approaches proposed by their organizations.

While very similar in many respects, the key differences identified between the two approaches are:

- The specific lands associated with the relinquished water is known by CPNRD, but is not known by NPPD.
- Depletions to the river associated with ground water pumping on land formerly using co-mingled water (both surface water and ground water) are handled differently. In the case of NPPD, it is handled either as grandfathered in as pre-1997, under the Nebraska New Depletions Plan, or augmented under an NRD plan. In the case of CPNRD, the depletion is calculated explicitly and handled through an augmentation supply (a portion of the water returned or a portion of the excess flow recharge effort).

Drain said he did not think that everyone agrees that expanded post-1997 use of a well is grandfathered by the Program. Shafer said it is covered by either the Program or the New Depletions Plan, so it is covered. Kraus said he is not sure the Program ever decided this issue. Barels said he thinks it is in the Program document. Sellers asked how a potential change in acreage would be handled under the Integrated Management Plan. Bradley said within each plan there is a monitoring protocol that includes "robust review" on a five-year recurring interval. That looks at management actions, post-97 depletions, and the net effect. The next update will be within the next two years. Sellers asked if aerial photography is used to calculate acres. Bradley said the process is very complex, including aerial photography, infrared imagery, NRD certified irrigated acres data, and other sources. LaBonde asked if this water is subject to appropriation by downstream users. Shafer said they will ask the Nebraska DNR to protect it all the way downstream to the Missouri River. Barels said NPPD also operates the Gothenburg Canal and they are looking at potential relinquished users from that canal. Ament asked why there are such relinquishments. Barels said during the drought, some users went to groundwater instead.

Berryman asked about increasing depletions and whether they are offset by instream flow releases. Woodward said those depletions are being offset by the water coming back. Thabault asked if 50% relinquishment is typical. Woodward said that's where we will be on the Cozad Canal, but it is hard to tell about other canals. Kraus said the canal rehab he has seen so far has been really good. He is not following all the transfer steps and he has some questions, but the rehab done by Central Platte NRD has been very good. Hovorka asked what the rough balance is between the recharge versus the water transfers. Woodward said it looks like at least half of the 10,000 acre-feet that we get on a canal like this. Kraus if you would expect the recharge to be about the same. Woodward said yes.

Kenny requested the GC members consult with their WAC members about these approaches and see if they are comfortable with these approaches because we hope to act in December on moving forward with the leasing agreements and adding to the Program's water portfolio.

Kenny distributed a table detailing potential Water Action Plan item scoring and connections to the budget process. Barels asked if these dollars will start being added into the budget. Kenny said the second table reflects draft budget numbers through the First Increment.

Future Meetings & Closing Business

Next GC meetings:

- November 20, 2103, 9:00 a.m. Mountain time @ Denver, CO to discuss draft FY2014 PRRIP budget
- December 3-4, 2013 @ Denver, CO at the Warwick Hotel
- March 11-12, 2014 @ Kearney, NE
- June 10-11, 2014 @ Cheyenne, WY
- September 9-10, 2014 @ Kearney, NE
- December 2-3, 2104 @ Denver, CO

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 a.m. Central time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from September 2013 GC meeting

1) Approved June 11-12, 2013 GC minutes.
2) Approved June 26, 2013 GC minutes.
3) Approved the revised PRRIP whooping crane monitoring protocol.
4) Approved the Land Management Plans for Tracts 2012001, 2012002, and 2012004.
5) Authorized the ED Office to seek appraisal of and begin negotiations for potential acquisition of Tracts 1301 and 1303 as complex habitat.