



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Governance Committee Meeting Minutes
Wyoming Water Development Commission – Cheyenne, WY
June 11-12, 2013

Tuesday, June 11, 2013

Meeting Attendees

Governance Committee (GC) Table

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member

Suzanne Sellers – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jim Schneider – Member

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

Duane Hovorka – Alternate

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member

George Williams – Member

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member

Deb Freeman – Alternate

Kevin Urie

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)

Bridget Barron

Beorn Courtney

Jason Farnsworth

Bruce Sackett

Chad Smith

Audience Members

Tom Econopouly – Service

Mike Besson – State of Wyoming

Barry Lawrence – State of Wyoming

Deb Freeman – Colorado Water Users

Brock Merrill – BOR



Welcome & Administrative

Ament called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. Mountain time. The group proceeded with introductions. Besson invited all interested participants to the Airport Golf Club for social time after the meeting. The Executive Session scheduled for today was intended for discussion related to the J2 project. Negotiations are not complete yet, so the GC meeting will adjourn for the day at the start of the time allotted for the Executive Session for continued negotiations. Kenny said there will be an update tomorrow.

LaBonde moved to approve the March 2013 GC minutes; Czaplewski seconded. Minutes approved.

Program Committee Updates

Land Advisory Committee (LAC)

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC met on March 26 and accepted the excess land recommendations document that will be discussed by the GC tomorrow. The LAC passed a recommendation to the GC regarding modifications to the public access plan. The LAC met again on May 29. The next LAC meeting is August 7 in Kearney, NE.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Courtney provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC met on May 7 and discussed depletions plans. There was a regular Water Action Plan project update, discussion about wet meadows hydrologic monitoring, a presentation on Phelps County groundwater recharge, a choke point update, and an overview of the 2013 Short-Duration Medium Flow release. The next WAC meeting is on August 13.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC met as part of the Adaptive Management Plan Reporting Session in April in Omaha. The TAC approved a motion for GC consideration of the grassland vegetation monitoring protocol. The next TAC meeting is scheduled for June 26th, 2013 in Kearney, NE.

There is a Wet Meadow Working Group workshop scheduled for later this month.

Finance Committee (FC)

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

- Approved the grassland vegetation monitoring contract
- Discussion on Program indexing
- Second Amendment to the contract for geomorphology/vegetation monitoring
- Fifth Amendment to contract for sediment augmentation pilot-scale management action
- Invitation for Bids for hydrologic telemetry monitoring

The next FC meeting is July 15.

Program Outreach Update

PRESENTATIONS

- Jason Farnsworth and Jerry Kenny presented on the Program to the Nebraska Water Leaders class on March 15, 2013 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Jason Farnsworth presented to a group from the International Crane Foundation on the Program's work in managing river habitat for cranes on March 16, 2013 at the Elm Creek complex.



- Jason Farnsworth presented a Program update at the Rivers & Wildlife Celebration in Kearney, Nebraska on March 23, 2013.
- Jason Farnsworth presented a Program update to the Water for Food tour group in Kearney, Nebraska on May 8, 2013.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at the Rivers & Wildlife Celebration in Kearney, Nebraska on March 23, 2013. We made 185 contacts.
- The Program sponsored the Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Envirothon State Competition on May 4, 2013. The Envirothon has high school teams competing in seven areas of environmental studies; soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, range, and current environmental policy. The Program sponsored the wildlife station and once again the team from Concordia High won the wildlife station competition and also won the overall championship.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

- The Program is assisting 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 will also be presenting on the Program to the tour participants at the Elm Creek Complex on July 11th.
- Chad Smith and Dave Baasch will be attending the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) in Schaumburg, Illinois from July 29 – August 3, 2013. Chad will be the moderator of a panel discussion titled, “Independent Science on a Large Scale”. The panel will include ISAC members David Marmorek, Philip Dixon, David Galat, Robb Jacobson, Kent Loftin and John Nestler. 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.
- The Program is a sponsor of the Nebraska Grazing Conference on August 13-14, 2013 in Kearney, Nebraska.

MEDIA/OTHER

- On March 22, 2013 the Grand Island Independent published an article about the Program titled, “Nesting areas to be built on Platte River islands”. Jerry Kenny was interviewed for the article.
- On March 23, 2013 the Kearney Hub published an article about the Program’s sediment augmentation titled, “Making Room to Grow”. Chad Smith, Jason Farnsworth, Justin Brei, and Bruce Sackett were all quoted in the article.
- Distribution of the Program’s 2011 & 2012 Bi-annual report.

PRRIP Budget Items

Kenny discussed the status of the FY13 PRRIP budget and associated expenditures and contracts.

Grassland Vegetation Monitoring

Smith discussed the grassland vegetation monitoring protocol.

Czaplewski moved to approve the monitoring protocol; Berryman seconded. Protocol approved.



Whooping Crane Tracking Project

Smith discussed proposed change to the “data use” section of the Whooping Crane Tracking Project Partnership Agreement. Kraus asked if these change would allow something like an EDO presentation to the GC on results of the telemetry project and how those results might inform Program decision-making. Smith said yes. Czaplewski asked about the source of the proposed edits to the agreement. Smith said the EDO helped to write the proposed language changes to address GC concerns, but those changes were discussed with all of the Core Partners and they have expressed support for the revised language. Thabault asked what it meant if the Service wanted access to the data. Smith said the Service representative on the Core Partnership would have to agree to be a collaborator on the project before the data would be released. Barels asked if any other Core Partner voted against Program use of the data, could that data still be discussed in Executive Session. Smith said he did not expect any Core Partners to reject Program data use, but if that happens discussing data in Executive Session might indeed be a good alternative.

LaBonde moved approval of the revised whooping crane tracking project agreement; Thabault seconded. Revised agreement approved.

PRRIP Indexing

Merrill discussed PRRIP indexing and adjustments for inflation. The proposed language would be a revision to the previous indexing process.

Campbell moved to approve the revised indexing methodology; Heaston seconded. Revised indexing methodology approved.

Phelps Groundwater Recharge Project 2012/2013 Results

Courtney provided an information update on 2012/2103 groundwater recharge results. Barels asked if there was any frazzle ice during the two years of the project. Courtney said a little initially but not much after that; mild winters may have contributed to that. Miller asked if the ground outside the canals was frozen because that could make a difference in infiltration rates. Courtney said that could have contributed to differences between this year and last. Kenny said freezing depth is shallow and most recharge probably is occurring below that. Differences in water temperature and soils composition are the most likely factors.

Courtney said we have incorporated comments from the WAC in the 2012/2013 draft report. Kenny asked if the GC wants to review the report before posting it for public consumption. The GC was comfortable with the WAC review. Kenny said then we are ready to post it and that will happen shortly. He will continue to talk with Kraus about future contracts for this work. The ED Office will work with the GC Scoring Committee to evaluate the project score.

Hay Harvesting on PRRIP Tract 2012005

Sackett discussed the issue of hay harvesting on Tract 20122005 and the possibility of delaying harvest on this tract until July 15 to protect nesting migratory birds. Ament asked how many acres are being hayed. Sackett said about 190 acres. Ament asked if we know how many nests we might be impacting. Sackett said he did not know. Heaston asked if there has ever been a bird inventory taken on the property. Sackett said no. Farnsworth said a lot of the grasslands have been replanted or have transitioned to cool season grasses. Berryman asked about what kind of birds we are talking about. Thabault said grassland nesting birds. Berryman asked about the price. Sackett said the price was averaged and considered by



EDO staff to be reasonable. Sellers asked if this went before the LAC. LaBonde and Czaplewski said it was discussed but it was a money call and thus the LAC was not asked for a recommendation to bring to the GC. Williams asked about the impact on the public perception of the Program. Sackett said probably right now we will end up with outside positive impression. Schneider said it seems we knew what we were getting into and that seems like the time this should have been discussed. Farnsworth said at the time Migratory Bird Treaty Act issues were not brought to our attention as a significant issue of concern. Now, it appears it has become an issue we need to work through on all properties.

Heaston said he is concerned about getting a reputation for changing the deal after the fact and it may set a bad precedent. With no documentation of birds on the property, we may be throwing money at a problem that we hope will go away but that will end up causing us more problems down the road.

Williams moved to keep the contract in its original form; Heaston seconded. Motion approved.

Other Business

Kenny presented Thabault with a plaque expressing appreciation for his service as GC Chair in 2012.

Meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m. Mountain time.

Wednesday, June 12, 2013

Welcome and Administrative

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

2013 AMP Reporting Session and Target Flows

Smith and Farnsworth discussed target flows and the process recommended by the ISAC for investigating options for revised or new target flows for the 2nd Increment. Freeman asked if it would help the GC think about this issue if sideboards were clearly spelled out. Campbell said he was concerned about upcoming funding and the need to prioritize what the Program really needs. He said he does not have a good idea of what cash flow would be required for the target flow process and how that fits with other Program priorities. Schneider said if target flows are potentially something that needs to be changed over time, the kind of water projects that can adapt to changing target flows are probably the ones that need to be looked at most closely. A project like J2 seems to fit that kind of need.

Kenny said he heard we need a scope and a budget for the potential plan moving forward, incorporating the species-oriented aspect as well as river hydrology. Farnsworth said we also need to clarify what our existing science program can say about the existing target flows. Kenny agreed.

Public Comment

Ament asked for public comment; none offered.

Executive Session

Berryman moved to enter Executive Session; Williams seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 9:30 a.m. Mountain time.



Campbell moved to end Executive Session; Bradley seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 11:20 a.m. Mountain time.

Program Land Tracts & Issues

LaBonde moved and Schneider seconded:

- To authorize the ED Office to seek appraisal of and begin negotiations for potential acquisition of Tract 1227 as complex habitat with the stipulation that the proposed acquisition agreement resulting from negotiations does not result in PRRIP land holdings totaling less than 10,000 acres.

Motion approved.

Czaplewski moved and Thabault seconded:

- To amend the current Platte River Recreation Access (PRRA) Policy to approve continuing the PRRA for another year on all tracts used in 2012. The following areas will be added to the PRRA in 2013: 2009001 Fox to include waterfowl and upland hunting; 2012005 Martin Meadows – open all seven listed compatible uses with certain stipulations; and 2008001 Wyoming for all seven listed compatible uses (does not include Blessing land).

Motion approved.

LaBonde moved and Berryman seconded:

- To approve the following actions related to PRRIP excess lands:
 - Update the appraisal on Tract 1221 and continue discussions with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC).
 - Exchanging (partial compensation) Tracts 1223 and 1205 with Tract 1209 to gain Tract 1209 as a trade land property. Upon completion of trade, re-evaluate Tract 1209 to be habitat; includes access to Tracts 1223 and 1205 must be to the south, and water rights are not part of this deal.
 - For the east side of Tract 2011001, approve a short-term management plan to clear cedar and Russian olive and necessary fence if needed as access from the north is pursued.

Motion approved.

America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Campbell discussed America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative and that DOI Secretary Jewell is very supportive of the program and will continue it under her leadership. Campbell presented Ament with a plaque from DOI for the PRRIP and PRRA being recognized as AGO projects. The plaque will be housed in the EDO.

Future Meetings & Closing Business

Next GC meetings:

- A Conference Call to discuss J2 Agreement at 2:00 pm Mountain (3:00pm Central) on Wednesday June 26, expected duration 2 hours.
- September 10-11, 2013 @ Kearney, NE

Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m. Mountain time.

This document is a draft based on one person's notes of the meeting. The official meeting minutes may be different if corrections are made by the Governance Committee before approval.

**Summary of Action Items/Decisions from June 2013 GC meeting**

- 1) Approved March 2013 GC minutes.
- 2) Approved the Grassland Vegetation Monitoring Protocol.
- 3) Approved revisions to the language of the Whooping Crane Tracking Project Agreement.
- 4) Approved the revised indexing methodology.
- 5) Approved keeping the hay harvesting lease on Tract 2012005 in its current form.
- 6) Provided guidance to the EDO on next steps related to target flows.
- 7) To authorize the ED Office to seek appraisal of and begin negotiations for potential acquisition of Tract 1227 as complex habitat with the stipulation that the proposed acquisition agreement resulting from negotiations does not result in PRRIP land holdings totaling less than 10,000 acres.
- 8) To amend the current Platte River Recreation Access (PRRA) Policy to approve continuing the PRRA for another year on all tracts used in 2012. The following areas will be added to the PRRA in 2013: 2009001 Fox to include waterfowl and upland hunting; 2012005 Martin Meadows – open all seven listed compatible uses with certain stipulations; and 2008001 Wyoming for all seven listed compatible uses (does not include Blessing land).
- 9) To approve the following actions related to PRRIP excess lands:
 - a. Update the appraisal on Tract 1221 and continue discussions with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC).
 - b. Exchanging (partial compensation) Tracts 1223 and 1205 with Tract 1209 to gain Tract 1209 as a trade land property. Upon completion of trade, re-evaluate Tract 1209 to be habitat; includes access to Tracts 1223 and 1205 must be to the south, and water rights are not part of this deal.
 - c. For the east side of Tract 2011001, approve a short-term management plan to clear cedar and Russian olive and necessary fence if needed as access from the north is pursued.