Agreement to Establish the Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership
Revised June 2013

The purpose of the Agreement is to:

1. Act as a document that records mutual assurances between named partners in activities directly related to the Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership (WCTP). It outlines activities, arrangements, and expectations of all parties in this collaborative research project but is not a legally binding contract;
2. Define respective roles and responsibilities of parties under the WCTP in relation to research activities. This includes collaboration among partner organizations as related to Whooping Crane research, extending to activities and behavior of research assistants, research fellows, or other members of the research staff who are working for partner members, and;
3. Establish a partnership framework for mutually beneficial research, monitoring, and development activities.

Introduction

The WCTP began in 2008 as a research project conceived by the Crane Trust (CT) with support from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to use Platform Transmitting Terminals with Global Positioning System capabilities as a means to identify migration pathways of Aransas-Wood Buffalo Whooping Cranes. The International Whooping Crane Recovery Team provided necessary support for initiation of this study. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) authorized capture of Whooping Cranes at wintering areas on and surrounding Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and at breeding sites at Wood Buffalo National Park, and made related technical, in-kind, and/or financial contributions. The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP) provided funds to initiate this project to the Crane Trust.

The mission of this partnership is to provide new and reliable knowledge about the Aransas-Wood Buffalo population (AWBP) of Whooping Cranes. The partnership places a premium on science-based conservation and management; results from this effort will inform management, aid in recovery of this species, and contribute to scientific literature on Whooping Cranes.

This description of the WCTP structure, organization, and partner responsibilities is intended to identify primary areas of activity for each partner and to encourage partners to work cooperatively in and across shared areas. We intend this document to be used by

partners as a dynamic tool to pursue objectives and goals. It can be amended as needed to reflect changes to the partnership as they occur.

Fundamental Objectives of the WCTP

1. Advance knowledge of Whooping Crane breeding, wintering, and migratory ecology, including threats to survival and population persistence.

2. Disseminate research findings in reports, presentations, and peer-reviewed literature to provide reliable scientific knowledge for conservation, management, and recovery of the AWBP of Whooping Cranes.

3. Minimize negative effects of research activities to the AWBP of Whooping Cranes.

Partnership Structure and Decision Making

The WCTP will function as a group of core partners, which work together to govern and administer the partnership. A group of associate partners will provide critical technical, financial, or other types of assistance to the WCTP necessary for completion of goals and objectives. Core partners contribute to all aspects of the partnership and will be expected to communicate frequently to make scientific and operational decisions. Associate partners generally will contribute to fewer aspects and, along with core partners, be involved in regular review of study goals, work plans, data analysis, and reports. We anticipate membership in the group of core partners to be more stable and limited to organizations making ongoing scientific contributions. Associate membership may be more dynamic and focused on making financial or technical contributions. Additional partners may be added by consensus of the core partners at any time. Currently, core partners include the Canadian Wildlife Service, the Crane Trust, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Associate partners include the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, the International Crane Foundation, and Parks Canada.

Each core partner organization of the WCTP has a substantial stake in the successful outcome of this research endeavor. Core partner organizations, therefore, will function as equal partners and, recognizing that each core partner has valuable perspectives to contribute, we aspire to make all major decisions by consensus. Each core partner will designate a representative, hereafter called a Primary Investigator (PI) to direct the involvement of their organization and to interact with other representatives. Individuals designated as PIs by their respective organizations or agencies are: Mark Bidwell (CWS),

Mary Harner (CT), Kris Metzger (USFWS), Chad Smith (PRRIP), and Aaron Pearse (USGS). Core partner organizations will assign their own replacement representative if the named PI is unable to continue in the WCTP. In addition, the CWS and USFWS Whooping Crane Coordinators will be invited to serve as project liaisons if they are not already designated as PIs. They will be asked to provide their perspectives in regards to recovery and conservation of Whooping Cranes and assist PIs of their respective organizations in project-related decisions. Their participation establishes and maintains a strong linkage between this research project and Whooping Crane recovery efforts. This team of individuals representing core partners (PIs and project liaisons) has responsibility for making decisions regarding activities undertaken by the WCTP. A chairperson will be assigned to facilitate discussions among partners, and with other organizations, as required.

Comment [DB1]: Kris Metzger was designated by the FWS to replaced Brad Strobel.

Comment [DB2]: Wade Harrell (WC Coordinator for USFWS) will serve as a project liaison; Mark Bidwell (WC Coordinator for CWS) is a designated PI.

Comment [DB3]: Removed coordination of field activities information as field activities are nearly complete (1 last trapping effort in Texas in 2013).

Removed third-party data sharing language as all parties agree data should not be disseminated to outside organizations until after the project has ended.

Research Priorities

Core partners have identified research priorities to be initiated by the WCTP (see table below). Topic areas may include single or multiple scientific products (e.g., manuscripts, reports, conference talks, posters). One core partner will be designated as lead for each topic area. Designation as lead indicates that the core partner will take primary responsibility for design, data collection, analysis, and preparation of scientific products, some of which, in agreement with the lead partner, may be led by another core partner. All remaining core partners will be invited to collaborate on, and co-author, scientific products generated by the lead. Co-authorship will be determined on a case-by-case basis according to the degree of involvement by each participating core partner (i.e., involvement in hypothesis generation, study design, data collection, data analysis, and manuscript preparation). Co-authorship beyond core partners will be determined primarily by the lead partner, in consultation with other core partners involved in the product. We anticipate that co-authorship may extend to past employees of partner organizations, if they have been substantially involved in development of a scientific product. In every case, scientific products will acknowledge the contributions of all partners.

We recognize that partners may have institutional requirements to review and approve scientific products and reports authored or co-authored by the partners and their employees before products are submitted for publication or are otherwise disseminated to the public. Authors shall notify core partners before submitting an information product to allow for completing these requirements if they exist.

As well as the production of scientific products for publication or presentation in peer-reviewed journals or at conferences, we envision use of the data by core partners to

produce reports that inform or evaluate management activities intended to conserve whooping cranes and the habitats they depend on. Core partners will coordinate data use by associate partners and third-party organizations or individuals, in accordance with the data use section below, to ensure that data are provided at the relevant spatial and temporal scales to allow for analyses and reporting within the confines of the approved study plan.

Core research topics:

Topic Area	*Lead Partner*
Breeding ecology of AWB Whooping Cranes	CWS
Migration ecology of AWB Whooping Cranes	USGS
Role of the Platte River and surrounding landscapes for AWB Whooping Cranes	CT
Winter ecology of AWB Whooping Cranes	USFWS
Estimation of vital rates of the AWB Whooping Cranes	CWS
Response of AWB Whooping Cranes to management actions on the central Platte River	PRRIP

Data Access and Use

Comment [DB4]: Changed title of this section from 'Data Sharing' to 'Data Access and Use'

Core partners will have full access to the project database via website link and will have the capability, if requested, to view and download current data as needed. Throughout the project, core partners will have the ability to use data as needed, such as informing management actions and undertaking field and research activities to address their specific objectives. In general, data analysis and production of scientific and other products will be initiated and directed by one or more of the PIs identified above. Core partners will be given opportunity to provide comments and discuss technical merits and use of sound scientific practices of proposed data use plans. Approval of proposed data use will be made by consensus. Core partners also will have an opportunity to review scientific products before submission to a scientific journal, presentation, or other forms of public release.

Comment [DB5]: The Program and other core partners have the ability to use any and all data when they feel the data is sufficient to address their specific objectives. Data use proposals must be submitted to and approved by the project team and any information beyond what is contained in the bi-annual reports must be approved by the project team prior to being released to the public.

Some research activities, data analyses, or product development may be undertaken in collaboration with associate partners, third parties or with others of our own agencies or organizations. Core partners agree not to share data in any form with collaborators, including complete or partial raw datasets, summaries of data, or maps, without agreement by core partners. PIs forming collaborations will remain involved in all phases

of the work, including conception, design, data collection, analysis and interpretation, and product development.

Comment [DB6]: Core partner PIs can collaborate with others, but must remain involved in all aspects of the study and cannot release any data to collaborators without approval of the project team.

To ensure that decisions regarding the conservation of Whooping Cranes are informed by the best scientific practices, the WCTP strives to uphold the highest degree of professional ethics and scientific standards. Release of preliminary data could affect marked Whooping Cranes, jeopardize the integrity of the dataset, result in inappropriate interpretations of results, and undermine research objectives of the partners. Therefore, the WCTP will not release data to third parties, in any form, until all data pertinent to the WCTP's research objectives have been collected, analyzed, and main research findings are released in scientific products. Once these activities are finalized, and not before completion of the research project in 2019, third parties may request data sharing with the WCTP.

Comment [DB7]: Data will not be provided to outside organizations requesting the data; however, collaborations with core partner PIs are possible.

Communications Plan

The partnership will compose mutually agreeable talking points that describe the basic structure of the project, scientific objectives, and methodology for use by all partners. Fall and spring updates will be drafted each year that summarize basic information related to the completed migration. These reports will be available for public distribution, thus will include only information that all core partners agree to release. Reports will be drafted by a designated core partner with available staff and reviewed by all core partners before distribution, which will occur in January (fall report) and June (spring report) each year.

Review, Term, and Amendment Provisions

Initiation of this agreement will occur on 1 September 2011. A review will occur annually until termination of the agreement on 31 December 2019. Amendments to the agreement may be authorized by consensus of core partners, including provisions for extension of the agreement as necessary. Partners may terminate their membership in the WCTP by written notice. A termination agreement that specifies future right to publish and intellectual property related to activities as a member of the WCTP must be resolved as a provision of departure from the partnership.

Attachments

1. Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership Media Talking Points 17 April 2012