



Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP)

Interstate, Federal & Water Information Section - Colorado Water Conservation Board

When a water project is considered to have “federal nexus” (i.e. it involves federal funding, federal permitting or licensing, use of federal lands, or a federal program), the need for consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is triggered. The result of a Section 7 consultation is a biological opinion (BO) that states whether a project is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat.

During the early 1990s, all ESA Section 7 consultations conducted on Platte River projects received jeopardy biological opinions, which meant that these water projects could not proceed. Thus began a collaborative conservation partnership now known as the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP).

PRRIP is now working to recover four threatened and endangered species (the whooping crane, interior least tern, piping plover and pallid sturgeon) in Nebraska, which in turn, allows water use and development to continue on the Platte River by addressing ESA compliance. The States of Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska, federal agencies, and several water, power and environmental interests, all participate in PRRIP. To allow for reassessment, the program is being implemented in an incremental manner, with the First Increment covering the 13-year period from 2007 through 2019. Negotiations to extend the first increment for another 13-year period are currently underway.

Since 2007, PRRIP has resulted in 157 (as of March 1, 2017) successful streamlined Section 7 consultations in Colorado. The preceding Cooperative Agreement, signed in 1997, resulted in bridge measures to allow for ESA compliance for approximately 120 Platte River basin consultations while negotiations for PRRIP were underway. Water project proponents in Colorado’s South Platte river basin can join the [South Platte Water Related Activities Program \(SPWRAP\)](#) to take advantage of these streamlined consultations.

The goals of the First Increment include:

- 1) Increasing stream flows in the central Platte River during relevant periods. This includes reducing target flow shortages up to an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year.
- 2) Protecting, restoring where appropriate, and maintaining at least 10,000 acres of habitat between Lexington and Chapman, Nebraska.
- 3) Testing, through Adaptive Management, priority hypotheses that represent different concepts about how the Platte River system functions and how it may respond to Program management actions.

To achieve these goals, Colorado has an obligation to retime up to 10,000 acre-feet of water to address past depletions and to retime water from times of net accretion to times of net depletion to account for current population increases. South Platte water users (through SPWRAP) will pay more than \$13 million in operating costs for the Tamarack project to retime this water. The State of Colorado’s financial obligation toward PRRIP for the first increment is \$24 million (in 2005 dollars).

[Learn more about the PRRIP](#)