



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP or PROGRAM)
Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, March 7, 2017 – 2:00 PM – 5:30 PM
Wednesday, March 8, 2017 – 8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Note: All times Central.

Meeting Location:
PRRIP EDO Conference Center
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6
Kearney, NE 68845
(308) 237-5728

Governance Committee (GC)

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member
Bryan Clerkin – Alternate

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member
Suzanne Sellers – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jeff Fassett – Member
Jennifer Schellpeper – Alternate

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member
Bob Mehling – Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Mark Czaplewski – Member
Mike Drain – Alternate
John Shadle – Alternate
Kent Miller – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jerry Kenny, ED
Dave Baasch
Bridget Barron
Jason Farnsworth
Patrick Farrell
George Oamek
Bruce Sackett
Chad Smith
Seth Turner
Kevin Werbylo

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Chris Beardsley – Member (2017 GC Chair)
Brock Merrill – Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Eliza Hines – Alternate
Matt Rabbe – Alternate

Environmental Entities

Rich Walters – Member
Bill Taddicken – Member
Duane Hovorka – Alternate

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member
Kevin Urie – Alternate
Deb Freeman – Alternate

Audience Members

Elizabeth Miller – NPNRD
Jesse Bradley – Nebraska DNR
Mike Applegate – EDO Special Advisor
Pat Engelbert – HDR
Jason Marks – Denver Water
Cory Steinke – CNPPID
Lori Potter – Kearney Hub
Jim Jenniges – NPPD

**TUESDAY, MARCH 7, 2017****Welcome & Administrative**

Beardsley called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

GC Decision – *Ament moved to approve the December 6-7, 2016 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes; LaBonde seconded. Minutes approved.*

Program Committee Updates***Land Advisory Committee (LAC)***

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met on February 14 in Kearney. Discussion items included: technical/land memos (GC discussion and decisions today); cease pursuit of two tracts (GC discussion tomorrow); 2016 Land Work Report (GC agenda item); land goals review; Czaplewski retain as Chair, Shadle retained as Vice Chair; discussion of how the Program gathers public comments related to the PRRA program. Sackett said the Program generally hosts a public meeting in Kearney and those comments are passed along to the GC. A LAC subcommittee also makes recommendations regarding hunting during the following year. Rabbe said there was discussion at the LAC about alternate ways to get more public comment. This will be discussed at the June 2017 GC meeting. Drain asked if the LAC can determine by itself how best to gather public comments. Drain suggested trying both ways to get comments (announce in paper and have a public meeting) but does not believe the GC should dictate the process. Shadle said there was no opposition at the LAC to no longer having the public meeting. LaBonde said this seems to be a local issue and in that case it is good to give people a chance to talk. Czaplewski said for this year he is hearing to do both (announce in paper and hold public comment meeting) and the LAC will then consider the issue further. Schellpeper said the LAC should consider how to re-start the meetings to address controversy if the meeting is no longer held.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met on February 28. Discussion items included: J-2 reservoir; water prices; water leasing; COHYST update; water projects work plan; Phelps canal recharge; broad-scale recharge and slurry walls; North Platte chokepoint and groundwater levels; hydroclimatic indices.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Sellers provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC held a conference call on February 13. Discussion items include: possible publications (GC agenda item); 2016 tern/plover and whooping crane monitoring reports; recommended using remaining non-complex acres for 60 acres of OCSW (GC agenda item); contract for RBJV for in-channel habitat availability analyses; invited to provide comments on draft NEPA table. The next TAC meeting is tomorrow after the GC meeting.

Finance Committee (FC)

LaBonde provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC met twice since the last GC meeting. The meeting in December 2016 focused on the proposed Extension budget. Several items were discussed at the next meeting: 2017 ISAC agreements; 2017 predator trapping agreement; habitat availability assessments; 2017 seeding agreements.

Program Outreach Update***PRESENTATIONS***

- Jerry Kenny presented on the Program to the Grand Island Rotary Club on January 17, 2017 in Grand Island, Nebraska.



- Jerry Kenny presented on the “*Platte River Recovery Implementation Program – Accomplishments and Path Forward*” for the Robert B. Daugherty Water for Food Institute at the University of Nebraska annual Water Seminar Series on March 1, 2017. The overall topic for the Spring 2017 Water Seminar Series is “*The Right Water for the Right use at the Right Time*”.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at the annual conference of the Four States Irrigation in Fort Collins, Colorado on January 11-13, 2017. We made 135 contacts during the event.
- The Program exhibited at Colorado Water Congress in Denver, Colorado on January 25 – 27, 201. We made 425 contacts over the course of the three days.
- The Program exhibited at the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Informational Seminar on February 2, 2017 in Grand Island, Nebraska. We made 135 contacts during the event.
- The Program sponsored the Nebraska Natural Resources Districts 2017 Legislative Conference on January 24th & 25th, 2017 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

- Dave Baasch will be presenting to Loup City/Arcadia High School students as they tour the Platte River basin on March 15, 2017. Dave will be discussing managing habitat for Whooping Cranes on the Platte river.
- Dave Baasch, Jason Farnsworth, and Jerry Kenny will be presenting at Audubon’s Nebraska Crane Festival in Kearney, Nebraska on March 18, 2017. Their session is titled, “*Habitat for Whooping Cranes*”.
- The Program will be exhibiting at Audubon’s Nebraska Crane Festival in Kearney, Nebraska on March 17th and 18th, 2017.
- Dave Baasch will be presenting to four groups of High School students at the Elm Creek blind on April 10, 2017. Dave will be discussing managing habitat for Whooping Cranes, terns and plovers on the Platte river.
- Jerry Kenny will be speaking about the Program as part of a panel presentation at the 2017 Water for Food Global Conference April 11, 2017 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The theme for this year’s conference is Water for Food Security: From Local Lessons to Global Impacts and the panel is focused on Water Governance and Management in Great River Basins.
- George Oamek will be speaking about the Program as part of a panel presentation at the 2017 Water for Food Global Conference April 11, 2017 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The theme for this year’s conference is Water for Food Security: From Local Lessons to Global Impacts and the panel is focused on Case Studies of Water Markets: Groundwater and Informal Markets.
- Scott Griebeling is presenting at the Spring Conference of the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) in Snowbird, Utah on May 1-3, 2017. Scott’s presentation is titled, *River and groundwater connectivity at wet meadow sites along the Platte River in Central Nebraska*.
- Seth Turner is presenting on the Program at the Spring Conference of the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) in Snowbird, Utah on May 1-3, 2017. Seth’s presentation is titled, *Developing Water Projects for ESA Compliance in a Highly Managed River System*.
- The Program is a Station Sponsor for the 2017 Nebraska Envirothon, which will be held on April, 26th 2017, at the Wildcat Hills State Recreation Area in Gering, NE. The Envirothon has high school teams competing in seven areas of environmental studies; soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, range, invasive species, and current environmental policy.
- The Program will be a stop on the 2017 Water & Natural Resources Tour of the Central Platte River Basin June 27-29.

**MEDIA/OTHER**

- The Kearney Hub interviewed Mark Czaplewski for a December 23, 2016 article on the water lease agreement between the Central Platte Natural Resources District and the Program and the potential extension of the Program.
- The Program, along with Rowe Sanctuary and the Crane Trust, are hosting and cooperating with Silverback Films, an independent wildlife film production company based in the United Kingdom. They are producing a new landmark natural history series, *Our Planet*, which will highlight some of the most important wilderness regions on the planet & the animals within them, from the perspective of their significance to biodiversity conservation. The 8-part series, made in partnership with the World Wildlife Federation, will be broadcast on Netflix in 2019 and is being produced by the team that made the landmark series *Planet Earth*, *Frozen Planet*, *Blue Planet*, and *The Hunt*. They will be filming the sandhill crane migration on the Platte River and hope to catch some whooping cranes on film. The team will be in Nebraska throughout March.
- The Program will be hosting Jane Goodall and her group from the Jane Goodall Institute in the Goodall blind on the evening of March 12, 2017.
- A plaque commemorating the first land purchase of the Program was recently installed on that property.

Beardsley asked if there is a repository of presentations that GC members can access. Kenny said it is not centrally located but that could be remedied. Barron said we would do that.

PRRIP FY17 Budget Update

Kenny gave an update on the status of the 2017 PRRIP budget and associated land income and taxes.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Report

Rabbe gave an update on 2016 Tiered Consultations.

PRRIP 2015 State of the Platte

Smith discussed the 2015 State of the Platte. Beardsley asked if comments from the ISAC and TAC had been addressed. Smith said in part but most of the comments were left unanswered for further discussion. Beardsley and Drain said we should consider a record of responding to comments. Rabbe said it might be helpful to start with a draft, get comments, make changes based on those comments, and then request a final round of comments for inclusion in the final document.

PRRIP Publication & Peer Review

Smith discussed two manuscripts for possible publication: tern/plover nest site selection and tern/plover brood survival.

GC Decision – *Czaplewski moved to approve publication of both manuscripts; Berryman seconded. Publication approved.*

PRRIP Technical Memos

Farnsworth discussed two technical memos for GC discussion and guidance:

- Updating PRRIP complex restoration and management plans – Beardsley asked if the short memo would just provide an update as to what has been learned and interim guidance until the AMP is updated. Farnsworth said yes. Drain said he was not sure this required a formal motion. Kenny said a motion would be helpful.



GC Decision – *Drain moved to defer complete updates of the complex management plans until Extension planning is done and instead draft a short memo; LaBonde seconded. Motion approved.*

- Transfer of remaining non-complex acres from palustrine wetlands to OCSW – Czaplewski said he recommends following the LAC recommendation. Drain said we need to make sure there is no confusion about the “or a portion” phrase in the LAC recommendation. Farnsworth said there was no discussion of going beyond the 800 acres. Freeman asked about the breakout of the 400/400 acres. Farnsworth said it is in the AMP and not the Program Document.

GC Decision – *Drain moved to adopt the LAC recommendation – “The LAC recommends use of remaining, or a portion of remaining, non-complex acres to make progress towards the development of the additional 60 acres of off-channel tern and plover nesting habitat but do not preclude the evaluation and acquisition of palustrine wetland habitat”; Berryman seconded. Motion approved.*

J-2 Regulating Reservoir

Drain gave an update on the J-2 project. Beardsley asked about first quarter 2017 expenses. Drain said they would be minimal. Kenny said all required reports and information have been given to the Program.

Water Action Plan (WAP) Projects Update

Turner gave an update presentation on Water Action Projects (WAP). Sellers asked if the budget would be updated because it looks like the slurry wall project budget had increased. Kenny said the budget is OK and we are still on track to get the 40,000 acre-feet. It still looks possible to get all water projects online and operational by 2024-25. It also appears our budget estimate is still on track. Beardsley asked which water projects have the greatest risk in terms of successful implementation. Kenny said in looking at the list each is fraught with their own risk and uncertainty.

Drain asked about the option of acquiring a site that is not a pit but we actively mine it ourselves and you could move a temporary project to a location of higher capacity. Turner said that is an option, the Lindstrom property acquired last year could work for that. Drain said the WAC recommended a functional pilot study. We would need probably five full-scale projects to get to 15,000 acre-feet or more so the first full-scale project should be considered the pilot project. Kenny said the main advantage of a functional pilot study is the ability to learn rapidly on techniques and results. Beardsley said he understands that from a cost-effectiveness perspective but it would be hard to commit to a full-scale project when we don’t know if it will work. LaBonde asked about the plan for addressing the patent. Kenny said there are indications that the best approach is to do an open pit, avoiding the patent question entirely. Berryman said he thinks we need to do option 3b, the full-scale gravel pit. Beardsley asked how the WAC arrived at its recommendation. Kenny said it was given the untested nature in central Nebraska of this concept, if we could a pilot quickly we would benefit from that knowledge to lead to better design and implementation of the full-scale project.

Drain asked if we have an expectation that it won’t work in Nebraska. Kenny said no. Miller said the Program does not have a lot of options and if there is a high probability it will work then we need to move forward. Sellers said we could do more rigorous geotechnical analysis around pits and would be worth investing in more samples. Kenny said that would better define permeability but there are always uncertainties. Applegate said we have good data but limited data. Given limited funding, he developed an option that would provide useful learning before committing to a larger project. Drain asked if it was his recommendation to do a functional pilot study. Applegate said yes. Miller asked about recent remote sensing data. Werbylo said it is useful in the valley as to where we could look at pits more closely. Drain agreed and said it would be most useful for site selection.



Schellpeper said if the risk is leaking, that might change the score but at least the leaking water would still hit the river at some point. Kenny said we have not looked at that yet – how much leakage would happen before this does not function as a storage option. LaBonde said he would support building the full-sized option. We need to deal with the patent as part of this project. Turner said the patent would not apply to an open-surface gravel pit. Kenny said we need direction from the GC at this point. Beardsley said his concern is jumping in with both feet with this much risk, and the timeframe of not knowing for a longer time with a full-scale project is problematic. It would be nicer to know if this will work more quickly.

Strauch said the WAC decision was based on the need to learn quickly at less cost. Berryman said he could support the WAC recommendation of a functional pilot project while simultaneously looking for a location for a full-scale project. Schellpeper said Nebraska is now looking to partner on J-2 alternatives so they want to know if these will work too. Merrill asked if that means Nebraska would put money in. Schellpeper that is up for discussion. LaBonde asked if it would be a joint project. Schellpeper said that would be a possibility. We would want a proof of concept so a pilot might be a better first step. Nebraska cannot commit yet without talking to other Nebraska folks. LaBonde said Wyoming still supports a full-scale project. Ament said he supports a full-scale project. Beardsley said he could go either way. Hines said the Service could go either way. Hines said it would be helpful to hear more definitive information from Nebraska so maybe it would be better to wait until all Nebraska parties could talk.

LaBonde said if we are ultimately talking about 5-7 of these to get the water, then if Nebraska commits to funding then we might really be talking about 8-10 projects. The Program should pursue its own project now. Strauch asked if the EDO could provide more detail about what we would learn from a pilot study versus a full-scale project. Kenny said it would be two key items: will it work/risk of catastrophic failure, and the rate of drawdown.

GC Decision – *Labonde moved to support moving ahead with Slurry Wall Option #3b, the full-scale gravel pit; Miller seconded.* Upon further discussion, the second was withdrawn and the motion died.

GC Decision – *Berryman moved to support the WAC recommendation:*

- *Pursuit of a small-scale gravel pit pilot project on Program lands (Approach 2).*
- *Simultaneous search for existing sand and gravel pit(s) suitable for acquisition and development of a full-scale slurry wall gravel pit project (Approach 3b).*

Walters seconded. Upon further discussion, the motion was withdrawn.

GC Decision – This item is tabled for further discussion either at the June 2017 GC meeting or possibly earlier. The GC will discuss the timing of this at the end of the meeting tomorrow.

Meeting adjourned at 5:49 PM Central Time.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 2017****Welcome & Administrative**

Beardsley called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM Central Time.

2016 Land Work Report

Farnsworth discussed the 2016 Land Work Report. Beardsley asked if anything learned in 2016 changes what is planned for 2017. Farnsworth said we may not need to disk again but it is hard to determine now. There is a 50-60% chance we won't have to spend money on disk, but we have to make sure we don't get behind on things like cottonwood seedlings.

PRRIP First Increment Extension

Freeman asked if this will go forward with an enhanced EA. It seems like there is a substantial amount of time committed to scoping and public comment. Beardsley said it is kind of an EIS-lite which builds in more scoping and public comment time. Merrill said when we do an EA for a project, there are no requirements for public input in the NEPA process. We are taking a bigger step to get public comment because this is a larger, important program. Freeman said this is a beneficial thing the Program is doing and this should be communicated to the public. Hines said that helps the Service justify an amended BO.

Fassett asked if there is a two-step process to show commitment on the part of the Signatories instead of just waiting until 2019 for signatures. Beardsley said Reclamation cannot sign on until after the NEPA process is complete but they can start work now briefing this up the chain. Hines said the Service is in the same position. Fassett asked how this matches with working channels in DC starting now without firm commitments. LaBonde said he will have a busy 2017 working on this issue with the Governor and the Legislature. He does not believe Gov. Mead would sign without having all the documents ready to go. Merrill said maybe we need to have all the high-level briefing done within the states and agencies before going to Congress. Taddicken asked if we need to pull together a benefits report to use to help move this forward. Ament said Colorado has talked to all their U.S. Senators and the Department of Natural Resources. They are all on board and we just need to stay on top of that over time. He does not see any point at all in going to DC and he is comfortable with where they are now.

Beardsley asked if it makes sense to keep this on future agendas to keep everyone updated. The GC agreed.

Smith gave a presentation on updating the AMP for the Extension. The GC had a long discussion regarding the relationship between amending the specifics of the AMP, the timing relative to the Extension, and the need to retain environmental compliance (NEPA and ESA) to finalize and begin the Extension. The Service and Reclamation agreed to talk about these issues and provide guidance on the extent and timing of amending the AMP for the Extension.

Public Comment

Beardsley asked for public comment. None offered.

Executive Session

Strauch moved to enter Executive Session; LaBonde seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 9:30 AM Central Time.

Ament moved to end Executive Session; Mehling seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 11:53 AM Central Time.

**PRRIP Executive Session Motions**

GC Decision – *Czaplewski moved to cease pursuit of Tracts 1607 and 1608; LaBonde seconded. Motion approved.*

GC Decision – *LaBonde moved to authorize the Executive Director to enter into a contract for acquisition of Tract W1606 and to enter into a contract to initiate mining operations on Tract W201602; Miller seconded. Motion approved.*

The EDO agreed to distribute a draft report on the economic benefits of the Program in about a month for GC review and comment. Oamek's presentation from today will be distributed to the GC. Taddicken asked about restrictions on using the information. Oamek said he is comfortable with the assumptions and conclusions in the draft work so far and the information can be used.

LaBonde asked if the slurry wall project would be for the Program or if there would be a sharing of benefits with Nebraska. This is a question that needs answering soon because it might entail cost sharing. Miller said the discussion yesterday was the initial project would be for the Program and Nebraska would consider it a proof of concept so that cost and benefit sharing could be considered for the future. Fassett said Nebraska anticipated being a partner on J-2 so there is a bucket of money that could be applied in a cooperative way at some point. Nebraska needs to discuss it further to determine what direction to go. LaBonde said it is important that Nebraska come to a consensus on that soon. Ultimately, we might need 5-7 of the slurry wall pit projects and if Nebraska becomes a partner then we might need even more of these sites.

Future Meetings & Closing Business**Upcoming GC meetings:**

- GC Quarterly Meeting – **June 6-7, 2017** @ Cheyenne, WY
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **September 12-13, 2017** @ Kearney, NE
- GC Pallid Sturgeon Workshop – **September 13-14, 2017** @ Kearney, NE
- 2017 AMP Reporting Session – **October 17-19, 2017** @ Omaha, NE
- GC Special Session (FY18 Budget) – **November 14, 2017** @ Denver, CO
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 5-6, 2017** @ Denver, CO

Meeting adjourned at 12:06 PM Central Time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from March 7-8, 2017 GC Quarterly Meeting

- 1) Approved December 6-7, 2016 PRRIP GC Quarterly Meeting Minutes.
- 2) Approved publication of the tern/plover nest site selection and tern/plover nest and brood survival manuscripts.
- 3) Deferred complete updates of complex management plans until Extension planning is done and instead having the EDO draft a short memo describing interim actions.
- 4) Adopted the LAC recommendation – “The LAC recommends use of remaining, or a portion of remaining, non-complex acres to make progress towards the development of the additional 60 acres of off-channel tern and plover nesting habitat but do not preclude the evaluation and acquisition of palustrine wetland habitat”.
- 5) Discussion and motions related to slurry walls:
 - a) *LaBonde moved to support moving ahead with Slurry Wall Option #3b, the full-scale gravel pit; Miller seconded. Upon further discussion, the second was withdrawn and the motion died.*
 - b) *Berryman moved to support the WAC recommendation:*
 - *Pursuit of a small-scale gravel pit pilot project on Program lands (Approach 2).*



- 375 ○ *Simultaneous search for existing sand and gravel pit(s) suitable for acquisition and*
376 *development of a full-scale slurry wall gravel pit project (Approach 3b).*
377 ○ *Walters seconded. Upon further discussion, the motion was withdrawn.*
378 c) This item is tabled for further discussion either at the June 2017 GC meeting or possibly earlier.
379 The GC will discuss the timing of this at the end of the meeting Wednesday.
380 6) Ceased pursuit of Tracts 1607 and 1608.
381 7) Authorized the Executive Director to enter into a contract for acquisition of Tract W1606 and to enter
382 into a contract to initiate mining operations on Tract W201602.