



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Conference Call / Webinar
February 13, 2017**

Meeting Participants

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Table

State of Colorado

Suzanne Sellers – (Chair; phone)

State of Wyoming

Barry Lawrence – Member

State of Nebraska

Carol Flaute - Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Matt Rabbe – Member

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

Brock Merrill – Member

Environmental Entities

Rich Walters – Member

Upper Platte Water Users

Colorado Water Users

Kevin Urie – Member

Downstream Water Users

Jim Jenniges – Member

Dave Zorn – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jerry Kenny (ED)

Chad Smith

Jason Farnsworth

Dave Baasch

Patrick Farrell

Other Participants

Mike Fritz (NGPC)



Welcome and Administrative

Sellers and Smith called the meeting to order and asked for agenda modifications; no modifications offered.

Nominations for TAC Chair – Urie nominated Suzanne Sellers, Jenniges seconded motion; all supported the motion.

PRRIP Publication and Peer Review

Rabbe expressed concern with recommending publication of the manuscript titled Negotiating Recovery of LTPP on the CPR. Rabbe stated there was some language in the manuscript that seems to question the Service's jeopardy opinion. Rabbe asked if the publication would be considered a Headwaters publication or a Program publication; Smith said it is a Program publication. Rabbe said he wanted to be sure the Program didn't publish something that could have further implications than intended. Rabbe said he would send the TAC specific points that the Service has concern with for the TAC to discuss in March. **Jenniges moved to recommend the GC approve publishing the Tern and Plover Habitat Selection manuscript and the Tern and Plover Nest and Brood Survival manuscript, but to table the manuscript titled Negotiating Recovery of LTPP on the CPR until March TAC meeting pending Service comments; Rabbe seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

Smith informed the TAC the peer review of the Whooping Crane Synthesis Chapters and WEST, Whooping Crane Report had been completed. Baasch and Farrell stated the EDO was addressing comments and conducting some additional analyses in response to peer review comments. The peer review and updated reports will be a major topic for the March TAC meeting

PRRIP AMP Reports

2016 Tern and Plover Monitoring Report

Baasch informed the TAC Czaplewski suggested several minor edits to improve the accuracy of the report that had been incorporated into the report that was currently on the Program website. **Urie moved to accept the 2016 LTPP Report as final; Sellers seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

Fall 2016 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report

Baasch informed the TAC we continued to monitor during the 'winter' monitoring season again in response to a delayed migration season. Rabbe and Baasch mentioned the TAC would need to figure out how to handle the apparent shift in the fall migration season and the implications it may have on future trend analyses. Jenniges suggested looking at data to ensure we are still conducting surveys during the time when 95% of the birds are migrating through; Baasch said that was the purpose of the analyses that were conducted in 2013. Baasch informed the TAC the EDO would re-run analyses that were conducted in 2013 to see if we could now detect a shift in the fall migration season. Sellers asked how the current contractor (ES) was performing; Baasch said things were going very well. **Rabbe moved to approve the 2016 Fall WC Monitoring Report; Merrill seconded motion; all supported the motion.**

**PRRIP Technical Reports***Updating PRRIP complex restoration and management plans*

Farnsworth lead the discussions and explained that many of the 5-year management plans were coming up for review and that the Program is currently moving towards an extension to the first increment. Farnsworth asked if the TAC felt the EDO should update all management plans, develop a general management plan that would be applied to all properties through the extension, or wait until the extension had been negotiated and update all plans at that time. Sellers said having individual plans has been helpful in the past, but asked if the EDO had the direction we need to manage the properties without updating the management plans. Farnsworth said the EDO got good direction on how to move forward with LTPP management objectives in 2016 and currently is using results of recent WC studies to manage properties for WC. Rabbe expressed concern with applying a single management plan to all complexes. Jenniges said all plans probably don't need to be updated right away if we stick to how things are currently being managed, but if we start using the annual work plan to do management experiments that there likely will be issues during the budget cycle in the future. Farnsworth said he agreed and stated the EDO would develop an experimental design for any science experiment. Farnsworth stated the EDO could develop a 1-2 page memo stating how the Program is managing complex and non-complex properties in accordance with what has been learned to date and that comprehensive updates would be conducted once we better knew what might happen during an extension of the first increment; several voiced support for this approach.

Transfer of remaining non-complex acres from palustrine wetlands to OCSW

GC requested the TAC discuss how to move forward with land acquisition for WC palustrine wetlands and LTPP OCSW. The GC indicated the Program should develop 60 more acres of bare sand LTPP nesting habitat. Jenniges said the AMP states the Program should not only restore wetlands, but also construct wetlands out of cornfields or other landcover class; Farnsworth stated that has been pursued, but finding suitable land has been challenging; Jenniges agreed. Sellers suggested the Program focus LTPP OCSW efforts on the downstream reaches where the Service proposes to build a new complex during the extension. Farnsworth and Jenniges stated the 400/400 acre objectives for palustrine wetlands and OCSW habitat are only in the AMP, not in the Program document. Urie asked if WC telemetry data indicated high use by WC or not; Baasch said all wetland types (palustrine, ponds, river, etc.) are heavily selected for during migration. **Rabbe moved the Program use the remaining or a portion of the remaining non-complex acres to make progress towards the development of an additional 60 acres of off-channel LTPP nesting habitat; Sellers seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

Target species habitat management on PRRIP water lands

The Program has started acquiring lands for water projects and the EDO wants TAC input on if the Program should implement management actions to improve habitat for target species if the management actions don't interfere with the planned water project; the Lindstrom Tract was used as an example tract. Rabbe supported the concept of creating additional habitat on water project lands when it made sense, but the Program needs to keep the land and water acre accounting separate; Farnsworth and Kenny agreed. Urie and Sellers said while it makes sense to created target species habitat, the Program's focus going forward needs to continue to be on water projects. Jenniges and Rabbe stated they felt land acres should be counted as they were the day it was acquired (species habitat or water project lands).

**PRRIP LTPP and WC Habitat Availability Assessments**

Baasch led the discussion and informed the TAC the FC approved entering a contract with RWBJV to conduct LTPP & WC habitat availability assessments pending discussions with the TAC on how best to move forward with the assessments while saving the Program money where possible. Recent analyses indicate WC neither select or avoid wet meadow habitat and the availability of wet meadow habitat doesn't change unless the Program builds it. The EDO asked for input on whether the Program should conduct LTPP in-channel or off-channel habitat availability assessments, off-channel WC habitat availability assessments, and in-channel WC habitat availability assessments as well as what the criteria should be used to define minimum habitat going forward. Jenniges and Rabbe stated they were comfortable with the EDO recommendations in the memo (no LTPP in- or off-channel habitat assessments, no WC off-channel habitat assessments). The EDO and RWBJV will use 90th percentiles from the published stopover study report as well as include a buffer to bridges based on 90th percentile of CPR observation data. Rabbe also stated it would be important to track improvements in habitat that was found to be selected for through time (i.e., channels with UOCW >600-700 feet and NF >200-250 feet). Baasch said he believes that information is included in the geodatabase we get from RWBJV. **The TAC recommended the Program enter into a contract with RWBJV to conduct in-channel WC habitat availability assessment for 2015 using minimum habitat criteria as refined in the published Stopover Study Report (including a distance from bridge criterion based on 90% of use observations within the Program's monitoring data), update 2007-2014 in-channel WC habitat availability assessments, and discontinue in- and off-channel LTPP habitat assessments.**

PRRIP First Increment Extension

Smith led the discussion and informed the TAC the EDO and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) is going through the NEPA process and that the BOR asked for Program Advisory Committee input on the Environmental Compliance Table. Smith said he updated the table based on comments provided by Sellers. Sellers said there could be some confusion on the land objective numbers as written; Rabbe and Merrill said they believe the Service's position was to add 1,500 acres to existing species habitat (doesn't include water project lands); Smith said the language came straight from the GC minutes. Urie asked how the 'primary program cost' was calculated; Farnsworth said he included that information, but that it was how it was outlined in the original EIS table.

State of the Platte Report Update

Smith informed the TAC the State of Platte Report incorporated comments provided by Jenniges on behalf of the original AMWG members as well as comments provided by the Service. The report will be printed and presented to the GC in March.

Pallid Sturgeon Process Update

Smith informed the TAC the Program entered into a contract with Compass to coordinate pallid sturgeon discussions with GC members and to coordinate a GC-focused pallid sturgeon workshop in September.

Upcoming 2016 TAC Meeting Schedule

The next TAC meeting will March 8, 1:00-4:00 in Kearney.

The AMP Reporting Session is scheduled for October 17-18, 2017 in Omaha



Summary of Decisions from the February 2017 TAC Meeting

1. The TAC nominated Sellers to remain the TAC Chair in 2017
2. The TAC recommend the GC approve publishing the Tern and Plover Habitat Selection manuscript and the Tern and Plover Nest and Brood Survival manuscript, but to table the manuscript titled Negotiating Recovery of LTPP on the CPR until March TAC meeting pending Service comments
3. The TAC accepted the 2016 Tern and Plover Monitoring Report as final
4. The TAC accepted the Fall 2016 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report as final
5. The TAC recommended the Program use the remaining or a portion of the remaining non-complex acres to make progress towards the development of an additional 60 acres of off-channel LTPP nesting habitat
6. The TAC recommended the Program enter into a contract with RWBJV to conduct in-channel WC habitat availability assessment for 2015 using minimum habitat criteria as refined in the published Stopover Study Report (including a distance from bridge criterion based on 90% of use observations within the Program's monitoring data), update 2007-2014 in-channel WC habitat availability assessments, and discontinue the in- and off-channel LTPP habitat assessments.