



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP or Program)
Governance Committee Meeting Minutes

PRRIP Executive Director's Office Conference Center
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6
Kearney, NE 68845

Meeting Attendees

Governance Committee (GC) Table

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member

Suzanne Sellers – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jeff Fassett – Member (Chair)

Jennifer Schellpeper – Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Michael Thabault – Member

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Brock Merrill – Alternate

Environmental Entities

Bill Taddicken – Member

Rich Walters – Member

Duane Hovorka – Member

Marian Langan – Alternate

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member

Bob Mehling – Member

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member

Kevin Urie – Member

Deb Freeman – Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Don Kraus – Member

Mark Czaplewski – Member

Kent Miller – Member

John Shadle – Alternate

Executive Director's Office (EDO) Staff

Jerry Kenny, Executive Director (ED)

Dave Baasch

Bridget Barron

Jason Farnsworth

Bruce Sackett

Sira Sartori

Chad Smith

Patrick Farrell

Scott Griebbling

George Oamek

Audience Members:

Jim Jenniges – NPPD

Mike Drain – CNPPID

Tom Econopouly – Service

Jeff Runge – Service

Matt Rabbe – Service

Eliza Hines – Service

Chris Reed – UNO

Ned Andrews – ISAC

Lori Potter – Kearney Hub

Cory Steinke – CNPPID



Welcome & Administrative

Ament called the meeting to order at 9:47 a.m. Central Time. Ament said the GC needs to nominate a Vice Chair for the GC for 2016 before the meeting ends today. The group proceeded with introductions.

LaBonde raised the topic of the states' proposal with regard to potentially extending the Program beyond 2019 (end of the First Increment). He would like to have a discussion today about possible next logical steps for moving that proposal forward.

LaBonde moved to approve the December 2015 GC minutes; Berryman seconded. Minutes approved.

Program Committee Updates

Land Advisory Committee (LAC)

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met in Kearney on February 23. The LAC moved to recommend to the GC to decline further pursuit of Tract 1505. The LAC recommended declining pursuit of Tract 1601. There was discussion of the Public Access Program in 2015. The next LAC meeting is May 23.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC had a conference call in February and discussed wet meadows peer review; updates on WAP projects including broad-scale recharge; transbasin diversions; flow summary report and excess flow analysis; and hydroclimatic indices. The next WAC meeting is in May in Ogallala.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Sellers provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC met on February 9 in Kearney and discussed the 2015 tern/plover monitoring report; the fall 2015 whooping crane monitoring report; recommended the GC approve a sole-source contract for grassland vegetation monitoring; recommended the GC approve submitting the whooping crane synthesis chapters for peer review; recommended the GC approve the wet meadows hydrologic monitoring approach peer review package; and then the TAC held a two-day SDM workshop. The next TAC meeting is a SDM workshop on April 20-21 in Kearney.

Finance Committee (FC)

LaBonde provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC had a conference call on February 26. The FC discussed contracts for geomorphology/vegetation monitoring and data analysis; website and database management; ISAC member amendments for 2016; recommended the GC support a sole-source contract on grassland vegetation monitoring; Phase III of the hydroclimatic indices project; and a discussion about Program cost indexing (recommended the GC return to the original method of indexing).

Program Outreach Update

PRESENTATIONS

- Jerry Kenny provided an overview of the Program as part of a panel at the Nebraska Power Farming Show on December 8, 2015 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The panel was an educational seminar focusing on Nebraska's water resources.
- At the joint meeting of the Four States Irrigation Council and the Ditch and Reservoir Company Alliance on January 15, 2016, Jerry Kenny and John Heaston presented on the Program in a session titled, "3-States Memorandum of Understanding".
- Darren Beck presented an overview of the Program to the Golden Beer Talks on February 9, 2016 in Golden, Colorado.



- Jerry Kenny presented an update of the Program to the NRD Water Programs conference on March 1, 2016 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Jerry Kenny and Jason Farnsworth presented an update on the science aspects of the Program to the Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID) Board meeting on March 2, 2016 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program was an exhibitor at the joint meeting of the Four States Irrigation Council and the Ditch & Reservoir Company Alliance (DARCA) in Fort Collins, Colorado on January 13-15, 2016. We made 201 contacts during the event.
- The Program exhibited at Colorado Water Congress in Denver, Colorado on January 27 – 29, 2016. We made 428 contacts over the course of the three days.
- The Program exhibited at the Rainwater Basin Informational Seminar on February 9, 2016 in Grand Island, Nebraska. We made 127 contacts during the event.
- The Program is a Station Sponsor for the 2016 Nebraska Envirothon, which will be held on April, 27th 2016, in Nebraska City, 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.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

- Dave Baasch is presenting on Whooping Crane Habitat Selection at the Nebraska Chapter of the Wildlife Society conference on March 9, 2016 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Dave Baasch is presenting at Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival in Kearney, Nebraska on March 19, 2016. His session is titled, "Investigations into Whooping Crane Use of the Central Platte River".
- The Program will be exhibiting at Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival in Kearney, Nebraska on March 19, 2015.
- Dave Baasch is presenting on Tern and Plover Breeding Pair Estimators at the annual conference of the Missouri River Natural Resources Committee (MRNRC) on March 23rd, 2016 in Great Falls, Montana.
- Chad Smith will be participating in the Trinity River Basin Science Symposium March 29th to the 31st, 2016 in Weaverville, California. The goal of the symposium is to advance the development and use of a decision support system for the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP).
- Jerry Kenny will be part of a panel at the National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) on April 20, 2016 in Coral Springs, Florida. The title of the session is "*Approaches and Tools for Scientist-Decision Maker Collaboration and Actionable Science*".

MEDIA/OTHER

- Jerry Kenny was interviewed about the Program for an article in the January 2016 issue of Irrigation Leader. The issue focused on the Endangered Species Act and the PRRIP was cited as an example of a successful program.
- The Program will be hosting Jane Goodall and her group from the Jane Goodall Institute in the Goodall blind on the evening of March 16, 2016.

PRRIP FY16 Budget Update

Kenny gave an overview of the status of the FY16 budget, related expenditures, and land income and taxes. The Program expended \$8.3 million in 2015. We are spent at about \$93 million total dollars for the Program so far. Farnsworth said the EDO was hoping to do a green LiDAR test run last year but that has not yet happened. The EDO is working on a RFP for a four-year contract to do imagery including green LiDAR



as a test. The RFP will have options to allow flexibility in imagery acquisition. The draft is done and the EDO requests that it be sent to the GC electronically for review and approval later this week.

Smith discussed the draft sole-source contract for Program grassland vegetation monitoring. Thabault said the Program should consider monitoring for management objectives. Wet meadows are identified in the Program document and we have documented occurrences of whooping cranes on that type of habitat so we need to go back and look at those properties and how management is affecting them. It may not be directly under the AMP per se but it is an adaptive management concept to monitor for the response of properties to management and how target species utilize those properties. LaBonde asked how the data will be tied back to whooping crane use and questioning our management methods. Baasch said the original concept was to watch for expansion of noxious weeds and then also keep track of plant species of interest. Rabbe said the TAC looked at different ways of managing grasslands and monitoring them. It can be very intensive to monitor these grasslands with learning objectives in mind so the TAC decided to pursue something cheaper and less intensive to watch for any major concerns that might detract from habitat value. Thabault asked if there is a feedback loop to the GC for this information. Smith said no. Sackett said there is an informal process that goes on annually that happens with Land Management Plans in terms of making decision about burning, grazing, and applying other management methods. LaBonde asked if this information is valuable in informing our land management decisions. Sackett said it helps to improve confidence in choices of management methods.

Czaplewski said we need to have the feedback loop to the GC to make sure the expenditure is worth the effort. Rabbe said the TAC discussed these issues and there may need to be further discussion of the frequency of monitoring events. There needs to be some follow-up to the first monitoring effort to see if we can determine changes/trends. Merrill said after that there needs to be a discussion about whether this is necessary in the future.

Thabault moved to approve the sole source contract with the caveat that the results of this monitoring effort and the first monitoring effort be brought back to the GC for discussion about the future utility of this monitoring effort; Walters seconded. Motion approved.

PRRIP Peer Review

Smith discussed the final peer review package for the wet meadows hydrologic monitoring approach.

Czaplewski moved to approve the final peer review package; Merrill seconded. Final peer review package approved.

Smith discussed the whooping crane habitat synthesis chapters and the request to begin the peer review process for these chapters.

Labonde moved to approve moving forward with peer review of the whooping crane habitat synthesis chapters; Czaplewski seconded. Motion approved.

Smith informed the GC about the status of peer review of the forage fish synthesis document and that the EDO is working to recommend a path forward with that peer review package. The EDO will be talking to the ISAC and TAC about next steps.

Central Platte River Phragmites Control

Walters discussed the status of phragmites control measures on the central Platte. Walters requested the GC consider removing the funding match requirement but instead allow the funding to be applied as needed.



The second request is a funding level of \$100,000 of additional monies in 2016 for control efforts. Ament asked about the timing of spraying. Walters said generally spraying is done in late August and early September but the bid documents need to go out now. Strauch asked about past Program actions for funding. Walters said the Program contributed \$200,000 but it has a match requirement and he is worried that the match cannot be fully met if you consider only this year and all control methods will not happen this year. The Nebraska Unicameral has taken up the issue, but funding this year is not likely, and NRDs and Power Districts have been asked for increased contributions. Czaplewski said the control measures have been very successful and need to be maintained so we don't slip back to where we used to be with phragmites. CPNRD is contemplating doubling their budget for this activity to help. Miller said TPNRD supports this and wants to stay on top of the problem as well. Taddicken said one of the most important aspects is to improve conveyance and not allow phragmites to continue to cause problems with reduced conveyance. Kraus said CNPPID is taking this issue up as well. Fassett asked if LB711 is the bill in question before the Nebraska Unicameral dealing with invasive controls. Walters said that is correct.

Ament asked again what Walters is asking for. Walters said to remove the match requirement from previous Program funds, and also asking for an additional \$100,000 funds. Merrill said removing the match requirement for one year might be workable but not for the life of the project because he doesn't want the Program to be on the hook for the full cost of the project.

Merrill moved to remove the 50% match requirement for 2016 only; Shadle seconded. Motion approved, Walters and Taddicken abstained.

Labonde moved approved of the additional \$100,000 Program contribution for 2016 only; Miller seconded. Farnsworth said a big chunk of that funding can be moved from LP-2 that was to be for island construction which now may not be happening. Kenny said the money will be moved to WP-1a., and the simple shifting of funds would not increase the total budget. Motion approved, Walters and Taddicken abstained.

J2 Regulating Reservoir Update

Kraus discussed the status of the J2 project. Steinke said investigations of the geotechnical aspects of the site found a clay layer they were looking for. Kenny said the holes were punched in road rights of ways and properties owned by CNPPID. We still need to do follow-up testing because we can't punch holes on land not owned by CNPPID. Results are positive to this point and are good news for this project because we can likely have an alternative to expensive liner concepts, but lacking the ability to do comprehensive exploration we can't be certain. Hovorka asked about the updated timeline. Steinke said the updated schedule is not current because it contains an aggressive land acquisition assumption that will not happen by this spring. Hovorka asked how long it will take to complete the project once you start breaking ground. Kraus said construction would start about 2019 and would be completed about 2021 (a two-year construction window).

No-Cost Net Controllable Conserved Water (NCCW) Project

Drain talked about NCCW scoring and the associated scoring subcommittee. The GC needs to approve the subcommittee members and chair.

Hovorka moved to appoint the following subcommittee members: Mike Drain (Chair), Brian Klerkin (Wyoming), Dennis Strauch (Upper Platte Water Users), Bill Taddicken (Environmental Groups), Jennifer Schellpeper (Nebraska); Thabault seconded. Subcommittee appointed.

Drain discussed the score recommendation for the NCCW project.

Kraus moved to approve the NCCW score; Merrill seconded. NCCW score approved.

**2015 Phelps County Canal Recharge Report & General Recharge Update**

Sartori gave an update presentation on Program recharge and recapture.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report

Rabbe discussed 2015 tiered consultations. Freeman asked about the differences in numbers in the biannual report and the Service report. Kenny said the biannual report number is incorrect and will be fixed in future versions. Rabbe asked the GC about information needs for future reports on tiered consultations and what they want to see. LaBonde said he would be interested in seeing depletion categories as well as the amount of depletions.

PRRIP Indexing

Merrill discussed indexing and the two possible methods (original method and 2012 method).

LaBonde moved to return to the original indexing method; Kraus seconded. Motion approved.

Public Comment

Ament asked for public comment. None offered.

Executive Session

Taddicken moved to enter Executive Session after lunch; Fassett seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 12:45 p.m. Central Time.

Thabault moved to end Executive Session; Fassett seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 1:30 p.m. Central Time.

PRRIP Executive Session Motions

Czaplewski moved to cease further pursuit of Tract 1505 on recommendation from the LAC; LaBonde seconded. Motion approved.

LaBonde moved to authorize the EDO to apply a tax change to all J2 related parcels acquired in 2014 and make payment in the amount of 121.75% of the 2014 tax payment to CNPPID to be forwarded to Phelps County to replace forgone tax revenue; Merrill seconded. Motion approved.

Future Meetings & Closing Business

Ament discussed recent conversations about a proposed 10-year extension for the First Increment. LaBonde said looking ahead at the schedule the next step is the GC needs to fundamentally agree on the proposal outlining the extension. At that point, a plan could be implemented to extend. The purpose of this discussion is to determine what needs to be done to get the GC to that point. LaBonde said he would like to see the proposal on the table for discussion at the June 2016 GC meeting which would include input from the EDO about the proposal as well. Fassett said his guidance is to be careful about any new or additional things that are added as part of this process because it will make the process more difficult. Thabault said he agrees extension is the way to go but strategically we need to look at parts of the Program to plus-up to take into account over the 10-year extension time period.

LaBonde asked if it is appropriate to ask all parties to put into written form their thoughts on the extension proposal, give the GC an opportunity to review those thoughts prior to the June 2016 GC meeting, and then discuss that information at the June 2016 GC meeting. Freeman asked what the best thing to do for the June meeting is for each of the parties. LaBonde said he would like to have everyone's thoughts around the table for the June GC meeting. The EDO would be the compiler of comments, including the EDO's thoughts on



the proposal and input from the advisory committees. Kraus and LaBonde said that should be vetted at the GC level first before getting input from the Advisory Committees. Hovorka asked about Big Questions and where we are at in answering those questions, and what that means for the focus of science questions for the extension.

*Ament nominated LaBonde as temporary chair of the GC for the June 2016 GC meeting. **Approved.***

Upcoming 2016 GC meetings:

- **June 7-8, 2016 @ Cheyenne, WY**
- **September 13-14, 2016 @ Kearney, NE**
- **November 15, 2016 @ Denver, CO (GC Special Session on FY17 Budget)**
- **December 6-7, 2016 @ Denver, CO**

Upcoming 2016 ISAC meetings:

- **2016 AMP Reporting Session – October 18-20, 2016 @ Omaha, NE**

Meeting adjourned at 2:06 p.m. Central Time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from March 2016 GC meeting

- 1) Approved the December 2015 GC minutes.
- 2) Approved the sole source contract for Prairie Legacy to conduct grassland vegetation monitoring in 2016 with the caveat that the results of this monitoring effort and the first monitoring effort in 2013-2014 be brought back to the GC for discussion about the future utility of this monitoring effort.
- 3) Approved final wet meadows hydrologic monitoring approach peer review package.
- 4) Approved moving forward with peer review of the whooping crane habitat synthesis chapters.
- 5) Approved removing the 50% match requirement for 2016 only for the \$200,000 in Program funds for central Platte River phragmites control.
- 6) Approved allocating an additional \$100,000 in Program funds for 2016 only for central Platte River phragmites control.
- 7) Appoint the following scoring subcommittee members: Mike Drain (Chair), Brian Klerkin (Wyoming), Dennis Strauch (Upper Platte Water Users), Bill Taddicken (Environmental Groups), Jennifer Schellpeper (Nebraska)
- 8) Approved the NCCW project score.
- 9) Approved returning to the original indexing method for Program funds.
- 10) Approved ceasing further pursuit of Tract 1505 as per the LAC recommendation.
- 11) Authorized the EDO to apply a tax change to all J2 related parcels acquired in 2014 and make payment in the amount of 121.75% of the 2014 tax payment to CNPPID to be forwarded to Phelps County to replace forgone tax revenue.
- 12) Appointed LaBonde temporary GC Chair for the June 2016 GC meeting in Cheyenne, WY.