



Platte River Recovery Implementation Program GC Meeting Notes – SDM Workshop

June 7, 2016
Cheyenne WY

Meeting Summary

The GC met to review the Round 4 alternatives and to make a decision regarding on- and off-channel habitat alternatives for terns and plovers. After a review of the alternatives, GC members completed an individual preference questionnaire, and then discussed the results as a group, with emphasis on sharing perspectives about value-trade-offs. The outcome of the meeting was a consensus agreement on the approach to off-channel habitat (Alternative C6, with 60 new acres of off-channel habitat) and on-channel habitat (10 acres of on-channel MCA habitat). They also confirmed support for the findings of the TAC with respect to nest initiation flows, and agreed on guidance to be provided to the US FWS regarding flow releases for terns and plovers.

Action Items

#	Description	When
1	Compass will distribute a form to collect feedback on the SDM process	June 30
2	Compass will prepare a report to document the process and outcomes	July 30

Participants

GC and TAC Members	Other
Harry LaBonde – State of Wyoming Jeff Fassett – State of Nebraska Kevin Urie (acting for Don Ament) – State of Colorado Chris Beardsley – Bureau of Reclamation Alan Berryman – Colorado Water Users Brian Barels, Don Kraus, Kent Miller, Mark Czaplewski – Downstream Water Users Dennis Strauch – Upper Platte Water Users Bill Taddicken, Rich Walters, Duane Hovorka – Environmental Entities Michael Thabault – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	GC Alternates Eliza Hines – USFWS Deb Freeman – Colorado Water Users Bob Mehling – Upper Platte Water Users Compass Lee Failing, Philip Halteman EDO Jerry Kenny, Chad Smith, Dave Baasch, Patrick Farrell
TAC Members Jennifer Schellpeper – State of Nebraska Mike Drain – Downstream Water Users (CNPPID) Mark Peyton – Downstream Water Users (CNPPID) Jim Jenniges – Downstream Water Users (NPPD) Kevin Urie – Colorado Water Users (Denver Water) Matt Rabbe, Jeff Runge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	

Summary of Discussions, Outcomes and Actions

DESCRIPTION	ACTION
Represent- ation	At the start of the meeting, the GC Chair noted that the representative of the State of Colorado was absent. The group agreed to proceed without them. Just prior to voting on the alternatives, the Colorado Water Users (K. Urie) received confirmation that they were authorized to vote for the State of Colorado by proxy.
Decision Process Recap	Compass summarized the decision process to date, including key conclusions and decisions made previously.
Off-channel	Compass presented the Round 4 off-channel habitat alternatives, summarizing the key trade-offs. Key points of discussion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GC accepted the TAC recommendation that the individual alternatives for leasing, buying and using existing land to gain 60 acres be consolidated into a single hybrid option (i.e., acquiring 60 new acres of habitat using a mix of lease, purchase, and existing Program land) and provide EDO with a habitat target and a budget and discretion to acquire land parcels in the most appropriate way. (Acquisition decisions would still go through the Lands Committee as per usual.)
On-channel	Compass presented the Round 4 on-channel habitat alternatives, summarizing the key trade-offs. Key points of discussion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It was clarified that the alternative involves ensuring there are 10 acres of on-channel MCA habitat per year (not necessarily building 10 new acres of habitat per year). - Some reservations were expressed about dealing with the on-channel habitat separate from off-channel, but after discussion, all agreed to continue with the preference elicitation as planned.
Nest Initiation Flows	Compass summarized the TAC conclusions with respect to plover nest initiation flows. Key points of discussion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GC accepted the TAC conclusions. - The GC noted that decisions about releases of EA water are made by the US FWS, and agreed unanimously on the following input to the FWS: Water should not be used solely for the purpose of tern and plover nest initiation, however tern and plover benefits could be identified as part of the rationale for water releases made for other purposes.
Preference Elicitation	GC members completed a preference elicitation exercise to rank and score the alternatives.
Discussion of Results – Off-Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All but 3 GC members identified C6 as their preferred alternative. - All those that did not choose C6 as their most preferred alternative identified it as their second-best alternative. - One person preferred A1, largely due to the desire to preserve budget for other Program priorities (high importance placed on the short term cost PM). Rationale included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While it is understood that this alternative is not expected to meet the Service's plover recovery criterion, considerable progress has already been made toward plover recovery. For the remainder of the First Increment, priority should be given to other Program activities. - Two people preferred C1, primarily because they put a high weight on long-term performance, and this alternative performs well in the longer term. Rationale included:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong long-term cost efficiency. - Strong long-term plover productivity benefits (numbers of pairs). - For these people, the incremental plover/tern benefits achieved by going from C6 to C1 are worth the incremental costs. - Most people preferred C6, primarily because it is seen to represent a good balance between achieving significant plover and tern benefits, including meeting the plover recovery criterion, while preserving some discretionary Program budget for other actions. Additional considerations included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For these people, the incremental plover/tern benefits achieved by going from C6 to C1 are not worth the incremental costs. - C1 involves creating new sand-pit habitat, which implies land conversions, which could be risky/controversial.
Discussion of Results – On-Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preferences were divided. Four people preferred to include an on-channel MCA component; ten people preferred not to. - The rationale for supporting an on-channel MCA component was generally driven by higher importance placed on the PMs for whooping cranes, sediment and learning. Specific rationale included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MCA delivers multiple benefits to the whole river system and these are important to consider. - In particular, MCA provides habitat benefits for other target species (i.e., whooping crane); if these benefits are not gained via MCA, they will have to be sought via other, potentially more costly/difficult means (e.g., using water). - The Program has more to learn about on-channel habitat (e.g., questions remain about on-channel nesting). - The financial cost of MCA is low in relation to the benefits for other species. - Rationale for not including an on-channel MCA component included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The benefits for terns and plovers are insignificant, and this is a decision process for terns and plovers. - While there are benefits to whooping cranes and sediment, these should be addressed in a different forum. This process was not scoped to do a comprehensive exploration of alternatives for whooping cranes; if it had been, other more-preferred alternatives might have been identified. - Learning under the MCA alternative will be limited, as there will be only 10 acres of habitat per year. - There are concerns that implementing MCA could be more costly than estimated, and the feasibility of finding islands and supportive landowners might be low. - In response to concerns about cost and feasibility, EDO noted that the costs were estimated based on past experience, and because the total acreage is limited to 10 acres, they continue to believe it is achievable within the estimated cost, at least for the next three years.
Voting and Selection of the Preferred Alternative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Based on low levels of support, the group agreed to remove the A1 alternatives from further consideration. - GC voting groups caucused to discuss the remaining alternatives. - Prior to voting, the GC as a group clarified the definition of the MCA alternative. As modeled, the MCA alternative is estimated to deliver 10 acres of on-channel habitat per year for \$26,000 total over three years. Given some members' uncertainties about the accuracy of the estimated cost, the definition of the alternative was refined to explicitly state that it includes a

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<p>total cost cap of \$26,000 and a desired target of at least 10 acres of habitat per year. If costs are higher (or lower) than expected, the actual amount of habitat produced will be lower (or higher).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Each voting group indicated whether they would Endorse (full support), Accept (support with reservations), or Oppose (unable to support) each alternative.- Results are as follows: <table><tr><th>Alternative</th><th>Endorse</th><th>Accept</th><th>Oppose</th></tr><tr><td>C6</td><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>C6 + MCA</td><td>3</td><td>7</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>C1</td><td>0</td><td>5</td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>C1 + MCA</td><td>0</td><td>2</td><td>8</td></tr></table>	Alternative	Endorse	Accept	Oppose	C6	7	1	2	C6 + MCA	3	7	0	C1	0	5	5	C1 + MCA	0	2	8	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Based on these results, the GC concluded that there was little opportunity for a consensus with the C1 alternatives.- They noted that there were more Endorses for C6 than for C6+MCA. They briefly explored the reasons for the two Oppose votes for C6, and potential solutions.- After discussion, the GC unanimously agreed to adopt “C6 + MCA” as the preferred management action for terns and plovers for the remainder of the First Increment.																				
Wrap-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A formal motion to reflect the decisions made was scheduled for the regular GC meeting.- Compass will distribute a form to collect feedback on the process. (1)- Compass will prepare a report to document the SDM process and outcomes. (2)																				