



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Kearney, Ne – Executive Director's Office**  
February 9, 2016

**Meeting Participants**

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Table**

**State of Colorado**

Suzanne Sellers – (Chair; phone)

**State of Wyoming**

Barry Lawrence – Member

Jeff Geyer – Alternate

**State of Nebraska**

**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**

Mark Czaplewski – Member

Jim Jenniges – Member

Mark Peyton – Member (phone)

**Executive Director's Office (EDO)**

Jerry Kenny (ED)

Chad Smith

Jason Farnsworth

Dave Baasch

Patrick Farrell

**Other Participants**

Mike Fritz (NGPC)

Andrew Pierson (Rowe)

Kevin Marks (Colorado)

Jeff Runge (FWS)

Andrew Caven (Trust)



### Welcome and Administrative

Sellers and Smith called the meeting to order and asked for agenda modifications; Smith said he had 2 agenda modifications. First Smith informed the TAC the EDO was seeking TAC support to advance the Wet Meadow Monitoring Approach Peer Review on to the GC in March. Smith also informed they would be asked to discuss the list of potential covariates the EDO is considering including in the initial *a priori* model set that was developed for the tern and plover off-channel habitat selection analyses.

**Nominations for TAC Chair – Czaplewski nominated Suzanne Sellers, Rabbe seconded motion; all supported the motion.**

### TAC Minutes

Sellers asked the group if there were any suggested changes for the February 24, 2015 TAC Minutes. **Urie moved to approve the February 24, 2015 TAC minutes; Peyton seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

### 2015 Tern and Plover Monitoring Report

Czaplewski informed Baasch there was an error on Page 9 in that mining occurred at Lilley Wood River Pit and asked that changes be made to reflect this activity; Baasch said he would make that change. Jenniges suggested the EDO insert a table in the annual reports that includes the same metrics that are in the SDM model (i.e., breeding pair density, etc.). **Jenniges moved to accept the LTPP Report as final after including suggested changes above; Peyton seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

### Fall 2015 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report

Rabbe suggested we modify Figure 4 and include zoomed in versions (bridge segment) so use locations are better identifiable and include a table that indicates unobstructed channel widths for locations used by each crane group as has been included in previous reports. **Rabbe moved to approve the WC monitoring Report as amended; Jenniges seconded motion; all supported the motion.**

### 2016 Grassland Vegetation Monitoring Sole Source

Baasch informed the TAC the Program selected a contractor to develop and implement the Grassland Vegetation Monitoring Protocol in 2013. Baasch said other proposals received in 2013 were more than \$100,000 over Prairie Legacy's estimate and he wouldn't expect things to be much different if another RFP was developed. Baasch said the sole source contract would only be for the 2016 monitoring season and he estimated it would cost about \$60,000. Urie asked how many additional acres would be surveyed in 2016 that were not surveyed in 2013; Baasch estimated we added about 300 acres. Jenniges said the EDO needed to get a cost estimate prior to recommending GC approve to sole source the work to Prairie Legacy. Baasch said he would get a cost estimate from Prairie Legacy and would email it to the TAC and ask for a recommendation the GC approve a sole source contract with Prairie Legacy to implement the monitoring protocol in 2016. Baasch said an RFP had already been developed and could be advertised if the TAC or GC is not comfortable sole sourcing the work to Prairie Legacy.

### Whooping Crane Data Synthesis Chapters

Smith informed the TAC the EDO received good feedback from Caven and Rabbe involving testing another metric the EDO has called Unforested Channel Width (UFCW). Baasch described the new metric as a hybrid of Unobstructed Channel Width (UOCW) and Nearest Forest (NF). Results of these analyses indicated UFCW was a reasonable predictor of whooping crane use of the Platte River, but was not better than the previous top ranked model that included UOCW and NF. Rabbe asked if UFCW could be combined with UOCW or NF to see if one of these models would better predict whooping crane use. Baasch said



UFCW would be highly correlated with UOCW and NF given it was a hybrid of the two metrics; however, the EDO did test the models and the additional models ranked lower than the model that included UOCW and NF. There was an extended discussion about metrics included in the analyses and what the results mean for Program management. Rabbe said he supports managing Program properties as has been done in the past (remove heavily vegetated islands by diking), but that where possible the Program should remove wooded and heavily vegetated islands in the channel to attempt to achieve a 1,000 foot unforested width and an UOCW channel widths >500 feet within Program complexes such as the Pawnee Complex.

Caven suggested the EDO evaluate multi-night stopovers as extended stay stopovers may be viewed as being more important to whooping cranes than stopovers that were only use for a single night. Baasch said this analysis had been conducted and results will be included in the report being developed by WEST. He said the top model was similar to for analyses of systematic unique observations and all observations, but that he wasn't sure what measures of UOCW and other metrics maximized probabilities of whooping crane use for the analysis that included all observations. Jenniges said highest probabilities of use were associated with UOCWs that were narrower when all locations were included in the analysis. Baasch said the Whooping Crane Synthesis Chapters 2 and 3 did not include multi-day stopover locations because we do not have enough data to run analyses that account for the correlation between subsequent locations. Caven suggested at least basic summary statistics be included in the report; Baasch said such summaries will be included in the WEST report. Caven suggested the EDO include a table in Chapter 2 that shows summary statistics for all variables include in the models broken out by spring, fall, and combined.

Runge asked if the Whooping Crane Synthesis Chapters had been reviewed by the ISAC; Smith said they had and that the version distributed to the TAC included revisions suggested by the ISAC.

Runge suggested the EDO include Figure 1 of the Program response memo to the Service suggestions in Chapter 4 so one can see when peak flows occurred during 2007-2015. Runge also asked to remove the 75th percentile cut-off for Figures 4 and 5 and suggested including a supplemental discussion about areas of high uncertainty in the figures. Runge cautioned document conclusions such as: *As such, it seems safe to assume flow, and thus area of suitable depth and wetted width had little to no influence on whooping crane habitat selection on the central Platte River during the timeframe of our study.* The link between unit discharge and wetted width/depth was not described in the text. Runge stated these conclusions would be better supported if supplemental documentation would link unit discharge values to actual (or modeled) wetted widths and depths. Rabbe suggested the EDO add information regarding why UFCW was not found to be as good of a predictor of whooping crane use as UOCW and NF combined.

**Jenniges moved to recommend GC approve peer reviewing the Whooping Crane Synthesis Chapters amended as discussed during the TAC meeting and including the FWS and Trust comments and EDO response documents; Urie seconded motion; all supported the motion.**

#### **Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring Approach Peer Review**

The TAC recommended the GC approve the Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring Approach peer review as final.

#### **Tern and Plover Off-channel Habitat Selection *a priori* Models**

Baasch and Farrell developed a preliminary list of covariates and *a priori* models to be included in an off-channel tern and plover habitat selection analysis. Baasch asked the TAC to let the EDO know if they had additional covariates or models they wanted to test in the analysis by February 26<sup>th</sup>.



**Upcoming 2016 TAC Meeting Schedule**

The next meeting will be a GC/TAC/ISAC SDM and GC meeting scheduled for March 8-10. The next TAC meeting will be an SDM workshop scheduled for April 20-21, 2016 in Kearney

**Summary of Decisions from the February 2016 TAC Meeting**

1. The TAC nominated Sellers to remain the TAC Chair in 2016.
2. The TAC accepted the October 26, 2015 TAC minutes as final.
3. The TAC accepted the 2015 Tern and Plover Monitoring Report as final after incorporating changes suggested during the meeting.
4. The TAC accepted the Fall 2015 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report as final after incorporating changes suggested during the meeting.
5. The TAC asked the EDO to obtain an estimate to implement the Grassland Vegetation Monitoring Protocol during 2016 from Prairie Legacy prior to recommending the GC approve sole sourcing the work to Prairie Legacy. Baasch will obtain and distribute an estimate to the TAC to respond via email to regarding whether or not the TAC supports a recommendation the GC approve sole sourcing the work to Prairie Legacy.
6. The TAC recommended the GC approve submitting the Whooping Crane Synthesis Chapters for peer review, including the FWS and Trust comments and EDO response documents with amendments discussed during the meeting.
7. The TAC recommended the GC approve the Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring Approach peer review as final.
8. The next meeting will be a GC/TAC/ISAC SDM and GC meeting scheduled for March 8-10.
9. The next TAC meeting will be an SDM workshop scheduled for April 20-21 in Kearney.