



Platte River Recovery Implementation Program GC Meeting Notes – SDM Workshop

March 8-9, 2016
EDO Conference Centre, Kearney, NE

Meeting Summary

The GC met to review the Round 2 alternatives. They confirmed support for the findings of the TAC, the use of the tern and plover model and the PMs, with one revision. The USFWS shared its perspective on pallid sturgeon, and a change was made to the Pallid PM. The GC made several decisions to narrow the range of alternatives under consideration. For the remaining decisions, they shared perspectives and identified outstanding information needs to be addressed by Compass/EDO and the TAC.

Action Items

#	Description	When
1	Compass / EDO to develop draft Round 3 alternatives and consequences, including an alternative that incorporates the new leasing opportunity.	Draft for April TAC meeting Final for June GC meeting
2	TAC to address outstanding information needs; Compass/EDO to prepare pre-reading to serve as starting point for TAC discussion.	For April TAC meeting
3	USFWS to confirm if they want to address pallid considerations related to nest initiation flows at the TAC meeting.	For April TAC meeting
4	Compass / EDO to distribute pre-reading for the GC meeting.	Two weeks before GC meeting

Participants

GC and TAC Members	Other
Harry LaBonde – State of Wyoming Jeff Fassett – State of Nebraska Don Ament – State of Colorado Brock Merrill (acting for Chris Beardsley) – Bureau of Reclamation Alan Berryman, Deb Freeman – Colorado Water Users Don Kraus, John Shadle, Kent Miller, Mark Czaplewski – Downstream Water Users Dennis Strauch, Bob Mehling – Upper Platte Water Users Bill Taddicken, Rich Walters, Duane Hovorka – Environmental Entities Michael Thabault – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	ISAC David Galat Dave Marmorek Adrian Farmer Jennifer Hoeting Brian Bledsoe Ned Andrews
TAC Members Jennifer Schellpeper – State of Nebraska Suzanne Sellers – State of Colorado 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, Tom Econopouly – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Observers Eliza Hines – USFWS
	Compass Lee Failing, Philip Halteman
	EDO Jerry Kenny, Chad Smith, Jason Farnsworth, Dave Baasch, Patrick Farrell

Summary of Discussions, Outcomes and Actions

Performance Measures

PM	DESCRIPTION	ACTION
Tern and Plover Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepted the TAC's findings and recommendations. - Agreed to use # breeding pairs and total # fledglings of the Program (vs. AHR) as the primary PMs. 	
Mgmt Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepted the TAC's findings and recommendations. - Agreed to use Water Use in Normal years as a proxy for other water use PMs. 	
W Cranes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepted the TAC's findings and recommendations. 	
Sediment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepted the TAC's findings and recommendations. 	
Implement-ation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepted the TAC's findings and recommendations. 	
Pallids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The USFWS shared their perspective on pallids, namely that alternatives involving flow could entail either increases or decreases in risks to pallids. - The GC agreed to change the Pallid PM to "change in risk to pallid sturgeon" (Yes, No, Maybe) and to assign a score of "maybe" to alternatives that involve flow (A4 and B4). 	Change to Pallid PM (Done)
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussed the learning objectives drafted by USFWS. - USFWS clarified that these are intended to capture the general learning interests of the TAC/GC in order to provide some context for the Learning PM; they are not put forward as required learning objectives of the USFWS. - Accepted the PM as a crude indicator of learning potential but agreed that if an alternative is supported on the basis of Learning, the learning potential should be further examined. - Noted that the learning potential of alternatives with small acreage (e.g., MCA at 10 acres/year) is low. 	
Plover Productivity – USFWS Draft Recovery Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USFWS shared relevant elements of the draft plover recovery plan. - All agreed to respect its confidentiality. - Discussed implications of the draft plan for this decision. Key points of discussion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - While the plan does not provide direct habitat or population targets for the CPR, it emphasizes a goal of stable or increasing populations. The USFWS suggest this could be used as context for interpreting Program success. - The USFWS does not believe having off-channel habitat as a component of tern and plover habitat and production is incompatible with the ecosystem-driven emphasis of the piping plover recovery plan. 	

Decisions Made

Alternatives	Decision addressed and key points of discussion	Outcome
On-channel only	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Does the GC want to consider alternatives that contain only on-channel habitat?</i> - No. The contribution of on-channel habitat only is low and uncertain, and cannot sustain tern/plover populations. 	No, remove on-channel only alternatives
Brood rearing flows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Does the GC want to consider alternatives that include a brood rearing flow?</i> - The GC concluded that it does not want to further explore brood rearing flows, based on (a) analysis conducted by the EDO as part of the forage fish synthesis document which demonstrated no relationship between flows to support forage fish and tern/plover productivity, and (b) no data describing any connection between flows and predation on fledglings. 	No, do not create alternatives with brood rearing flows
MCA vs Conventional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Does the GC want to consider alternatives that include conventional on-channel habitat?</i> - The USFWS has indicated a preference for MCA habitat over conventional on-channel habitat. They are balancing terns/plovers and whooping cranes. They believe that the loss in tern/plover productivity and lower opportunities for learning under MCA (relative to conventional) are offset by the gains for whooping cranes. MCA is also lower in cost due to the limit of 10 acres. <i>This does not preclude consideration of other on-channel habitat in the future. However, no such alternatives are proposed for consideration in this process.</i> - GC members discussed the pros and cons, including in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GC discussed and recognizes that an alternative that provides only 10 acres of on-channel habitat per year will produce very few birds, which will significantly reduce the ability (or lengthen the timeline required) to answer BQs. - They discussed the value of learning, noting how insensitive the relative performance of alternatives is to changes in uncertain parameters. - There is an interest in ensuring that monitoring would be in place to enable assessing performance of MCA - The GC concluded that it does not want to see alternatives with a conventional on-channel component in June. On channel habitat, if any, will be MCA. 	No, on channel habitat, if any, will be MCA
Land Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Does the GC want to consider alternatives that require land acquisition?</i> - The GC agreed to not consider land acquisition in excess of the current budget of \$1.5 million. See discussion below. - The GC concluded to drop the B alternatives; keep the C alternatives. 	Do not consider land acquisition beyond the current \$1.5 million budget.

Decisions addressed and deferred to June, with information needs identified

Alternative	Decision addressed and key points of discussion	Info Needs Identified
Off-channel habitat – how much is enough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>For the remainder of the first increment, how much off-channel habitat is enough for terns/plovers?</i> - The GC compared alternatives with different amounts of off-channel habitat (noting that MCA and flow could be added to any of them). They agreed to remove the B alternatives but did not decide among the remainder. - Across the off-channel alternatives, the relationship between cost and birds is linear. The GC needs to make a value judgment about how much to spend, based on a) current budgets and other priorities, and/or b) what is the Program's target or measure of success. - With respect to targets, the GC discussed the possibility of defining targets, or what-is-success, for the Program. The USFWS noted that while there is no guidance from the draft recovery plan to support setting a habitat or population target, the plan's emphasis on stable or increasing populations could be used to provide context for evaluating performance. - With respect to costs, several GC members noted that, having met the Program land targets, they feel the priority is to acquire water. 	<p>To be addressed by the TAC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refine the alternatives: is there any way to reduce costs within the A alternatives? - Refine the costs: Summarize costs and cost-effectiveness, looking for efficiencies and/or breakpoints that may provide guidance. - Provide context for interpreting tern/plover performance: Clarify to what extent each alternative supports a stable or increasing population.
MCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Does the GC want to include an MCA component (do the benefits outweigh the costs)?</i> - USFWS indicated a preference for including an MCA component, but at least some GC members are undecided and want to continue to see off-channel-only alternatives in June. 	<p>None identified. The PMs adequately describe the costs and benefits. The GC will need to make a value judgment about whether the benefits outweigh the costs.</p>
Nest Initiation flows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Does the GC want to include a nest initiation flow (do the benefits outweigh the costs)?</i> - The GC reviewed the performance of alternatives with and without a nest initiation flow. With only 10 acres of on-channel habitat, the change in productivity is well below the MSIC (e.g., the PMs do not report a benefit associated with a nest initiation flow). - The USFWS indicated it would like to continue evaluating alternatives that include flow and supports the TAC investigating different options within those nest initiation flows. - The GC agreed to continue to consider nest initiation flow, but to refine the alternative, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider using water for plovers only; - consider using it only in some years; - consider how it might best be designed for MCA. - The GC confirmed support for considering these flow alternatives even though they are not in the AMP. - The GC requested a short summary of other opportunities to use water, to help them think about the potential value of water in other uses (e.g., % of water that would be used for target flows for WCs, etc.). 	<p>To be addressed by the TAC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Refine the alternatives. - Document other potential uses of water. - Clarify the rationale for a nest initiation flow: what are the benefits and how would they be communicated. - Possibly (to be confirmed by USFWS), address pallid considerations.

Alternative	Decision addressed and key points of discussion	Info Needs Identified
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USFWS noted that they don't at this time expect pallid considerations to affect choices about nest initiation flow. 	

Recap

TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION
Confirming decisions made	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GC reviewed the decisions made on Day 1 and associated rationale. They confirmed the decisions made. 	
Confirming decisions to come	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The GC reviewed and the alternatives to be presented for decision in June and confirmed the identified information needs. - EDO shared an opportunity that has emerged to lease land and asked the GC how they would like this treated with respect to the June decision. The GC confirmed that they would like to see an alternative that incorporates the leasing opportunity. 	1. Compass / EDO to develop draft Round 3 alternatives and consequences, including an alternative that incorporates the new leasing opportunity.
TAC Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The TAC agenda will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and provide input to Round 3 alternatives and consequences. - Review refined off-channel alternatives and their costs. - Evaluate (qualitatively) the performance of the alternatives in the context of the draft plover recovery plan's emphasis on "stable or increasing populations". - Explore refinements to nest initiation flows. - Document other potential uses of water. - Possibly, consider implications of nest initiation flows on pallids. 	2. TAC to address outstanding info needs; Compass/EDO to prepare pre-reading for the TAC meeting to serve as starting point. 3. USFWS to confirm if they want to address pallid considerations related to nest initiation flows at the TAC meeting.
GC Meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The SDM session is tentatively planned for two half-day sessions: morning of Day 1 and afternoon of Day 2, which allows for a preference elicitation exercise in the event that a consensus is not reached in the first session. 	4. Issue pre-reading for GC meeting after the TAC meeting.