



TO: Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC)
FROM: Executive Director's Office (EDO)
RE: Platte River Caddisfly Research Project
DATE: February 2, 2012

Request

As per direction from the Governance Committee (GC), the EDO requests ISAC input and guidance on the value of the proposed Platte River Caddisfly Response to Tree Removal Research Study Plan and additional input on how to incorporate this particular species into Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) management actions and associated monitoring/research as a whole.

The purpose of the proposed caddisfly research project on the Program's McCormick Tract (Elm Creek Complex) and Binfield Tract (Shoemaker Island Complex) is to learn about caddisfly response to woody vegetation removal and to reduce uncertainties Program management actions may have on this Program species of concern. Specifically, the EDO requests the ISAC provide a written response to the following questions regarding this project:

- 1) Will the proposed study provided adequate initial insight into the potential responses of caddisflies to woody vegetation removal, and how those responses might influence Program decision-making regarding management actions?
- 2) Should additional/alternative methods, data, or study designs be considered to help the Program reduce uncertainties associated with potential Program management action impacts on the caddisfly?

The EDO requests the ISAC provide a draft written response to Chad Smith by noon Central time on Friday, March 23 and deliver a presentation on the draft response during the AMP Reporting Session on March 27-28, 2012. Input from the AMP Reporting Session can be used by the ISAC to modify and refine the response into a final document for presentation to the GC during their June 2012 meeting in Cheyenne, WY.

Background

On October 29th, 2010 Program staff attended a University of Nebraska–Kearney (UNK) thesis defense related to the caddisfly. During the presentation of research findings, it became apparent that there was still significant uncertainty associated with caddisfly habitat requirements as related to the importance of woody vegetation and possible impacts associated with clearing woody vegetation in areas with an extant caddisfly population. Program staff mentioned there is an extant caddisfly population on the Program's McCormick Tract in an area where tree clearing has been contemplated and a study of caddisfly response to woody vegetation removal would provide valuable information to guide Program management actions and ensure that the Program does not adversely impact one of our species of concern.

Dr. Wyatt Hoback indicated that UNK would be interested in participating in a research project to assess caddisfly response to tree removal and an existing graduate student (Mike Cavallaro) could be assigned to the project. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), UNK, and Program staff collaboratively developed the Caddisfly Research Study Plan and the Service provided Program staff clarification that the Program would not be held responsible for caddisfly listing in the event the proposed tree removal negatively impacted caddisfly. In response, the EDO entered into a contract with UNK to conduct the research as per the Final Program Procurement Policy (09/26/2008) which states the Executive Director can solicit proposals for services costing less than \$25,000 without Finance Committee approval if the costs are covered by a GC-approved budget.



The research project was discussed with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in December 2010 and again in August 2011. The TAC did not provide a clear recommendation for the project, in part because the State of Colorado raised concerns about the implications of the project for the Program. The research project was discussed with the Governance Committee (GC) in September 2011 at which point the project was tabled until the Service completed the 12-month review and a determination of whether or not caddisfly would be listed as threatened or endangered had been made. The GC also decided to defer tree removal along the caddisfly sloughs to preserve the possibility of conducting the research after a decision on how to proceed was made in June 2012. The GC asked the EDO to seek scientific advice related to the Platte River caddisfly as it pertains to Program management actions from the ISAC.

Significance of the Project to Program

Platte River caddisfly is a species of concern as per the Program's Land Plan and is also still under consideration by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) for listing as a threatened or endangered species. As a Program species of concern, the caddisfly is linked to Adaptive Management Plan Management Objective #4: *Within overall (management) objectives 1-3, provide benefits to non-target listed species and non-listed species of concern and reduce the likelihood of future listing.*

The purpose of the caddisfly research project is not to provide information relative to specific priority hypotheses, but rather to provide information relative to the response of the caddisfly to management actions such as woody vegetation removal. The Service and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) advise that typical caddisfly habitat is often found in sloughs and similar locations that are co-located with stands of trees. Woody vegetation removal is a management action under consideration at multiple Program properties and information regarding the potential impact on the caddisfly would be valuable in assessing and designing the extent of future woody vegetation removal projects on additional Program projects.

Caddisfly Research Project Status

While the tree removal design was not implemented, the graduate student at UNK, Mike Cavallaro, has conducted surveys for caddisfly and collected data in accordance with the methodology described in the Caddisfly Research Study Plan on the Program's McCormick and Binfield Tracks during 2011. Mike will continue to survey Program properties as they are acquired to document caddisfly presence, abundance, and distribution and will continue collect data at the McCormick and Binfield Tracts through summer 2012. To date, Mike has collected valuable baseline data that will allow the Program to learn about impacts management actions, such as tree removal, may have on caddisfly should the Program decide to resume this study.

Supporting Documents

ISAC members will be provided with the following information to assist with the review process:

- Excerpt from the September 2011 GC minutes
- The caddisfly memo and exhibits provided to the GC in September 2011, which includes more detailed background, the research study plan, and substantial supporting documents
- Distribution and population status of the Platte River caddisfly - an assessment of threats to its survival (Lindsay Vivian Thesis)
- Recent publication (Geluso et al.) on caddisfly behavior
- Additional information as requested by ISAC members