



# PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

## Finance Committee Conference Call Minutes

August 21, 2013

### Meeting Attendees

#### Finance Committee (FC)

##### **State of Wyoming**

Andrea O'Dell – Alternate

##### **State of Colorado**

Suzanne Sellers – Member

##### **State of Nebraska**

Jim Schneider – Member

#### **Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**

Gary Campbell – Member

Brock Merrill

#### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)**

Mike George – Member

#### **Environmental Entities**

Marian Langan – Alternate

#### **Colorado Water Users**

Kevin Urie – Alternate

#### **Downstream Water Users**

Don Kraus – Member

Brian Barels

#### Welcome and Administrative

FC Chair Campbell officially called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. Central time. The group proceeded with introductions.

*Urie moved to approve the July 15, 2013 FC minutes; Kraus seconded. Minutes approved.*

#### Shoemaker Island Complex

Farnsworth discussed the bid package for river island construction at the Shoemaker Island Complex. The Program received the 404 permit from the Corps for this work and this is the standard bid package used for this kind of work. The bids will be let so that construction will begin around the third week of November to avoid the whooping crane migration season.

*George moved to approve the bid package; Schneider seconded. Bid package approved.*

This document is a draft based on one person's notes of the meeting. The official meeting minutes may be different if corrections are made by the Finance Committee before approval.

**PRRIP FY2014 Budget**

Kenny discussed the status of development of the draft PRRIP FY14 budget. The EDO is exploring potential ways to improve data collection and find cost savings relative to a couple of monitoring items – whooping crane monitoring and tern/plover monitoring. Currently, the USGS conducts tern/plover monitoring for the Program under contract. The current USGS field leader is leaving and the current contract is coming to an end. Potentially, this item will need to be re-competed. The whooping crane monitoring conducted during the spring and fall is done under contract by WEST and Gary Lingle. The EDO has encountered several difficulties with the local monitoring contractors and those issues do not seem to be improving, leading to ongoing discontent with the monitoring effort. The EDO has been exploring combining the efforts related to these two monitoring efforts, using the same monitoring technicians for both efforts (spring whooping crane, summer tern/plover, and fall whooping crane).

Options include keeping the current whooping crane monitoring contractor and re-competing for the tern/plover monitoring, or having the EDO assemble a technician team to conduct the monitoring at a cost savings to the Program based on initial estimates. Kenny said he wanted to get feedback and thought from the FC as to their perception as to how we should move forward with options like this given the budget implications. Campbell said he heard three options – 1) separate contracts; 2) hire one entity to do both monitoring efforts; and 3) the EDO hires technicians to conduct the field monitoring work. Campbell said he also heard there would be a cost savings if the EDO coordinated the monitoring. Langan said the cost savings make the decision easy, but she does not have the history with concerns related to the size of the EDO staff. Kenny said that concern seemed to have come from John Lawson and Mike Purcell so maybe the concern left with them. Langan asked if there would be a perception problem with outside groups if the EDO was conducting the monitoring. Kenny said peer review, ISAC review, and other review should help to alleviate that concern. He also emphasized that the EDO is an independent entity so that builds in a buffer as well – we are concerned with the right answer, no what the answer is.

Barels said there is probably a hybrid way to bid it, maybe Part 1 and Part 2 could be bid separately. Barels said he likes the work being done by the EDO and that way things are moved forward. He is concerned about doing the field work and maybe that hurting the notion of independence. Kenny said that is certainly an important issue that functionally could be handled by keeping the data gatherers and data analysts separate. Kraus said one option would be to do the monitoring in house and bid out the data analysis. Kraus said that the cost savings are definitely something that needs to be explored. Kenny said the other important point is to make sure the data quality is as high as it can be given its importance in decision-making; that is one of the main concerns of the EDO with the current arrangements. Kraus asked about the timing and how the two monitoring efforts fit together. Kenny said the timing is different for both. The tern/plover monitoring contract is up and a decision will need to be made moving forward. Kraus asked about fall whooping crane monitoring. Kenny said it would be stay the course for this fall. The part that WEST is contracted for (data analysis) might be an example of keeping that data analysis separate through contract, and the actual data collection would be handled by the EDO and its technician crew. Urie asked if our current contract for whooping crane monitoring extends beyond this fall. Kenny said yes, he believes through 2015. But, like any Program contract, the contract can be voided with 30 days' notice. Campbell asked if there would be damages. Kenny said no, they would only be paid for work completed.



Urie said from a TAC perspective, if the EDO has to double their efforts to make up for poor effort on the part of contractors, the Program would get built-in quality control and do things just once instead of having to essentially do the work twice.

Langan asked if a decision needed to be made today. Kenny said he was just looking for input before going too far down on road or the other. Discussions about options will continue through the committee process of building the budget. Urie asked if this would require additional staff. Kenny said yes, but it would be field technician staff on the order of six additional people but at a lower technician pay grade. The EDO is confident that we can find quality and able people to fill those roles. Campbell said he is in favor of looking at options going forward to save dollars and avoid duplicative work.

#### **Closing Business**

Kenny asked Campbell if we were at the stage of being able to release the Notice to Proceed on the J2 project. Campbell and Merrill said things were close within the BOR and they would know soon when that Notice to Proceed could be released.

Langan asked about the next steps in the budget development process. Kenny said the draft budget is being discussed with all the Advisory Committees. That process will continue, a draft budget will be discussed with the FC, there will be a GC Special Session in October to discuss the draft budget, a FC meeting in November to talk about the budget prior to final discussion and approval at the GC meeting in Denver. One-on-one thoughts and comments with EDO staff about the budget are also encouraged.

Kenny requested that the FC convene a brief meeting at the conclusion of the GC meeting on September 11, 2013 to discuss a bid packages for several efforts related to the North Platte choke point. That meeting will be at 11:30 a.m. Central time on September 11, 2013.

The next FC meeting is from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Central time on October 24, 2013.

**FC meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m. Central time.**

#### **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from August 21, 2013 FC meeting**

- 1) Approved the July 15, 2013 FC minutes.
- 2) Approved the Shoemaker Island Complex river island construction bid package.