

To: Jason Farnsworth, Executive Director, Platte River Recovery Implementation Program
From: Tovar Cerulli and Phil T. Seng, DJ Case & Associates
Re: Paths Forward for PRRIP Communications
Date: August 29, 2025

In May 2025, the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP) contracted with DJ Case & Associates to collaborate on development of a strategic engagement and communication plan, conduct research pertinent to plan development, provide related guidance and recommendations, and support initial plan implementation.

In June, July, and early August, our team facilitated a series of meetings with the communications and outreach committee assigned to this effort. The meetings were designed to identify key objectives and audiences for the communications plan and capture ideas for potential implementation strategies.

Shared priorities

Members of the committee concurred that the plan's goal should be to build and maintain the support and resources necessary to enable PRRIP's mission of serving the threatened and endangered species and the people and communities of the Platte River Basin.

The committee identified overarching objectives: building and maintaining support for the program, increasing public awareness, and increasing recreational use of PRRIP public lands. The committee also identified a list of potential priority audiences, including water user groups, neighboring landowners, residents within the associated habitat reach, potential recreational users, longer-distance visitors, conservation entities, and government officials throughout the Platte River Basin.

The committee agreed that building and maintaining support for the program is essential and will require effective engagement with key stakeholders, including officials and water user groups. Committee members noted that communication with some stakeholders (e.g., officials) should be carried out by the Governance Committee (GC) and that the Executive Director's Office (EDO) should keep the GC informed, rather than engaging directly.

A fork in the road

In August, we conducted a series of interviews with committee members to gain deeper insight into audiences and potential channels and messages. In those conversations, it became clear that committee members have divergent perspectives on what kinds of communications efforts the EDO should engage in directly and with what audiences.

Some committee members expressed the view that the EDO should employ a wide range of messages, including arguments for the value of the program, in communicating with a wide range of audiences and stakeholders. Other members expressed the view that the EDO should

employ a narrow range of messages (e.g., focused on operational topics) and communicate only with a narrow set of audiences (e.g., local residents), and that the GC alone should determine messaging for and communicate with others (e.g., water users).

In light of these divergent perspectives, it is our view that we have come to a fork in the road. To move forward in either direction, we will need guidance.

Option A—Operational Approach

PRRIP's communication plan could focus on a narrow set of audiences (e.g., residents within a defined geographic area, potential recreational users) and a narrow set of messages (e.g., Good Neighbor policy, management activities, recreational opportunities). The plan would focus exclusively on communication by the EDO.

The primary advantage of this approach is that plan development would be relatively simple, as would the plan itself. Though this approach might not require resolving larger questions about EDO/GC role delineation, it would require clarification of the specific audiences with which the EDO is authorized to communicate, using what messages, via what channels.

The primary disadvantage of this approach is that implementation of the plan is unlikely to make a significant contribution to the overarching goal of building and maintaining the support necessary to enable continued success in delivering on PRRIP's mission. This approach would likely focus on increasing awareness, understanding, and acceptance among specific subsets of the local population. It would not address outreach to other stakeholder groups (e.g., water users) whose support is essential.

Option B—Strategic Approach

Alternatively, PRRIP's communication plan could address engagement with a broad set of audiences (e.g., including water users and officials) and the channels and messages best suited to each. The plan would describe a broader communication role for the EDO and would likely also describe the GC's role (overall and in relation to specific stakeholders).

The primary advantage of this approach is that the plan would be designed to make meaningful strategic contributions to the overarching goal of building and maintaining the support necessary to enable continued success in delivering on PRRIP's mission over the next several years and into the Second Increment.

The primary disadvantage of this approach is that plan development would be more complex and more time- and resource-intensive. In the process, the EDO and GC would need to resolve key questions (e.g., about their respective roles, especially in relation to various audiences; about appropriate messaging and channels for policy-related communication).