

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)****2024 Q1 PRRIP Governance Committee (GC) Meeting – Virtual***Tuesday, March 25, 2025*

Jason Mead – 2025 GC Chair

Jason Farnsworth, PRRIP Executive Director (ED) – Moderator

PRRIP Governance Committee (GC) Meeting Attendees Tuesday, March 25, 2025		
Name	Affiliation	Member or Alternate
Department of the Interior		
Brock Merrill	Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)	Member
Drue DeBerry	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)	Member
Mark Porath	USFWS	Alternate
Matt Rabbe	USFWS	Alternate
State of Wyoming		
Jason Mead	Wyoming Water Development Office (WWDO) – 2025 GC Chair	Member
Barry Lawrence	WWDO	Alternate
State of Colorado		
Amy Ostdiek	Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)	Member
Kara Scheel	CWCB	Alternate
State of Nebraska		
Jesse Bradley	Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	Member
Upper Platte Water Users		
Dennis Strauch	Pathfinder Irrigation District	Member
Bob Mehling	Goshen Irrigation District (virtual)	Alternate
Colorado Water Users		
Kyle Whitaker	Northern Water	Member
Jason Marks	Denver Water	Alternate
Downstream Water Users		
Devin Brundage	Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID)	Member
Kyle Leibig	Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD)	Member
Kent Miller	Twin Platte Natural Resources District (TPNRD)	Member
Lyndon Vogt	Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD)	Member
Environmental Entities		
Rich Walters	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	Member
Brice Krohn	The Crane Trust	Member
Melissa Mosier	Audubon Nebraska	Member
Executive Director's Office (EDO)		
Jason Farnsworth, BCES	Executive Director	
Chadwin Smith, Ph.D.	Science Policy Coordinator	
Tim Tunnell, M.S.	Land Plan Coordinator	
Seth Turner, P.E.	Water Plan Coordinator	
Malinda Henry, Ph.D.	Science Plan Coordinator	
Justin Brei, P.E.	Water Resources & Engineering Manager	
Alyx Vogel	Wildlife Biologist	
Ethan Ideus	Wildlife Biologist	
Jonathan Wentz	Wildlife Biologist	



Quinn Lewis	River Scientist
Ed Weschler	Junior Civil Engineer
Alicia Uribe	Executive Office Manager
Other Participants	
Abigail Boudewyns	WY Attorney General's Office
Andy Nicewicz	CO Attorney General's Office
Caitlin Kingsley	Nebraska DNR
Cory Steinke	CNPPID
Dave Zorn	CNPPID
John Shadle	NPPD
Jeff Shafer	NPPD
Jim Jenniges	NPPD
Brandon Gardels	NPPD
Mike Archer	Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (NGPC)
Brandi Flyr	CPNRD
Kevin Urie	SPWRAP
Richard Belt	SPWRAP
Aaron Pearse	ISAC
Steven Labay	USFWS
Terence Stroh	USBR
Michelle Hubbard	State of Wyoming
John Thorburn	Tri-Basin NRD
Jacob Fritton	TNC
Alex Wendlandt	
Parker Hamill	
Bennett Smith	
James Wittler	
Nathan Elder	

#1	GC Meeting – Welcome & Administrative	Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
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Introduction – Chair Mead called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM Central Time. The meeting was held virtually over Microsoft Teams with the list of attendees serving as record of attendance in lieu of introductions.

Agenda – No changes were made to the agenda.

Minutes:

GC MOTION: DeBerry moved and Ostdiek seconded to approve the 2024 Q4 PRRIP GC Quarterly Meeting Minutes. **Motion carried.**

#2	Advisory Committee Updates	Agenda Item Objective: General update on recent work of PRRIP Advisory Committees.
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Land Advisory Committee (LAC) – Zorn said the LAC last met on February 12. Main topics were the FY2024 Land Work Report and Second Increment counting of conservation lands.



Water Advisory Committee (WAC) – Scheel said the WAC last met on February 11. Main topics were basin hydrology updates; recharge and recapture projects; Elwood Outlet Feasibility Study; discussion of monitoring wells; water project scoring. Next WAC meeting on May 6, 2025. Mead asked about a landowner concern related to the Elwood Outlet that could cause a cost increase. Turner said he would provide an update on that later today, the feasibility study is just underway

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Walters said the TAC last met on February 4. Main topics were target species monitoring; Science Plan WC stopover/flyover analysis; seasonal peak flows; germination suppression flow; Wet Meadow Hydrology Report peer review; pallid sturgeon; sediment augmentation alternatives; Grassland Management Working Group. The next TAC meeting is April 29-30, 2025.

Finance Committee (FC) – Merrill said the FC last met on February 25. Main topics were Tract 2021001 Structure Removal RFP; Grassland Monitoring RFP; predator trapping contracting for 2025. The next FC meeting is May 27, 2025.

#3	Executive Director's (ED) Report	Agenda Item Objective: Update on PRRIP budget, implementation, and other key activities.
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Implementation Highlights – Farnsworth summarized recent EDO and PRRIP implementation activities.

Public Outreach – Uribe summarized the latest PRRIP Public Outreach activities and discussed contractor selection (Astralis United from Texas) to help with PRRIP Public Outreach strategies.

#4	PRRIP Budget	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss/approve FY25 Budget, FY25 Work Plan, and 2025 PRRIP EDO Contract Amend.
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FY24 Budget Wrap-Up – Farnsworth summarized the FY24 look-back.

FY25 Budget Status – Farnsworth summarized FY25 budget activities so far (January and February).

FY25 Procurement – Smith summarized key FY25 Procurement items.

#5	PRRIP Science Plan	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss recent Science Plan implementation activities.
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PRRIP Target Species:

- **Plover/Tern (LTPP)** – Vogel summarized the results of the 2024 plover and tern monitoring season. Whitaker asked about how the PRRIP estimates the number of breeding pairs. Vogel explained the Breeding Pair Calculator used over the years. Henry said it is based on the number of nests and accounts for potential re-nesting. Brundage asked what happens if we exceed our take thresholds. Rabbe said there is incidental take prescribed in the Biological Opinion and there has not been even one instance of that yet.

GC Motion: Merrill moved and DeBerry seconded to approve the 2024 Plover and Tern Monitoring Report. **Motion carried.**



- **Whooping Crane (WC)** – Ideus summarized the results of Spring 2024 WC monitoring. Whitaker asked about use vs. discharge. Ideus said on the morning of March 28, 2024 there were 93 WC on the river at a time when the mean daily discharge was in the 2,000 cfs “bin”. Henry said the figure is not an attempt to represent flows WC are selecting for stopover, due to a timing mismatch. The telemetry data are being analyzed to provide more information on the importance of discharge for stopover vs. flyover decisions. It is a general overview of flows available during the monitoring period and how WC use was distributed over that availability. Whittaker asked why nearest forest (NF) mean was smaller than unobstructed channel width (UOCW) mean. Henry explained that NF is measured in one direction only from WC location, Farnsworth said unforested corridor width is two times NF and would be closer to UOCW. Brundage asked if the Program has received telemetry data from the USGS. Farnsworth and Henry said we have 2023 data, we should have 2024 data in hand probably in May 2025. Ideus said the PRRIP has 69 total WC observations so far in spring 2025. Rabbe said he estimated about 50% of the WC have come through already this season.

GC Motion: Whitaker moved and Strauch seconded to approve the Spring 2024 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report. **Motion carried.**

Seasonal Peak Flows – Farnsworth said the importance of this topic has to do with the idea that as we move through the Extension, we are homing in on what water the Program is likely to have. As people are thinking about the Second Increment, maybe there are things we can do to benefit the target species without having to lease water or find other scraps of water. One of the major categories is peak flows, of which we had several such natural events during the First Increment that helped us explore some of the impacts of such flows and how that relates to Program water management actions. Walters said Farnsworth’s summary was good, it’s important to consider the importance of water in the river and what the tradeoffs are for using water in different ways. Rabbe said the flattening of the channel in response to peak flow events has allowed us to use less water with germination suppression flows but still get the same effect.

#6	PRRIP Independent Science	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss PRRIP Independent Science activities.
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Smith discussed the 2025 Q2 ISAC Scope of Work. Scheel asked for an update on the status of the genetics and habitat research projects. Henry summarized where the SIU and UNL teams are at with their work. Farnsworth updated the GC on the status of HDR’s work on lower Platte River modeling. Mead said the GC is on track to discuss the ISAC’s 2025 Q1 work on Program science implementation and the Department of the Interior’s Scientific Integrity Policy at the 2025 Q2 GC Meeting in Cheyenne, WY.

#7	PRRIP LAND PLAN	Agenda Item Objective: Update on recent Land Plan implementation activities.
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2024 Land Work Report – Tunnell summarized the 2024 Land Work Report.

GC Motion: Ostdiek moved and Brundage seconded to approve the 2024 Land Work Report. **Motion carried.**



Tract 2021001 Structure Removal RFB – Tunnell explained the purpose and content of the RFB. Whitaker asked what obligation there is to ultimately remove these structures if we award a bid. Farnsworth said we will execute a contract bill of sale with the winning bidder and that will include language that will make it as concrete as we can to assume the structures are removed.

GC MOTION: *Merrill moved and Walters seconded to approve the Tract 2021001 Structure Removal RFB.* **Motion carried.**

Liebig asked about the status of 2025 prescribed fire. Tunnell said we teamed up with the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture and Central Platte NRD to pool burn units. Two contractors bid on the projects so the burning was split between two contractors (one from Nebraska, one from Colorado). 250 acres were burned to the west this week. We want to hold off burning in some areas until late April to early May as a way to control cool season grasses now that we have clearance to burn later in the spring.

Meeting Break – 2:30 PM Central Time (5 minutes)

#8	PRRIP WATER PLAN	Agenda Item Objective: Update on recent Water Plan implementation activities.
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Scoring Water Projects – Turner discussed water project scoring and the Scoring Subcommittee. We will provide the most recent list of the subcommittee and will ask for GC input to update the membership of that subcommittee. We will then be in position to move forward with the scoring of the Cottonwood Ranch Groundwater Recapture Project.

Groundwater Monitoring Wells – Turner said the Program has an extensive array of groundwater monitoring wells along the Program’s footprint. Most of the data being collected has not been used for anything for several years. The EDO has a list of wells that will have equipment removed and then will be decommissioned. Mead asked if there is a process to formally decommission a well. Turner said yes and he will be coordinating with the Nebraska DNR soon.

Elwood Outlet Feasibility Study – Turner provided an update on the progress of this study. One landowner has concerns about the open channel option but is amenable to the buried pipeline option. The contractor is only at the start of this feasibility study and the development of a 30% design, this should be ready for discussion at the June and/or September GC meetings.

CNPPID Irrigator Lease – Turner said the GC previously approved a one-year extension of the contract. Increased price by \$60/acre to increase enrollment. 1,129 acres enrolled (847 acre-feet contributed to the Environmental Account) but only a small increase (76 acres) in enrollment over 2024. Central provided feedback saying participants are the same from year to year; variability in acreage is just the change in crop rotation by the same participants. Scheel asked when that EA water will be available. Turner said the crediting won’t happen until October so it won’t be available until next year. Turner estimated current EA balance at approximately 135,000 acre feet.

#9	GC Policy Discussions	Agenda Item Objective: Discussion of key GC policy matters.
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North Platte Chokepoint – Merrill discussed recent edits to the Chokepoint Policy Framing Document. At this point, the GC feels First Increment and Extension obligations have been met.



The GC does not make the same assumption for a potential Second Increment. Mead asked about the last time we had discussions with the National Weather Service (NWS). Turner said July 2020. Brundage said he appreciates the work on this, he wondered if the document could reflect that part of the constraint is development in the floodplain in that area (along with change in stage). Using the word primarily related to “change in stage” is the part that needs a bit of editing.

Mosier – at line 140, which GC meeting is being discussed? Agreement to change “September 2024” to “December 2024”.

General GC discussion about language edits.

GC Motion: *DeBerry moved and Merrill seconded to approve the North Platte Chokepoint Policy Framing Document.* **Nebraska opposed, motion failed.**

GC agreed to provide additional comments to Farnsworth by April 15, 2025 and then this item will be discussed again at the 2025 Q2 GC Meeting.

Perkins County Canal Project – Bradley gave a Power Point presentation on the Perkins County Canal Project, linkages to the Program, and timelines. Ostdiek asked about the likelihood of getting this project done and permitted on the timeline presented. Bradley said Nebraska is willing to talk about the Second Increment even if the Perkins project is not discussed directly but it makes sense to consider them together in complementary fashion. The permitting timeline for the project was provided to Nebraska from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Whitaker asked about State Line Flow Projections. Bradley said it ties to NPPD and CNPPID operations as well as flow requirements in the Critical Habitat Reach. That is the way to think about the “green” on the graph, as it ties to Lake McConaughy management. Whitaker said so in essence does that mean diverting South Platte water in the winter and replacing it with Lake McConaughy water in the river? Bradley said in essence yes. Whitaker discussed the use of non-native water in Colorado and also the Colorado carve-out of 35,000 acre-feet. Ostdiek said Colorado has been in full compliance with its New Depletions Plan, Bradley’s comments were interesting and we have concerns about the current Program not working and maybe Colorado being out of compliance. Bradley said he is not asserting any lack of compliance with the New Depletions Plan. But continued water development, no pursuit of buy-and-dry, etc. raised concerns, Nebraska thinks it can do its part to maintain flows. Marks asked if Nebraska has spoken directly with the Service about the Perking Canal project and the PRRIP and its Biological Opinion. Bradley said we will be doing agency scoping over the summer, some informal discussion with DeBerry.

Mosier asked about the potential impacts on the Tamarack Project in Colorado. Bradley said it is a bit premature, he doesn’t know how Colorado will allocate water, there will need to be discussions about how these projects can work together. Ostdiek said the Colorado clear reading of this says Tamarack will be completely curtailed, so that project would go away with the Perkins Canal project. Bradley said that is the first he heard that but Nebraska is willing to work through the process and make sure the Program can recoup the score and be made whole if there is an impact. Ostdiek said Tamarack would be junior to the Perkins Canal project so it would go away. Whitaker said he has been through big water projects like this and it has taken about 20 years to get through it. He is worried about the intersection about negotiating the Second Increment with uncertainty



about when or if Perkins comes on line. Bradley said he hopes this group could be an advocate for the permit. Whitaker said his experience shows there are always opponents and it will be a challenge no matter what.

#10	Public Comment	Agenda Item Objective: Public comment period on PRRIP activities.
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None offered.

#11	GC MEETING REVIEW & WRAP-UP	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss action items, meeting feedback, and upcoming meeting schedule.
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2025 GC Meeting Schedule:

- **2025 Q2 GC Meeting:**
June 17-18, 2025 @ Cheyenne, WY
- **2025 Q3 GC Meeting:**
September 22-23, 2025 @ Kearney, NE
- **2025 ISAC Meeting (joint with 2025 Q3 GC Meeting):**
September 22-24, 2025 @ Kearney, NE
- **GC Virtual Special Session on FY2026 Budget & Work Plan:**
Monday, November 17, 2025
10:00 AM-12:00 PM Central Time *via Teams*
- **2025 Q4 GC Meeting:**
December 9-10, 2025 @ TBD in Colorado

GC Meeting End	3:52 PM Central Time
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Summary of Action Items/Decisions from 2025 Q1 GC Meeting:

- 1) Approved the 2024 Q4 GC Meeting Minutes.
- 2) Approved the 2024 PRRIP Plover and Tern Monitoring Report.
- 3) Approved the Spring 2024 PRRIP Whooping Crane Monitoring Report.
- 4) Approved the 2024 Land Work Report.
- 5) Approved the Tract 2021001 Structure Removal RFB.