



## PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -OR- PROGRAM)

**TO:** Governance Committee  
**FROM:** Jason Farnsworth, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
**DATE:** June 9, 2025

This report provides a high-level summary of current Program activities and priorities with a focus on items of relevance to the GC.<sup>1</sup>

### Organizational Update

- Program public website and intranet update ongoing. Currently designing landing page for Program stakeholders that will 1) allow users to manage their own committee participation and notifications, 2) list upcoming meetings and tasks, and 3) allow for electronic voting and polling.
- The National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration (NCER) will be held April 13-16, 2026 in Omaha, NE at the Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District (where the PRRIP has held past Science Plan Reporting Sessions). Chad Smith is Conference Chair and has organized a panel session with Jason Farnsworth, Amy Ost diek, Jason Mead, Jesse Bradley, and Brock Merril to discuss PRRIP decision-making. Other EDO staff are participating in topical presentation sessions. The agenda will be finalized in September and additional PRRIP involvement and presentations are likely.

### Budget and Procurement Update

- 2025 Q2 (interim, does not include March data) budget summary attached.
- Terminated agreement with Astralis United selected to assist the Program in updating our education and outreach strategy. Awarded to DJ Case – process will be integrated with website refresh already underway.
- GEI selected for grassland monitoring. Contract executed and work will begin soon.
- Cultural resources completed for Meyer Farms buildings. Preparing to advertise for bids to move structures.

### Land Plan Implementation

- Conservation land ownership update completed. Seeking GC direction for next steps in process.
- Negotiated flowage easement terms for groundwater impacts on neighboring property at the Cottonwood Ranch recharge project.
- Land management tasks underway including prescribed fire, noxious weed control, and infrastructure maintenance.
- Need to discuss funding of phragmites control efforts with GC. Potential issues with match to Program funds.

### Water Plan Implementation

<sup>1</sup> GC-Governance Committee, ED-Executive Director, EDO-Executive Director's Office, LAC-Land Advisory Committee, WAC-Water Advisory Committee, TAC-Technical Advisory Committee, ISAC-Independent Science Advisory Committee, FC-Finance Committee, AHR-Associated Habitat Reach.



- EA release for germination suppression ongoing. Dry conditions followed by high local precipitation making it challenging to stay at target.
- LRE Water (in conjunction with EDO and CNPPID) has identified a preferred alignment for an Elwood Reservoir outlet pipeline. CNPPID initiating discussions with landowner.
- Testing of cavitation in the pipeline outlet control valves at Cottonwood Rand recharge project conducted in late May. Currently determining if issues can be addressed through operational rules or if a structural fix is needed.

### **Science Plan Implementation**

- EDO completed draft System-Scale Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Report including data from 2017-2024. Report will be reviewed by TAC in July. Metrics will be utilized to help assess channel conditions in response to June germination suppression flow releases.
- EDO working with TAC on data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of June germination suppression flow releases on maintaining suitable whooping crane roosting habitat.
- EDO implementing a monitoring protocol for assessing J2 Return Channel changes in absence of sediment augmentation (no-aug experiment). Analysis of 2024 LiDAR indicates no incision issues in the J2 Return channel in 2024.
- EDO working with Stantec for reconnaissance-level investigation of passive alternatives to provide long term sustainable means of augmenting sediment.
- EDO working with TAC to perform data analysis to evaluate the relationship between flow and crane stopovers on the Platte as well as compare/contrast stopover behavior on the Platte and other Nebraska river systems.
- UNL final field season of active pallid sturgeon tracking ongoing. EDO working with UNL to revise data analysis methods and expand to include PRRIP prioritized explanatory variables.
- Lower Platte River hydraulic model contractor (HDR) completed hydrodynamic model of the lower Platte to be used in hydraulic/habitat analyses over the next several years.
- Plover and tern management, monitoring and research ongoing including continued predator management and monitoring to document predation on nesting sites.

### **Independent Science and Peer Review**

- Independent peer review of the PRRIP Wet Meadow Hydrology Study is ongoing. The EDO is working with an independent groundwater modeling expert (Dr. Calvin Miller) to finalize edits to the study related to comments from one peer reviewer regarding groundwater modeling. This issue was discussed with the TAC in January and the TAC agreed to have the EDO make final changes to the study and present the revised document and all related peer review materials to the GC for final approval. The EDO expects this discussion will occur during the 2025 Q3 GC Meeting.
- ISAC – The ISAC is now working on 2025 Q2 tasks as approved by the GC in March, with two virtual summer meetings scheduled to discuss the whooping crane (WC) roost site selection data analysis and PRRIP pallid sturgeon issues related on ongoing research on the lower Platte River.