

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)****Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting June 2024 (Q2) – Scottsbluff, NE***Tuesday, June 11 to Wednesday, June 12, 2024*

Fliesbach Retreat Center (Trails West YMCA Camp) – 1918 S. Beltline Highway W.

Drue DeBerry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – 2024 GC Chair

Jason Farnsworth, PRRIP Executive Director (ED) – Moderator

PRRIP Governance Committee (GC) Meeting Attendees Day #1 – Tuesday, June 11, 2024		
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) – <i>2024 GC Chair</i>	Member
Mark Porath	USFWS	Alternate
Matt Rabbe	USFWS	Alternate
State of Wyoming		
Jason Mead	Wyoming Water Development Office	Member
State of Colorado		
Amy Ostdiek	Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)	Member
Emily Zmak	CWCB	Alternate
Kara Scheel	CWCB	Alternate
State of Nebraska		
Tom Riley	Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	Member
Jennifer Schellpeper	DNR	Alternate
Upper Platte Water Users		
Dennis Strauch	Pathfinder Irrigation District	Member
Bob Mehling	Goshen Irrigation District	Alternate
Owen Williams	Upper Platte Water Users Association	Alternate
Colorado Water Users		
Kyle Whitaker	Northern Water	Member
Deb Freeman	Trout Raley	Alternate
Downstream Water Users		
Devin Brundage	Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID)	Member
Kyle Leibig	Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD)	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 (virtual)	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 (virtual)	
Seth Turner, P.E.	Water Plan Coordinator (virtual)	
Malinda Henry, Ph.D.	Science Plan Coordinator	
Justin Brei, P.E.	Water Resources & Engineering Manager	
Alicia Uribe, B.S.	Executive Office Manager (virtual)	



Patrick Farrell, M.S.	Statistical Ecologist
Libby Casavant, P.E.	Hydraulic Engineer (virtual)
Ed Weschler	Engineer (virtual)
Quinn Lewis, Ph.D.	River Scientist
Other Participants	
Dave Marmorek, M.Sc.	Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) (virtual)
Jesse Bradley	NE DNR
Justin Lavene	NE Attorney General's Office
Mike Drain	CNPPID (virtual)
Caitlin Kingsley	Nebraska DNR
Ryan Kelly	Nebraska DNR
Rich Belt	SPWRAP (virtual)
Dave Zorn	CNPPID
John Shadle	NPPD (virtual)
Jeff Shafer	NPPD (virtual)
Jim Jenniges	NPPD (virtual)
Andy Nicewicz	CO Attorney General's Office
Jack Mesinger	NE DNR (virtual)
Michelle Hubbard	State of WY (virtual)
Aaron Pearse	ISAC (virtual)
David Galat	ISAC (virtual)
Alan Kasprak	ISAC (virtual)
A Boudewyns	State of Wyoming (virtual)

#1	GC Meeting – Welcome & Administrative	Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
-----------	--	--

Introduction – Chair DeBerry called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM Mountain Time. The in-person and virtual groups proceeded with introductions. Walters asked for time on the agenda tomorrow to talk about recent issues with funding for invasive species spraying.

Agenda – No modifications offered.

Minutes:

GC MOTION: Riley moved and Ostdiek seconded to approve the GC Quarterly Meeting_March 2024 (Q1) minutes. **Motion carried.**

#2	PRRIP Advisory Committees	Agenda Item Objective: General update on recent work of PRRIP Advisory Committees.
-----------	----------------------------------	---

Land Advisory Committee (LAC) – Wagner provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met on May 15. Discussion from the Grassland Working Group and PRRA Subcommittee.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC) – Turner provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met on May 7. Discussion about the North Platte chokepoint, the WY Property flow split project, reports on PRRIP leasing, recapture, and recharge projects, spring EA release, CNPPID irrigator lease, and state and federal depletions plans. The next WAC meeting will be August 6 in Ogallala.



Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Rabbe provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC last met on May 7 and 8. Items discussed: spring WC flow release from the EA (highest WC total ever during spring migration), updates to PRRIP WC monitoring protocol, fall 2023 WC monitoring report, wet meadows, sediment augmentation, USGS stage gage recommendation (for GC today), WC riverine roost site channel widening, piping plover management, WC data analysis, and an update on pallid sturgeon data collection.

Finance Committee (FC) – Merrill provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC last met on May 28. The FC approved contract amendments for six ISAC members; approved the RFQ for in-channel disking; discussed surface water agreements.

#3	PRRIP Outreach	Agenda Item Objective: General update on PRRIP outreach activities.
----	----------------	---

Uribe provided an update on the latest PRRIP outreach activities:

PRESENTATIONS

- Pallid Sturgeon Research supported by the PRRIP – **Jenna Ruoss** presented her work with **Chris Pullano, Jonathan Spurgeon, Mark Pegg (UNL) and Kirk Steffensen (NGPC)** at the Missouri River Natural Resources Conference entitled “Investigating environmental cues for pallid sturgeon entry and exit for a Missouri River tributary” on March 11th – 13th 2024, in Nebraska City, NE.
- **Alyx Vogel** attended the 2024 Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Informational Seminar on March 14th, 2024 in Grand Island, NE representing the Program.
- **Libby Casavant, Jason Farnsworth, and Chad Smith** had the following participation at the National Conference Ecosystem Restoration on April 14th – 19th, 2024 in Albuquerque, NM:
 - **Libby Casavant** presented on PRRIP’s sediment augmentation project and analysis.
 - **Chad Smith** developed and moderated a panel session on large-scale aquatic restoration and species recovery programs. **Jason Farnsworth** represented the PRRIP on this panel alongside representatives from the Trinity River Restoration Program, the Glen Canyon Dam Adaptive Management Program, and the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Program.

#4	PRRIP Budget	Agenda Item Objective: FY24 PRRIP budget status, FY24 Procurement Policy, and specific FY24 budget items.
----	--------------	---

PRRIP FY24 Budget – Farnsworth summarized the status of the PRRIP FY24 budget.

PRRIP Indexing – Merrill said indexing and budget numbers generally did not change from 2022 to 2023.

PRRIP FY24 Procurement – Smith summarized the status of several FY24 budget items related to the PRRIP Procurement Policy.

**#5 PRRIP Independent Science****Agenda Item Objective:** Appoint Peer Review Panel.

Smith summarized several items:

- There were seven (7) candidates for the ISAC seat that will be open when David Galat cycles off at the end of September. The ISAC Selection Panel will interview four (4) candidates and should have a recommendation for GC consideration by the end of July.
- The EDO is working to increase the amount of interaction between the ISAC and the Program (especially the GC) and make sure that connection remains meaningful for all parties.
- Smith is working on Peer Review Reports for the Sediment Augmentation Data Synthesis Compilation and the Wet Meadow Hydrology Report. A final report should be in front of the GC in September for the sediment augmentation document.
- Smith talked about the State of the Platte Report (SoPR) and the work being done with the ISAC and TAC to attempt to finalize that document for the September GC meeting.

Dave Marmorek delivered a presentation on behalf of the ISAC summarizing ISAC recommendations and comments on the draft 2024 SoPR. General GC discussion:

- Riley asked if the Program is focused on “do no harm” for pallid sturgeon or “securing defined benefits” for pallid sturgeon. Discussion about the Pallid Sturgeon Policy Frame and the research being supported by the Program on the lower Platte River.
- Freeman said any changes proposed for the Extension Big Questions should be done carefully because those questions were phrased intentionally. Group discussion about how to address this recommendation from the ISAC.
- Scheel asked about what the “thumbs up/down” mean and if that is explained in the SoPR. Group discussion about how best to explain those and their purpose.

MEETING BREAK – 3:45 PM**#6 PRRIP Science Plan****Agenda Item Objective:** Discuss recent Science Plan implementation activities.**Whooping Crane (WC):**

- Henry summarized the Fall 2023 WC Monitoring Report in front of the GC today.
- Brundage and Riley asked why the 2024 Aransas census was not conducted. DeBerry, Porath, and Rabbe said it was due to the monitoring being conducted in a different division and the budget was cut. Brundage asked how much it costs to conduct that monitoring. Rabbe said between \$30,000-\$40,000.
- Henry said at their May meeting the TAC discussed the possibility of partnering with FWS to fund the annual census beginning in 2026.

GC MOTION: *Walters moved and Merrill seconded to approved the Fall 2023 WC Monitoring Report.* **Motion carried.**

- Ideus summarized the results of spring 2024 WC monitoring.
- Riley asked who owns the wetland next to DeBoer. Farnsworth said the Jeffreys. Riley asked how far it is off the river. Ideus said about 2.5 miles south.

Pallid Sturgeon (PS):



- Henry provided a research update from the UNL research team on 2024 activities and results so far.
- Henry discussed an update from the March GC meeting regarding the genetics research being conducted by Ed Heist related to hybridization in the Mississippi River and Missouri River.

#7	PRRIP Science Plan (continued)	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss recent Science Plan implementation activities.
----	--------------------------------	---

Sediment Augmentation – Brei discussed the Passive Sediment Augmentation RFP.

- Brundage asked if this RFP would include looking at the potential for channel incision to move downstream passed the Overton Bridge. Brei said yes.
- Mead asked about the timeframe for this work. Brei said one year from contract award. Mead also asked if not augmenting for five years if that would alter the alternatives and how they are considered. Brei said conditions will not change enough to cause a re-review of alternatives.

GC MOTION: *Mead moved and Merrill seconded to approve the RFP.* **Motion carried.**

Proposal Selection Panel: Shuhai Zheng (Nebraska DNR), Matt Rabbe (USFWS), Kara Scheel (CO), Abraham Kanz (Trust), TBD Wyoming, Justin Brei (EDO).

- Brei updated the GC on work around the No Augmentation Alternative. The EDO has been working with the TAC to developed the framework for a monitoring plan. The EDO is incorporating that feedback into a more details monitoring and analysis plan that will be discussed with the ISAC and TAC in July.
- Brei discussed known data shortages related to being able to fully monitor the No Augmentation Alternative, primarily the lack of a stage gage in the J2 channel.
- To address resolving the stage gage issue, the EDO is requesting GC approval of an adjustment to PRRIP FY24 Budget Line item WPWM-1. This line item would increase from \$42,000 to \$59,500, an addition of \$17,500 for this year’s installation and O&M. Future year budgets will include approximately \$10,000 for annual O&M.

GC MOTION: *Riley moved and Vogt seconded to approve an amendment to the PRRIP FY24 Budget for WPMWM-1: Water Monitoring Activities (J2 Channel Stream Gage) raising the approved budget from \$42,000 to \$59,500.* **Motion carried.**

Wet Meadows:

- Farrell summarized the results and conclusions of the recent collaborative effort to address differences between the WEST analysis and the Ecotope analysis.
- Whitaker asked why and how there are 50 random use locations related to each use location. Farrell explained the purpose of generating random use locations for quantification of available conditions and how the randomly available use locations are generated.
- Riley asked if the difference is the constraint of available locations around use locations used in the WEST report and the unconstrained available use locations used in the Ecotope analysis. Farrell agreed.
- Farnsworth asked why this changes the answer. Farrell said if your use locations are not evenly distributed, random distribution of available locations throughout the AHR won’t get the kind of contrast you are looking for. WC diurnal use locations are not evenly distributed across the



AHR, they tend to be closer to the river. Comparing use locations closer to the river to available locations distributed anywhere throughout the AHR tends to increase the signal for use of wetter locations relative to their availability,

- Farnsworth summarized recent discussions at the TAC relative to what to do now with wet meadows in the Program, and in the Grassland Working Group about management implications for PRRIP grasslands.
- Farnsworth asked the GC to consider whether there is a need to publish this research for consideration during NEPA process.

GC Meeting End – Day #1	5:45 PM
GC Group Dinner @ Fliesbach Retreat Center	6:30 PM

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)****Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting June 2024 (Q2) – Scottsbluff, NE***Tuesday, June 11 to Wednesday, June 12, 2024*

Fliesbach Retreat Center (Trails West YMCA Camp) – 1918 S. Beltline Highway W.

Drue DeBerry, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – 2024 GC Chair

Jason Farnsworth, PRRIP Executive Director (ED) – Moderator

PRRIP Governance Committee (GC) Meeting Attendees Day #2 – Wednesday, June 12, 2024		
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) – 2024 Chair	Member
Mark Porath	USFWS	Alternate
Matt Rabbe	USFWS	Alternate
State of Wyoming		
Jason Mead	Wyoming Water Development Office	Member
State of Colorado		
Amy Ostdiek	Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB)	Member
Emily Zmak	CWCB	Alternate
Kara Scheel	CWCB	Alternate
State of Nebraska		
Tom Riley	Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	Member
Jennifer Schellpeper	DNR	Alternate
Upper Platte Water Users		
Dennis Strauch	Pathfinder Irrigation District	Member
Bob Mehling	Goshen Irrigation District	Alternate
Owen Williams	Upper Platte Water Users Association	Alternate
Colorado Water Users		
Kyle Whitaker	Northern Water	Member
Deb Freeman	Trout Raley	Alternate
Downstream Water Users		
Devin Brundage	Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID)	Member
Kyle Leibig	Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD)	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 (virtual)	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 (virtual)	



Seth Turner, P.E.	Water Plan Coordinator (virtual)
Malinda Henry, Ph.D.	Science Plan Coordinator (virtual)
Justin Brei, P.E.	Water Resources & Engineering Manger
Patrick Farrell, M.S.	Statistical Ecologist
Alicia Uribe	Executive Office Manager (virtual)
Other Participants	
Michelle Hubbard	State of Wyoming (virtual)
Caitlin Kingsley	Nebraska DNR
Ryan Kelly	Nebraska DNR
Dave Zorn	CNPPID
Jeff Shafer	NPPD (virtual)
George Oamek	EDO Special Advisor (virtual)
Cory Steinke	CNPPID (virtual)
Jason Marks	Denver Water (virtual)
Mike Drain	CNPPID (virtual)
Rich Belt	SPWRAP (virtual)
John Shadle	NPPD (virtual)

#8	GC Meeting – Welcome & Administrative	Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
-----------	--	--

Introduction – Chair DeBerry called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM Mountain Time. The in-person and virtual groups proceeded with introductions.

Agenda Modifications – none offered.

#9	PRRIP Water Plan	Agenda Item Objective: Update on recent Water Plan implementation activities.
-----------	-------------------------	--

Water Plan Updates – Turner delivered a presentation providing updates on several Water Plan items:

- Germination Suppression EA Release
- CNPPID Irrigator Lease program and related Irrigator Workshop
- Mosier asked if there are other leasing programs throughout the Platte River basin that we can compare to. Oamek said there is some irrigator to irrigator trading going on that is reported at the NRD level, but we don't have any data on that.
- Mead asked about reverse auctions. Oamek said the Program would say their goal is to get a certain amount of acres out of production and get the corresponding water and would ask producers to submit sealed bids on how much they would make available at what price. Mead asked if you take individual bids or pay everyone the highest bid. Oamek said you would pay everyone the highest bid. Oamek said the irrigators that he talked to about this understood it and seemed to be amenable to the idea. Vogt said it works well for a few years but then people realize they need to start putting in higher bids.

Water Leasing Agreements – Turner summarized the NPPD and CPNRD water leasing agreements. Ostdiek said Colorado would like more time to review these agreements. Vogt said there is a lot of economic growth in their District and there is a big push to sell water to those interests instead of the Program. Whitaker said that is why he is concerned about the certainty of



this water past 2032 and that the Program might be outbid or lose out on this water at that time. Whitaker asked if there is an escalator or something we could build into the agreements to provide more certainty for the water over the long term. Vogt said that might be helpful to consider. Farnsworth said we have been in a couple year holding pattern while trying to think about what is going to happen in the long term, if we get more than 2-3 years down the road without those issues being worked out that would be a major problem. In his mind these agreements are best over the next 2-3 year period as kind of a stopgap but we need some kind of firm commitment on paper for this water after that time period. We need to have a broader agreement that everyone agrees on that would address bigger items for a longer time period.

Merrill asked if Vogt would consider a lump sum payment up front. Vogt said he couldn't answer that right now, he would need to talk to the irrigation districts and his board. Whitaker asked if there is time sensitivity to this or if it can wait until the September GC meeting. Vogt said this is the annual income for these producers so it would be nice to know now. Whitaker said it would be helpful to have all of this explained to the GC before making a final decision. Brundage said it might work to have another one year agreement and then work out all these other issues. Farnsworth said we can make the changes in the agreement to move them back to a one year agreement for 2024.

Whitaker said we should think about language that could be added that would help deal with the time period after 2032 (end of the Extension). Merrill said we could look at language that was added to the J2 reservoir agreement that might be bridge language for these agreements.

Water Milestone Summary – Turner provided a status report noting progress toward meeting the Water Milestone is at the same place it was in March 2024.

State Depletions Plan:

- **Colorado** – Scheel delivered a presentation on the Colorado Depletions Plan.
- **Wyoming** – Hubbard delivered a presentation on the Wyoming Depletions Plan.
- **Nebraska** – Schellpeper delivered a presentation on the Nebraska Depletions Plan. Mosier asked what climate data is used by Nebraska. Schellpeper said it is the PRISM dataset. Whitaker asked about the state protected flows. Schellpeper said it is a term for Nebraska surface water rights. Whitaker asked about the Upper Platte DCP (drought contingency plan). Schellpeper said it is a work in progress, Kelly said it is being done through a Water Smart Grant.

Federal Depletions Plan – Rabbe delivered a presentation on consultations from the federal side, both cumulatively and specifically for 2023.

MEETING BREAK

#10	PRRIP Land Plan	Agenda Item Objective: Update on recent Land Plan implementation activities.
-----	-----------------	--

Land Milestone Summary – Tunnell presented an update on progress toward meeting the Land Milestone.



Property Reclassification – Tunnel summarized the status of a Water Acquisition Tract and potential reclassification of that tract to habitat acres.

GC MOTION: *Strauch moved and Merrill seconded to approve transfer of Tract W201601 to Complex habitat.* **Motion carried.**

Platte River Recreation Access (PRRA) Subcommittee – Rabbe summarized recent discussions among the subcommittee related to a review of the program from 2023.

Phragmites Spraying – Walters summarized the status of funding for annual river-wide phragmites spraying that includes the PRRIP Associated Habitat Reach (AHR). There is an endowment that provides some funding now but an important grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust cannot be renewed as well as the loss of some Nebraska Department of Agriculture funding. So, the group is about \$250,000 short for the next round of spraying. Walters is asking the PRRIP to increase its contribution to \$300,000 to help cover spraying this fall and in spring 2025. Riley said he heard from the Department of Agriculture that they are working hard to find other funding sources to help next year.

GC MOTION: *Brundage moved and Riley seconded to increase PRRIP FY24 Budget Line Item WP-1(b) from \$200,000 to \$300,000.* **Motion carried.**

#11	Public Comment	Agenda Item Objective: Public comment period on PRRIP activities.
------------	-----------------------	--

None offered.

#12	GC Executive Session	Agenda Item Objective: GC member discussion of sensitive land, water, and policy items.
------------	-----------------------------	--

GC MOTION: *Merrill moved and Whitaker seconded to enter Executive Session.* **Motion carried,** entered Executive Session at 10:30 AM Mountain Time,

GC MOTION: *Merrill moved and Ostdiek seconded to exit Executive Session.* **Motion carried,** exited Executive Session at 10:40 AM Mountain Time.

#13	GC Executive Session Motions	Agenda Item Objective: GC consideration of motions discussed during Executive Session.
------------	-------------------------------------	---

None offered.

#14	GC Meeting Review & Wrap-Up	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss action items, meeting feedback, and upcoming meeting schedule.
------------	--	--

Farnsworth discussed looking into software tools to help manage GC (and other Advisory Committee) documents, agendas, and other items. Rabbe, Merrill, and Scheel mentioned that the TAC is currently being asked to keep track of multiple documents for review and feedback, motions to recommend products and RFPs, as well as work group meeting schedules. Rabbe said for those serving on multiple committees, a one-stop shop might be helpful. Merrill said we could probably trial an option for a year and see how it goes. Riley said we should be clear about what problem we are trying to solve and how any tool will help with that. Mehling asked about security, Merrill asked about whether the options being considered are based in the U.S.. Farnsworth said the companies



he has talked to are based in the U.S. and are highly secure because of the nature of the boards and the work they do. Farnsworth said he would keep working with the PRRIP database contractor to try to integrate something with the current PRRIP website structure, and if that doesn't work see what could be to merge something together. DeBerry and Riley said to work with the committees to identify problems and key performance measures to see what is really needed and what would work best. Strauch said a demo at the September meeting would be helpful, Farnsworth agreed.

2024 GC Meeting Schedule:

- **2024 Summer ISAC Meeting:**
July 16-18, 2024 @ Kearney, NE
- **September 2024 GC Quarterly Meeting:**
September 10-11, 2024 @ *Alda, NE* (@ The Crane Trust; EDO working with Crane Trust on logistics for meeting and hotel rooms)
- **GC Virtual Special Session – FY25 Budget & Work Plan:**
Wednesday, November 13, 2024
10:00 AM-12:00 PM Central Time *via Teams*
- **December 2024 GC Quarterly Meeting:**
December 3-4, 2024 @ *Loveland, CO*

GC Meeting End – Day #2

10:59 AM

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from June 2024 (Q2) GC Quarterly Meeting:

- 1) Approved the GC Quarterly Meeting_March 2024 (Q1) minutes.
- 2) Approved the Fall 2023 WC Monitoring Report.
- 3) Approved the Passive Sediment Augmentation RFP.
- 4) Approved an amendment to the PRRIP FY24 Budget for WPMWM-1: Water Monitoring Activities (J2 Channel Stream Gage) raising the approved budget from \$42,000 to \$59,500
- 5) Approved the transfer of Tract W201601 to Complex habitat.
- 6) Approved an increase in PRRIP FY24 Budget Line Item WP-1(b) from \$200,000 to \$300,000.