



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

**TO:** Governance Committee  
**FROM:** Jason Farnsworth, Executive Director  
**SUBJECT:** Director's Report  
**DATE:** September 3, 2024

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

- The Program's website contractor (DJ Case) has initiated a public website and intranet update that will include a refresh of design, content and organization. This includes incorporating many of the user workflow/organization improvements we discussed at the end of the June GC. Work will be completed under the existing 2024 budget.

### Budget and Procurement Update

- Quarterly budget summary attached.
- *The annual Federal Single Audit of Nebraska Community Foundation's (NCF's) Program financial statements and EDO compliance with procurement policy took place on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Audit was clean – no findings.*
- Panel selected Stantec Consulting Services Inc. to conduct the reconnaissance level investigation of methods to passively augment sediment downstream of the J2 Return.

### Land Plan Implementation

- EDO drafted habitat restoration and management plans for newly acquired Broadfoot South off-channel sand and water (OCSW) site (2024001) and the Lindstrum property (W201601) that was reclassified by the GC in June. The plans have been reviewed by the LAC. They will be reviewed by the TAC and brought to the GC for approval in December.
- Agricultural leasing winding down for the year. In 2024, the Program executed leases on 3,655 acres of pasture, 626 crop ground, and 315 hay ground. Total 2024 income will be \$204,000 split almost evenly between crop and grazing/hay leases. The Program paid \$175,000 in property taxes this year.
- The recreation access program administered by Nebraska Game and Parks Commission ([www.platteaccess.org](http://www.platteaccess.org)) is taking 2024-2025 hunting season reservations. Access is provided on 6,300 acres across seventeen areas stretching from Overton to Grand Island.
- Platte Valley Weed Management Area (PVWMA) aerially applied herbicide to 300 acres of phragmites in the Program's AHR this summer. A second aerial control campaign will occur in the fall after irrigation diversions conclude.
- *The Program has been effectively unable to implement prescribed fire since 2020. The EDO is working with districts, agencies and conservation organizations to develop a collaborative contracting solution for 2025. Proposed changes will be brought before committees as part of 2025 budgeting process.*

<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.



- The TAC is developing new guidance for management of Program wet meadows and grasslands. This guidance is expected to clarify the hierarchy of management objectives and associated activities. We expect the guidance to come before the GC for consideration in December. If approved, the Grassland Working Group will spend 2025 revising management plans and leases for implementation in 2026.

### Water Plan Implementation

- Two releases have been made from the Lake McConaughy Environmental Account (EA) in 2024. A total of 35,700 AF were released during the spring whooping crane migration and 78,000 AF were released during a May – June germination suppression flow that successfully maintained the flow target of at least 1,500 cfs for 29 days.
- *EA volume is currently ~ 45,000 AF. Fall leasing, Pathfinder EA, and Lake McConaughy storable natural inflows are expected to increase volume to ~ 130,000 AF by March of 2025.*
- The reconnaissance-level analysis (LRE Water) of alternatives to increase the controllability of recharge water is substantially complete. Construction of an outlet from Elwood Reservoir to Plum Creek appears to be the best performing alternative. The report will be reviewed by the WAC this fall and provided to the GC in December.
- The analysis of alternative to increase flow capacity at the North Platte Choke Point (Anderson Consulting Engineers) is nearing completion. Results will be presented to the WAC this fall and GC in December.
- Program's special advisor on economics of water (Dr. George Oamek) has completed an analysis of economics and alternatives for the CNPPID irrigator lease. Results will be presented at the September GC for action on continuing and/or modifying the leasing program in 2025 and beyond.
- Electrical water control equipment at the Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge project was damaged during summer storms and the project is non-functional. First opinion involved twenty-week lead time for replacement valve actuator. EDO and design engineers exploring alternatives.
- United States Geological Survey (USGS) installed a stream gage on J2 Return Channel at Program's Plum Creek Complex. Flow data will be used in future sediment analyses.

### Science Plan Implementation

- *Plover and tern nesting season concluded in August. EDO monitored 15 OCSW nesting sites. Ten of those sites had nests and were monitored twice a week. EDO also surveyed the 90-mile reach by airboat 7 times. No nesting was observed on the river this year. A total of 63 plover nests (highest ever observed) produced 54 fledges this year (comparable to 2022 and 2023). High nest losses early in the year due to weather and predation but many renests were successful.*
- EDO finalizing whooping crane roost site selection technical report. Primary predictors of roost location include width of channel unobstructed by dense vegetation, distance to nearest forest, and distance to disturbance. Working with TAC to evaluate/refine habitat suitability and management criteria based on analysis results.
- Whooping crane telemetry tracking partnership provided the dataset that includes all stopovers and flyovers in Nebraska as well as the associated flight paths from one day prior through one day following the stop or flyover. EDO is processing and summarizing data for TAC whooping crane workgroup. This dataset will be used 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.

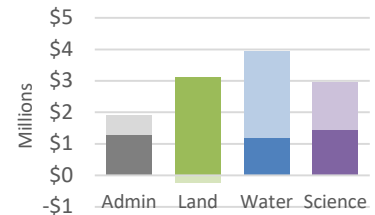
- UNL continuing to capture and monitor pallid sturgeon use and spawning in the lower Platte. In the spring of 2024 two pallids were detected upstream past the Loup, entering the central Platte. Likely two females spawned in the lower Platte in the spring of 2024. One near the Loup River confluence and one near the Missouri River confluence. EDO working with hydraulic model contractor (HDR) to finalize two-dimensional hydrodynamic model of the lower Platte to be used hydraulic/habitat analyses over the next several years.
- Phragmites field monitoring contractor (GEI Consultants) conducting monthly monitoring at three study sites.
- EDO has drafted monitoring protocol for assessing J2 Return Channel changes in absence of sediment augmentation (no-aug experiment). TAC will finalize this fall and protocol will be brought before the GC for approval in December. Periodic field monitoring has begun (provisionally) pending protocol approval.
- EDO working with Stantec to finalize scope of work for reconnaissance-level investigation of passive alternatives to provide long term sustainable means of augmenting sediment.
- EDO working on refinements to system-scale geomorphology and vegetation monitoring protocols, which will be used, in part, to assess performance of germination suppression flow releases. Currently refining methods for supervised classification of vegetation from remote sensing as well as refining methods for assessing geomorphic (sediment) change based on sediment augmentation peer reviews (see below).

### Independent Science and Peer Review

- The Program hosted the Summer 2024 ISAC Meeting in Kearney, NE on July 16 – 18. ISAC members discussed the draft 2024 State of the Platte Report (SoPR), Extension Big Questions, how to possibly re-frame Program science priorities during the remainder of the Extension, and specific Program science topics including sediment augmentation and whooping crane roost site selection. The meeting included a field visit to several Program properties and implementation sites. The ISAC will be providing written responses to the Program by August 30 and will discuss those responses in a virtual meeting (in Teams) for all interested Program parties on Wednesday, September 4 at 12:00 PM Central Time.
- *The ISAC Selection Panel interviewed four candidates for the open ISAC seat (David Galat is rotating off the ISAC at the end of September) and recommends the GC appoint [Dr. Gary Lamberti](#) of the University of Notre Dame.*
- Initial independent peer review of full-scale sediment augmentation experiment has been completed. Peer reviewers included [Dr. James Brasington](#), [Dr. Mark Smith](#), and [Dr. Richard Williams](#). Reviews were generally positive with all reviewers recommending acceptance with revisions. The EDO is currently addressing comments and making revisions. These edits will be discussed with the TAC this fall and presented to peer reviewers. We expect results to be provided to the GC in December.
- The initial peer review of wet meadows hydrologic analyses has been completed. Peer reviewers included [Greg Kamman](#), [Dr. Steven Loheide](#), and [Dr. Mark Rains](#). Reviews were generally positive with all reviewers recommending acceptance with revisions. EDO has addressed peer review comments and revised the report accordingly. Next steps on hold pending TAC discussion.

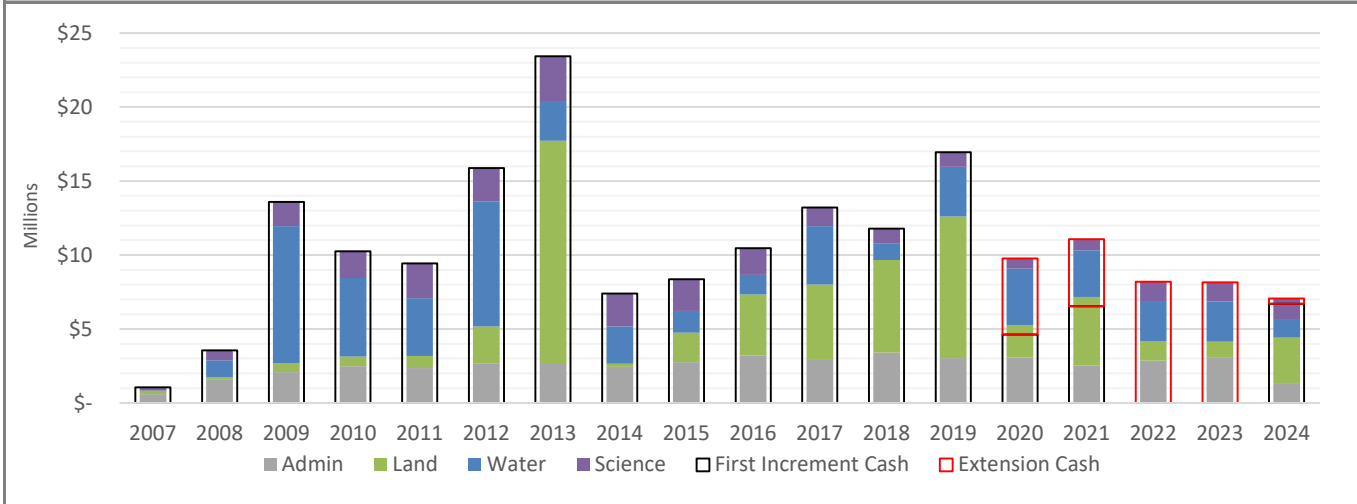
## January - August 2024

	Budget	Expenditures	Remain
Admin	\$ 1,913,700	\$ 1,291,583	\$ 622,117
Land	\$ 2,885,200	\$ 3,125,453	\$ (240,253)
Water	\$ 3,946,300	\$ 1,186,403	\$ 2,759,897
Science	\$ 2,945,700	\$ 1,449,894	\$ 1,495,806
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 11,690,900</b>	<b>\$ 7,053,332</b>	<b>\$ 4,637,568</b>

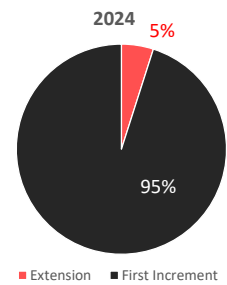


ID - Description	% Spend	Budget	ID - Description	% Spend	Budget
ED-1: Program Staff	61%	\$3,236,000	WPRT-3: Broad-Scale Rech.	2%	\$208,000
ED-2: Legal Services	9%	\$47,100	WPRT-4: Recapture Network	57%	\$300,000
ED-3: Public Outreach	40%	\$48,500	WPST-1: Lake Mac Leases	0%	\$1,648,000
GFC-1: Financial Services	28%	\$257,500	WPST-2: US Storage Leases	100%	\$624,000
GFC-2: Liability Insurance	91%	\$93,800	WPIR-1: Irrigator Leases	37%	\$310,000
PD-8: Website & Database	80%	\$77,000	WPLW-1: Water Land O&M	0%	\$21,000
CTE-1: Committee Expense	126%	\$7,300	WPWM-1: Monitoring	46%	\$59,500
WP-1(b): Phragmites Control	100%	\$300,000	WPMT-1: Management Tools	0%	\$0
LP-2-P: Predator Trapping	44%	\$108,400	WPSA-1: Water Advisors	71%	\$20,000
LP-2: Habitat Management	53%	\$336,900	G-1: Remote Sensing	39%	\$305,200
PD-22: Sediment Aug.	1%	\$500,000	TP-1: T&P Monitoring	245%	\$4,600
PD-15: Env. Permitting	4%	\$50,000	WC-1: WC Monitoring	56%	\$98,500
LP-3: Land Acquis. & Fees	265%	\$853,000	PS-1: Pallid Monitoring	60%	\$511,700
LP-4: Land O&M	29%	\$358,000	G-5: Geomorph Monitoring	30%	\$258,900
LP-6: Land Advisors	56%	\$25,000	IMRP-3: AM Advisors	0%	\$120,000
LP-7: Public Access Program	100%	\$40,000	ISAC-1: ISAC Expenses	42%	\$240,000
WPCP-1: Choke Point	63%	\$300,000	PD-3: Peer Review & Pubs	48%	\$93,000
WPRT-1: Canal Recharge	63%	\$185,000	PD-11: AMP Workshops	37%	\$45,000
WPRT-2: Elwood Recharge	0%	\$0	TOTAL	60%	\$11,690,900
				> 5% over budget	

[illegible]

**EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY AND FUNDING TYPE THROUGH TIME****2024 EXPENDITURES BY FUNDING TYPE AND SIGNATORY**

	Extension		First Increment		Total	
	Expenditure	%	Expenditure	%	Expenditure	%
Colorado	\$ 81,572	23.49%	\$ 859,718	12.82%	\$ 941,290	13.35%
DOI	\$ 255,550	73.59%	\$ 5,631,087	83.97%	\$ 5,886,637	83.46%
Wyoming	\$ 10,140	2.92%	\$ 215,265	3.21%	\$ 225,405	3.20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 347,261</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$ 6,706,071</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>\$ 7,053,332</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



Currently expending

**First Increment Funds**

Remaining expenditure before reverting to First Increment Carryover Funds:

\$0

**EXTENSION EXPENDITURES BY FUNDING TYPE AND SIGNATORY****Extension Funding**

	Indexed Cash Ceiling <sup>1</sup>	Expended	Remaining	Percent Remaining
Colorado	\$ 30,347,146	\$ 6,191,590	\$ 24,155,556	<b>80%</b>
DOI	\$ 95,072,220	\$ 19,400,041	\$ 75,672,179	
Wyoming	\$ 3,772,400	\$ 769,471	\$ 3,002,929	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 129,191,765</b>	<b>\$ 26,361,102</b>	<b>\$ 102,830,663</b>	

<sup>1</sup>Indexing date - October 2023**First Increment Carryover Funding**

	Final Cash Ceiling	Expended	Remaining	Percent Remaining
Colorado	\$ 8,015,862	\$ 2,292,021	\$ 5,723,841	<b>71%</b>
DOI	\$ 52,503,273	\$ 15,011,719	\$ 37,491,554	
Wyoming	\$ 2,007,092	\$ 573,835	\$ 1,433,257	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 62,526,227</b>	<b>\$ 17,877,576</b>	<b>\$ 44,648,651</b>	

	Total Cash Ceiling	Total Expended	Total Remaining	Percent Remaining
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 191,717,992</b>	<b>\$ 44,238,678</b>	<b>\$ 147,479,315</b>	<b>77%</b>