



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
In Person PRRIP Conference Room & Teams Conference Call
February 22, 2023**

Meeting Participants

Land Advisory Committee (LAC)

State of Wyoming

Jay Smith – Member, Wyoming State Engineer’s Office
Michelle Gess – Alternate, Wyoming State Engineer’s Office (online)

State of Colorado

Kara Scheel – Member, State of Colorado (online)

State of Nebraska

Ted LaGrange – Member, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission (online)
Jean Eichhorst – Alternate, Nebraska DNR (online)
Katlin Kingsley – Alternate, Nebraska DNR (online)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Matt Rabbe – Member, USFWS

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR)

Brock Merrill – Member, USBOR (online)

Power Districts

Dave Zorn – Member (Chair), Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
John Shadle – Member, Nebraska Public Power District (online)
James Jenniges – Alternate, Nebraska Public Power District (online)

Environmental Entities

Cody Wagner – Member (Vice-Chair), Audubon Rowe Sanctuary (online)
Tim Smith – Member, Crane Trust (online)

Local Nebraska Rep. – Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD)

Lyndon Vogt – Member, CPNRD (online)

Local Nebraska Rep. – Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (TBNRD)

John Thorburn – Member, TBNRD (online)

Local Nebraska Rep. – Joint CPNRD/TBNRD

None

**Executive Director's Office (EDO)**

Tim Tunnell
Jason Farnsworth

Other Participants

Joshua Wiese – Crane Trust (online)
Melissa Mosier – Audubon (online)

Welcome and Administrative

Chairman Zorn called the meeting to order at 10:00 am Central Time. Tunnell recognized members who were attending in-person at the PRRIP conference room and acknowledge members attending virtually. Zorn asked for agenda modifications. None were offered. Zorn asked for the LAC's recommendation on the minutes of the October 19, 2022, LAC meeting. Shadle made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 19, 2022, LAC meeting. Motion seconded by J. Smith and passed unanimously.

General Update and Other Committee Coordination

Farnsworth updated LAC on the activities of the TAC. Met in mid-January. Approved whooping crane and tern/ plover reports. Talked about external science and metrics for on and off channel roost site selection for whooping cranes. Farnsworth provided GC update. Land relevant actives for March GC will be reviewing Land Facility recommendation & Meyer Estate Management Plan. Closed on the Jenson tract at North Platte as a water property as of Feb. 10. Farnsworth also updated the LAC on the activities of the WAC. The two main priorities for this year are to focus on North Platte choke point and \$11 million from J2 fund to prefund ½ the available space in Elwood reservoir and partially pay for seepage fix throughout the extension. RFP to look at large scale recapture in Phelps and BSR. Tunnell reviewed the Land Milestone Summary and pointed out total of 1,316.5 acres have been acquired for the 1,500-acre goal for the Extension with 183.5 acres remaining. Need to add the Jenson tract (~100 ac) to the water summary page. Farnsworth mentioned the need at some point to talk about reclassifying water tracts between Elm creek and Odessa as habitat land or as noncomplex OCSW area first increment. There is some nesting habitat on the east side. Plan is to continue to mine through extension but possibly a 1031 exchange with him to continue pumping on the Lindstrom tract.

2022 Land Work Report Overview

Tunnell gave an overview of 2022 Land Work Report related budget line items and discussion of expenditures for each budget line item. Zorn asked for the LAC's recommendation on the 2022 Land Work Report. Zorn asked why noxious weed control was higher than budget. Tunnell answered it was a combination of herbicide costs and presence of weeds. Smith asked about attorney fees in LP-3. Farnsworth noted that we had several agreements to review, Babb lease at Chapman, legal issue related to one property associated with the Jenson acquisition, and the 1-acre trade with Izaak Walton League next to Meyer Estate. Tunnell also provided an update on the Rx Fire and Chemical application RFP's. Proposals are due February 24. There was only 1 contractor attend the Rx fire pre-bid meeting and there were 4 contractors attend the chemical application pre-bid. Contracts will be for 3 years. Thorburn asked about timing of noxious weed management and pointed out criticism of timing of control of musk thistle in the grassland vegetation survey report and asked if the criticism is valid and if the contractor will be considered for this year's work. Tunnell answered that the contractor is expected to bid on this year's work and attended the pre-bid meeting. Tunnell answered that the criticism is partly valid and reiterated that the contractor bid on the whole project area, and this was one of the reasons for splitting up complexes this year. Tunnell also pointed out that as far as timing of control, and the approach of having contractors focus on individual complexes will allow them to use their judgement on timing of control based on growth stage of weeds. This will allow them to maximize control of musk thistles that are at various stages of growth at each complex which provides challenges for control



across the entire AHR. Thorburn made a motion to approve the 2022 Land Work Report. Motion seconded by Scheel and passed unanimously.

2022 PRRIP Grassland Vegetation Assessment Report

Tunnell introduced the grassland vegetation survey report and provided more information regarding the criticism regarding musk thistle spraying. Tunnell reported that Prairie legacy reported to him that the contractor was being excessive in spraying, in their opinion. Tunnell went to site but did not see evidence of excessive spraying in the area mentioned but did contact the contractor and report the criticism and that it was not acceptable. The plan is to have both TAC and LAC members look at the vegetation report. Tunnell noted that no grasslands have been burned since the last monitoring effort & last year's rainfall was half of normal which will influence vegetation cover and composition. Zorn noted that there was quite a bit of discussion last year with the GC on doing this survey work conducted. It was decided that it was good to do the survey and that we had several new properties that would benefit from a baseline vegetation survey. Zorn discussed the need for more discussion and involvement from committee members in how we incorporate this information into our management actions. Shadle asked if we were receiving comments on the document. Tunnell said that the report is final, but we are asking for input for management based on the results of the survey. Rabbe mentioned that past mgmt. objectives have been to create short structure for crane habitat and that timing of management actions have not been considered. He suggests that TAC needs to look at some properties that may need to be managed differently and use this information to manage for pollinators. Tunnell noted that one of the reasons for starting this survey effort was to track the effects of early spring burning for whooping crane use and prior to MBTA time period measure how that would affect cool season dominated grasslands. Tunnell also noted and reminded the group that a lot of the grasslands that were purchased were already low diversity with a high cool season grass component when purchased. The likelihood of being able to enhance diversity if its not in the seed bank is to purchase native forb seed and put it out there, which brings question of commercial seed vs. local ecotype seed. Smith pointed out that although he does not speak for his GC rep., he believes enhancing diversity does not fit within the scope of the Program. Farnsworth stated this has been an issue with the Program from day one and mentioned that the Framework document could be where we address these issues holistically. Tunnell noted that comments regarding the report can be accepted until April 1 and noted that the report will be provided and discussed at the TAC if agenda allows.

Restoration & Management Framework for PRRIP Habitat Complexes

Tunnell introduced the document and explained the background of the document. This document was put together towards the end of the first increment when most of the early tract and complex management plans were expiring. Rather than updating every management plan, this document was put together back in 2018 and that this would be a good time to look at and update this document. The document was put together as a "living document" and can/should be updated as new things are learned. Update target species habitat criteria, grassland management and other species of concern habitat portions.

Rabbe updated the group that the NLEB will be up-listed to endangered on March 31. The programmatic consultation will go away. He suspects that implications for the Program will be tree clearing restrictions which will be longer (window is much shorter and there may be size restrictions). Suppose to be a determination key to walk through things to get to "not likely to adversely affect" determination. He expects that there may be a period from March 31, 2023, to March 31, 2024, where activities covered by the 4D rule could be covered by a programmatic consultation such if we were doing a project during interim period it could be done. Need to think about existing lands and any tree clearing that may be considered in the next 1-10 years and if there is a need to move into that window.



He also noted that from the science he has seen there have been very few records of the NLEB along the Platte as we are at the western extent of their range and would like for the Program to help document that there are no NLEB in the AHR. Tunnell pointed out that we are sitting good with tree clearing at this point. All projects that have been planned are complete but if science changes and tells us that we need to do more, restrictions resulting from this listing will need to be followed. Farnsworth noted that this needs to be addressed with the GC and at a minimum he suspects that the Program should invest in doing baseline monitoring. A working group from both committees to work on Framework document revisions was established. Volunteers from the LAC: LaGrange, Smith or Gess from WY, Josh Weise & Cody Wagner. Will solicit more members from the TAC when a meeting is called for the working group.

LAC Function/ Responsibilities for Extension

Zorn gave background of the historical function of LAC as being primarily to evaluate the habitat potential for lands that were offered to the Program for purchase and to create management plans. As the land acquisition goal is nearing completion it is a good time to reevaluate the role and responsibilities of the LAC. Seeking input from the group for remainder of extension of what they envision the role & function of the LAC might be. Farnsworth noted that he does not expect to shift away from the original intent of the LAC in the Program document but how does the group want to use this time. We want to use time efficiently and maybe having 2 meetings a year instead of 4 could be considered. Tunnell mentioned that the EDO is open to having LAC members give us topics to discuss or other members could give presentation of varying subjects. LaGrange pointed out that we are shifting to more of a review on management actions and might be advantageous to combine TAC & LAC representatives. Rabbe discussed the need to start thinking about our long-term vision for properties and how other conservation lands fit in with Program properties and at some point, provided the GC with guidance for post extension decision. Farnsworth noted that this would be good. Shadle and Thoburn noted that the LAC should continue to serve as sounding board for “Good Neighbor Policy.” LaGrange agreed. Farnsworth asked how to get more participation from local landowners on the committee. Is it important to have landowner representatives from the public or should we add other folks from the public that could contribute in other ways? Shadle said that if you have a local person in the committees it lends to credibility. Farnsworth will meet with Vogt to discuss. Zorn suggests that this group have more input into management decisions tied to the TAC and science and how this intertwine and have active committee participation in land management decisions. Zorn asked for any future agenda topics to be sent to him and Tunnell.

Executive Session

- Rabbe made a motion to go into Executive Session at 11:19 am.
- Zorn asked for motion to come out of Executive Session. Smith made the motion. Motion approved. Back in regular session at 11:44

Public Forum

Chairman Zorn asked for public comments, none were offered.

Spring Meeting

The next LAC meeting is planned for May 17, 2023. Rabbe will present about the PRRA. A tour of the Programs’ Plum Creek Complex will be planned in addition to the meeting. Details will be provided prior to the meeting. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Zorn at 11:45 a.m. CDT.