

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)****Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting – Kearney, NE**

Executive Director's Office (EDO) Conference Center

Tuesday, March 7 & Wednesday, March 8, 2023

Tom Riley, State of Nebraska – 2023 GC Chair

Jason Farnsworth, PRRIP Executive Director (ED) – Moderator

PRRIP Governance Committee (GC) Meeting Attendees Day #1 – Tuesday, March 7, 2023		
Name	Affiliation	Member or Alternate
Department of the Interior		
Brock Merrill	Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)	Member
Steve Small	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – 2023 Vice Chair	Member
Mark Porath	USFWS	Alternate
State of Wyoming		
Brandon Gebhart	Wyoming State Engineer	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) – 2023 Chair	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
Jason Marks	Denver Water	Alternate
Downstream Water Users		
Devin Brundage	Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID)	Member
Kent Miller	Twin Platte Natural Resources District (TPNRD)	Member
John Shadle	Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD)	Member
Brandi Flyr	Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD)	Alternate
Environmental Entities		
Rich Walters	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	Member
Melissa Mosier	Audubon Great Plains	Alternate
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.	Engineering/Colorado Coordinator
Jason Bruggeman, Ph.D.	Species Monitoring Coordinator
Alicia Uribe	Executive Office Manager
Patrick Farrell, M.S.	Statistical Ecologist
Mallory Jaymes, M.S.	Whooping Crane Biologist
Kaley Keldsen, M.S.	Spatial Biologist
Michael Steele	Biological Technician
Jonathan Wentz	Biological Technician
Ed Weschler	Water Resources Engineer
Libby Casavant, M.S.	Hydraulic Engineer (virtual)
Helen Davis, M.S.	Geospatial Analyst (virtual)
Sarah Fancher, Ph.D.	Fluvial Geomorphologist (virtual)
Other Participants	
Jennifer Hoeting, Ph.D.	Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) (virtual)
David Galat, Ph.D.	ISAC (virtual)
Matt Rabbe	USFWS
Ryan Kelly	Nebraska DNR
Tom Wilmoth	BWJ Law Group
Lalit Jha	JEO
Dan Fricke	JEO
Matt Pillard	HDR
Jeff Shafer	NPPD
Dan Bigbee	EA
Cory Steinke	CNPPID
Mike Drain	CNPPID
Dave Zorn	CNPPID
Mike Archer	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)
Jonathan Mohr	LRE Water
Tom Smrdel	GEI (virtual)

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#1	WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE	Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
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9 **Introduction** – Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM Central Time. The in-person and virtual
10 groups proceeded with introductions.

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12 **Agenda** – No modifications offered.

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14 **Minutes:**

15 **GC MOTION:** *Ostdiek moved and Merrill seconded to approve the December 2022 GC Quarterly*
16 *Meeting minutes.* **Minutes approved.**



#2	COMMITTEE UPDATES	Agenda Item Objective: General update on recent work of PRRIP Advisory Committees.
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Land Advisory Committee (LAC) – Zorn provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met on February 22, 2023. LAC recommended GC approval of the 2022 PRRIP Land Work Report. The LAC discussed the 2022 vegetation assessment report; need to update the restoration management framing document; update on the Northern Long-Eared Bat up-listing; land item to be discussed in Executive Session; and Tract 2022001 Management Plan.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC) – Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met on February 7, 2023. Steinke elected Chair, Scheel elected Vice Chair. The WAC discussed accounting and operations updates; seepage repair at Elwood Reservoir and construction of a new E65 canal and siphons; VESPR report on the North Platte chokepoint and the associated RFP; tour in May.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Scheel provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC last met on January 18. Scheel was elected TAC Chair. The TAC discussed science on-boarding; approved the 2022 tern/plover report; approved the 2022 fall whooping crane monitoring report; discussed WC data analysis; updated on the NLEB. The next TAC meeting is April 12

Finance Committee (FC) – Merrill provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC last met on February 21. The FC discussed the North Platte Chokepoint Engineering Services RFP and received an update on the Prescribed Fire and Chemical Application Services selection processes. The next FC meeting is May 30.

#3	PRRIP OUTREACH	Agenda Item Objective: General update on PRRIP outreach activities.
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PRESENTATIONS

From Program-sponsored pallid sturgeon projects:

- Dr. Ed Heist from Southern Illinois University Carbondale presented twice in this period:
 - Middle Basin Pallid Sturgeon meeting on January 19th, 2023. Title: “A New Generation of Molecular Markers for Pallid Sturgeon Conservation.”
 - Missouri River Recovery Program Science Staff Meeting on Feb 7th-9th, 2023. Information gained using legacy SNP and microsatellite genetic markers and current use of SNP markers together with GTseq analyses to identify pallid sturgeon larvae from the Missouri River.
- Dr. Mark Pegg from the University of Nebraska Lincoln presented at the Middle Basin Pallid Sturgeon meeting on Jan 19th, 2023, as well. Title: Pallid sturgeon biology in the Platte River and its Tributaries. Update on Program-supported pallid sturgeon habitat and spawning research.
- Jenna Ruoss and Chris Pullano - graduate students under Dr. Mark Pegg and Dr. Jonathan Spurgeon at University of Nebraska Lincoln gave poster/presentations at:
 - The Nebraska American Fisheries Society Meeting and 83rd Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference held February 12th-15th, 2023. Poster. Title: Monitoring Pallid Sturgeon in the Lower Platte River and its Tributaries.
- On February 28th, 2023 Jason Farnsworth presented to the University of Wyoming Master’s Capstone Class on experience navigating science-policy nexus in large-scale species recovery program.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at the Colorado Water Congress in Aurora, Colorado on January 25th-27th, 2023. 200 contacts were made.

**UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS**

- On March 23rd, 2023, Malinda Henry and Jason Farnsworth are participating in the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy Panel on Platte & Republican Basin Issues in Kearney.
- On March 27th, 2023, Jason Farnsworth is presenting a Program update to the Senior College of Central Nebraska.

MEDIA COVERAGE/OTHER

- With crane migration happening now, The Program is hosting individuals and groups from Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska in Program blinds.

PRRIP Outreach – Farnsworth and Uribe discussed the need to work with a GC subgroup to identify PRRIP outreach efforts for the remainder of the Extension. The GC appointed the following individuals to work with the EDO: *Emily Zmak (Colorado) and Melissa Mosier (Environmental Entities)*.

#4	PRRIP BUDGET	Agenda Item Objective: General update on current status of FY22 budget.
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FY22 Budget/Expenditure Recap – Farnsworth provided an FY22 recap and highlighted individual line items that were overbudget in FY22.

PRRIP FY23 Budget – Farnsworth provided a status update on the FY23 budget.

FY23 Procurement – Smith summarized major procurement items for the March and June GC meetings. Turner summarized the scope of the North Platte Chokepoint Engineering Services RFP.

North Platte Chokepoint Engineering Services RFP – Turner summarized the RFP scope. The GC appointed the following Proposal Selection Panel for this RFP: *Carrie Roberts (Environmental Entities), Bill Brewer (Wyoming), Tom Riley (Nebraska), Cory Steinke (Downstream Water Users), Kara Scheel (Colorado), Jason Marks (Colorado Water Users)*.

#5	PRRIP SCIENCE PLAN	Agenda Item Objective: Discussion recent Science Plan implementation activities.
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Fall 2022 Whooping Crane (WC) Monitoring Report & 2022 Tern/Plover Monitoring Report – Bruggeman summarized both reports. Marks asks if losses due to predation count as take. Bruggeman and Henry said yes and that is something we have to report to the Service. Flyr asked what happens if take triggers are met. Rabbe said it would cause a re-consultation to investigate further. Henry asked the GC about their preferences for the tern/plover report, the large size of the report had the TAC recommending splitting the report into two pieces. Henry said the EDO preferred to keep it together. The GC agreed. Riley suggested more regular reporting of monitoring and research results, and other scientific endeavors, to keep the GC up to date throughout the year.

GC MOTION: Gebhart moved and Ostdiek seconded to approve both reports with edits summarized by the EDO. Reports approved.

MEETING BREAK – 3:19 PM Central Time



#6	PRRIP INDEPENDENT SCIENCE	Agenda Item Objective: Latest update from the ISAC and information on selecting a new ISAC member and PRRIP Peer Review.
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ISAC – Hoeting provided a presentation from the ISAC related to recent discussions at the 2023 PRRIP Science Plan Reporting Session.

ISAC Selection Panel – The GC appointed Brock Merrill (USBR) to replace Matt Rabbe (USFWS).

Peer Reviewer Selection Panel – The GC directed Smith to use the existing ISAC Selection Panel (Merrill, Riley, Freeman, Lawrence, Taddicken, Hoeting) to serve as the Peer Reviewer Selection Panel as well.

#6	PRRIP SCIENCE & POLICY	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss integration of non-Program science into Program work.
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Smith led a discussion with the GC on how to keep track of and evaluate science generated outside of the Program. Key discussion points:

- The utility of a process or specific criteria for what non-Program science to integrate with Program science – some GC members suggested the best path would be to take items on a case-by-case basis and not develop a specific written process or evaluation criteria, but a general consensus was not reached here and this topic warranted more discussion. The GC was split on whether or not to have a "specific written process or evaluation criteria".
- When to elevate discussion of non-Program science to the GC – general consensus was to focus the discussion at the TAC level but keep the GC informed (maybe on a quarterly basis when reporting on Science Plan activities).
- How to keep track of non-Program science over time – general consensus that a place should be made in the State of the Platte Report for recoding new non-Program science since last year and summarizing what that publication, report, etc. says relative to Program goals/objectives, the Extension Science Plan, Big Questions, target species, and the implementation and assessment of Program management actions.

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Tom Riley, State of Nebraska – 2023 GC Chair

Jason Farnsworth, PRRIP Executive Director (ED) – Moderator

PRRIP Governance Committee (GC) Meeting Attendees Day #2 – Wednesday, March 8, 2023		
Name	Affiliation	Member or Alternate
Department of the Interior		
Brock Merrill	Bureau of Reclamation (USBR)	Member
Steve Small	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) – 2023 Vice Chair	Member
Mark Porath	USFWS	Alternate
State of Wyoming		
Brandon Gebhart	Wyoming State Engineer	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) – 2023 Chair	Member
Jennifer Schellpeper	DNR	Alternate
Upper Platte Water Users		
Dennis Strauch	Pathfinder Irrigation District	Member
Bob Mehling	Goshen Irrigation District	Alternate
Owen Williams	(virtual)	Alternate
Colorado Water Users		
Kyle Whitaker	Northern Water	Member
Deb Freeman	Trout Raley	Alternate
Jason Marks	Denver Water	Alternate
Downstream Water Users		
Devin Brundage	Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID)	Member
John Shadle	Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD)	Member
Lyndon Vogt	Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD)	Member
Environmental Entities		
Bill Taddicken	Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary	Member
Rich Walters	The Nature Conservancy (TNC)	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.	Engineering/Colorado Coordinator
Jason Bruggeman, Ph.D.	Species Monitoring Coordinator
Alicia Uribe	Executive Office Manager
Patrick Farrell	Statistical Ecologist
Mallory Jaymes, M.S.	Whooping Crane Biologist
Kaley Keldsen, M.S.	Spatial Biologist
Michael Steele	Biological Technician
Jonathan Wentz	Biological Technician
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Libby Casavant, M.S.	Hydraulic Engineer (virtual)
Helen Davis, M.S.	Geospatial Analyst (virtual)
Sarah Fancher, Ph.D.	Fluvial Geomorphologist (virtual)
Other Participants	
Ryan Kelly	Nebraska DNR
Tom Wilmoth	BWJ Law Group
Lalit Jha	JEO
Dan Fricke	JEO
Matt Rabbe	USFWS
Jim Jenniges	NPPD
Melissa Mosier	Audubon Nebraska
Mike Drain	CNPPID
Dave Zorn	CNPPID
Mike Archer	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)
Melissa Dirr Gengler	Historical Resources Group (HRG) (virtual)
Matt Pillard	HDR (virtual)
Tom Smrdel	GEI

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#8	WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE	Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
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131 **Introduction** – Chair Riley called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM Central Time. The in-person and
 132 virtual groups proceeded with introductions.

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134 **Agenda Modifications** – none offered.

#9	NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT (NLEB)	Agenda Item Objective: Greeting
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135 Small summarized the latest process related to the up listing of the NLEB and what initial
 136 implementation issues and tools will look like over the next year. Freeman asked if with the up listing to
 137 endangered and the 4D exceptions are not allowed, what is the legal mechanism by which those
 138 exemptions will now be available? Small said no longer with 4D, the approach is novel and there are
 139 some unknowns about the implications. Freeman asked if the concept is the Service will use its
 140 judgment whether something will amount to take (what might be allowable under the take provision).
 141 Rabbe said Porath will touch base on this with a presentation and then he would re-visit this afterward.



Porath said this year will be a novel approach, it won't be an extension of 4D measures but the conservation measure-related coverage will still be there. That is why the Service has developed interim analysis and guidance to get through this. Rabbe said there was a previous programmatic consultation with Reclamation around 2016 and at that point relied on the 4D rule. That consultation will be null and void as of March 31 and they will have to move forward with a new consultation with this new interim framework. Small said there will be a public process and engagement as new tools are developed over the next year during this interim period. Freeman asked from the standpoint of the Program we will presumably need to do a limited re-opener on things related to the NLEB. Rabbe said yes in the Extension Biological Opinion the Service referenced the 2016 programmatic consultation, so things moving forward will need to be re-evaluated with the new framework. Freeman asked if the Service is blocking out a roadmap to help the Program avoid take. Porath said as long as activities don't change, the Program will be fine. But if something changes or if different management is proposed, that will trigger the need to re-evaluate.

Farnsworth said his take on what the Program needs to do for the next year is to follow the guidance we have been following, but we will need to be prepped to change that process after the next year. We are operating on an avoidance paradigm where we don't clear trees until August, but our understanding is that timeframe will get pushed past November 1. That will leave a very limited window to do work on the river. Farnsworth said he thinks we should implement acoustic monitoring now to build an awareness of the presence/absence of bats and to develop a repeatable monitoring protocol that would all be built into the FY24 PRRIP budget to help the Program move forward. Porath said that would be a good step and any monitoring should be in accordance with the current guidelines. Drain asked about the impact of white nose syndrome. Porath said any efforts that can be made to better understand the bat community would be a benefit.

Freeman asked if the Service has a survey protocol for how much surveying needs to be done to be able to do tree work within the season. Porath said yes and they have been accepted for several years. Marks asked if the Program could work with the avoidance window of April 1 through November 1. Farnsworth said it depends on the work and the size of the project, but most of our large tree-clearing projects are complete at this point. The Program can adapt to this if some fine-tuning tree work along the channel needs to be done over time. Whitaker asked if acoustic monitoring is done how you distinguish between different bat species. Farnsworth said Helen Davis in the EDO has experience doing acoustic surveys for bats and has explained that software exists to differentiate species based on collected acoustic data. Rabbe said the Service will come back to the Program with the Determination Key to help with understanding of the process and the implications for the Program.

#10	WATER ACTION PLAN (WAP)	Agenda Item Objective: Update on recent WAP implementation activities.
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Turner provided a status update on WAP projects. The CNPPID irrigator lease (on Page 2 of the Water Milestone Summary) is in the final year of the 5-year lease agreement. That will need to be discussed again with the GC, likely at the September GC meeting.

Turner provided a status update on construction of the recapture network at Cottonwood Ranch. Construction and pressure testing is complete, the EDO conducted a walk-through of the project this Monday and only a few small items were identified as needing resolved. Since we are in shortages for the near future, the wells will be turned back soon to pump recaptured groundwater.



Turner asked for GC input on members for the Scoring Subcommittee and to offer any updates for membership in case the Subcommittee convenes later this year if necessary. Turner asked the GC to email him any membership changes by the end of March.

Turner discussed the Expanded Recapture RFP. It will seek a contractor to conduct a feasibility study for additional recapture efforts including Elwood. The pilot study is complete and we know recapture is feasible, we need to investigate conveyance capacity in Plum Creek related to Elwood. There is a Recapture Working Group that will help develop a Scope of Work, that group will meet at the end of March. The WAC will review the RFP in early May and then will be in front of the Finance Committee in late May for review and approval. The GC will see the RFP in June to review the scope and appoint a Proposal Selection Panel. Taddicken asked why Elwood is a great place to put water because it takes a long time to get to the river and it leaks. Turner said it is good from a storage standpoint, and there is a large volume (about 40,000 AF) of Program recharge water in the aquifer that could be pumped out to return water to the river. With a gravity outlet from Elwood, we would also have the capability to release water directly back to the river during periods of shortage depending on Plum Creek conveyance capacity.

#11	LAND PLAN
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<i>Agenda Item Objective:</i> Update on recent Land Plan implementation activities.

Land Milestone Summary – Tunnell summarized recent Land Plan activities.

2022 PRRIP Land Work Report – Tunnell highlighted key pieces of the 2022 Land Work Report. Farnsworth and Tunnell said we now have a fire contractor under contract and we should be able to do some burning this year so the GC will see some fire expenditures.

Tract 2021001 Management Plan – Tunnell summarized planned activities at this tract (at the Chapman Complex).

GC MOTION: *Merrill moved and Ost diek seconded to approve the Tract 2021001 Management Plan.* **Plan approved.**

PRRIP Facilities Workgroup – Tunnell summarized the recommendations of the Facilities Workgroup:

- Quonset at Dyer Property – discontinue use, leave in place or demolish.
- Lodge at Dyer Property – solicit bids to move lodge off property or solicit bids to demolish.
- Bartels cabin – maintain as temporary accommodation as needed.
- Leaman building – maintain and re-evaluate at the end of the Extension.
- Meyer Farm homesite and buildings – keep homesite and attempt to move house/barn off of property by offering to prior owner family or taking sealed bids. Demolish along with other structures (except machine shop and hay shed) only if unable to find someone willing to remove.
- Office of the Executive Director – identify and purchase existing commercial space in or near Kearney that can be retrofitted to meet Program needs.

Whitaker asked about the current term of the EDO office lease. Farnsworth said 2024 is the last year of the current lease term.



GC MOTION: Vogt moved and Strauch seconded to adopt the recommendations of the Facilities Workgroup. Recommendations approved.

#12	PUBLIC COMMENT	Agenda Item Objective: Public comment period on PRRIP activities.
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None offered.

#13	EXECUTIVE SESSION	Agenda Item Objective: GC member discussion of sensitive land, water, and policy items.
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GC MOTION: Gebhart moved and Brundage seconded to enter Executive Session. GC entered Executive Session at 9:25 AM Central Time.

GC MOTION: Gebhart moved and Merrill seconded to exit Executive Session. GC exited Executive Session at 9:39 AM Central Time.

#14	EXECUTIVE SESSION MOTIONS	Agenda Item Objective: GC consideration of motions discussed during Executive Session.
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None offered.

#15	GC MEETING REVIEW & WRAP-UP	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss action items, meeting feedback, and upcoming meeting schedule.
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Action Items and Meeting Feedback – Riley reminded the GC to keep thinking about non-Program science and related policy issues. There is an opportunity for upcoming site visits with the LAC and WAC so GC should participate if interested.

Upcoming GC meetings:

- **June 2023 GC Quarterly Meeting:**
June 13-14, 2023 @ Cheyenne, WY
- **September 2023 GC Quarterly Meeting:**
September 12-13, 2023 @ Kearney, NE
- **2023 Fall ISAC Meeting:**
October 10-12, 2023 @ Kearney, NE
- **GC Virtual Special Session on FY2024 Budget & Work Plan:**
November 8, 2023
10:00 AM-12:00 PM Central Time via Teams
- **December 2023 GC Quarterly Meeting:**
December 5-6, 2023 @ Denver, CO
- **2024 PRRIP Science Plan Reporting Session:**
February 20-22, 2024 @ Omaha, NE

GC MEETING END	9:41 AM Central Time
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Summary of Action Items/Decisions from March 2023 GC Quarterly Meeting

- 1) Approved the December 2022 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes.
- 2) Appointed Emily Zmak (Colorado) and Melissa Mosier (Environmental Entities) to work with the EDO to identify PRRIP Outreach priorities for the remainder of the Extension.
- 3) Appointed a Proposal Selection Panel for the North Platte Chokepoint Engineering Services RFP: Carrie Roberts (Environmental Entities), Bill Brewer (Wyoming), Tom Riley (Nebraska), Cory Steinke (Downstream Water Users), Kara Scheel (Colorado), Jason Marks (Colorado Water Users).
- 4) Approved the Fall 2022 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report.
- 5) Approved the 2022 Tern/Plover Monitoring Report.
- 6) Appointed Brock Merrill to the ISAC Selection Panel.
- 7) Directed the ISAC Selection Panel to also serve as the Peer Reviewer Selection Panel.
- 8) Approved the Tract 2021001 Management Plan.
- 9) Adopted the recommendations of the Facilities Workgroup:
 - Quonset at Dyer Property – discontinue use, leave in place or demolish.
 - Lodge at Dyer Property – solicit bids to move lodge off property or solicit bids to demolish.
 - Bartels cabin – maintain as temporary accommodation as needed.
 - Leaman building – maintain and re-evaluate at the end of the Extension.
 - Meyer Farm homesite and buildings – keep homesite and attempt to move house/barn off property by offering to prior owner family or taking sealed bids. Demolish along with other structures (except machine shop and hay shed) only if unable to find someone willing to remove.
 - Office of the Executive Director – identify and purchase existing commercial space in or near Kearney that can be retrofitted to meet Program needs.