



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM  
Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
In Person PRRIP Conference Room & Teams Conference Call  
May 17, 2023**

**Land Advisory Committee (LAC)**

**Meeting Participants:**

**State of Wyoming**

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

Jean Eichhorst – Alternate, Nebraska DNR

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

**Environmental Entities**

Cody Wagner – Member (Vice-Chair), Audubon Rowe Sanctuary

Tim Smith – Member, Crane Trust

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

None

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

John Thorburn – Member, TBNRD

**Local Nebraska Rep. – Joint CPNRD/TBNRD**

None

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

Tim Tunnell

Jason Farnsworth

**Other Participants**

Melissa Mosier – Audubon

**Welcome and Administrative**

Chairman Zorn called the meeting to order at 10:03 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 February 22, 2023, LAC meeting. Thorburn made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 22, 2023, LAC meeting. Motion seconded by LaGrange and passed unanimously.

**General Update and Other Committee Coordination**

Scheel updated LAC on the activities of the TAC. TAC met April 12. Due to travel issues and virtual burnout the committee decided to change meeting format to 2 half day meetings going forward. Rabbe provided update of the NLEB and walked through the interim guidance. Discussed the 2022 PRRIP grassland vegetation monitoring report and suggested forming a technical committee to review the results and provide a list of management recommendations. Reviewed the germination suppression implementation plan and Farnsworth provided preliminary results and demonstrated how to assess the effectiveness of releases. Discussed an RFP for Lower Platte hydraulic model for pallid sturgeon habitat and updates from the WC telemetry work group and WC monitoring period workgroup. Reviewed some recent science articles.

Farnsworth updated the LAC on the activities of the WAC. Farnsworth updated the group about the water tour of CNPPID and NPPD's systems starting at Lake MAC and going downstream. Forty + people attended, and all appreciated the tour and now understand how NE system is spread out. BOR talked CO out of some excess water from a precipitation event in Denver which is first excess flow other than 2 days last spring. Excess water will reduce amount of water to ramp up germinate suppression and irrigation demand has slowed resulting in more rejected irrigation water in the river right now. No June pulse flow target due to dry conditions and will revert to species target flow of 800 cfs. As a result, we have excess flows and CNPPID will start putting excess water into the CWR BSR project. This will allow testing of the system as conditions have been dry since the project was constructed. Will be able to update infiltration rates. Volume of water is estimated to be a week at 70 cfs which should be enough to fill it up and see how fast water will infiltrate. This will be the first test and help gain experience to operate.

Farnsworth updated the LAC on the activities of the GC. Next meeting is June 13-14 in Cheyenne. Lots of science related topics such as WC monitoring and discussion of ecotype article of wet meadows. PRRA recommendations, multiple procurement items for science plan such as 3-dimension hydrodynamic modeling project, a project to look at alternatives to improve ability to pump recharge water back to the river, and NP Chokepoint project that Anderson Consulting was selected and in process of securing contract. Thorburn noted that DNR and TBNRD also have agreements with CNPPID to also divert excess flows. TBNRD is putting excess flow into Funk, Victor Lake, and Cottonwood WPA's which started on May 16. Scheel and Merrill provided updates on precipitation events in CO and WY and elaborated on



the outlook of water storage possibilities. Merrill report that is quite possible to refill the Environmental Account in Pathfinder Reservoir this year. Scheel reported no crazy runoff this year is expected from snowpack in CO.

Tunnell pointed out that nothing has changed with the Land Milestone Summary. A total of 1,316.5 acres have been acquired for the 1,500-acre goal for the Extension with 183.5 acres remaining.

### **Land Management Status Update**

Tunnell provided an update on the BELF tract that went to public auction a month ago. The winning bidder was a neighboring landowner. They have contacted the EDO about a possible management agreement or lease. Tract was purchased to eliminate competing hunting from their property and do not intend to hunt or develop the tract. Rabbe mentioned that although it has great potential for LT/PP habitat as is, it could become a sink if management to control predators is not done. EDO will continue discussions with new owner as warranted.

Tunnell, Zorn and Rabbe further discussed the TAC's recommendation of forming a technical committee to review the results of the 2023 PRRIP Grassland Vegetation Monitoring Report and provide a list of management recommendations. Zorn reported that there are volunteers for the subcommittee from the TAC and wanted to know of volunteers from the LAC to sit on subcommittee. Tunnell noted that at the last LAC meeting that Smith, Gess, Wagner, Weise, and LaGrange volunteered to review the "Restoration and Management Framework for PRRIP Habitat Complexes" document from 2018. Zorn and T. Smith also volunteered to be on the committee. There is a grassland management section in the document that also needs to be updated along with species of concern information- this could be a task for the group as well. The TAC appointed Rabbe the point person and Walters, Hegg, Jaymes, Merrill, Scheel and Smith were appointed as members. Rabbe will call the first meeting at the end of June or first of July. Tunnell reported that EDO is in the process of consolidating all vegetation monitoring results into an ESRI story map to consolidate monitoring data and annual fire, grazing, haying management at each tract. Tunnell said that the long-term goal is for the committee to provide tract by tract recommendations for grazing stocking rates, prescribed fire units and timing, haying recommendations, and any other management practices to EDO prior to September 1 of each year so that tenants can be notified of any changes that might affect next year's lease. This information will be required by EDO to budget for next year's land and species management budgets as warranted. Tunnell will provide Rabbe with email list of members and a doodle poll will be sent for the first meeting date. Tunnell reported that not a lot of the Framework document will need to be updated until the science is completed which may or may not change. Farnsworth noted that the Framework document at a minimum could be updated with new science plan priorities and species of concern priorities provided by the GC.

### **Platte River Recreation Access Program- Public Use Overview**

The PRRA coordinator sent out an email notification to all users of the PRRA sites asking for pictures and editorials of their hunting experiences using the PRRA sites. Rabbe provided a PowerPoint presentation of the information collected from the users including pictures, testimonials, and poetry. La Grange asked for the presentation be shared to the Kearney and Lincoln NGPC staff and recommended that it could be a nice article potential for NEBRASKLAND.

### **2022 Platte River Recreation Access Program Review**

Rabbe reviewed the PRRA subcommittee minutes and recommendations from the March 30, 2023, meeting. The LAC provides the following PRRA recommendations for GC consideration:

- Change Max number of reservations to 4



- EDO complete parking lot repairs where needed and install permanent parking lot at Area K
- Add waterfowl hunting as an existing use within the slightly modified mapped geographic boundary of Area A. This excludes anything North of the high bank on the Eastern half (river) and all portions of the OCSW sand peninsula; but includes the water surrounding the OCSW and the boundary as is on the West half. Access on the land and water surrounding the OCSW would be open to all uses but access in the sand area of OCSW remains closed to access and boats are not allowed. Signage would need to get updated if approved.
- NGPC to add fish harvest survey question on public surveys
- Add waterfowl hunting on Area K as an acceptable recreation use and remove 100-yard buffer from truck stop as exclusion area consistent with NGPC regulations on shooting distance from dwellings. The open area would include everything else except the sand island portion of the OCSW (water open but no boats allowed).
- NGPC modify reservation system to keep past reservation data visible
- Open Area B back up for rifle deer hunting, including the lottery

Zorn asked for the LAC's approval of the recommendations. Thorburn made a motion to approve the recommendations. Motion seconded by T. Smith and passed unanimously. LaGrange abstained from the vote. Rabbe will be unable to attend June GC meeting. Zorn will provide presentation and LAC approved PRRA recommendations to GC.

#### **Public Forum**

Chairman Zorn asked for public comments, none were offered, and meeting adjourned at 11:44 am Central Time.

Next LAC meeting will be August 16.

#### **Lunch and Plum Creek Tour Overview**