



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**In Person PRRIP Conference Room & Teams Conference Call**  
**August 24, 2022**

**Meeting Participants**

**Land Advisory Committee (LAC)**

**State of Wyoming**

Michelle Gess, Member, 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, Nebraska DNR

**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**

Tim Smith - Crane Trust

Melissa Moser –Member (Vice-Chair), Audubon Rowe Sanctuary

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

Lyndon Vogt – CPNRD (online)

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

John Thorburn – TBNRD

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

None

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

Tim Tunnell

Jason Farnsworth

**Other Participants**

Joshua Wiese, Crane Trust (online)

**Welcome and Administrative**

Chairman Zorn called the meeting to order at 8:57 am Central Time. Roll call of members who were attending in-person at the PRRIP conference room and Tunnell recognized members attending virtually. Zorn asked for agenda modifications. None offered. Zorn asked for additional items or edits to minutes from May 25 LAC meeting. None offered. Motion to approve by Lyndon Vogt. Second by Brock Merrill. Motion carries, minutes approved.

**General Update and Other Committee Coordination**

Merrill updated the group on the TAC. Their last meet was on July 13 in Kearney and a main topic of discussion was the PRRA program and beginning to allow fishing on the Leaman tract during off season use by LT/PP. Recommendation was to open fishing under state guidelines during off season. Talked about water aspects of the program, such as germination suppression flow releases and needs to allow water to move through the North Platte chokepoint. Had species updates on LT/PP monitoring, predator research, and approved the 2022 WC monitoring report. Discussed aspects of the WC riverine roost site selection & analysis, 2022 phragmites research pilot study and sediment augmentation.

Farnsworth update the group on GC & WAC. GC meeting in Kearney in September 13. Topics of interest on water will be germination suppression flow release that happened in June. The target was 30 days with 1500 CFS in river, got close to that but ran out of capacity at the North Platte Chokepoint late June. Program released 70,000-acre feet of water (\$6-7 million). Science is focused on whether this approach works to not remove vegetation, but to keep channel wet as long as possible. Thorborn asked what kind of research and follow up is being done. Farnsworth explained that there are 2 parts to the analysis, Phragmites research and general vegetation using spring imagery and compare to fall imagery with lidar to construct full vegetation classification to document how vegetation changes through the year with the use of a machine learning model that looks at the effects of flow and mechanical management on how the channel responds to changes. This is 3<sup>rd</sup> year of quasi flow release and plan to have 1 or 2 more releases followed by a comprehensive analysis to see how well we kept the gains we got in 2015, 2016 and 2019. Zorn mentioned the use of time lapse cameras to gain additional information. Farnsworth spoke of the information gained during the first increment with site specific detailed vegetation analysis with plots and hydraulic model. What was found was that veg establishment was so dynamic, there was good info at plot level but 120 feet away vegetation was completely different. Forced us to look at 10,000 ft level which is messy but since we have 100% spatial coverage, we can compile that back into trends in a research scale. Other GC discussion is on the NP Chock point and if VESPR finds some silver billet that was missed in evaluating the chock point issue, the Program has used all the tools that are available to us to increase choke point capacity. GC wants us to focus on tradeoffs of increasing capacity vs benefits we get in the central Platte from meeting management objectives. Further focus should be towards the second increment and what information is needed on increasing capacity, what is needed for regulatory compliance or other things that will need to be addressed (i.e. eminent domain, exceeding flood stage, etc.). Provide information to policy makers for structuring a second increment.



Tunnell updated group on the change made to the Land Milestone Summary. The OSG Lex Pit acres were incorrectly being counted in the 1500 ac plus up objective. The change resulted in removing 196 acres which increased the balance of extension acres remaining to goal at 234.5 acres instead of 38 as previously recorded.

### **Land Management Status Update**

#### *Information and discussion*

Tunnell provided the following update for land management activities:

Tract 2020002 OSG-Lex pit

- ~~Working with neighbors on north boundary to install woven wire fence on boundary the north boundary. One neighbor is responsive the other is not.~~ Received bid to install woven wire fence along NW boundary. Work will be completed this fall.

Tracts 2014002/2015002 BELF/ Volentine

- Received hourly quote for disking islands this fall.

Tract 2015001 Speidell

- ~~Informal violet survey completed by PPRI & EDO. Native populations were identified on the grassland portions of the tract. EDO is working with PPRI to develop a plan. Areas to plant have been identified and working with tenant to hay areas prior to planting this fall.~~
- Received bids to burn & bury tree piles from islands in main channel that were cleared last fall. Unable to burn & bury last year due to dry conditions.
- Received hourly quote for disking islands this fall.

Tract 2018001 Dippel

- ~~Made notice to east neighbor that whole property will be in PRRA program this fall. Suppose to meet next week to settle boundary differences of interpretation. Attorney is working on Land Use agreement. Develop bid packages for tree removal and fence construction of FC approval prior to late summer/ early fall construction.~~
- Received hourly quote for disking islands this fall.

Tract 2019001 Bergen

- Received bids for tree pile removal. Work will be completed this fall.

Tract 2021001 Meyer Estate

- ~~Completed small fence construction at NE corner of wet meadow for grazing tenant.~~
- ~~Have east and west boundaries survey and marked for tree removal and fence construction as tract will be included in the PRRA program this fall. Develop bid packages for tree removal and fence construction of FC approval prior to late summer/ early fall construction.~~



- Bids for fence line tree clearing and fence installation have been received. Work will be completed this fall.
- Working with Izaak Walton League on Land Use agreement.

#### Audubon Mgmt. Agreement

Audubon is going to shred/ cut trees in accretion areas. PRRIP will reimburse them for costs. Will budget for herbicide to control resprouts in 2023.

LaGrange spoke of the UNL Naturalist program as an opportunity to assist EDO with field work as part of their volunteer efforts. Gave Matt Jones as a contact for Kearney area.

Farnsworth updated the group on the 2022 Sediment Augmentation projects. Discussion centered around high costs for the work and timing of the work.

Tunnell lead open discussion on challenges with contract work such as Rx fire and Nx weed spraying. Costs are increasing and companies are changing business models that are not as effective and efficient for our needs. Discussed challenges with contracts and aspects of scale. Need to start thinking of strategies to make stewardship efficient and cost effective. Thorburn brought up the idea of possibly looking at staffing and equipment to do the work in-house. Zorn spoke of a cost analysis of stewardship work through contractors or transitioning to long-term strategy of work in-house.

#### **PRRIP Facility Discussion**

##### *Information and discussion*

Farnsworth talked about the Facility workgroup discussions and went through the memo. Program has land and facilities scattered across the associated reach which may not be conveniently located. Working group talked about all the facilities and what to do with them and will provide their recommendation to the GC in September.

#### **Executive Session**

Thorburn made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:11am.

Zorn asked for motion to come out of Executive Session. Mossier made motion. Thorburn seconded. Motion approved.

#### **Public Forum**

Chairman Zorn asked for public comments, none were offered.

The next LAC meeting is planned for October 19, 2022. Details will be provided prior to the meeting. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Zorn at 10:30 a.m. CDT