



## **PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)**

### **Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting – Cheyenne, WY (+ virtual)**

Day #1 – Tuesday, December 7, 2021

#### **Governance Committee (GC)**

##### **State of Wyoming**

Harry LaBonde – Member  
Brandon Gebhart – Alternate

##### **State of Colorado**

Don Ament – Member (2021 GC Chair)

##### **State of Nebraska**

Tom Riley – Member

##### **Upper Platte Water Users**

Dennis Strauch – Member  
Bob Mehling – Alternate

##### **Downstream Water Users**

Devin Brundage – Member  
Kent Miller – Member  
Lyndon Vogt – Member  
Joe Citta – Member (virtual)

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

Jason Farnsworth – ED  
Bridget Barron  
Justin Brei  
Patrick Farrell  
Julia Grabowski (virtual)  
Malinda Henry  
Mallory Jaymes (virtual)  
Kaley Keldsen (virtual)  
Kari Mohlman (virtual)  
George Oamek (virtual)

Alicia Uribe (virtual)  
Chad Smith (virtual)  
Tom Smrdel  
Tim Tunnell (virtual)  
Seth Turner (virtual)

##### **Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)**

Brock Merrill – Member (2021 GC Vice Chair)  
Brian Hollis – Alternate

##### **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)**

Steve Smith – Member (virtual)  
Mark Porath – Alternate (virtual)  
Matt Rabbe – Alternate (virtual)

##### **Environmental Entities**

Brice Krohn – Member (virtual)  
Bill Taddicken – Member  
Rich Walters – Member  
Melissa Mosier – Alternate

##### **Colorado Water Users**

Alan Berryman – Member  
Deb Freeman – Alternate  
Jason Marks – Alternate (virtual)  
Kevin Urie – Alternate (virtual)

##### **Other Participants**

Cory Steinke & Mike Drain – CNPPID (virtual)  
Jim Jenniges, Jeff Shafer, & Michael Krondak –  
NPPD (virtual)  
Brian Caruso, Tom Econopouly & Jeff Runge –  
Service (virtual)  
Lauren Ris & Erik Skeie – State of Colorado  
(virtual)  
Michelle Koch – NGPC (virtual)  
Mirko Kruse – Trout Raley (CO Water Users;  
virtual)  
Jennifer Hoeting – ISAC (virtual)  
Dave Marmorek – ISAC (virtual)  
Adrian Farmer – ISAC (virtual)  
David Galat – ISAC (virtual)  
Ned Andrews – ISAC (virtual)



<b>#1 WELCOME &amp; ADMINISTRATIVE</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
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**Introductions** – Chair Ament called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM Mountain Time. The in-person and virtual groups proceeded with introductions.

**Agenda** – No modifications offered.

**Minutes** – The GC approved the following minutes:

**GC Motion:** Riley moved and LaBonde seconded to approve the September 2021 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes. Minutes approved.

**GC Motion:** LaBonde moved and Riley seconded to approve the November 2021 GC Virtual Special Session minutes. Minutes approved.

<b>#2 COMMITTEE UPDATES</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> General update on recent work of PRRIP Advisory Committees.
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**Land Advisory Committee (LAC)** – Mosier provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met on October 27. Agenda items included Advisory Committee updates, FY22 Land Plan budget and work plan, upcoming tour of Program properties, management of Fox, DeBoer, and Liehs tracts related to palustrine wetlands (informal recommendation to GC to be discussed today), elected Dave Zorn as 2022 Chair and Mosier and Vice Chair. Next meeting is February 23, 2022.

**Water Advisory Committee (WAC)** – Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met on October 26, most items will be discussed by the GC at this meeting (recapture wells, choke point, water projects accounting, WAP budget).

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** – Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC last met on October 13 and discussed broadscale recharge at Cottonwood Ranch, palustrine wetland issues (TAC recommendation to GC), update to tern/plover monitoring protocol, predator management at OCSW sites, remote sensing for geomorphology, Extension Science Plan, pallid sturgeon research projects, wet meadow hydrology, other species of concern, and the FY22 budget and work plan.

**Finance Committee (FC)** – Farnsworth noted there has not been an FC meeting since the last GC meeting, Colorado does not have a rep (Jojo La moved on and was FC Chair) so FC-related items are on the GC meeting agenda today and tomorrow.

<b>#3 OUTREACH UPDATE</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> General update on PRRIP outreach activities.
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**PRESENTATIONS**

- Kaley Keldsen presented at the virtual Nebraska Natural Legacy Conference on October 18, 2021. Her presentation was titled, “Monitoring Interior Least Tern and Piping Plover Nests with Trail & Cellular Video Cameras at Off-channel Nesting sites Along the Central Platte River in Nebraska”.
- Jason Farnsworth presented a Program update to the Central Platte Natural Resources District Board in Grand Island, Nebraska on October 28, 2021.
- Jason Farnsworth presented on the Program Governance structure to the South Platte Water Related Activities Program (SPWRAP) virtual conference on November 8, 2021.



- Jason Farnsworth participated in a leadership panel discussion held by the Nebraska Water Leaders Academy in Kearney, Nebraska on November 19, 2021.

## EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 14, 15, and 16, 2021 in the Natural Resources Districts building. We made 1054 contacts.
- The Program exhibited at the Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Annual Conference on September 26 through 28, 2021 in Kearney, Nebraska. We made 90 contacts.
- The Program exhibited at the Nebraska Water Resources Association/Nebraska State Irrigation Association joint conference in Kearney, Nebraska on November 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021. We made 76 contacts.
- The Program sponsored a break at the South Platte Forum on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 in Westminster, Colorado.

## UPCOMING EXHIBITS

- The Program will be exhibiting at the Four States annual conference in Fort Collins, Colorado on January 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022.
- The Program will be exhibiting at Colorado Water Congress in Aurora, Colorado on January 26<sup>th</sup> through 28<sup>th</sup> in Aurora, Colorado.

## MEDIA/OTHER

- In early November, the Omaha World Herald and Kearney Hub newspapers published articles on the record number of whooping cranes stopping over in central Nebraska. Staff from The Crane Trust and Rowe Sanctuary were interviewed for the articles.

#4	PRRIP FY21 BUDGET	Agenda Item Objective: General update on current status of FY21 budget.
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Farnsworth delivered an updated presentation to the GC on the status of the FY21 budget, expenditures, and budget-related action items for the GC today.

#5	PRRIP FY22 Budget	Agenda Item Objective: Discuss/approve FY22 budget, work plan, and EDO contract.
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Farnsworth introduced the FY22 PRRIP budget and work plan and the associated FY22 EDO contract for GC discussion and approval. Farnsworth updated the GC on the small budget item related to violet plantings for Regal fritillaries (only would be expended with GC approval) and budget line item PS-1 (pallid sturgeon) including costs for a flight to collect additional LiDAR data in the lower Platte River. Riley asked when the EDO anticipated they might seek approval from the GC for acquiring the LiDAR data in the lower Platte River. Farnsworth said he would address that with the GC after budget approval today. Freeman asked how the choke point money in the budget connects with resolving that issue. Farnsworth said he anticipates an extended discussion with the GC on this issue at the March 2022 meeting. Any expenditures next year would be taken up looking at administrative, legal, and institutional feasibility of options, a more detailed feasibility analysis would be in 2023 and that budget would be reflected accordingly at that time. Freeman asked if we would be having more discussion on the pallid sturgeon yet today. Farnsworth said yes.

**GC Motion:** LaBonde moved and Merrill seconded to approve the PRRIP FY22 budget and work plan. **FY22 budget and work plan approved.**



**EDO contract:** Riley moved and Taddicken seconded to approve the FY22 EDO contract. **FY22 EDO contract approved.**

Farnsworth summarized the need for acquiring additional LiDAR data in the lower Platte River related to the Pallid Sturgeon Framing Agreement and the two research projects that are now beginning. Gebhart asked if the estimated price would be good for a five-year window. Farnsworth said probably close, prices for data acquisition have been stable but the cost could be influenced by rising fuel prices. Brei said after the end of 2022 we will need to re-compete the remote sensing contract so depending who wins that contract the price could change. Ament asked about the ideal flow conditions. Brei said we will ask the current contractor (Quantum Spatial) for help identifying that, but we will be looking for low flow and low turbidity. Low depths and low velocities are generally the kind of conditions we need. Does the channel form change enough that the results might not be applicable at the end of the Extension? Farnsworth said the distributions of habitat (available/used) are generally pretty stable across conditions and across time, but that is something we have to watch. Freeman asked if it is an option to stay within the original scope and move to the Phase 2 water management study to see if the pieces hold together or is the recommendation that we need to do this to do the Phase 2 water management study. Farnsworth said the concern is if we add too much noise to the dataset and reduce confidence in findings, we might be in a situation like we are now where certain parties lack confidence in results and conclusions and the Program can't make any forward movement on the PS issue.

Riley asked how you handle the temporal mismatch created by one-time LiDAR data being a surrogate for river topography that will change every day. Henry said habitat data will be collected where fish are caught, the LiDAR data will be used to help identify the distribution of such habitat types (generalize hydraulic data back to distributions and habitat types by reach) to get out of temporal effects. Freeman asked if this will result in flow recommendations for above the Elkhorn River. Farnsworth said we likely would get operational rules to avoid impacts, and also the Service wants to quantify benefits to pallid sturgeon so this could end up being a tool that might be part of that. Farnsworth said he does not foresee actual flow recommendations for the lower Platte, beyond operational rules for avoiding impacts. Riley asked if we are using existing gaging stations to help set rating curves. Farnsworth said we have all that data if we end up doing the LiDAR acquisition we would probably develop an SRH-2D model and use those to calibrate back. Drain said the purpose of the LiDAR data is to not get a point-specific piece of information to match with point-specific data on fish. Instead, this is to look at connectivity, how this might be influenced by flow regimes, etc. Farnsworth said yes. Drain said one decision could be to wait but you then might have to wait to acquire data, but if we do this now we can be ready when appropriate conditions occur. Smith said the goal here was to collect appropriate information to fill data gaps before heading into a Second Increment. Farnsworth said the EDO can work with our current contractor to design a set of optimal conditions for the LiDAR flight. EDO will come back to the GC in March to provide more information and acquisition criteria.

<b>#6</b>	<b>PRRIP SCIENCE ACTIVITIES</b>
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<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Discuss recent AMP implementation activities.
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Jaymes delivered an update presentation to the GC on fall 2021 whooping crane (WC) monitoring. Farnsworth said people at the GC meeting were asking "why" so many WC were observed this fall. Jaymes said some speculation relates to cranes bunching up in Saskatchewan then moving based on north or south winds. Taddicken asked if there was data about river use versus off-river habitat use. Jaymes said we don't collect that data but most sightings were on the river, Taddicken said that is what they observed at Rowe Sanctuary as well.



Jaymes introduced the 2022 WC monitoring RFB to secure flight crew services for spring and fall migratory monitoring. Farnsworth said this is generally something we would handle at the FC but have this in front the GC today. Riley asked if liability numbers have been updated recently, the coverage limits in the RFB seem low. Farnsworth said last year they were industry standard numbers but we should double-check. The Program carries a big umbrella policy over that. Farnsworth said he would check with the insurance agent again to make sure the coverage numbers are accurate.

**GC Motion:** Riley moved and Mehling seconded to approve the WC monitoring RFB. **RFB approved.**

Henry provided a short update to the GC on the status of the pallid sturgeon research projects. Startup meetings are scheduled for December 16<sup>th</sup> with UNL and for January 5<sup>th</sup> with SIU.

<b>#7</b>	<b>INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ISAC)</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Update from the ISAC.
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Smith introduced the ISAC and the context of this session. Henry delivered an update presentation to the GC on the Extension Science Plan. Hoeting delivered an updated presentation to the GC on behalf of the ISAC. GC discussion:

Drain – GC wants to have hypotheses if we are going to collect data. Is a lack of hypotheses an indicator that there are some things in the draft Science Plan that we really aren't going to focus on? Plover predation is an example to consider. Discussions on the AMWG suggested that for that one, we are just "going to do what we are going to do". If we don't have hypotheses for this, maybe we consider pulling it from the Science Plan entirely?

Labonde – saw discussion in slides about impacts of water management on pallid sturgeon. Going back to original Stage Change Study, I thought the consultant said we could not detect central Platte flow management in the lower Platte so he wondered why there is discussion about flow and pallids. Farnsworth said right now in the Science Plan we have learning objectives for pallid sturgeon, not specific hypotheses. We do not anticipate any hypotheses that relate to Program flow management. The ISAC is likely talking about something like a trade-offs analysis for water use in the Second Increment, which ties to the Pallid Sturgeon Agreement Framing Document. LaBonde said Big Questions going forward should keep that in mind. Miller said he was confused about the pallid sturgeon items and what is anticipated to be done with pallids and the lower Platte in regard to the Science Plan.

<b>#8</b>	<b>OTHER SPECIES OF CONCERN</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Initial GC feedback and discussion on other species of concern.
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Henry delivered an update presentation to the GC on the process of working through other species of concern with the GC-appointed work group. Freeman asked about how much effort the subcommittee is going to have to get into and is concerned about the level of detail. Farnsworth and Henry said they can work with the subcommittee to get this down to a one-pager of species that might be under consideration and provide a short synopsis of why each species was included on the list based upon prioritization criteria. That can be brought to the GC in March for further discussion to get direction from the GC on next steps before investing time in developing work plans and budgets.



<b>#9</b>	<b>PALUSTRINE WETLANDS</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Initial GC feedback and discussion on palustrine wetlands.
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Tunnell and Jaymes discussed the issue of palustrine wetlands. Merrill said the TAC recommendation was to keep the Fox tract and bank the other two properties, selling them to pay for on-channel or within complex habitat where available, but to do so with conservation easements. The LAC recommendation was to keep all three properties, managing them as WC habitat by filling them during migration (including development of a plan for providing water to DeBoer, but do not implement). The GC concurred with the LAC recommendation.

<b>GC MEETING DAY #1 END</b>	<b>5:32 PM Mountain Time</b>
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**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)****Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting – Cheyenne, WY (+ virtual)**Day #2 – Wednesday, December 8, 2021**Governance Committee (GC)****State of Wyoming**

Harry LaBonde – Member

Brandon Gebhart – Alternate

**State of Colorado**

Don Ament – Member (2021 GC Chair)

**State of Nebraska**

Tom Riley – Member

**Upper Platte Water Users**

Dennis Strauch – Member

Bob Mehling – Alternate

**Downstream Water Users**

Devin Brundage – Member

Kent Miller – Member

Lyndon Vogt – Member

Joe Citta – Member (virtual)

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

Jason Farnsworth – ED

Bridget Barron

Justin Brei

Patrick Farrell

Julia Grabowski (virtual)

Malinda Henry

Mallory Jaymes (virtual)

Kaley Keldsen (virtual)

Kari Mohlman (virtual)

George Oamek (virtual)

Ed Weschler

Alicia Uribe (virtual)

Chad Smith (virtual)

Tom Smrdel (virtual)

Tim Tunnell (virtual)

Seth Turner (virtual)

**Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)**

Brock Merrill – Member (2021 GC Vice Chair)

Brian Hollis – Alternate

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)**

Steve Smith – Member (virtual)

Mark Porath – Alternate (virtual)

Matt Rabbe – Alternate (virtual)

**Environmental Entities**

Brice Krohn – Member (virtual)

Bill Taddicken – Member

Rich Walters – Member

Melissa Mosier – Alternate

**Colorado Water Users**

Alan Berryman – Member

Deb Freeman – Alternate

Jason Marks – Alternate (virtual)

Kevin Urie – Alternate

**Other Participants**

Cory Steinke &amp; Mike Drain – CNPPID (virtual)

Jim Jenniges, Jeff Shafer, John Shadle, &amp;

Michael Krondak – NPPD (virtual)

Brian Caruso, Tom Econopouly &amp; Jeff Runge –

Service (virtual)

Lauren Ris, Erik Skeie, &amp; Amy Ostdiek – State of

Colorado (virtual)

Michelle Koch – NGPC (virtual)

Mirko Kruse – Trout Raley (CO Water Users;

virtual)

Jennifer Hoeting – ISAC (virtual)

Dave Marmorek – ISAC (virtual)

Adrian Farmer – ISAC (virtual)

David Galat – ISAC (virtual)

Ned Andrews – ISAC (virtual)

Jesse Bradley – State of Nebraska (virtual)





<b>#10</b>	<b>WELCOME &amp; ADMINISTRATIVE</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Greetings, roll call, review agenda.
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Chair Ament called the meeting to order at 8:03 AM Mountain Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

<b>#11</b>	<b>PRRIP WEBSITE &amp; DATABASE</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Approve FY22 contract amendment for PRRIP website & database.
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Brei introduced the 2022 contract amendment for DJ Case.

**GC Motion:** Labonde moved and Riley seconded to approve the FY22 DJ Case contract amendment. **Contract amendment approved.**

<b>#12</b>	<b>PRRIP PERMITTING</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Discuss Approve items related to PRRIP permitting in FY22.
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Turner introduced the FY22 PRRIP permitting contract amendment and the RFP for selecting a new permitting contractor.

**GC Motion:** Riley moved and LaBonde seconded to approve the PRRIP permitting FY22 contract amendment and the associated RFP. **Contract amendment and RFP approved.**

The GC appointed the following **Selection Panel** for the PRRIP permitting RFP – Bill Brewer, Wyoming; Tom Riley, Nebraska; Brock Merrill, Reclamation; Matt Rabbe, Service; Seth Turner, EDO.

<b>#13</b>	<b>WATER ACTION PLAN (WAP)</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Update on recent WAP implementation activities.
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Turner delivered an updated presentation to the GC on the status of WAP activities, water accounting, the recapture network at Cottonwood Ranch, and the North Platte chokepoint. Freeman said it would be great to have a summary table of Program flow contributions in the WAP accounting memo. Turner agreed. Riley asked if the bypass option has floated to the critical path in terms of the Program turning its attention to that option. Turner said it is ultimately up to the GC but at this point other solutions do not seem to get the necessary capacity gains at the chokepoint. Riley asked what the Service's viewpoint is of this issue. Small said it is one of the last big hurdles left and it is still very important to the Service to get to the 3,000 cfs capacity. He is still interested in hearing more about other solutions, does the Program have to go this alone, are there other partners, etc. But for the Service, the 3,000 cfs capacity is still important. Freeman said the Extension document talks about aggressively pursuing this and it seems the Service wants us to continue on that path. Taddicken said it would be helpful to get a review of all the possible solutions that have been considered over time. Brei said there is a document created for the chokepoint workgroup that can be shared. Farnsworth said the EDO will do a quick review in March 2022. Small asked if Turner could make available to the GC sooner rather than later the summary memo provided to the chokepoint workgroup. Turner agreed. Small said Mark Porath would be available to be part of discussions leading up to the GC meeting next March. LaBonde said it would be worthwhile to refresh the group as to why 3,000 cfs is the capacity target, and also a reminder that the bypass option requires land acquisition which for the Program would mean willing sellers.

<b>#14</b>	<b>PUBLIC COMMENT</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Public comment period on PRRIP activities.
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Tom Econopouly announced that he is retiring at the beginning of January 2022 and will move on from working for the Service and on the Program. The GC thanked him for his good work and wished him





well. Small thanked Econopouly for his work and for helping him learn about the Platte River and the Program. No other public comment offered.

<b>#15</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SESSION</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> GC member discussion of sensitive land, water, and policy items.
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**GC Motion:** *Merrill moved and LaBonde seconded to enter Executive Session. GC entered Executive Session at 8:51 AM Mountain Time.*

The GC exited Executive Session at 8:59 AM Mountain Time.

<b>#16</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SESSION MOTIONS</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> GC consideration of motions discussed during Executive Session.
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None offered.

<b>#17</b>	<b>GC MEETING REVIEW &amp; WRAP-UP</b>	<b>Agenda Item Objective:</b> Discuss action items, meeting feedback, and upcoming meeting schedule.
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**Action Items & Meeting Feedback** – Farnsworth said that based upon feedback from this meeting the plan for the March 2022 GC meeting would be to come back to the GC on Other Species of Concern, more information on LiDAR of lower Platte and pallid research, and choke point options on the first day of the meeting. The second day would be dedicated to working through the Extension Science Plan with the GC. Technical details will have been discussed in more detail with technical folks during the February Science Reporting Session.

**2022 GC Chair and Vice Chair** – Merrill (Reclamation) elected 2022 GC Chair and Riley (Nebraska) elected 2022 GC Vice Chair.

**Upcoming GC meetings** (in-person meetings depend on local and national public health conditions and travel restrictions):

- **2022 PRRIP Science Plan Reporting Session** – February 15-17, 2022 @ Omaha, NE
- **March 2022 GC Quarterly Meeting** – March 8-9, 2022 @ Kearney, NE
- **June 2022 GC Quarterly Meeting** – June 7-8, 2022 @ Cheyenne, WY
- **September 2022 GC Quarterly Meeting** – September 13-14, 2022 @ Kearney, NE (in conjunction with Fall 2022 ISAC Meeting)
- **GC Virtual Special Session on FY2023 Budget/Work Plan** – November 9, 2022; 10:00 AM-12:00 PM Central Time *via Teams*
- **December 2022 GC Quarterly Meeting** – December 6-7, 2022 @ Denver, CO

<b>GC MEETING DAY #2 END</b>	<b>9:07 AM Mountain Time</b>
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### [Summary of Action Items/Decisions from December 2021 GC Quarterly Meeting](#)

- 1) Approved the September 2021 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes.
- 2) Approved the November 2021 GC Virtual Special Session minutes.
- 3) Approved FY22 PRRIP budget and work plan.
- 4) Approved FY22 EDO contract.
- 5) Approved WC monitoring RFB.
- 6) Approved the FY22 DJ Case contract amendment.



- 345 7) Approved the FY22 HDR contract amendment.
- 346 8) Approved the PRRIP permitting RFP and appointed the following RFP Selection Panel – Bill Brewer,
- 347 Wyoming; Tom Riley, Nebraska; Brock Merrill, Reclamation; Matt Rabbe, Service; Seth Turner, EDO.
- 348 9) Elected Brock Merrill (Reclamation) as 2022 GC Chair and Tom Riley (Nebraska) as 2022 GC Vice
- 349 Chair.