



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

Governance Committee (GC) Virtual Quarterly Meeting

Day #1 – Tuesday, September 14th, 2021

Governance Committee (GC)

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member
Brandon Gebhart – Alternate

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member (2021 GC Chair)
JoJo La – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Tom Riley – Member

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member
Bob Mehling – Alternate
Owen Williams - Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Devin Brundage – Member
Kent Miller – Member
Lyndon Vogt – Member
Joe Citta – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED
Bridget Barron
Justin Brei

Kristen Cognac (virtual)
Patrick Farrell
Julia Grabowski
Malinda Henry
Mallory Jaymes
Kaley Keldsen
Kari Mohlman (virtual)
Chad Smith (virtual)
Tom Smrdel
Tim Tunnell
Seth Turner (virtual) Kevin Werbylo (virtual)

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Brock Merrill – Member (2021 GC Vice Chair)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Mark Porath – Alternate (virtual)
Matt Rabbe – Alternate (virtual)

Environmental Entities

Brice Krohn – Member
Bill Taddicken – Member
Rich Walters – Member

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member
Deb Freeman – Alternate
Jason Marks – Alternate (virtual)
Kyle Whittaker – Alternate

Other Participants

Mike Drain, Scott Dickie & Dave Zorn – CNPPID
Jim Jenniges, Jeff Shafer, John Shadle, &
Michael Krondak (virtual) – NPPD
Tom Econopouly & Jeff Runge – Service (virtual)
Brandi Flyer - CPNRD
Cody Miller – Trust (virtual)
Michelle Koch – NGPC
Melissa Mosier – Audubon Nebraska
Mirko Kruse – Trout Raley (CO Water Users)
Kyle Whitaker – Northern Water
Jennifer Hoeting – ISAC (virtual)
David Galat – ISAC (virtual)
Dave Marmorek – ISAC (virtual)
Adrian Farmer – ISAC (virtual)
Matt Pillard - HDR
Melissa Mosier – Audubon Nebraska



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| #1 | WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE | Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda. |
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Introductions – Chair Ament called the meeting to order at 2:05 PM Central Time.

Agenda – No modifications offered.

Minutes – The GC approved the following minutes:

GC Motion: LaBonde moved and Riley seconded to approve the June 9, 2021, GC Virtual Quarterly Meeting minutes. Minutes approved.

GC Motion: Riley moved and Labonde seconded to approve the July 27, 2021, GC Virtual Special Session minutes. Minutes approved.

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| #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 September 1, 2021. Agenda items included an update on current land work items and Tract 20003.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC) – Turner provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met on August 3, 2021. Agenda items included leasing and recharge projects, well recapture, Platte basin hydrology, vegetation treatment at the North Platte chokepoint, June Environmental Account (EA) release, water operations considerations for the future related to the germination suppression flow. The next WAC meeting will be October 26.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC last met on July 14, 2021. Agenda items included updates on Program land management activities, results of spring 2021 whooping crane (WC) monitoring, status of 2021 tern/plover monitoring, progress on pallid sturgeon research projects, and the status of the Extension Science Plan. The TAC also discussed a plan presented by the EDO to plant violets on PRRIP properties. The next TAC meeting will be on October 13.

Finance Committee (FC) – Farnsworth provided an update on the last FC activities. The FC last met on July 14, 2021. Agenda items included a bid package for annual sediment augmentation and a discussion of the draft contracts for pallid sturgeon research (genetics and habitat/spawning).

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

- Jason Farnsworth participated in a Nebraska Water Leaders Academy panel discussion of inter-basin water management in the Platte and Republican basins on August 12, 2021, in North Platte, Nebraska.
- Jason Farnsworth presented a Program update to participants of the Nebraska Water Center annual water tour on August 18, 2021, in Sidney, Nebraska.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

There were no exhibits in June, July, or August.

**UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS**

- The Program is exhibiting at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 14, 15, and 16, 2021 in the Natural Resources Districts building.
- The Program will be exhibiting at the Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Annual Conference on September 26 through 28, 2021 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- The Program will be sponsoring the South Platte Forum on December 9th, 2021, in Westminster, Colorado.

MEDIA/OTHER

- Display of the National Recognition Award from American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) Engineering Excellence Awards competition. The Cottonwood Ranch Broad-Scale Recharge Project won the award for exceptional engineering excellence.
- Distribution of the Program's 2019/2020 Biennial Report.

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

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| #5 | PRRIP INDEXING | Agenda Item Objective: Discussion of latest PRRIP indexing. |
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Merrill discussed the status of PRRIP indexing.

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| #6 | INTERIOR LEAST TERN (ILT) DELISTING | Agenda Item Objective: Approve Program Document Addendum. |
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Rabbe discussed the latest version of the Program Document Addendum II which relates to updated language regarding the interior least tern due to that target species being federally de-listed. LaBonde asked about the status of the Service's post de-listing monitoring plan. Rabbe said no details yet but he expects something in early 2022. LaBonde asked who is working on that. Rabbe said the national lead for species monitoring and post de-listed plans. Runge said the Mississippi Field Office is the lead office on that work, a key issue is the duration of the surveys (as opposed to making any changes in the monitoring methodology).

GC Motion: Riley moved and Merrill seconded to approve Program Document Addendum II with edit to page 2 Item 4 on line 37, removing the word "may" from that sentence. **Addendum II approved as edited.**

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| #7 | PRRIP SCIENCE ACTIVITIES | Agenda Item Objective: Discuss recent AMP implementation activities. |
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Jaymes discussed the spring 2021 whooping crane (WC) monitoring report.

GC Motion: Merrill moved and Taddicken seconded to approve Spring 2021 WC Monitoring Report. **Report approved.**

Mohlman discussed the results of summer 2021 tern/plover monitoring. Keldsen discussed the results of predation research during the summer 2021 nesting season. Riley asked about "camera effects." Keldsen and Henry explained it is a measure to make sure the cameras are not a beacon for predators. Freeman asked about the plover fledgling ratio being less in 2021 than 2020. Mohlman said though the



2021 fledge ratio was somewhat smaller than in 2020, it is still much better than the very low ratios in 2018 and 2019.

Henry discussed the status of the two contracts for pallid sturgeon research (genetics and habitat/spawning). The genetics contract with Southern Illinois University and the habitat/spawning contract with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have both been fully executed.

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| #8 | INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ISAC) | Agenda Item Objective: Update from the ISAC. |
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Henry gave an update on the status of the Extension Science Plan. Riley asked about the time of day issue and how to match that to buttons the Program might be able to push to affect its relationship to WC stopovers. Riley asked what kind of tests we could do within the window of time of interest. Henry said right now the plan is more of a table-top exercise to use existing data and expected future data to analyze the relationship. Farrell added that the large time of day effect is based upon only 8 stopovers within the AHR, providing little confidence in this result. Farnsworth said the telemetry project adds more birds each year, so there is the potential to increase sample size over the next few years before telemetry equipment becomes non-functional. As we gather more data over the next few years, we will continue to reanalyze to see if this preliminary result holds true.

LaBonde asked about correlating flows to WC use, but it seems to be more of a surface area question. Henry said the Science Plan is being developed with flow as the primary hypothesis, but the basis for WC response to flow is probably a function of wetted width and depth, a secondary hypothesis that will be included under this big question. LaBonde said depth is probably not important for selection as WC flyover. Need to look at wetted perimeter or surface area to see if there is something there that pulls them out of the sky to stop.

Marmorek gave a presentation from the ISAC regarding several questions related to whooping cranes. La asked about how to tease out the influence of factors outside the control of the Program especially when working through data analyses. Marmorek said you can approach the question with two schools of thought: 1) cranes have a set of decision criteria applied uniformly across all habitats they encounter, or 2) cranes have different decision criteria applied differently across a range of habitat choices. It would probably be wise to separate out very unique habitat situations that are not informative to what happens on the Platte, such as a high-density metropolitan area or tar sands sites in Canada.

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| #9 | OTHER SPECIES OF CONCERN | Agenda Item Objective: Initial GC feedback and discussion on other species of concern. |
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Henry gave a presentation on recent discussions related to potential “other species of concern” in an effort to prompt GC discussion providing guidance for how to handle these species and factor them into development of Program documents like the Extension Science Plan. LaBonde said he interprets the Program Document language literally so that we should not spend money on non-target species of concern. Working with other programs to allow for something like planting certain plant species without a cost to the Program would be OK, or maybe some EDO staff time used in that way. But it would go against the purpose of the Program to actually spend Program dollars on this. Freeman said she remembers discussing this language, the discussions focused on this being an ESA, target species Program only. Previous discussions about species like this were related to Program management actions bumping up against species like the caddisfly and a bat species. Program action was prompted when our



management actions might impact a non-target species of concern. It was important for the GC to deal with those issues, but the discussion today is focused on species that are largely external to the Program. There may be value in understanding what species are out there, what their sensitivities might be to Program management actions, and what those links might be. She suggested thinking about big bang for the buck opportunities when they arise but was disinclined to do more than that due to Program commitments to larger issues during the Extension like pallid sturgeon and Phragmites.

Riley said the language is clear and unless there are additional resources available that we are not using, it is hard to get by the first step. This Program does not seem to be in a place to steward these other species in that fashion. Ament said we need to know how we are spending money and why. It may be a good idea from the species standpoint but we have to weigh Program priorities and budget limitations. Riley said what LaBonde said is a great opportunity to leverage efforts with other groups and be supportive of that. Ament agreed that is a good approach and the GC would be a good partner. LaBonde asked if the EDO has been provided a list of sensitive species by the Service. Henry said yes. LaBonde said it would be good for the GC to see that list, and also to do a literature search to see what kind of habitat overlaps there are and what the implications of Program management actions might be on those species over time.

Merrill said it might be worth thinking about small amounts of money be applied in a way to leverage against bigger problems down the road. We don't want to siphon off big resources from Program priorities but small bits may be worth a look. Porath said he doesn't think the language was meant to apply to a species or action that would detract from the Program overall, these seem to be more about issues of scale and optics. The Program is unique and successful, and doing the right things from a conservation perspective would further the good will earned by the Program. We don't want to detract from the Program but also want to have good information related to some of these species as we go along. The intention here is to be good stewards, which is a hallmark of the Program. Freeman said definitely want a GC final head nod on any Program actions for these species. Citta said this Program has succeeded with focus on clear goals and we need to stay the course on that. Taddicken said the Advisory Committees work well and have this foundation as well, if something bubbled up from those Committees he would feel confident it would be focused and not detract from overall Program direction or success, but GC gives final approval. Riley said he agrees with Citta that there is a roadmap for moving forward, let's keep our work between the lines going forward.

Farnsworth summarized that he heard the GC does not want to veer off into building big chunks of the Science Plan around these species and draining resources away from the target species and other critical priorities. But the GC is interested in keeping an eye open for partnership opportunities or small efforts that would help the Program avoid bigger problems in the future. Henry said the Program should not expect collaborative partners to take all the weight on this, as they are also resource/time limited. She asked whether to include a management objective for non-target species of concern in the Science Plan, similar to that which was included in the First Increment Adaptive Management Plan. Rabbe pointed out the duplicity of language in the Program document Purpose B and the Adaptive Management Plan Management Objective that has made the path forward on this issue unclear. Farnsworth said the EDO would do some "wordsmithing" to come up with a management objective for non-target species of concern to reflect today's discussion for inclusion in the Extension Science Plan.

GC MEETING DAY #1 END**5:15 PM Central Time**

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP -or- Program)****Governance Committee (GC) Virtual Quarterly Meeting**Day #2 – Wednesday, September 15th, 2021**Governance Committee (GC)****State of Wyoming**

Harry LaBonde – Member

Brandon Gebhart – Alternate

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member (2021 GC Chair)

JoJo La – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Tom Riley – Member

Jesse Bradley – Alternate (virtual)

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member

Bob Mehling – Alternate

Owen Williams - Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Devin Brundage – Member

Kent Miller – Member

Lyndon Vogt – Member

Joe Citta – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Justin Brei

Kristen Cognac (virtual)

Patrick Farrell

Julia Grabowski

Malinda Henry

Mallory Jaymes

Kaley Keldsen

Kari Mohlman (virtual)

Chad Smith (virtual)

Tom Smrdel

Tim Tunnell

Seth Turner (virtual)

Kevin Werbylo (virtual)

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Brock Merrill – Member (2021 GC Vice Chair)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Mark Porath – Alternate (virtual)

Matt Rabbe – Alternate (virtual)

Environmental Entities

Brice Krohn – Member

Bill Taddicken – Member

Rich Walters – Member

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member

Deb Freeman – Alternate

Jason Marks – Alternate (virtual)

Other Participants

Mike Drain & Dave Zorn – CNPPID

Jim Jenniges (in-person), John Shadle,

Jeff Shafer, & Michael Krondak (virtual) – NPPD

Tom Econopouly & Jeff Runge – Service (virtual)

Michelle Koch – NGPC (virtual)

Cody Miller – Trust (virtual)

Keith Koupal – NGPC (virtual)

Melissa Mosier – Audubon Nebraska

Mirko Kruse – Trout Raley (CO Water Users)

Jennifer Hoeting – ISAC (virtual)

David Galat – ISAC (virtual)

Adrian Farmer – ISAC (virtual)



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| #10 | WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE | Agenda Item Objective: Greetings, roll call, review agenda. |
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Chair Ament called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

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| #11 | INDEPENDENT SCIENTIFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ISAC) | Agenda Item Objective: Discuss plan for ISAC administration and management during the Extension. |
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Smith and Farnsworth discussed the structure and function of the ISAC and provided options and ideas for GC consideration relative to the process of facilitation the identification and selection of potential new ISAC members going forward.

GC Decision: LaBonde moved and Taddicken seconded to direct the EDO to implement Option #3 as described in the EDO memo for ISAC Member Nomination Administration, with the addition of seeking names of potential candidates from current ISAC members. **Motion approved.**

GC Decision: Riley moved and Merrill seconded to appoint an ISAC Member Selection Panel comprised of the following members: one (1) member from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; one (1) member representing PRRIP conservation entities; three (3) total members representing the PRRIP states of Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska (one member per state); and Dr. Jennifer Hoeting as the current ISAC member advisor. **Motion approved.**

The GC committed to identifying individuals for the Selection Panel within the next week.

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| #12 | VISION FOR AN ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE PLATTE RIVER (VESPR) | Agenda Item Objective: VESPR discussion with the GC. |
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Mosier delivered a presentation on the foundation, purpose and vision of VESPR. Riley asked Mosier about her work for Audubon and what is the governing structure of VESPR. Mosier said she coordinates meetings, agendas, questions for group discussion, etc. But the work of the group is informal. Riley asked about the inclusion of the University of Nebraska and wondered if Melissa is representing the whole university. Mosier said VESPR is working with a couple of professors at UNL including Dr. Craig Allen and also Human Dimensions professors. Riley asked about VESPR staff. Mosier said the Playa Lakes group has a staff member in Human Dimensions that works in part on the Platte River basin with a portion of her time. Riley said there does not appear to be a formal governing structure. Mosier agreed and Taddicken said it is just a way to coordinate informally with a wide group trying to get consensus on a vision and work on the ground. Riley asked how the vision for VESPR was developed and how decisions are made going forward. Taddicken said that is a good question and we are learning as we go. Krohn said this compliments some of the discussion the GC had yesterday about how to tackle other species of concern and the desire to seek partnerships for that work with and beyond the Program.

La asked about funding sources and priorities. Mosier said that is a still a work in progress. La asked if the group anticipates asking the PRRIP for money. Mosier said no, Taddicken said there could be something down the road like seeing if there could be any cooperation on a grant request. Riley asked if somebody like Krohn is representing the Trust in this role on VESPR. Krohn said they will partner on things that match the direction of the Trust. Riley asked the same of Porath. Porath thanked Mosier for



the presentation and said the important thing to realize is that each group has different responsibilities and the Service looks broadly at all species. This is a matter of getting together and talking through good ideas, the Service is aware of the work of VESPR and being a partner in all conservation efforts like this.

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| #13 | WATER ACTION PLAN (WAP) | Agenda Item Objective: Update on recent WAP implementation activities. |
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Turner gave an update on the latest WAP activities. Werbylo gave an update on the Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge at Cottonwood Ranch, the well recapture network near this project, and a separate contracting issue related to securing help with PRRIP permitting needs going forward. Werbylo reminded that option #2 for competitive selection would probably require securing HDR services for the first 3 months of 2022 as the bidding and review process is expected to lead to final GC approval in March of 2022. Riley asked how long we have been working under the permitting sole-source contract with HDR. Werbylo said since 2018. Merrill said sole source does not look good after a while, HDR will likely have a good shot at it through competitive selection. He suggested developing an RFP and budgeting for this accordingly in the FY22 budget. The GC concurred and Farnsworth agreed to move ahead that way.

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| #14 | LAND PLAN | Agenda Item Objective: Update on PRRIP land-related activities. |
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Tunnell gave an update on recent land management activities on PRRIP property at the Chapman Complex. Riley asked what tree species are being logged. Tunnell said cottonwoods and cedar trees mostly. Riley said the cottonwood trees largely go to make pallets at the mill in Kenesaw.

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| #15 | PUBLIC COMMENT | Agenda Item Objective: Public comment period on PRRIP activities. |
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None offered.

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| #16 | EXECUTIVE SESSION | Agenda Item Objective: GC member discussion of sensitive land, water, and policy items. |
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Strauch moved and Riley seconded to enter Executive Session. GC entered Executive Session at 10:39 AM Central Time.

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| #17 | EXECUTIVE SESSION MOTIONS | Agenda Item Objective: GC consideration of motions discussed during Executive Session. |
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GC Motion: Merrill moved and LaBonde seconded to cease pursuit of Tract 2103 as possible plus-up acres for the Extension land acreage goal. **Motion approved.**

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| #18 | GC MEETING REVIEW & WRAP-UP | Agenda Item Objective: Discuss action items, meeting feedback, and upcoming meeting schedule. |
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Action Items & Meeting Feedback – None.

2021 GC Meetings:

- GC Virtual Special Session – **November 10, 2021**; discussion of FY22 budget and work plan
- GC In-Person Quarterly Meeting – **December 7-8, 2021 @ Denver, CO**

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| GC MEETING DAY #2 END | 11:11 AM Central Time |
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Summary of Action Items/Decisions from September 2021 GC Quarterly Meeting

- 1) Approved the June 2021 GC Virtual Quarterly Meeting minutes.
- 2) Approved the July 2021 GC Virtual Special Session minutes.
- 3) Approved Program Document Addendum II with edit to remove “why” from the first page.
- 4) Approved the Spring 2021 whooping crane monitoring report.
- 5) Directed the EDO to implement Option #3 (hybrid process) as described in the EDO memo for ISAC Member Nomination Administration, with the addition of seeking names of potential candidates from current ISAC members.
- 6) Appointed an ISAC Member Selection Panel comprised of the following members: one (1) member from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; one (1) member representing PRRIP conservation entities; three (3) total members representing the PRRIP states of Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska (one member per state); and Dr. Jennifer Hoeting as the current ISAC member advisor.
- 7) Agreed to cease pursuit of Tract 2103 as possible plus-up acres for the Extension land acreage goal.