



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
In Person PRRIP Conference Room & Teams Conference Call
October 27, 2021

Meeting Participants

Land Advisory Committee (LAC)

State of Wyoming

Jay Smith, Alternate, Wyoming State Engineer's Office

State of Colorado

JoJo La – Member, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Erik Skeie – Alternate, Colorado Water Conservation Board

State of Nebraska

Ted LaGrange – Member, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Elizabeth Esseks, Nebraska

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Tim Tunnell
Jason Farnsworth
Mallory Jaymes

Other Participants

None

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Matt Rabbe – Member, USFWS

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR)

Brock Merrill – Member, USBOR

Power Districts

Dave Zorn – (Chair) Member, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
John Shadle – Member, Nebraska Public Power District
Jim Jenniges – Alternate, Nebraska Public Power District

Environmental Entities

Josh Wiese - Alternate Crane Trust
Tim Smith - Crane Trust
Melissa Moser – (Vice-Chair) Member, Audubon Rowe Sanctuary

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

Lyndon Vogt – Member, CPNRD

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

John Thorburn - TBNRD

Local Nebraska Rep. – Joint CPNRD/TBNRD

Jim Bendfelt - Landowner

**Welcome and Administrative**

Chairman Zorn called the meeting to order at 9:30 am Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions. Zorn asked for agenda modifications. None were offered. Zorn asked for the LAC's recommendation on the minutes of the April 5, 2021, and September 1, 2021, LAC meetings. John Shadle made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 1, 2021 LAC meeting. Motion seconded by Jim Bendfelt and passed unanimously. Melissa Moser made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 1, 2021, LAC meeting. Motion seconded by Jim Bendfelt and passed unanimously.

General Update and Other Committee Coordination

Merrill updated LAC on the activities of the TAC. Palustrine wetland memo was discussed at the last TAC meeting and take home was that as long as the Program owned Fox, Liehs and DeBoer, the tracts should be managed as whooping crane habitat. If disposal was to happen, it should be done so with a conservation easement. No matter what- Fox tract will be retained in Program ownership. Keep doing what we are doing but keep in mind that Deboer and Liehs could be used to offset the cost of buying additional land that might fit better in habitat complex ownership. Discussed water management and using EA water for filling the CWR BSR project during whooping crane season. Final recommendation was to not use EA water to fill project during whooping crane migration when excess flows are not available. Received an update on the 2021 LT/ PP predator management study, discussion of reach-wide geomorphology and vegetation monitoring, update on extension science plan, update on pallid sturgeon research, discussed wet meadow hydrology study and to move forward with study as a tool to informing second increment water use by GC and talked about non target and non-listed species of concern and decided to put together a working group to assemble a list.

La updated the LAC on the activities of the WAC. Discussion of project updates, recharge, hydrology, chokepoint, and recapture network. EDO thinking critically on what to do with chokepoint issues. Update on BSR and filling will not be done with EA water. Water project accounting needs to be updated. Lastly reviewed 2022 water budget items.

Jason provided GC update. Last meeting was in September, land related items discussed at meeting was primarily Species of Concern. Program land acquisition includes lots of acres of grassland and wet meadows with focus on ESA and species recovery, may or not be whooping crane habitat, what do you do how managed- default to manage for structure transition into extension and science priorities and species of concern keep coming up. GC wants a bottom-up approach looking at ~300 species out of NGPC that occur on central Platte River basin and whittle down to specific species that could have a Program nexus and that we could provide potential benefits. Working group has not meet but looking at first quarter next year. GC will make call on case-by-case basis. Meyer tract will close next Monday. GC did extend the license agreement until April 2022 to accommodate time for farm sale. Will continue to pursue additional acquisition opportunities in the Chapman Complex.

Tunnell gave an update on Land Milestone summary. Tract 2101 closes soon and will add 580 acres to the 1500 ac goal for the extension leaving a balance of 38.4 acres. Brief discussion of Tract 2102 and that negotiations will continue after Tract 2101 is acquired. Farnsworth mention



that next year we should evaluate water properties by Elm Creek and have a discussion with GC to take lands off water books and add to habitat acres. Discussed lease at Broadfoot south that will expire in a couple of years. Likely habitat will be gone as the miner plans to mine through it.

2022 Land Plan Budget & Meeting Schedule

Information and discussion

Tunnell gave an overview of 2022 land related budget line items and discussion of estimated expenditure for each line item and estimated income per complex. Farnsworth discussed lack of budget for in channel disking for next year to allow to run experiment to evaluate in channel vegetation next fall. Zorn asked for the LAC's recommendation on the 2021 Land Plan Budget. Lyndon Vogt made a motion to approve the 2021 Land Plan Budget. Motion seconded by John Thorburn and passed unanimously.

LAC meeting schedule for 2022 was discussed and group decided that quarterly meetings will be best on Wednesday mornings. Tunnell will send calendar invites for each meeting so that members can schedule accordingly. Additional meetings will be called on an as needed basis. Discussed a possible field tour of properties next spring.

Scheduled quarterly LAC meetings are:

February 23, 2022

May 25, 2022

August 24, 2022

October 19, 2022

Palustrine Wetland Memo

Information and discussion

Tunnell gave a very brief overview of the Palustrine wetland memo regarding management of the Fox, DeBoer and Liehs tracts. The TAC's discussion resulted in agreement that the Fox tract will be retained in Program ownership, but DeBoer and Liehs could be used to offset the cost of buying additional land that might fit better in habitat complex ownership. If sold, there should be conservation easements placed on them to protect the wetlands. In the meantime, continue pumping supplemental ground water on the Fox and Liehs tracts to wetlands during fall and spring migration. LAC discussion centered around TAC's recommendation. Shadle interjected that these off-channel wetland tracts have long history with the Program back to the Cooperative Agreement days and were fought hard to get into the Program and he would not support these being disposable properties for complex river properties. LaGrange agreed and added that depending on what any future opportunities might be- should keep options open- but these were purchased for a purpose and that just because there has been no use to date doesn't mean that there is not potential habitat for use in the future. Thorburn expressed that he doesn't consider DeBoer and Liehs to be interchangeable. Liehs requires more management and has less habitat potential than DeBoer. Should address each separately. LaGrange pointed out that these tracts should be referred to as Non-Complex, Off channel wetlands (i.e., not adjacent to river palustrine wetlands) rather than broad category of Palustrine wetlands only. Raabe asked about natural flooding frequency on DeBoer since habitat management has occurred. Tunnell discussed past restoration management on the tract and indicated that there has been standing water every



migration since ownership and that vegetation management focused on structure and invasive phragmites control. Conclusion was that the DeBoer tract does not require a supplemental water strategy currently. Future strategy on DeBoer will need to focus on obtaining certified acres rather than infrastructure. Raabe asked about supplemental water on Liehs and Fox. Farnsworth pointed out that if you want whooping crane habitat on either tract - supplemental water is required. Tunnell asked about abandoning the flooded cornfield objective on the dryland field at Liehs. TAC has already agreed to abandon strategy. Tunnell discussed past flooding of field and management with no use. LAC discussion centered around abandoning the flooded corn field but to continue supplemental pumping to the wetland. LaGrange pointed out issues, confusion with options on memo. Tunnell will address changes in the memo. Shadle asked about TAC's decision of abandonment of the flooded cornfield strategy being unanimous. Jenniges pointed out that it is such a limited ability to do it and only one we have- doesn't serve much purpose from the experimental standpoint. No one on TAC opposed to discontinue pumping. Farnsworth pointed out that this is a weird science-policy-land management intersection. We know that palustrine wetlands are the most used roost habitat throughout the migration corridor, and we know that we can't develop a giant string of palustrine wetlands along the central Platte so what should be done with the resources you have. Good input and we will keep it in good habitat. From the policy perspective, points to the GC should be that there is a sensitivity to disposing noncomplex acres and transitioning to complex acres due to the long history of fighting to get them. The decision would require a good trade off discussion, and we are a long way away from that decision from a resource allocation perspective. From the past when we sold excess acres it was in the context that we were buying existing conservation land and we needed to defray cost of buying land that wasn't going to count as new habitat.

Zorn summarized the discussion as a consensus to keep all 3 tracts, manage as whooping crane habitat, discontinue flooding Liehs cornfield, keep pumping Fox and Liehs wetlands, potentially leave developing supplemental water strategy at DeBoer but not to actively pursue at this time. Zorn ask for additional discussion or if there was interest in making motion regarding Palustrine wetland memo. Farnsworth pointed out that a motion is not needed, and the memo can be provided as general guidance that is fine. Thorburn pointed out that the LAC is being asked to approve the memo and that the LAC will be taking action on the memo as revised. Tunnell said that edits can be made to the memo and sent back out to LAC members. Farnsworth stated that the memo was developed for information purposes to spur conversation. Typically, we don't ask the LAC to approve these types of things to send to GC unless it's a specific land evaluation making a recommendation to buy or not buy land. Farnsworth suggestion is that Zorn's summary of the LAC discussion be inserted at the end of the revised memo and include the TAC's summary as well. Generally, TAC and LAC are in agreement. Tunnell will make edits to memo and distribute to LAC members along with minutes.

Reorganize Officers

Zorn opened floor for nomination as chair and vice-chair. Currently Zorn as Chair and Mossier as vice chair. Vogt asked is there a reason we must change? John Shadle made a motion to keep officers as currently appointed. Motion seconded by Lyndon Vogt and passed unanimously.



135 **Public Forum**

136 Chairman Zorn asked for public comments, none were offered.

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138 **The next LAC meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2022.**

139 With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Zorn at 11:00 a.m.