



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

**TO:** PRRIP Governance Committee (GC)  
**FROM:** Executive Director's Office (EDO)  
**RE:** Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) Structure and Management for the Extension  
**DATE:** August 30, 2021

### REQUESTED GC ACTION (SEPTEMBER 2021 QUARTERLY MEETING):

- 1) *Discuss this ISAC structure and management plan and provide general guidance and concurrence.*
- 2) *GC Decision: provide direction on ISAC member nomination administration.*
- 3) *GC Decision: seat an ISAC Member Selection Panel.*

### BACKGROUND

The recommendations below for ISAC structure and management through the rest of the Extension track the ISAC Charter (Final Program Document, Attachment 6, Appendix I, 12/07/2005; **attached**). The proposed process for identifying new members, cycling on/off of ISAC members, the development and approval of the annual ISAC scope of work and budget, and other procedural steps below follow the general guidance in the ISAC Charter and reflect lessons learned since the ISAC was first appointed and began its work in March 2009. Key points:

- **ISAC Membership:** The ISAC Charter envisions an ISAC “composed of approximately five independent scientists knowledgeable in technical areas critical to the implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan.” Since its inception, the ISAC has always had six (6) members appointed by the GC based on areas of expertise identified by the Program as important for evaluating Program learning and the implementation of Program science. The recommendations below propose retaining the 6-member ISAC structure.
- **Length of Appointments:** Two current ISAC members have been on the Committee since it began in 2009, the other four members have been on the Committee for more than one 3-year term. The recommendations below propose refreshing ISAC membership during the Extension but doing so in a staggered approach that does not immediately purge all institutional knowledge from the Committee at once.
- **Appointment Procedures:** Per the Charter, members of the ISAC are appointed by the GC. The GC will base ISAC member appointments on candidates submitted by a Selection Panel seated by the GC and convened by the ED. Nominations can come from a wide variety of sources but the vetting process will specifically address the issue of independence to ensure that candidates do not represent the interests of the nominating Program entity or any other Program-affiliated entity. The nomination process includes a significant administrative component involving communication and coordination with prospective nominees leading to development of a report that presents a roster of potential ISAC member candidates for Selection Panel and GC consideration.



- ISAC Administration: The EDO provides administrative oversight and staff support to the ISAC. This includes development of the annual scope of work, communication of specific questions for consideration by the ISAC, and responding to ISAC questions/feedback.

## EXTENSION ISAC MEMBERSHIP – GENERAL PROCESS

### 1. Appointment Procedures

Based on the ISAC Charter, the following process is recommended for appointing new ISAC members:

- a) GC seats a Selection Panel – to be convened by the ED, for the purposes of reviewing potential nominees to the ISAC and recommending ISAC member appointments to the GC. This Selection Panel will be re-convened any time vacancies arise on the ISAC.
- b) Solicitation of ISAC Nominees – based on agreed-upon and needed areas of expertise as identified by the GC, Program Advisory Committees, and ED; solicit nominees from the GC, sponsoring entities, other agencies, groups, professional societies, the National Research Council (NRC), and the public.
- c) Development of ISAC Candidate Report – compile a list of ISAC candidates based on nomination process detailed in Step b) above; contact nominees to verify their willingness to serve; document expertise, experience, and credentials and verify willingness to sign a Conflict of Interest Statement; and organize information into an ISAC Selection Candidate Report.
- d) Review ISAC Candidate Report – Selection Panel reviews candidate report and develops final recommendations to the GC for ISAC member appointments.
- e) GC appoints ISAC members – Selection Panel presents ISAC member appointment recommendations to the GC and the GC appoints new ISAC members.
- f) Convene ISAC and begin work – EDO develops annual ISAC scope of work and budget for GC review and approval and facilitates ISAC activities.

### 2. Length of Appointments

As specified in the ISAC Charter and as has been common practice with the ISAC since 2009, members will generally be appointed for 3-year terms with the option of renewal or adjusting membership term length at the discretion of the GC. A possible staggered approach to ISAC terms is presented below for GC discussion and consideration that would ensure the Program could capitalize on institutional knowledge and provide a more balanced and informative transition process for new ISAC members.

### 3. Membership Considerations

Specific ISAC membership considerations identified in the Charter (high achievement in relevant scientific discipline, strong record of scientific accomplishment, high standards of scientific integrity, ability to forge creative solutions to complex problems, etc.) will be retained. **Table 1** details the current ISAC members and their associated categories of expertise. **Table 2** details a possible ISAC membership cycling structure during the Extension including an updated set of expertise categories based on Program science learning priorities and the anticipated focus of the Extension Science Plan.

**Table 1.** Current ISAC members (all contracted terms end in March 2022).

ISAC Member	Area of Expertise
Jennifer Hoeting	Ecological statistics
Dave Marmorek	Adaptive management and decision-making
David Galat	Large river ecology and fish ecology (pallid sturgeon)
Adrian Farmer	Avian ecology
Ned Andrews	Geomorphology/sediment
Brian Bledsoe	Vegetation/flow/sediment

**Table 2.** Possible ISAC membership in the Extension.

Area of Expertise	Extension ISAC Membership
Ecological statistics	April 2022-March 2025: Jennifer Hoeting April 2025-March 2028: Jennifer Hoeting April 2028-March 2031: <b>new member</b> April 2031-March 2034 (move into Second Increment): renew member
Adaptive management and decision-making	April 2022-March 2025: Dave Marmorek April 2025-March 2028: <b>new member</b> April 2028-March 2031: renew member April 2031-March 2034 (move into Second Increment): renew member
Fish ecology (pallid sturgeon focus)	April 2022-March 2024: David Galat April 2024-March 2027: <b>new member</b> April 2027-March 2030: renew member April 2030-March 2033 (move into Second Increment): renew member
Avian ecology (whooping crane focus)	April or September 2022-March 2025: <b>new member</b> April 2025-March 2028: renew member April 2028-March 2031: renew member April 2031-March 2034 (move into Second Increment): renew member
Fluvial geomorphology (braided river focus)	April or September 2022-March 2025: <b>new member</b> April 2025-March 2028: renew member April 2028-March 2031: <b>new member</b> April 2031-March 2034 (move into Second Increment): renew member
River restoration (vegetation focus)	April or September 2022-March 2025: <b>new member</b> April 2025-March 2028: renew member April 2028-March 2031: renew member April 2031-March 2034 (move into Second Increment): renew member

## EXTENSION ISAC MANAGEMENT

As identified in the ISAC Charter, general ISAC tasks include:

- Advising the GC and ED on implementation of the Extension Science Plan, including providing an independent opinion on the design and implementation of science activities and adaptive management, including the scientific rigor of proposed management actions and associated monitoring and research.



- Reviewing scientific information collected by the Program and providing an independent opinion on these results in terms of the response (or lack thereof) of the river and target species to management interventions.
- Responding to specific questions of a scientific nature from the GC and EDO.
- Advising the GC and EDO on the need for additional peer review.

#### General approach to facilitating these ISAC tasks during the Extension:

- The ISAC will select a Chair and Vice Chair each year.
- Conduct at least one in-person ISAC meeting each year in Kearney, NE to facilitate face-to-face interaction among the ISAC and between the ISAC and Program participants and to allow for field trips to Program properties and management action locations.
- Conduct 2-3 virtual ISAC meetings each year to explore specific questions of scientific interest to the Program as developed by the GC and EDO.
- ISAC participation in and presentations at each GC Quarterly Meeting.
- ISAC participation in the annual Science Plan Reporting Session, currently conducted in February each year in either Omaha, NE or Denver, CO.
- The EDO will be responsible for: providing administrative oversight and staff support for all aspects of ISAC work including developing meeting agendas, distributing documents, coordinating communication among ISAC members and between the Program, refining the list of questions and tasks the ISAC is to focus on for each meeting, facilitating all ISAC meetings, and working with the ISAC Chair and Vice Chair to develop ISAC presentations and documents; and drafting the annual scope of work and budget for the ISAC as part of the annual PRRIP budget and work plan development process.

#### ISAC MEMBER NOMINATION ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY

As noted above, there is a substantial administrative component to the ISAC nomination and candidate identification process. When first establishing the ISAC in 2008/2009 and then when cycling 2-3 new members onto the ISAC during the first half of the First Increment, the Program selected an independent consultant (Dr. Tom St. Clair) to administer the nomination process. Dr. St. Clair's work consisted of developing a set of possible experts to consider for open ISAC spots by soliciting names from the Program (EDO, GC, TAC, other Program participants) and generally working to identify possible ISAC member candidates through other sources; screening potential nominees for willingness to be considered as a candidate; gathering relevant qualification information; and providing the Program with an ISAC candidate report for the GC's consideration in making ISAC appointments.

At this later stage in Program maturity, the GC has the options of 1) again soliciting an external entity to administer the nomination/candidate process, 2) tasking EDO staff with those responsibilities as part of the EDO's broader role in providing administrative oversight and staff support to the ISAC, or 3) taking a hybrid approach whereby the nomination of candidates comes from entities within the Program as well as a widely publicized external solicitation of candidates administered by the EDO. These options are further described below:

##### *Option 1: External Administration*

Under this option, the EDO would develop a multi-year administrative services Request for Proposals (RFP) for GC review and approval at the December 2021 GC meeting. We would recommend the ISAC



Selection Panel also serve as the selection panel for the administrative services RFP. Proposal ranking, contractor selection, and contract development would be completed in time for GC approval of a multi-year contract at the March 2022 GC meeting. Nominee identification could begin as soon as the Selection Panel is convened with the intent that potential ISAC nominees be provided to the contractor for immediate screening and ISAC Selection Candidate Report development. The report and Selection Panel recommendations would likely be ready for GC action in September 2022.

PRRIP budget implications – For this option, the EDO estimates a PRRIP cost of \$50,000-\$60,000 to identify candidates for 2-3 open ISAC member seats in FY22 and a PRRIP cost of \$30,000/year for subsequent out-years during the Extension when the need arises to identify candidates for 1-2 open ISAC member seats.

#### *Option 2: Internal Administration*

Under this option, Dr. Chadwin Smith of the EDO would be responsible for carrying out the administrative aspects of the candidate nomination, screening, and report development process in support of the Selection Panel. The Selection Panel would be convened shortly after the September 2021 GC Quarterly Meeting and the identification of and information gathering related to potential ISAC member nominees would begin immediately with the objective of the ISAC Selection Candidate Report and the Selection Panel recommendations for ISAC membership being ready for GC action in March 2022.

PRRIP budget implications – For this option, PRRIP costs would be limited to additional EDO staff time. Under this option, approximately 20% of Dr. Smith's time allocated annually to the PRRIP would be devoted to ISAC member nomination administration and the facilitation of ISAC work.

#### *Option 3: Hybrid – Internal Administration Plus an Additional External Candidate Solicitation Process*

This option is the same as Option 2 with the additional step of ISAC member candidate solicitation through a public advertisement process administered by Dr. Chadwin Smith of the EDO. The Selection Panel and the EDO would jointly develop a short "position description" for open ISAC member seats and develop a standard set of candidate information requirements for Program review. It is anticipated ISAC member openings would be posted on academic job boards, social media channels based upon area of expertise, academic society and journal newsletters, and agency websites to cast a broad net for candidates from academic, governmental, and private sectors. Dr. Smith would compile candidate applications and the Selection Panel would determine which, if any, of the candidates from this External Candidate Solicitation Process should be included as part of the overall ISAC Candidate Report. This option retains the objective of the ISAC Selection Candidate Report and the Selection Panel recommendations for ISAC membership being ready for GC action in March 2022.

PRRIP budget implications - For this option, PRRIP costs would primarily be associated with additional EDO staff time. Under this option, approximately 30% of Dr. Smith's time allocated annually to the PRRIP would be devoted to ISAC member nomination administration and the facilitation of ISAC work. This option may also result in minor PRRIP costs associated with public advertisement of the ISAC member position description.

**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Attachment 6**  
**Appendix I**

**Independent Scientific Advisory Committee Charter**  
**December 7, 2005**

**I. BACKGROUND**

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) establishes an Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) to accomplish the purposes specified in this charter. The ISAC will provide independent scientific advice to the Executive Director (ED) and to the Governance Committee (GC), as requested, on scientific issues during the First Increment of the Program. The ISAC will be composed of approximately five independent scientists knowledgeable in technical areas critical to the implementation of the Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) (Program Attachment 3).

**II. MEMBERSHIP**

Members of the ISAC should be experienced scientists with demonstrated achievement and high standing in their field. They will be chosen to fill specific areas of expertise that are needed by the Program. There should be a balance between scientists with specific knowledge of the Platte River basin and those with more broad and diverse experience. Members will be expected to provide objective scientific advice in a timely and professional manner, and work effectively in multi-disciplinary setting. ISAC membership will be open to individuals employed by all agencies, institutions, and organizations, with the exception that members may not be salaried employees of members of the GC or organizations with specific mandated representation on the Land Advisory Committee, Water Advisory Committee, or Technical Advisory Committee.

**1. Appointment Procedures**

Members of the ISAC will be appointed by the GC. The GC will base their appointments on candidates submitted by a Selection Panel selected by the GC and convened by the ED. The Panel will review nominees and make recommendations to the GC. Nominations to the ISAC shall be solicited from the GC, sponsoring entities, as well as other agencies, groups, professional societies, the National Research Council, and the public. While nominations to the ISAC may come from any of a variety of sources, members of the ISAC are independent scientists and do not represent the interests of the nominating entity or any other entity. The Selection Panel will pay careful attention to suggestions by advisory committees and the GC regarding membership and needed expertise. A selection panel will be convened when vacancies arise on the ISAC.

**2. Length of Appointments**

The initial appointment to the ISAC will be for one to three years. Appointments can be renewed as requested by the GC.

### **3. Membership Considerations**

Considerations will include, but not be limited to, the following when members are selected:

- a. High achievement in a relevant scientific discipline which may include biology, ecology, fisheries, hydrology, river geomorphology, statistics, wildlife ecology, and other relevant disciplines.
- b. A strong record of scientific accomplishment documented by contribution to the peer-reviewed literature or other evidence of creative scientific accomplishment.
- c. High standards of scientific integrity, independence and objectivity.
- d. Ability to forge creative solutions to complex problems.
- e. Interest in and ability to work effectively in an interdisciplinary setting.

## **III. COMMITTEE PURPOSES**

The ISAC is to foster a scientific approach to adaptive management, monitoring and research in meeting the goals and objectives of the Program by providing advice to the GC and the ED. The ISAC must retain as much independence from the adaptive management program as possible. This independence requires that their role focus on reviewing products produced by the Program.

The tasks to be undertaken by ISAC will be identified in a scope of work prepared by the ED and approved by the GC. The tasks may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Advise the ED and GC on implementation of the AMP in two primary areas:
  - a. The ISAC should provide an independent opinion on the design of the adaptive management program and associated monitoring and research, most likely after completion of the final AMP and first year work plan in October 2006 and in subsequent years. The focus of this opinion should be on the scientific rigor of the proposed management activities and associated monitoring and research.
  - b. The ISAC should be asked to review the scientific information collected and to provide their opinion of these results in terms of the response (or lack of response) to management interventions.
2. Respond to specific questions of scientific nature from the GC and ED. Questions for consideration by the ISAC should be submitted through the ED.
3. Advise the GC and the ED on the need for additional peer review.

## **IV. COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

1. The ISAC shall select a Chairperson and Vice Chair annually, with such selection being noted in the official minutes of the meeting where elections are held.
2. The Chair, and Vice Chair in his/her absence, is the executive officer of the ISAC. The Chair conducts the meetings; seeing that business is conducted in a timely and efficient manner and that each member has the opportunity to be heard.
3. The ED will provide administrative oversight and staff support to the ISAC.

4. The ED will act as the point of contact for requests to the ISAC. The ED will ensure that these communications are conveyed to the ISAC.
5. ISAC will receive a stipend to be determined by the GC. Members not otherwise reimbursed by agencies or institutions may request reimbursement of actual expenses and per diem associated with attending ISAC meetings or other activities as directed by the ED or GC. The ED will work with the appropriate entities to develop the procedure for reimbursement requests.