



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**EDO Office, Kearney, Conference Call, and WebEx**  
**October 21, 2019**

**Meeting Participants**

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

**Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**

**State of Colorado**

Jojo La – Member

**State of Wyoming**

Barry Lawrence - Member

**State of Nebraska**

Carol Flaute – Member

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

**Environmental Entities**

Rich Walters – Member

Andrew Pierson – Alternate

**Upper Platte Water Users**

**Colorado Water Users**

**Downstream Water Users**

Dave Zorn – Member

Mark Czaplewski – Member

Jim Jenniges – Member

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

Jason Farnsworth

Chad Smith

Dave Baasch

Patrick Farrell

Mallory Irvine

Kari Mohlman

Kaley Keldsen

**Other Participants**

Andrew Caven – Trust

Tom Econopouly – USFWS



### **Welcome and Administrative**

Baasch called the meeting to order, the group did a roll call, and Baasch asked for any agenda modifications. Baasch informed the TAC the Dippel Land Management Plan would be discussed during the meeting.

### **TAC Minutes**

Baasch asked the group if there were any suggested changes for the June 3, 2019 TAC Minutes.

**Walters moved to approve the June 3, 2019 TAC minutes; Jenniges seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

### **Spring 2019 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report**

Baasch led the discussion on the Spring 2019 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report. La stated there was a lot of discussion during the Adaptive Management Reporting Session about discontinuing placing decoys and potentially discontinuing whooping crane monitoring efforts all together given over 90% of PRRIP sightings are in the FWS database. Baasch stated that a majority of the FWS database sightings on the Platte River are due to Program monitoring efforts and otherwise would have likely gone undetected. Caven agreed and stated the decline in FWS sightings would probably be most noticeable in the fall when there aren't a lot of people on the river. Baasch said whether or not we place decoys wouldn't have any budget implications since all decoys are placed and retrieved by EDO staff. Caven said he would support placing multiple decoys rather than only single decoys to see how that might affect detection rates. Protocol modifications will be discussed at the next TAC meeting early in 2020.

**Czaplewski moved to approve the Spring 2019 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report as final; La seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

### **Off-Channel Sand and Water Update**

Baasch provided an update on the status of Off-channel Sand and Water investigations and informed the group the Land Review Committee evaluated 4 potential Off-channel Sand and Water Sites and plans to get a LAC recommendation for the GC pursue the Overton Sand and Gravel site near Lexington at the upcoming LAC Meeting. Baasch also mentioned Lilly Wood River is an option that will be reviewed during 2020 as well. Smith asked if the Land Review Committee was looking at specific areas or how sites were being identified; Baasch said all existing sites are being considered. La asked why the Program was pursuing additional OCSW habitat; Baasch stated the additional 60 acres was what the GC decided it would acquire during the 2016 SDM process in order to meet the Service's objective of maintaining stable populations of terns and plovers on the central Platte. Farnsworth mentioned that the Lakeside sandpit is another option for obtaining 20-30 acres of OCSW nesting habitat while it's being mined during the next 10-20 years.

### **PRRIP Predator Deterrent Study Plans**

Baasch and Farrell informed the TAC about the discussions that occurred at the 2019 AMP Reporting Session and with the sub-group call the previous week and presented information about the EDO's plans during 2020. Farrell stated the sub-committees recommendation was to try woven wire turtle exclosure fencing at a site or 2 during 2020 and consider turtle trapping at other sites to



reduce the abundance of turtle eggs on the nesting areas which seem to be attracting predators. Strobe lights would also be used in the experimental design which appears will take 8-10 years to obtain enough power to detect an effect of management actions on productivity. La asked how treatments were assigned to the 9 sites; Baasch said treatments were randomly assigned and would be rotated every year. La stated another strategy would be to target management activities at sites with more predators; Farrell said the objective of randomizing the design is to maximize contrast. Farnsworth stated this approach is a way to maximize learning in an adaptive management framework. Jenniges said if productivity increases rapidly due to management activities than the study plan could be aborted and management strategies applied to all sites within a few years if desired. Caven asked how close the fencing would be placed to the waterline given it fluctuates throughout the year; Baasch said we would attempt to place the fence so that it is not under water when water levels rise. Caven stated the Trust had very low capture rates for turtles in their research studies. La asked if there has ever been a long-term study using strobe lights or trapping to increase productivity; Baasch and others said they aren't aware of any long-term studies, but that short-term studies indicated strobe lights were very effective in increasing tern and plover productivity. Jenniges stated we should probably monitor effectiveness of fencing and trapping at excluding turtles. Baasch stated the next step would be for the EDO to develop the experimental design that will be reviewed by the TAC early in 2020. A sub-group composed of Jenniges, Czaplowski, Rabbe, Zorn and La would review and discuss the study design prior to the next TAC meeting in 2020.

### **Dippel Land Management Plan**

Tunnell stated the Dippel Land Management Plan is strictly for the Dippel Tract and does not include potential management agreements on neighboring properties. Baasch and Tunnell stated there were some EDO discussions about whether or not to include the MCA Islands component in the Land Management Plan. Czaplowski stated he would like to see the MCA Island component left in the Land Management Plan. Czaplowski stated the OCSW component should be included in the Dippel Land Management Plan as it is still a possible site for adding some or all of the 60 acres of OCSW nesting habitat in the future. Czaplowski asked if the Service or NGPC have provided guidance to the Program on species of concern; Farnsworth said they use require a foot-print consultation and now they automatically provide guidance automatically. Farnsworth said the EDO would discuss this with Eliza Hines (FWS) since it's a habitat item and would update the language. Caven discussed the types of grassland communities that are present on Dippel and stated he would like to see the dryland crop fields restored to grassland for sandhill cranes, Henslow sparrow, and other species of concern. Czaplowski stated the removal of the building site should be included in the Plan. Czaplowski noted Figure 11 included management areas outside of the Dippel property boundaries; Tunnell said the yellow line represents the surveyed boundaries while the smaller polygons represent where current fences are. Czaplowski said there should be mention of the plus-up acres the Program negotiated in the introduction section. Czaplowski mentioned it should be "Northern Long-eared Bat". Caven and Walters stated they would like to see a long-term easement placed on the cropland if it were to be excessed. Jenniges said having an easement on the property would make it continue to count for Program acres; Caven and others said it could be another organization's easement so the acres wouldn't count if land is excessed. Walters asked what the status of the duck hunter on the western side of the property and inholding property; Farnsworth



said the hunter is gone and that the inholding owners are claiming additional land outside of their court-defined ownership boundaries.

### **PRRIP FY2020 Budget**

Farnsworth, Smith and Baasch led the discussion of the AMP-related sections of the FY2020 Budget.

#### **CTE1 (TAC, LAC, WAC, etc. meetings)**

- No discussion

#### **LP2 (AMP-related land management activities)**

- Tunnell said this line item covers all in-channel disking, pre-emergent herbicide application, tree clearing etc. and all the information is included in the 2020 Land Management Plan.

#### **LP2-P (LTPP mammalian predator control)**

- Czaplewski asked if this line item included predator management activities discussed earlier in the meeting; Baasch said this line only includes mammalian predator trapping activities.
- Czaplewski asked if there were alternatives for predator trapping; Farnsworth stated we've had problems with private trappers in the past so USDA-APHIS is about the only option.

#### **PD22 (Sediment Augmentation)**

- No discussion

#### **WP1(b)**

- Czaplewski suggested we include 2.6 million dollars in the line item in 2020 for the Program's contribution to phragmites control during the First Increment Extension (\$200,000 \* 13 years)

#### **G1 (LiDAR and Imagery)**

- Farnsworth said this line item includes all LiDAR and imagery acquisition during 2020
- Czaplewski asked if there were many options for LiDAR and Imagery acquisition; Farnsworth said we had 5-10 reply to the RFQ during 2016.

#### **TP1 (Tern and Plover Research)**

- No discussion

#### **WC1 (Whooping Crane Monitoring)**

- Czaplewski asked if there were ways to reduce the cost of this line item; Farnsworth said good telemetry data would help us adjust monitoring efforts. Baasch said the monitoring seasons have been extended due to shifting migration seasons so we are now monitoring more than the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of the migration season. We could reduce costs by \$20,000-30,000 annually if we only monitored the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile of the migration seasons. Baasch said the TAC will consider revising the monitoring season in early 2020.

#### **PS1 (Pallid Sturgeon Monitoring and Research)**

- Smith informed the TAC that ISAC will likely recommend a 1 or 2-thumb assessment for the 2019 State of the Platte Report and that the EDO is pursuing discussions with the Service to determine if they would still support a Program contribution to pallid sturgeon learning rather than dealing with a pallid sturgeon in-depth research approach.
- Jenniges stated pallid sturgeon will always be a policy issue rather than a technical one.
- Econopouly said he would be talking to Steve Small (Service GC representative) about pallid sturgeon within a few weeks.



**G5 (Geomorphology and Vegetation Remote Monitoring)**

- Farnsworth stated the EDO has budgeted for a second geomorphologist in 2020 so we can get reports and products to the Program in a timelier manner.

**PD15 (Environmental Permitting)**

- No discussion

**PD18 (AMP Equipment)**

- No discussion

**IMRP3 (AMP Special Advisors)**

- Smith stated this line item budget was largely for Compass to help facilitate the Target Flow Process in 2020.

**PD21 (PRRIP Publications)**

- Farrell stated the LTPP Inside/Outside monitoring publication has been under journal for 6 months so it may not be published until 2020.
- Baasch added that a second publication could be the Program's Wet Meadow Research

**ISAC1 (ISAC)**

- Smith said we plan to 2 face-to-face meetings and several calls during 2020 that would likely be focused on AMP Tool development

**PD3 (PRRIP Peer Review)**

- Smith said we would likely peer review the Wet Meadow Research Report during 2020

**PD11 (AM Reporting Session)**

- Smith said the EDO is interested in TAC input on the timing of the AM Reporting Session during 2020 or possibly February 2021 to allow more time to complete analyses and modeling efforts.

**Program Publications**

Farrell provided an update on the Inside-Outside Monitoring publication and stated it had been submitted to Waterbirds for publication nearly 6 months ago and we are still awaiting feedback from the journal.

**Upcoming 2019 TAC Meeting Schedule**

A Doodle Poll will be distributed to set the next TAC meeting which will likely be early in February 2020.

**Summary of Decisions from the April 30, 2019 TAC Meeting**

1. The TAC approved the June 3, 2019 TAC Meeting Minutes as Final
2. The TAC approved the Spring 2019 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report as Final