



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP or PROGRAM)
Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, December 10, 2018 – 2:00 PM – 5:45 PM

Note: All times Mountain.

Meeting Location:

Warwick Hotel Denver
1776 Grant Street
Denver, CO 80203
(303) 861-2000

Governance Committee (GC)

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member

JoJo La – Alternate

Carlee Brown – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jeff Fassett – Member (2018 GC Chair)

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member

Bob Mehling – Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Mark Czaplewski – Member

Don Kraus – Member

Brian Barels – Member

Kent Miller – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Chad Smith, DED

Bridget Barron

Dave Baasch

Courtney Black

Scott Griebing

Bruce Sackett

Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Chris Beardsley – Member

Brock Merrill – Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Michael Thabault – Member

Environmental Entities

Bill Taddicken – Member

Rich Walters – Member

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member

Deb Freeman – Alternate

Audience Members

Mike Drain – CNPPID

Tom Econopouly – Service

Matt Rabbe – Service

Devin Brundage – CNPPID

Steve Kuehr – Brierley Associates

Blain Dwyer – HDR

Cory Steinke – CNPPID

Rick Wilson – JEO

Becky Mitchell – CWCB

Brent Newman – CWCB

Erik Skeie – CWCB

Mike Drain – CNPPID

Jeff Cowley – State of Wyoming

**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2018****Welcome & Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 2:09 PM Mountain Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

GC Decision – *Ament moved to approve the following GC Minutes; Merrill seconded. Minutes approved.*

- *September 11-12, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended by Colorado.*
- *November 13, 2018 GC Special Session minutes as amended by Colorado*

Program Committee Updates***Land Advisory Committee (LAC)***

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC met on October 29 and largely discussed FY19 budget items. There was discussion about Tract 1804 that is on the GC agenda later today. Czaplewski is LAC Chair and John Shadle is LAC Vice Chair for 2019.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Turner provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met on October 2 with updates on groundwater recharge, leasing, slurry wall, and Cottonwood Ranch broad scale recharge (BSR). The WAC also discussed the FY19 budget.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC had a short meeting on October 16 just before the start of the 2018 AMP Reporting Session. The TAC then discussed the process of updating the AMP and there will soon be a schedule.

Finance Committee (FC)

LaBonde said the FC last met on November 6 and handled several action items including a Cottonwood Ranch BSR contract addendum; contract amendment for the PRRIP web site and database; discussed the FY19 budget; and approved the expenditure of \$24,000 for an upgrade to the Program's IT infrastructure.

Program Outreach Update***PRESENTATIONS***

- Jason Farnsworth presented an update on the Program at the Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Annual Conference on September 25, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- George Oamek presented on the Program to a Senior Survey Class in Environmental Policy at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, Colorado on October 4, 2018.
- Deb Freeman and Jason Farnsworth presented an update on the Program at the South Platte Forum on October 25, 2018 in Loveland, Colorado.
- Tom Smrdel presented on the Program's sediment augmentation to the Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID) Board of Directors on October 26, 2018 in Holdrege, Nebraska.
- Dave Baasch presented on the Program to the Fisheries Society of America meeting on December 4, 2018 at Rowe Sanctuary.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 11, 12, and 13, 2018 in the Natural Resources Districts building. We made 1,400 contacts over the course of the three days.
- The Program exhibited at the South Platte Forum on October 24 & 25, 2018 in Loveland, Colorado. We made 172 contacts over the course of the two days.



- The Program exhibited at the Boo!-Seum at the Kearney Children’s Museum on October 25, 2018. Attendance was over 400 children and adults. The Program gave children attending the event candy and kits to make their own bird feeder.
- The Program exhibited at the joint convention of the Nebraska Water Resources Association and the Nebraska State Irrigators Association on November 18 -20, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska. We made 100 contacts at the conference.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

- The Program will be exhibiting at the annual meeting of the Four States Irrigation Council in Fort Collins, Colorado on January 9-11, 2019.
- Justin Brei will be presenting to the Nebraska Land Improvement Consultants (NLIC) conference on January 16, 2019 in Kearney, Nebraska. His session is titled, “*Water Projects and Habitat Restoration for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program – Past, Present, and Future*”.
- The Program will be exhibiting at Colorado Water Congress in Denver, Colorado on January 30 – February 1, 2019.
- Bruce Sackett will be presenting at the Joint Venture Rainwater Basin Information Seminar in Grand Island February 7, 2019 about the Program accomplishments and the Public Access Program with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

MEDIA/OTHER

- The Kearney Hub published an article in the November 28, 2018 newspaper regarding the construction of the berms for the Broad-Scale Recharge Project. Kevin Werbylo was interviewed for the article and Jason Farnsworth and Jeff Fassett were quoted.

PRRIP FY18 Budget Update

Farnsworth discussed the status of the FY18 budget, expenditures, and forecast for the rest of 2018.

PRRIP FY19 Budget & Work Plan

Farnsworth discussed the draft FY19 PRRIP budget and work plan and the FY19 EDO contract. Walters discussed the history of funding for phragmites control on the central Platte and how much the Program has contributed over time. LaBonde asked how big this program is each year. Walters said roughly \$600,000 each year. LaBonde asked how much the Nebraska Department of Agriculture is going to contribute this year. Walters said hopefully \$200,000. Ament said if you get behind on weeds, then you are behind for a long time. He discussed finding a way to draw down the amount of Program funding slowly. Kraus said he appreciates Walters’ efforts and bringing this to the GC. Ament asked if the EDO helps with this. Farnsworth said Tim Tunnell is president of the WMA, the EDO provides some GIS support, etc. He said the biggest uncertainty right now is the Environmental Trust grant. Beardsley asked what a reduced effort would look like. Walters said the main change would be having the contractor spray less of the channel. Thabault said he would hate to see the Program slide backward and have a stranded investment of the money we have already invested over time. La asked what prospects we have of cost sharing with other entities and staying at a total effort of \$600,000 if the Program is at \$250,000. Walters said he feels good about the possibilities.

LaBonde said we discussed this last year and there was discussion of ramping down the Program’s funding level. The Program still seems to be the fallback cash cow for this vegetation control program. It is an excellent program, it is just that the PRRIP is funding at too high of a level given the relative percentage of benefits. LaBonde said he will not support the motion increasing the amount of funding to \$250,000. Merrill echoed those comments. Thabault said we aren’t just protecting the phragmites investment, we are



protecting all of the Program's investments. Taddicken said the phragmites control has likely been the keystone effort of the Program during the First Increment and we would be much further behind without it. Freeman asked if there is anything the Program could do to encourage more support from other parties. Farnsworth said it really hinges on grant applications that are in now that we won't learn about until at least the end of January. Fassett said there has been some discussion of creating an endowment. Walters said those discussions are happening but nothing firm yet.

Beardsley suggested we fund this line item at \$250,000; that sends a message that Program funding is on the decline; and that we are looking at being at \$200,000 the next year to keep the Program closer to the one third support. LaBonde said this program needs to move to an O&M approach and get away from so much support from grants.

GC Decision – *Thabault moved to increase FY19 PRRIP budget line item WP-1(b) to \$250,000 for FY19; Ament seconded. The State of Wyoming (Program Signatory) opposed the motion; motion failed.*

Czaplewski asked about WP-4b(ii) – the work plan text refers to \$2.3 million in acquisition costs but is specific and wonders what that refers to. Farnsworth said if the owners of the parcels immediately downstream of the BSR project area, this would provide us cash to acquire that land if necessary. Czaplewski asked if this is more of a contingency. Farnsworth said yes.

GC Decision – *LaBonde moved to approve the FY19 PRRIP budget and work plan; Ament seconded. Motion approved.*

GC Decision – *Thabault moved to approve the 2019-2023 EDO contract; Taddicken seconded. Motion approved.*

PRRIP Publications, Peer Review, & Monitoring Update

Baasch provided an update on the latest PRRIP publications, tern and plover monitoring results, the latest whooping crane population estimate, and introduced the EDO technicians that work for the PRRIP with species monitoring, data collection, and data analysis. Fassett asked about banding variability by site. Baasch said he does not have a clear answer as to why some sites had much lower banding as opposed to some sites having higher banding rates. It could have something to do with bird movement and re-nesting. Farnsworth said it probably also has to do with a small sample size.

GC Decision – *Czaplewski moved to approve publication of the tern/plover inside/outside monitoring manuscript; LaBonde seconded. Publication approved.*

Environmental Account (EA) Annual Operating Plan (AOP)

Econopoulou discussed the main focus items of the 2019 EA AOP, which includes a test of conveyance capacity at the choke point. LaBonde asked about safeguards that are in place related to any issues with flooding or inundation at the choke point. Farnsworth said discussions are underway with the National Weather Service, City of North Platte, and other entities to plan for this. Farnsworth has been working closely with Central on the mechanics of how this will work. There will be extensive monitoring of the event and Jim Hawks from North Platte will be a key player. La asked whether there are concerns about blowing out the new State Channel berm. Farnsworth said it would be a lot more water to overtop and blow out that berm. LaBonde asked what the measurable results were from the October release this year. Econopoulou said about 75% of the flow made it past Grand Island and Rabbe said it eliminated the effects of hydrocycling.

**Tiered Consultations**

Rabbe discussed possible changes to the template for tiered consultations. Thabault said the Service is looking for two to three key individuals to help clean up language and propose changes. Freeman, Merrill, Econopouly, and Farnsworth will help Rabbe with possible edits.

PRRIP Water Action Plan (WAP) Update

Werbylo introduced Wilson from JEO and Kuehr from Brierly who gave a short presentation on the updated status of the Lakeside Slurry Wall project design. LaBonde asked if part of the cost is to bring material in to help with areas that are mined closely. Kuehr said yes. Drain asked why we would pursue permitting now if we just wanted to get to final design. Barels asked what will take the project to final design. Wilson said integrating final comments and moving the plans to a final version. LaBonde asked if the slurry wall would pass the test in Colorado and if not, how issues of capacity and storage will be dealt with in Nebraska. Wilson said this design would not pass the strict requirements of Colorado but we have to talk with the Nebraska DNR to get a read on how it will work in Nebraska. LaBonde asked if we should continue to investigate issues related to leaking and how the Nebraska DNR will handle that – whose water is it if it leaks and how is it handled? That could fall under permitting but it is really a pre-permitting question. LaBonde said it might be wise to table action until we have answers for these types of issues. Fassett asked if that is a precursor to final design. LaBonde said yes.

Farnsworth said he is hearing a desire to investigate some of the regulatory, administrative, and operational aspects of this project before going further with final design. The GC agreed. Thabault said it seems odd to stop when we are so close to final design on the slurry wall. Beardsley said it is more of a pause until we get further information.

Choke Point

Farnsworth gave a quick update of activities to deal with the idea of a choke point test flow next year and the draft indemnity agreement. Drain said he is incorporating comments into the agreement and has contacted staff at FERC to start discussions about this. Hopefully, this can be addressed by FERC within a month or two. Fassett asked about the preference of when the test would happen. Farnsworth said hopefully May or June. Drain said NWS staff prefer to go in the fall. Barels asked about the length of the test and what the NWS is thinking. Farnsworth said probably something like a couple to several days with no steep drop-off. Drain said likely something like five days to a week, dependent on the season. LaBonde asked if we have quantified the impacts we would be indemnifying Central for. Farnsworth said we are preparing all associated monitoring and modeling and also will consider establishing a set of triggers related to flow levels.

Public Recreation Access (PRRA) Program

Sackett said he has not yet heard back from the NGPC about possibly lowering what the Program pays them to administer the Program.

Public Comment

Fassett asked for public comment. None offered.

Executive Session

Ament moved to enter Executive Session; LaBonde seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 5:00 PM Mountain Time.

Beardsley moved to end Executive Session; Kraus seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 5:15 PM Mountain Time.



PRRIP Executive Session Motions

GC Decision – *Czaplewski moved to authorize the EDO to enter into negotiations for acquisition of Tract 1804; LaBonde seconded. Motion approved.*

Future Meetings & Closing Business

GC Decision – *Elected LaBonde (State of Wyoming) as 2019 GC Chair and Ament (State of Colorado) as 2019 GC Vice Chair and Beardsley (Bureau of Reclamation) as 2019 GC Alternate Vice Chair.*

Upcoming 2019 GC meetings:

- GC Quarterly Meeting – **March 4-5, 2019 @ Kearney, NE**
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **June 11-12, 2019 @ Cheyenne, WY**
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **September 10-11, 2019 @ Kearney, NE**
- 2019 AMP Reporting Session – **October 8-10, 2019 @ Omaha, NE**
- GC Special Session (FY20 Budget/Work Plan) – **November 12, 2019** (conference call/webinar only)
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 3-4, 2019 @ Denver, CO**

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM Mountain Time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from December 10, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting

- 1) Approved the following GC minutes:
 - September 11-12, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes.
 - November 13, 2018 GC Special Session minutes.
- 2) Approved FY19 PRRIP budget and work plan.
- 3) Approved 2019-2023 EDO contract.
- 4) Approved publication of tern/plover inside/outside monitoring manuscript.
- 5) Authorized the EDO to enter into negotiations for acquisition of Tract 1804.
- 6) Elected Labonde as 2019 GC Chair, Ament as Vic Chair, and Beardsley as Alternate Vice Chair.
- 7) Set 2019 GC meeting schedule.