



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

Tuesday, September 11, 2018 – 2:00 PM – 5:45 PM
Wednesday, September 12, 2018 – 8:00 AM – 11:45 AM
Note: All times Central.

Meeting Location:
PRRIP EDO Conference Center
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6
Kearney, NE 68845
(308) 237-5728

Governance Committee (GC)

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member

JoJo La – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jeff Fassett – Member (2018 GC Chair)

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member

Bob Mehling – Alternate

Owen Williams – 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

Dave Baasch

Justin Brei

Patrick Farrell

Scott Griebing

George Oamek

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

Matt Rabbe – Alternate

Environmental Entities

Bill Taddicken – Member

Rich Walters – Member

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member

Jason Marks – Alternate

Deb Freeman – Alternate (by phone)

Audience Members

Mike Drain – CNPPID

Tom Econopouly – Service

Jeff Runge – Service

David Galat – ISAC

Philip Halteman – Compass

Christian Beaudrie – Compass

Cory Steinke – CNPPID

Rick Wilson – JEO

Matt Pillard – HDR

Dan Bigbee – EA

Jim Jenniges – NPPD

Keith Koupal – NGPC

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2018****Welcome & Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

Additional items:

- Farnsworth asked if the GC would be interested in the lunch and a field tour.
- Fassett asked about possibly changing the dates of the December GC meeting to December 10-11. GC agreed.
- Smith let the GC know that he would be sending everyone an email soon with a link to an anonymous survey related to data collection for his PhD dissertation.

GC Decision – *Strauch moved to approve the following GC Minutes; LaBonde seconded. Minutes approved.*

- *June 12-13, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes.*
- *August 14, 2018 GC Special Session minutes.*

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

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC met on August 13. Discussion topics included the restoration and management framework document (for GC review at this meeting), power line easement on Tract 2011001. The next LAC meeting will be October 29.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC items will all be discussed on the GC agenda during this meeting.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. There has been no recent TAC meeting but one will be scheduled soon to address a handful of items and discuss the draft FY19 PRRIP budget.

Finance Committee (FC)

LaBonde said the FC last met on August 14 to approve the bid package for the Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge (BSR) project.

Program Outreach Update***PRESENTATIONS***

- Jason Farnsworth was part of a panel on Platte River Stewardship at Rowe Sanctuary on June 20, 2018. The panel is part of a class for Senior College of Central Nebraska.
- Jason Farnsworth presented a Program update at the North Platte stop of the Nebraska Water Tour on June 26, 2018.
- Don Ament presented on *The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program and Ag*, at the Colorado Ag Water Alliance 2018 Ag Water Tour in Sterling, Colorado on July 12, 2018.
- Justin Brei presented on the Broad Scale Recharge Project to the Tri-Basin Board on August 14, 2018 at the Cottonwood Ranch property.



EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at that World O! Water event on September 8, 2018 at Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District inside the Chalco Hills Recreation Area. World O! Water is an annual event for people of all ages to learn about the important role that water plays in our lives and community. We gave out make your own bird feeder kits and crane fact/coloring sheets.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

- Jason Farnsworth will be presenting an update on the Program at the South Platte Forum on October 25, 2018 in Loveland, Colorado.
- Jason Farnsworth will be presenting an update on the Program at the Nebraska Natural Resources Districts Annual Conference on September 25, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- The Program is exhibiting at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 11, 12, and 13, 2018 in the Natural Resources Districts building. Husker Harvest Days is recognized as the World's Largest Totally Irrigated Working Farm Show™ and features the most extensive state-of-the-art information and technology available for today's agricultural producers.
- The Program will be exhibiting at the South Platte Forum on October 24 & 25, 2018 in Loveland, Colorado.

MEDIA/OTHER

- The Kearney Hub published two articles in the August 18-19, 2018 newspaper regarding the Program. The first article was focused on the Program extension and Jason Farnsworth was interviewed for that article. The second article was focused in the Broad-Scale Recharge Project near Elm Creek. Jason Farnsworth and Jeff Fassett were interviewed for the second article.
- Irrigation Today will publish an article written by George Oamek in the October 2018 edition. The title of the article is "*Regional economic impacts of irrigation – What is the real effect of irrigation transfer on our rural communities?*"

PRRIP FY18 Budget Update

Farnsworth discussed the status of the FY18 budget. Farnsworth discussed the results of the federal audit done on the Program through the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF). The audit was clean. Merrill said there have been no findings on expenditures since the Program started and this has always been a non-issue because of how good the NCF is with their work. Farnsworth said he will be sitting down with the NCF soon to review the Program's Procurement Policy.

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.

PRRIP Water Action Plan (WAP) Update

Econopouly said the Service wants to make a EA release from October 20-November 4 that coincides with the peak of the whooping crane migration. The release estimate is near 20,000 acre-feet with a target flow of 1,800 cfs.



Turner, Werbylo, and Farnsworth provided an update on WAP project scoring and the status of the Cottonwood Ranch BSR project, the Lakeside slurry wall project, and the CPNRD surface water transfer. The date of completion for the CSR project will be changed to May 1 because of concerns about construction during the fall and spring migrations. The EDO anticipates a 90-95% final design by December and that will be shown to the GC at the December GC meeting. Farnsworth discussed the CPNRD surface water transfer. At this point, it is a one-year MOA and if it works well CPNRD would be interested in transitioning the project into a long-term agreement for the Extension. This could substantially change our decision-making into the Extension if this becomes a long-term water agreement. Strauch asked if it would be a long-term lease under Nebraska law. Fassett said no it is not considered a transfer. It is a senior not calling for water, so a junior can keep it. Runge asked if the water is credited continually. Drain said no it is credited in the fall around October 1. Thabault asked how this affects filling and spilling the EA. Farnsworth said it will be fine based on current EA operations and continued active use of the EA.

Turner walked through the WAP project fact sheets. They are intended to be a handy reference for GC and WAC members, they are too technical at this stage for public consumption. All of the fact sheets have the same formatting and sections. Econopouly asked if these would be made available on the PRRIP web site. Farnsworth and Turner said yes.

Elwood Reservoir Recharge and Pathfinder Municipal Account Lease Scoring

Drain provided an update on the scoring recommendation for the Pathfinder Municipal Account Lease.

GC Decision – *LaBonde moved to approve the revised score for the Pathfinder Municipal Account Lease; Berryman seconded. Revised score approved.*

Drain said the State of Nebraska asked for more time to review the scoring recommendation for the Elwood Reservoir recharge project and associated modeling, so that item will be addressed by the GC at a later time.

CNPPID Irrigator Lease

Farnsworth and Oamek discussed the irrigator lease and the history behind it as a pilot project. Farnsworth said we are now looking at a five-year lease instead of a one-year lease. There is a revised cap of 3,000 acres. One major change is the ability to have pricing flexibility into the future. Kraus said his Board had some concern about the five-year agreement but coming back each year to do price and acres made that amendable. The Central Board did approve this unanimously. Merrill asked about adding a clause for termination for convenience. Kraus said that could easily be added. Fassett asked if it had been the same people during the three-year pilot. Kraus said there were a lot of repeats but some new folks as well. Strauch asked about the split payment. Kraus said that was included in the revised draft sent to the GC by Smith on Friday.

GC Decision – *LaBonde moved to approve the CNPPID irrigator lease subject to addition of a termination for convenience clause for both parties; Beardsley seconded. Kraus, Czaplewski, and Miller abstained. Amended CNPPID irrigator lease agreement approved.*

Chokepoint Update

Brei provided an update on activities at the North Platte chokepoint. Farnsworth said the NWS is willing to work with the Program to have a high flow test in 2019 to see what happens after work is complete on the state channel. The NWS has other issues they consider when thinking of raising flood stage, we will have to work through those issues with them to find resolution. Fassett asked if we did a test can the NWS still say they don't want to make a change? Kraus said we have other concerns and we need to somehow be



indemnified. Drain asked if this is testing a new flood stage or testing above the current flood stage. Farnsworth recommended that the GC convene an ad hoc committee to deal with all the policy issues related to a possible flow test and associated risk. La asked about issues related to the bridges in this area. Brei and Farnsworth said modeling has shown the two main bridges in the chokepoint area do not cause major problems. Econopouly asked if we needed a contingency plan to do monitoring if we get natural high flows. Farnsworth said yes, we need a mobilization plan. Thabault said the group needs to find a way to yes because this is a major issue for EA management.

Chokepoint ad hoc committee – Drain, Econopouly, Barels, Jim Hawks or his designate, Brian Clerkin, JoJo La, Brock Merrill

Habitat Land Restoration and Management Framework

Tunnell discussed the habitat land restoration and management framework document. Both the LAC and TAC have reviewed the document and recommend it to the GC for review and approval.

GC Decision – *Czaplewski moved to approve the habitat land restoration and management framework document; Thabault seconded. Document approved.*

PRRIP First Increment Extension

Merrill and Rabbe discussed the status of the Extension NEPA process. Formal consultation is complete and there is a Final Biological Opinion. Reclamation should have a signed FONSI soon. There is new DOI guidance on the NEPA process that requires a much shorter document than it currently is and efforts are underway to reduce the number of pages. Merrill said all the documents will be available online and that website link will be emailed around and the documents can be made available on the Program web site as well. Freeman said we have to be careful about putting everything in appendices based on this new DOI guidance, and also that it appears that cost of preparation has to be put somewhere on documents like this.

Merrill said he had been asked about how Program entities that are allowed to do so could help with outreach on the political side of getting the Extension completed. He is not allowed to do that so he turned to the states and other parties to provide that guidance. Fassett said the current landscape is that nothing will happen until after November 6 at the state or federal level. We have to see what the landscape looks like in Congress after this year's elections. We have heard nothing negative about advancing the Extension. Taddicken said his question was about further up the chain in terms of getting funding and getting the bill passed and signed. LaBonde said that is his thought as well. La said right now there is not a good vehicle in this session of Congress. It seems the time to find a vehicle for it is after the bill is introduced.

Meeting adjourned at 5:04 PM Central Time.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2018****Welcome and Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

Pallid Sturgeon Process

Smith introduced Halteman and Beaudrie from Compass and the purpose of the discussion during the GC meeting. Halteman and Beaudrie summarized proposed next steps in the GC Pallid Sturgeon Process. Thabault said the Program should think about water management (retiming, etc.) as opposed to just specific flow releases for pallid sturgeon. Discussion topics included:

- Timing and relationship to ongoing learning about pallid sturgeon on the Missouri River and lower Platte River.
- Issues related to flow management, flow regimes, and how to think about potential management actions to benefit pallid sturgeon in the Second Increment.
- Ways to collaborate with others currently working on the lower Platte River and the Missouri River as a way to leverage knowledge and resources to improve understanding for Program purposes.
- Looking both at how pallids use the lower Platte River and also what the Program can actually do with hydrology that affects the lower Platte.
- What the Program can actually do to affect the lower Platte and pallids given what water we know the Program has available to it for management actions.
- Construct of the ISAC, role in this pallid sturgeon process, how to add expertise to the ISAC and/or reconstitute the ISAC as the Program enters the Extension.
- Sync this process with FY19 budget as a start, what needs to be done to inform the FY2021 budget as the Extension really starts.

The GC directed Farnsworth and Smith to work with Compass to develop an updated approach that syncs with the FY19 budget and general updating of the PRRIP AMP.

PRRIP Website and Database Project Update

Brei walked the GC through the updated PRRIP website and its features. Barels and Thabault asked if a PDF portfolio could still be posted on the GC site so that all documents could be downloaded at once. Smith said he will do that for future meetings.

Public Comment

Fassett asked for public comment. None offered.

Executive Session

Beardsley moved to enter Executive Session; Mehling seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 10:34 AM Central Time.

Mehling moved to end Executive Session; Ament seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 11:13 AM Central Time.

PRRIP Executive Session Motions

GC Decision – *Ament moved to approve the EDO entering into a power line easement with Southern Public Power District on Tract 2011001; LaBonde seconded. Motion approved.*



Future Meetings & Closing Business

Upcoming 2018 GC meetings:

- 2018 AMP Reporting Session – **October 16-18, 2018** @ Omaha, NE (Hilton Omaha)
- GC Special Session (FY19 Budget/Work Plan) – **November 13, 2018** (conference call/webinar only)
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 10-11, 2018** @ Denver, CO (Warwick Denver)

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 AM Central Time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from September 11-12, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting

- 1) Approved the following GC minutes:
 - June 12-13, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes.
 - August 14, 2018 GC Special Session minutes.
- 2) Approved the revised score for the Pathfinder Municipal Account Lease.
- 3) Approved the CNPPID irrigator least subject to addition of a termination for convenience clause for both parties.
- 4) Approved the habitat land restoration and management framework document.
- 5) Approved the EDO entering into a power line easement with Southern Public Power District on Tract 2011001.