



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

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Virtual Meeting

Meeting held in person at Denver Airport Marriott

Gateway Park, 16455 E 40th Circle, Aurora, CO 80011

Day #1: Tuesday, July 22, 2025; 1:00 PM – 4:45 PM MT

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

State of Wyoming

Barry Lawrence – Member

Michelle Hubbard – Alternate

Cheyenne Love – Alternate

Jeremy Manley – Alternate

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Brock Merrill – Member

State of Colorado

Kara Scheel – Member

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Matt Rabbe – Member

State of Nebraska

Caitlin Kingsley – Member

Environmental Entities

Rich Walters – Member

Amanda Hegg – Member

Bethany Ostrom – Alternate

Melissa Mosier – Alternate

Upper Platte Water Users

n/a

Colorado Water Users

Jason Marks – Member

Downstream Water Users

Jim Jenniges – Member

Brandi Flyr – Member

Dave Zorn – Member

Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Chad Smith

Malinda Henry

Tim Tunnell

Seth Turner

Patrick Farrell

Justin Brei

Quinn Lewis

Nicole Fijman

Libby Casavant

Ed Weschler

Josh Carrell

Ethan Ideus

Alyx Vogel

Jon Wentz

Tyler Matrangos

Other Participants

Abe Kanz – Crane Trust

Terence Stroh – USBR

Mike Archer – NGPC

Jack Mensinger – NE DNR

Shuhai Zheng – NE DNR

Richard Belt – SPWRAP

Brandon Gardels – NPPD

Steven Labay – USFWS

Joel Jorgensen – NGPC

Melissa Marinovich – NGPC

Kevin McAbee – USFWS

Smriti Chaulagain – UNL

Mark Stone – UNL

Aaron Mittelstet – UNL

**WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE**

Walters called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM Mountain Time.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

No modifications to the agenda were offered.

Document: [01 – PRRIP TAC Quarterly Meeting Agenda July 2025](#)

MINUTES

Henry received a few minor edits made by the TAC to the April TAC minutes. Those corrections were grammatical and did not change content.

TAC MOTION: *Merrill moved, and Scheel seconded a motion to approve the April 2025 TAC Meeting minutes with the TAC edits accepted. Minutes approved.*

DRAFT Document: [02 April 2025 TAC Minutes DRAFT TAC edits](#)

FINAL Document: [April 29 2025 PRRIP TAC Meeting Minutes FINAL](#)

SPECIES MONITORING**2025 LTPP MONITORING SEASON UPDATE**

Vogel presented a mid-season update on plover nesting and productivity across the Associated Habitat Reach. She also informed the TAC that on two nesting sites (Dyer and Newark) the EDO has documented owl behavior that might have indicated owls were keying in on nest cameras leading to nest predation. In response, nest cameras have been removed from those sites. Shoreline and site cameras not associated with nests remain on those sites to help document predator presence. Outside monitoring continues to provide information at those sites, but the lack of cameras on nests at those sites will limit our ability to document and quantify losses to predation (data needed to address EBQs #8-9 of the Science Plan). The TAC should expect a reduction in failed-predated nests and an increase in failed-unknown nests for 2025 as a result. Rabbe asked about fledge ratios for 2025. Vogel said it is still too early in the season to have final numbers, but so far may be pretty similar to last year. Marks asked if this is the first year we have seen this kind of behavior by owls. Vogel said we saw them at nest cameras last year then predating nests, but much more interest in the cameras themselves this year. Rabbe reminded that the TAC's recommendation last fall was to use cameras this year without replacing them as they wear out. Henry said we need to look specifically at outcomes for camera vs non-camera nests at the two sites with owl predation. Will do that in the 2025 report to evaluate how cameras may have impacted productivity. Carrell with EDO is evaluating impacts of predation and ability to mitigate using data from cameras. EDO will go hard at it over fall and winter together with TAC work group and come to TAC with better information early in 2026. Walters said TAC can evaluate pros and cons of using cameras early next year. Ostrom said she thought decision had already been made to stop after this year. Henry said there may be equipment still functioning at the end of the season that we could use to document nest fates next year. Jenniges suggested just take cameras off if evidence predators are keying in. Farnsworth said you could have 30 cameras left functioning at the end of this and the TAC could still decide to stop in January.

**EDO ACTION ITEMS:**

- Continue to use camera data through 2025 to address EBQs 8-9 – Impacts of predation on plover productivity and effectiveness of predator management.
- Continue to keep an eye on any signs of predators keying in on cameras and evaluate fates of nests with and without cameras
- Bring this information to TAC work group meetings and quarterly TAC meetings

Presentation: [03_2025 July TAC Plover Tern Presentation](#)

2024 FALL WHOOPING CRANE MONITORING REPORT

Ideus summarized updates to the fall 2024 monitoring report since reviewed by the TAC for the April meeting. Updates include incorporating new USFWS Winter 2024-2025 Aransas-Wood Buffalo population estimate into PRRIP's calculation of Proportion of the AWB Population using the Program's Associated Habitat Reach. USGS discharge data from the fall 2024 season has also been approved and incorporated into the fall report to finalize. Jenniges said the 557 population estimate did not include 68 birds outside main survey area. He asked how the TAC wants to deal with the additional birds in terms of calculating PRRIP's Proportion of AWB population using the AHR? Rabbe said that previous reports have not considered additional birds from secondary areas. Protocol for monitoring primary areas is different than protocol for monitoring secondary areas. They are not monitored at the same time, so birds from secondary area could be a double count of birds from primary areas. There are criteria established for moving secondary areas into the primary survey protocol. Farnsworth said without including those additional birds, the Program may be overestimating the proportional use of the AHR. Jenniges suggested at least adding a footnote in the report that lets readers know there may have been more birds than accounted for in a population estimate based upon observations in the primary areas alone. Henry said the EDO can do that.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Add footnote to report about 68 additional birds outside primary survey area

TAC MOTION: *Jenniges moved, and Kanz seconded a motion to recommend the fall 2024 WC monitoring report to the GC for their approval with an additional footnote documenting the birds counted outside the primary survey area. Motion carried.*

Documents: [04_Implementation of the Whooping Crane Monitoring Protocol - Fall 2024 Report Updated DRAFT](#)
[Implementation of the Whooping Crane Monitoring Protocol - Fall 2024 Report Updated DRAFT with TAC Footnote](#)

Presentation: [05_Fall 2024 WC Report Update & Spring 2025 WC Monitoring Update Presentation](#)

2025 SPRING WHOOPING CRANE MONITORING UPDATE

Ideus presented results from the spring 2025 whooping crane monitoring season. The full report is not ready for TAC review as USGS discharge data for the spring are not approved yet. Plan is to bring it to the TAC in October. No questions or feedback from TAC.

**EDO ACTION ITEMS:**

- Finalize spring 2025 monitoring report once discharge data are final and bring back to TAC in October.

Presentation: [05 Fall 2024 WC Report Update & Spring 2025 WC Monitoring Update Presentation](#)

2024-2025 USFWS POPULATION ESTIMATE

McAbee gave an overview of winter survey results and explained how primary vs. secondary areas were surveyed and how data from each of those areas are used. He said birds continue to expand use outside primary areas. Birds in secondary areas were not included in the estimates because they do not meet the criteria for a closed population estimate. Birds can fly in and out and be counted twice. Guadalupe Delta area being added next year into primary area because this area met the criteria. Walters asked about the criteria for secondary area inclusion into primary area. Jenniges said it is in report. Walters asked if annual survey will be implemented consistently now. McAbee said that is the plan but no guarantee with federal budget constraints. FWS may need budget supplementation to ensure the survey gets done. Last year Canadian Wildlife Service and Guadalupe Fund helped fund effort. Henry asked when FWS might reach out for assistance if needed and would PRRIP be contacted? McAbee said the FWS will begin looking at the budget but will not have a good feel for need for supplementation until at least the fall. Henry said PRRIP begins budgeting for 2026 in the fall, so that timeframe works well. It would allow PRRIP to run funding options through the various committees who review the Program budget.

Document: [06a WHCR Update Winter 2024-2025](#)

WHOOPING CRANE RECOVERY PLAN UPDATE

McAbee reviewed the status of the Whooping Crane Recovery Plan and Species Status Assessment. He said he was writing both of those for the Service. Whooping crane experts were asked to provide input in both the SSA and the Recovery Plan. Plan is still in development, not at the final draft public comment stage yet. Farnsworth asked about the relationship between the published paper and the recovery plan. McAbee said the paper provides foundations from previous Pearse papers to communicate how science supports recovery plans. Farnsworth asked how many critical habitat areas are in the flyway. Jenniges said four plus Aransas. Farnsworth asked if input was provided by any of those managers of critical habitat within the flyway? He asked why the Service did not reach out to PRRIP? McAbee said PRRIP representation was through Pearse and Rabbe. Farnsworth asked if Program science is represented in the Recovery Plan. Rabbe said yes. McAbee said there are hundreds of whooping crane biologists, so a decision about involvement had to be made to keep the group down to a manageable size. There will be an opportunity for public to comment on the plan. Farnsworth asked about content in the Caven and Pearse publication that mentions protection of additional acres in the flyway (critical habitat). McAbee said FWS has no formal plan to recommend new critical habitat. Henry asked how SSA being done and whether current PRRIP science was included there to help inform the Recovery Plan? McAbee said the 2020 SSA needs to be updated. It was never made public. The 2025 SSA will be an updated version from the 2020 assessment. Farnsworth asked how the Recovery Plan deals with groundwater and surface water targets that were mentioned in the paper. McAbee said the recommendation was made by species experts for the Service to specify that availability of wetlands distributed across the landscape be part of recovery criteria to ensure functional habitat into the future. Water is an important component, but these targets are not part of the recovery plan. Farnsworth asked if these experts include



groundwater or surface water managers? The Program has a long history of managing water to provide benefits to whooping cranes. Were Program pubs and learning included? Scheel asked how the Recovery Plan would impact PRRIP. Farnsworth said according to the publication the Recovery Plan sets up water management criteria for ESA compliance. Flyr said the document may be focused on other systems as opposed to direct consideration of the Platte and the AHR. Jenniges said there have been cases when management is pushed through Recovery Plans. The plover Recovery Plan is one of those. Kanz said the Recovery Plan focuses on the importance of water for whooping cranes, nothing new there. It is making recommendations for water availability across the corridor for the long term. McAbee said Caven and Pearse paper is not the FWS approved Recovery Plan. Rabbe said we are getting ahead of ourselves, recovery plan still in development and not a final draft. Rabbe said the Platte River was used as an example of how to manage water along the corridor for whooping cranes. He said the recovery plan reflects Program water management efforts and asked why wouldn't you want to be a part of this? Walters asked if McAbee was the primary contact on this since he is the primary author. McAbee said yes, and he would be available to address further PRRIP questions.

Document: [06b_Caven&Pearse2025-A network of refugia: Whooping Crane drought response informs international habitat conservation goals](#)

SCIENCE PLAN

WC ROOST SITE SELECTION REPORT

Farrell reminded TAC of the main takeaways from the WC Roost Site Selection analysis which has been previously reviewed and revised in detail by the TAC. Farrell then reviewed additions to the WC Roost Site Selection technical report that included an evaluation suggested by the ISAC of PRRIP contributions to roosting conditions. Scheel asked whether the proportion of population used in the figures was based only on WC use of the Platte River. Farrell said yes – it is first, unique roosts on the Platte in relation to the population estimate. Scheel asked where the large amount of use on conservation lands with nearest forest just under 500ft occurred. Farrell said this was probably on Trust property.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Set up process for offline TAC review of technical report and provision of feedback to EDO by August 12, 2025.
- Depending on TAC feedback, decide on process and timeline for finalizing report and getting it approved.

TAC ACTION ITEMS:

- Review and revise technical report by August 12th.

Document: [07_WC Roost Site Selection Report DRAFT](#)
Presentation [08_WC Roost Site Selection Presentation](#)

WHOOPING CRANE STOPOVER VS. FLYOVER UPDATE

Farrell updated the TAC on the progress made by the TAC work group on data analysis to address Extension Big Question #4: What factors influence whooping crane decision to stop or fly over the AHR? Farrell summarized on-channel metrics associated with river flow and channel width being used in the analysis as explanatory variables. He also reviewed the three scales being evaluated as important for making stopover decisions. He reviewed the unmanageable variables that were previously tested and



presented to the TAC in April. He pointed out that there was only a single stopover on the South Loup, so an analysis of factors important to making stopover decisions specific to the South Loup would not be possible. The question remains whether to include the data from the South Loup (multiple flyovers and one stopover) in an overall analysis to better characterize habitat that is not selected along NE sand bed rivers. Farrell showed results from adding on-channel explanatory variables to the model together with unmanageable variables and the demonstrate the relationships of these variables to predicted probability of stopover. He presented next steps and proposed a timeline for checking back in with the TAC working group.

Labay asked about model type. Farrell said he is using a Multiple Variable Binomial model with random effect of river as a way to initially assess data. He is open to considering the complexity of the dataset and suggestions to fit the dataset better.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Add 2024 dataset to analysis
- Add off-channel variables to analysis
- Create list of hypothesis-based candidate models with the work group
- Perform analysis and discuss results with work group to decide if adding weather as explanatory variable is worth it.

Presentation: [09 WC Stopover Flyover Update](#)

SYSTEM-SCALE GEOMORPHOLOGY AND VEGETATION MONITORING REPORT

Fijman and Casavant went over methods, results, and main takeaways from the 2017-2024 System Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Report. Farnsworth asked if there were any questions or comments. Kanz said it is strange why the Sed Aug report is separate from the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Report. Sed Aug provides important context for this report. You can see it in bed volume change table. He said it is hard to talk about volumetric changes without including the sediment augmentation we did. Kanz recommended adding some sed aug context to this report. Casavant agreed. Lewis said we could consider flow context as well. Brei said this is a monitoring report, avoids analysis, but could reference the Sed Aug Synthesis report in this for readers that want more context. Rabbe said it is important to note that approximately 300,000 cu yards was due to sed aug. Farnsworth clarified that what is presented is not sediment flux, for example, sediment aggradation in North channel, reach 1, is sediment added to that reach but not leaving reach 1. Rabbe said cause for degradation in reaches 3A and 3B may be due to sediment in reach 1 that does not make it to 3A and 3B. Farnsworth said he struggles with the meaning of degradation of 0.1 ft. Is that a lot or a little in context of what happens in sand braided rivers? Lewis said this is not out of the ordinary for sand bed braided rivers, though there is not a lot of comparable data out there. Casavant said many other sand bed rivers have way more flow so hard to compare. Farnsworth said the degradation in J2 channel is easy to see because you see planform change. The Lower Platte sees 0.3 ft of degradation but no one is concerned about it. EDO is asking for suggestions regarding interpretation. Scheel asked if degradation is assumed to be bad. Lewis said depends on the situation, you could have degradation that does not reduce channel width. Rabbe said degradation in braided systems is widely accepted to be bad, most braided systems are aggradational. Kanz asked if the data represented here are just for the main channel. Casavant said yes, main channel. Casavant said if we see this continue and accelerate downstream of J2, under this low flow context, it should be something we look at. Scheel asked what that means for the overall system,



does it not depend upon how chunking up the river. Farnsworth asked if a 0.1 ft degradation in a river over a decade is a problem, probably not. That amount of volume change is on the scale of our LiDAR error. Farnsworth said a slowly degrading braided river isn't necessarily bad, but J2 trigger adds important context. Jenniges reminded that these numbers are not absolutes- there is a lot of error around it. Lewis/Casavant said the LiDAR error is random and normally distributed, so that is not a problem. Jenniges asked how real is the problem and is it worth a discussion for this small of a change with high noise. Rabbe said concern is with degradational reaches downstream of J2 channel, and he can see it in the data. Jenniges said the sediment in 3B that was lost with levee breach went into Blue Hole. Ostrom repeated that the concern is with the degradation downstream from J2. Also different vegetation types are dictated by small elevational difference (inches do matter). Connectivity to groundwater is also impacted by elevation. Farnsworth asked what the conservation entities might want to see for 3A and 3B to be comfortable – do they all have to be positive (aggradational)? Jenniges said that degradation might reflect disking work and erosion of in-channel islands as you make them mobile that lowers the overall elevation of a highly managed reach like Cottonwood Ranch. Casavant said this counts as degradation if it was within the 5000 cfs 2D model footprint. Farnsworth asked Lewis why this ag/deg flips back and forth downstream. Lewis said he sees it as dynamic equilibrium of ag/deg tradeoffs among reaches through different hydrological years. Too short of a period to know if degradation will continue to progress or simply switch from degradation to aggradation. Jenniges asked what the TAC wants to do about approving the report. Walters asked if the TAC wanted a small work group to add more sed aug context? Farnsworth said he doesn't want extensive interpretation in this report as it is an annual update of quantitative metrics we build on each year. Think of it like the WC seasonal report. Metrics reported here will then be used in multi-year assessments of Big Questions to evaluate necessity of mechanical sediment augmentation for maintaining suitable WC roosting habitat. Casavant said she could add some sed aug context into the volume change section of the report to address Kanz' comments. EDO will take their best shot at revising to provide some sed aug context. They will then let the TAC review it/ revise it offline to get to a TAC motion to recommend leading up to Sept GC.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Revise to add sed aug context to volume change section of report.
- Send out for TAC offline review

TAC ACTION ITEMS:

- TAC review of revised Volume Change section of report
- TAC Motion to recommend prior to September GC

TAC MOTION: NO motion at this time.

Documents: [10 System Geomorphology and Vegetation Report 2024](#)
[System Geomorphology and Vegetation Report 2024 with TAC edits](#)

Presentation: [11 Geomorphology and Vegetation Report Presentation](#)

PRRIP RELEVANT SCIENCE

EXAMINING RIVER EVOLUTION

Chaulagain from UNL presented their project to assess the effects of hydrology and climate on Platte river vegetation and channel morphology. Jenniges asked how much EDO staff time would go into the



project and if there was any PRRIP money request. Farnsworth said more of a data sharing request without any financial support from PRRIP. Study goes beyond the AHR, so will provide comparison with AHR. Brei asked what the response variables for this study are, are they similar to those on the Rio Grande study? Chaulagain said these vegetated area and channel width. Henry asked if including a metric like unvegetated width to get habitat metric useful for the Program. Stone said techniques they are using are good for quantifying bare earth so might get something similar. Rabbe asked about the role of Riley in the project. Are there any conflict-of-interest concerns? Walters thanked Chaulagain and Stone for reaching out to the Program and willingness to collaborate.

Document: [12 UNL Project Proposal-Platte River](#)

Presentation: [13 UNL Presentation](#)

DAY #1 REVIEW & WRAP-UP

Henry reviewed evening TAC dinner plans and breakfast plans prior to next day's meeting to begin at 8:00 a.m. MT.

TAC MEETING END

The TAC meeting adjourned at 4:46 PM MT.



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

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Virtual Meeting

Meeting held in person at Denver Airport Marriott

Gateway Park, 16455 E 40th Circle, Aurora, CO 80011

Day #2: Wednesday, July 23, 2025; 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM MT

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

State of Wyoming

Barry Lawrence – Member

Michelle Hubbard – Alternate

Cheyenne Love – Alternate

Jeremy Manley – Alternate

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Brock Merrill – Member

State of Colorado

Kara Scheel – Member

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Matt Rabbe – Member

State of Nebraska

Caitlin Kingsley – Member

Environmental Entities

Rich Walters – Member

Amanda Hegg – Member

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Upper Platte Water Users

n/a

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Richard Belt – SPWRAP

Brandon Gardels – NPPD

Steven Labay – USFWS

Joel Jorgensen – NGPC

**WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE**

Walters called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM Mountain Time.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

No modifications to the agenda were offered.

Document: [01 – PRRIP TAC Quarterly Meeting Agenda July 2025](#)

SCIENCE PLAN***GERMINATION SUPPRESSION EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS***

Lewis summarized TAC working group meeting objectives, progress, and steps for moving forward. Presentation focused on getting full TAC up to speed on using timelapse cameras to document inundation of in channel vegetation and resulting vegetation growth from one stage to another (changes in height and density). Emphasis was placed on explaining methods for developing a robust sampling design to represent the variability of conditions at each veg monitoring camera location over time. Mosier asked about using random times a day for sampling. Lewis said we could test what that does to the results. Workgroup was more supportive of a 2-3 times a day frequency for assigning samples to appropriate inundation blocks. Lewis said this was something to look into. Brei said the plan is to schedule two more check ins with the workgroup to review progress until end of the year. Then EDO will bring some initial results back to the full TAC in early 2026.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Move forward gathering data for sample blocking at each camera for each year.
- Set up work group check ins to review inundation distribution curves at each camera, proposed blocking, and proposed sampling design.

Presentation: [14 EDO July2025TAC germSup update](#)

NO SED AUG MONITORING PLAN

Walters began by letting the TAC know that the EDO is looking for a motion on this and a decision on whether this is the type of report the TAC wants or if the TAC is looking for some kind of a revision. Lewis provided an overview of the annual No Sed Aug Monitoring Report. He stopped at points where yesterday's discussion on sediment augmentation and channel degradation indicated more discussion was needed. Scheel asked about stability of flow through J2. She asked whether high flow or low flow years really impact the J2 channel. Casavant said J2 is more consistent than the North channel. Brei said in dry years you typically see more flow through J2 than North channel. Farnsworth said min and max should be same through J2 for wet and dry years, magnitude the same, but volume can vary. Anything in the river is water rejected or not needed for irrigation demand. J2 return is more dependent on irrigation demand and hydropower, whereas North channel is more sensitive to general wet vs dry years. The TAC discussed concerns from Tuesday's meeting about potential continued degradation since halted augmentation in 2023. Does the EDO have total numbers of sed agg/deg since cessation of sed aug? Casavant said the summation of annual volume change (in plot) give you that metric. Kanz said these are over two recent low flow years, that context is important for interpreting trends. Lewis said only two years of data since halted augmentation, so hard to interpret trends. Keeping the context of low flow years in mind is important as we assess trends into the future. Jenniges reminded the TAC about the 2022 levee breach at Blue Hole. That serves as a sediment sink from the river. Farnsworth



asked how the monitoring report deals with this. Brei and Casavant said masks have tried to eliminate this from the analysis, but it stills shows up in 23-24 and 24-25 degradation. Sediment lost from the river is deposited in Blue Hole. Farnsworth said assuming 15 acres of deposition to a depth of greater than 20 ft, the fill in Blue Hole is roughly 600,000 cu yards. Ostrom asked about change in 5ft deep or deeper category being mainly ½ mile within Overton bridge. Is it normal for that localization of degradation? Lewis clarified this to mean that the extent of this class has not progressed further downstream. The deeper class appears to migrate from one channel to another but not downstream further. Farnsworth said risk has a value-based answer with everyone in the room having different evaluation of risk. So he asked the TAC to think about this in terms of resource allocation potential. Program will need to decide how to allocate resources to buy water, manage channel (disk, Phrag spray), augment sediment, etc.. He is trying to figure out what information you need to give relative value to each of these management choices. Lewis said the more we do not augment sediment, the more we learn about the result of not doing sed aug. Kanz asked if this is a money consideration? Kanz said we are in a data poor situation with only a few years of each upon which to draw conclusions and make decisions (5 years of aug, 5 years of no aug). Farnsworth said, yes, it has to be in terms of Second Increment implementation. It is not in the near term, we have enough budget to implement augmentation every year during the Extension. Belt asked regarding implementation of annual LiDAR. Is this something that is worth the bang for the buck? Lewis said it is the best tool for the job. Henry said maybe it helps to think of it in terms of the information generated right now to help make future decisions regarding resource allocation. Farnsworth asked, yesterday he heard conservation folks say they never want line below zero, all reaches aggradational. How much would that cost? And what does it cost you in terms of other types of management actions? He does not think that is something that is feasible. Farnsworth asked what response would you need to see to make a decision? Need something that ties sediment to birds, NEPA, ESA compliance, a physical response and ultimately a species response. Can we build a relationship between sediment and unobstructed channel width, for example. Brei said we can develop relationships between sed aug and unobstructed channel width similar to the relationship developed already in the channel width model between Phrag spraying and channel width. Merrill said allocation to sed aug reduces money to buy water, that is the tradeoff. Rabbe said possibly all these actions are needed from a species perspective. Maybe all are possible within the budget and not necessarily competing against one another. Starting with the assumption that somethings gotta give is not a good place to start. Farnsworth said you need to be able to assess the benefits in comparison with other actions. Rabbe said it is possible that the conclusion we reach is that sed aug may be necessary every year. Farnsworth asked how would you come to that conclusion, based upon what information? Rabbe said his conclusion is based upon bed erosion, but the question still remains about spatial scale. Rabbe said it remains unresolved whether the Lexington to Overton reach that is part of the AHR is necessary for ESA compliance. Bed erosion downstream of Overton bridge is also a metric he is interested in. He would want to see these metrics under lower flows (over last 4 of 5 years for which we have data) and under higher flow years (would bed erosion be worse?). Farnsworth asked Rabbe to clarify what volume and area of bed erosion metrics Rabbe wants to see. Rabbe also wants WC response to sed augmentation. Farrell said we can look at bed erosion metrics at Cottonwood Ranch habitat complex plus changes in veg classes, wetted width, unobstructed channel width (link to species habitat) after a concerning year or period. We can also look at WC response during that period. Lewis said it is hard to say how bed erosion changes WC habitat and WC use. Rabbe said analysis on this limited spatial and temporal scale might be data limited. Lewis continued on to show drone imagery to break down lateral erosion into shorter time periods between image acquisition. Kanz noted there was more lateral erosion in times of year when flow is highest. He asked about the spatial resolution on these drone images.



Lewis said these are opportunistic observations to fill in temporal gaps in information. Not for use in isolation but may point out temporally important time periods when consider multiple samples over time and space. Lewis asked for TAC feedback on reducing number of transects surveyed at each anchor point. Kanz asked for a time estimate on each transect. Lewis said he estimates a field effort of 35 hours could be reduced to 20 hours. Kanz said this effort is still in first year and was conducted during a low flow year. He said we might not have enough information on annual channel change to know if transect number is important. Kanz recommended we collect another year of data before change anything. Lewis/ Brei asked if report as written contains what is needed for TAC evaluation. Henry asked if the TAC wants any changes to the annual monitoring report to reflect discussions over last two days – include reaches further downstream and/or add WC metrics like wetted width, vegetation area, unobstructed channel width. TAC said not for this report. Kanz said EDO is collecting the right data, that is what is important. How to present those data can be further discussed.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- EDO will take monitoring report to the GC for informational purposes
- EDO will take TAC feedback into consideration and think about how to put this together into a multi-year analysis.

TAC MOTION: No need for a motion, since no transect changes will be made to the protocol.

Document: [15 No Sed Aug Yearly Monitoring Report 2025 Final](#)

Presentation: [16 EDO July2025TAC NSA Presentation](#)

WET MEADOWS WRAP UP

WET MEADOWS HYDROLOGY REPORT

Farnsworth said the Special Advisor working on updating the groundwater model used in the report has been delayed in water court. There is nothing to report to the TAC at this time.

DATA MANAGEMENT

PRRIP DATA STORAGE & RELEASE POLICY

Farnsworth reminded the TAC that development of the data storage and release policy was a suggestion made by the ISAC in their review of DOI's Science Integrity Policy. It was presented to the GC along with ISAC report at the June GC. The GC suggested TAC review and be aware of the policy.

Document: [17 PRRIP Data Storage Release Policy](#)

LAND

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

Rabbe provided year by year management cycles for Cottonwood Ranch and Shoemaker Island (spreadsheet shows details). Cottonwood Ranch strategy is annual rotation and to use areas not for diversity management as cattle grazing areas (ex. area 1). He has integrated a burn schedule into this more recently. Jenniges suggested working group schedule a site visit and get back together to finalize what do for 2026 to inform grazing contracts for 2026. Rabbe said he thought what was in the spreadsheet was pretty much final but can schedule a site visit with the group. Shoemaker strategy was to split into three units of pasture over which management could be rotated over a 3-year cycle. Consistent annual haying has been split into two areas that rotate between rest and mid to late June



hay. In Binfield South the focus is less on diversity but priority is more on structure, keeping woody vegetation out or low enough not to decrease unobstructed channel width through grazing. The TAC provided no questions or comments.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Once plans are finalized, EDO will pass them to UFARM farm managers to start tenant negotiations.

Documents: [18 CWR Management Units](#)
[19 Shoemaker Island Management Units](#)
[20 PRRIP Grazing Units 2026-2032](#)

WATER

2025 GERMINATION SUPPRESSION RELEASE

Turner gave a summary of 2025 release implementation, EA water used, and comparison of implementation ability to hit target for 2023-2025. Scheel asked how much water can release out of EA. Turner said capacity of canals and North Platte river is a total of 3200-3500 cfs, 1850 cfs is the largest ever released for this. Water is preferentially routed through Southerland Canal so choke point not an issue and can use the water for power generation. Comes out after Lake Mac, but back after North Platte. That is how water would be routed if it weren't EA water anyway. Turner also said the 98,500 acre feet released this year is the largest EA release thus far. We hit our target of 1500 cfs at Grand Island 29 of 30 days. Hubbard asked about remaining EA balance. Turner estimated roughly 35,000 acre feet. Farnsworth asked for an estimate for early 2026 account balance. Turner said adding 15,000 acre feet from Pathfinder and about 18,000 acre feet from leases, plus natural inflows. He estimated somewhere between 80,000 and 100,000 acre feet if get decent natural inflows. Scheel asked if a criteria was established for when there is not enough water to make an EA release. Farnsworth said we discussed this at beginning of this year. There was discussion about whether it was even worth it to release water at all if likely to be very little to Grand Island and cut short. Rabbe/LaBay said the Service's strategy is to release as much as they can. Even if looks like would shut down EA release for irrigation demand, Service will take any water in the river they can get. Once start a release they may have evaluated how much water got to GI. Annual accruals to EA are about 90,000 acre feet. This year was much lower due to Pathfinder lows. Scheel asked if there is a river forecast on the Platte they can refer to. Turner said yes, we rely a lot on Central and NPPD for information on hydropower/irrigation demand and system constraints. Also, these do not account for precipitation events, especially downstream of Overton. Once we get water to Overton not much to do about it after that. Thunderstorms downstream of Overton are also unpredictable. Rabbe said he thought this year's release was important and successful after a year when vegetation encroachment looks like it had reduced unobstructed channel width. LaBay said Service's decision to continue EA release with any water they can get was also based on lack of June Phrag spraying, making the veg control by water that much more important. Walters asked Flyr to expand on importance of controllable water to make these types of management releases. Turner pointed out initial season lows and very low base flows from mid-June onward over which EA releases were made. Every release has been unique in terms of base conditions, amount of water used, duration, magnitude, target achievement metrics, etc. Most water went down the Southerland Canal, only about ¼ of it went down the North channel. Walters asked about efforts to keep flow capacity at choke point as high as possible to keep Phrag from invading and shrinking capacity even further. Turner said the choice of Southerland is to promote flexibility for irrigation and power generation. LaBay noted



that this year's release flirted at least three times with minor flood stage. Turner acknowledged this but said it did not warrant a change to the release.

Presentation: [21_2025 Germination Suppression Presentation for TAC 2025-07-23 rev](#)

TAC MEETING REVIEW & WRAP-UP

MOTIONS

- April 2025 TAC Meeting minutes approved.
- 2024 Fall Whooping Crane Monitoring Report recommended to GC for approval.

2025 TAC Meeting Schedule

- September 22-25, Kearney, NE, joint GC/ISAC/TAC Fall Science Meeting – focus on pallid sturgeon research and connecting it to PRRIP water management
- October 21-22, Kearney, NE

TAC MEETING END

The TAC meeting adjourned at 12:09 PM MT.