



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

Tuesday, March 13, 2018 – 2:00 PM – 5:30 PM  
Wednesday, March 14, 2018 – 8:00 AM – 10:15 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  
Jeff Cowley – Alternate

**State of Colorado**

Don Ament – Member  
Carlee Brown – 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 Barel – Member  
Kent Miller – Member

**Executive Director’s Office (EDO)**

Jason Farnsworth, ED  
Chad Smith, DED  
Bridget Barron  
Dave Baasch  
Courtney Black  
Patrick Farrell  
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**

Rich Walters – Member  
Bill Taddicken – Member

**Colorado Water Users**

Alan Berryman – Member  
Deb Freeman – Alternate  
Kevin Urie – Alternate  
Jason Marks – Alternate

**Audience Members**

Eliza Hines – Service  
Tom Econopouly – Service  
Matt Rabbe – Service  
Tracy Zayac – North Platte NRD  
Cory Steinke – CNPPID  
Rick Wilson – JEO  
Brandi Flyr – Central Platte NRD  
Jim Jenniges – NPPD  
Pat Engelbert – HDR  
Lyndon Vogt – Central Platte NRD  
John Shadle – NPPD  
Dan Bigbee – EA  
Scott Dicke – Lower Republican NRD  
Lori Potter – Kearney Hub



**TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2018**

**Welcome & Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions. Farnsworth thanked the group for all the empathy, kind words, and support related to the passing of Jerry Kenny. Fassett offered his thanks to the EDO for how they handled the situation and helped to keep the Program moving forward smoothly.

Agenda modifications:

- PRRIP First Increment Extension discussion will be today.
- PRRIP Water Action Plan Projects update will be earlier today.
- Platte River Invasive Species Management discussion will be tomorrow.

**GC Decision** – *LaBonde moved to approve the December 05, 2017 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes and the March 01, 2018 Executive Session Conference Call minutes; Ament seconded. Minutes approved.*

**PRRIP Executive Director’s Office (EDO)**

Fassett discussed recent conversations among the Signatories with how best to handle the transition of leadership in the EDO in light of the passing of Jerry Kenny. Ament offered comments on the plan moving forward and expressed his gratitude to the EDO for quickly developing a very good plan for moving forward. Thabault said the Service fully supports the plan moving forward. Beardsley said they have great faith in Farnsworth, Smith, and the EDO moving forward and fully support it.

**GC Decision** – *Ament moved to approve the PRRIP Signatories recommendation to accept Headwaters Corporation’s Internal Option for the PRRIP EDO and appoint Jason Farnsworth PRRIP Executive Director (ED) and Chad Smith PRRIP Deputy Executive Director (DED); Taddicken seconded. Motion approved.*

**GC Decision** – *LaBonde moved to approve the FY18 EDO Contract Addendum; Thabault seconded. Motion approved.*

**Program Committee Updates**

*Land Advisory Committee (LAC)*

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC has not met since the last GC meeting but will be meeting soon.

*Water Advisory Committee (WAC)*

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC met via conference call on February 6. Discussion topics included: water leasing on Central’s system for irrigators; Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge; Elwood recharge modeling; Central Platte NRD water transfers; project scores; and AEM imagery to help with slurry walls. Steinke is the 2018 WAC Chair.

*Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*

Baasch provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC met via conference call on January 29. Discussion topics included: tabled nomination of the 2018 TAC chair; approved the 2017 tern/plover monitoring report; approved the 2017 spring whooping crane monitoring report; new Program publications; updates on Program water projects and the new Program website and database.



97 *Finance Committee (FC)*

98 LaBonde said the FC had not met since the last GC meeting. The FC met via conference call on February  
99 1. The FC took four actions: approved the 2018 ISAC member contract amendments; approved a channel  
100 reactivation bid package for the choke point; approved 2018 Program land spraying bid package; and  
101 approved a contract amendment for RTi related to the Program website and database.  
102

103 **Program Outreach Update**

104 *PRESENTATIONS*

- 105 • Jason Farnsworth presented a Program overview to the Platte River Recovery Implementation  
106 Foundation (PRRIF) Board on December 11, 2017 at Rowe Sanctuary.
- 107 • Jason Farnsworth presented on the hydrology of the Program to Rowe Sanctuary Volunteers on  
108 December 12, 2017 at Rowe Sanctuary.
- 109 • Jason Farnsworth presented a Program update at the annual conference of the Nebraska Association of  
110 County Officials on December 13, 2017 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- 111 • Jason Farnsworth presented an update on the Broad Scale Recharge and Elwood Recharge projects to  
112 the Tri-basin Natural Resources District Board of Directors on March 8, 2018 in Holdrege, Nebraska.  
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114 *EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS*

- 115 • The Program exhibited at the annual meeting of the Four States Irrigation Council in Fort Collins,  
116 Colorado on January 10-12, 2018. We made 186 contacts.
- 117 • The Program had a memorial book for Jerry Kenny at the Colorado Water Congress in Denver,  
118 Colorado on January 24 – 26, 2018.
- 119 • The Program exhibited at the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Informational Seminar on February 1,  
120 2018 in Grand Island, Nebraska. We made 122 contacts during the event.  
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122 *UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS*

- 123 • The Program will be exhibiting at the Audubon Crane Festival March 22-24, 2018 in Kearney,  
124 Nebraska.
- 125 • Dave Baasch will be presenting on Habitat Selection by Whooping Cranes within the Platte River  
126 Valley and the Migration Corridor, at the Audubon Crane Festival March 22-24, 2018 in Kearney,  
127 Nebraska.
- 128 • Patrick Farrell will be presenting on Habitat Selection by Sandhill Cranes within the Platte River  
129 Valley, at the Audubon Crane Festival March 22-24, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- 130 • Jason Farnsworth will be presenting on Platte River water accounting and ways that future water  
131 management activities may influence crane habitat at Rowe Sanctuary on March 31, 2018.  
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133 *MEDIA/OTHER*

- 134 • The Kearney Hub published an article by Lori Potter titled “Jerry Kenny remembered as peacemaker  
135 on Platte River habitat efforts” on January 19, 2018.
- 136 • The Program will be hosting Jane Goodall and her group from the Jane Goodall Institute in the Goodall  
137 blind on the evening of March 15, 2018.  
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139 **PRRIP FY18 Budget and Work Plan**

140 Farnsworth discussed the status of the FY18 budget. LaBonde said with regard to the Extension, it relies  
141 upon First Increment carryover funds to complete work during the Extension.



142 **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report**

143 Rabbe provided an update on 2017 Tiered Consultations. Ament asked about Colorado consultations. Rabbe  
144 said the OMAD missile project is the main one, it is a Department of Defense road project. Urie asked  
145 about depletions that do not fit under the existing MOA. Rabbe said those are for projects largely in 2008  
146 and maybe into 2009 before the MOA was finalized. Econopouly said he would find out more details and  
147 get back to Colorado.

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149 **PRRIP Water Action Plan (WAP) Projects**

150 Werbylo and Engelbert provided an update on the Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge (BSR) project.  
151 Farnsworth discussed the status of agreements with NPPD (land use) and CNPPID (pipeline Water Service  
152 Agreement) to move the BSR project forward. The EDO is working on revised language for both  
153 agreements with the hope that both can be presented to the GC soon.

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155 Strauch asked about the estimated cost per acre foot for BSR. Werbylo said the current estimated cost for  
156 the full project is roughly \$3 million. Shadle asked when final plans would be wrapped up. Engelbert said  
157 likely by the end of this month. Werbylo said the EDO and HDR are working with Central to get specifics  
158 about pipeline-related costs. Barel asked if the pipeline and berms are designed for icing conditions.  
159 Engelbert said everything will be designed with icing conditions in mind. Farnsworth said the largest  
160 uncertainty is the infiltration rate so over the next 2-3 years we will be developing and adjusting operational  
161 plans based on learning from operation.

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163 Werbylo gave a short update on the slurry wall project. Fassett asked about the cost. Werbylo said the \$7  
164 million estimated construction cost is just for the single project at Lakeside.

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166 **PRRIP 2016 State of the Platte**

167 Smith provided a summary of the 2016 State of the Platte. Discussion topics included:

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- 169 • Changes to the format of the document, including addition of a Glossary, listing of Program  
170 publications, and a summary of progress toward the Land and Water milestones.
- 171 • Plans to move the State of the Platte more to a living document through the Program website.
- 172 • Big Question #5 – Group discussion about the question focusing on whooping crane selection of habitat  
173 in proportion to its availability, data analysis showing a disproportionate selection for unobstructed  
174 channel width of around 650 feet and unforested width of around 1,100 feet, implications for Program  
175 management, and determining a process for getting to “Adjust” in the adaptive management cycle for  
176 this Big Question.

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178 **PRRIP Publications & Peer Review**

179 Thabault said the Service supports publication of Chapters 2 and 3 and the EDO response to the Alexander  
180 et al. “Letter to the Editor” but wants the meeting minutes to reflect that the Program publications do not  
181 necessarily represent the Service’s positions on all the issues discussed in those publications.

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183 **GC Decision** – *Czaplewski moved to approve publication of Whooping Crane Habitat Synthesis Chapters*  
184 *2 and 3; Beardsley seconded. Publication approved.*

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186 **GC Decision** – *Czaplewski moved to approve publication of the EDO response to Alexander et al.; Labonde*  
187 *seconded. Publication approved.*



188 **PRRIP First Increment Extension**

189 Merrill discussed the status of the NEPA process for the Extension. There is a Draft Environmental  
190 Assessment (EA) now on the street for public review and there are several public open houses to allow for  
191 input on the document. A formal request for consultation went out to the Service last week and we should  
192 still be on schedule for a FONSI in September of this year. Rabbe said formal consultation began on March  
193 7 and there is a 30-day period for the Service to respond to the request from Reclamation. After that, there  
194 is a 90-day period to write the draft Biological Opinion and then there is a 135-day period for consultation  
195 on the Final Biological Opinion. Thabault said the draft BO will be shared with the federal agency and we  
196 may need to have some discussion with Reclamation as to whether we can share the draft BO with the GC  
197 for review and comment.

198  
199 LaBonde said the states came together last fall with a proposal to extend the Program by 13 years. As part  
200 of that, there is a water project called the Pathfinder Proposal (16,507 acre-feet) which adds the uses of  
201 environment, fisheries, and wildlife to an irrigation use (below Guernsey and above Lake McConaughy).  
202 The project requires Congressional authorization and it would be best to put this in the same legislation as  
203 the Extension. Three conditions would have to be met: 1) a change of use (state water right issue in  
204 Wyoming); 2) approval by Wyoming legislature under export statutes; 3) Nebraska would have to issue a  
205 permit to protect that water from the state line to McConaughy. Some folks in the Upper North Platte had  
206 concerns about this project. LaBonde held a series of public meetings in Wyoming to discuss this issue.  
207 There is broad support from Wyoming water users to extend the Program, but water users from the Upper  
208 North Platte want protections for their water use in the federal legislation. The suggestion that has come up  
209 is to have the federal legislation ask Reclamation to petition for a no-call provision on this water right.  
210 LaBonde will be talking to the Wyoming Governor soon about this proposed language and at that point he  
211 can talk to Colorado, Nebraska, and the Wyoming Congressional delegation about the issues.

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213 **Meeting adjourned at 5:17 PM Central Time.**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2018**

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**Welcome and Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

**Platte River Invasive Species Management**

Walters discussed funding for Platte River invasive species management. Freeman asked about the status of other funding for this work. Walters discussed the annual contributions of several organizations (CPNRD, TPNRD, NPPD, CNPPID, DU) and pending funding from the State of Nebraska. There are also three pending grants that could provide matching funds. Barels said this is one of the best things the Program can do to keep water moving through the system. LaBonde asked what the total cash need is for this Program. Walters said the goal is \$600,000-\$650,000 with a minimum of about \$400,000; this is out-of-pocket cash that does not include in-kind services. LaBonde said his concern is that the cost share has the Program paying about half of the cost of this effort when it is an issue for the whole river in Nebraska. Merrill said this is a concern for Reclamation as well. Farnsworth said the counties in Nebraska are trying to pool resources to help address this issue and the EDO will continue to push them to do as much as they can to get a handle on this issue. LaBonde said this appears to be a Nebraska issue more so than a Program issue especially when the Program is currently the largest cash contributor. LaBonde asked other funding partners like CNPPID and NPPD if their contributions can be higher.

LaBonde moved to approve the expenditure of \$200,000 of FY18 funds in PRRIP Budget Line Item WP-1(b) for invasive species management in 2018. No second was offered so the motion died.

Thabault said he is concerned about being pennywise and pound foolish and that reducing funding might lead to greater control costs down the road. He supports a motion that keeps Program funding at the level of \$300,000 and that we work to find additional funding sources to alleviate the Program funding burden over time. Runge asked if there is an effort to develop a statewide integrated pest management approach. Walters said not at this time. Taddicken said Audubon has been working with donors to possibly develop a large endowment to work on invasive species management. Barels said one idea is to have the EDO develop a strategy and a cost for putting out an RFQ to hire a commercial applicator to just treat Program lands.

LaBonde asked if there is a phragmites infestation on Program lands. Tunnell said yes and that control efforts for it are not built into regular Program management budget line items but are covered by this effort being discussed.

**GC Decision** – *Thabault moved to approve the expenditure of \$300,000 in FY18 funds in PRRIP Budget Line Item WP-1(b) for invasive species (phragmites) management and to direct the EDO and related funding partners to work more aggressively to help find additional funding sources; Miller seconded. Motion approved.*

Merrill said it is important for Walters to discuss with the other funding partners for this work that the PRRIP funding Signatories are getting frustrated with the level of funding coming from the Program and there is a desire to reduce the Program's funding share to something closer to past levels (\$200,000).

**PRRIP Land Management**

Tunnell discussed the 2017 Land Work Report. Freeman asked about LP-2 and what is meant by AM Species Habitat Actions. Farnsworth said this means actions like channel widening and other actions that are separate from regular land operations.



262 **Public Comment**

263 Fassett asked for public comment. None offered.

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265 **Executive Session**

266 *Beardsley moved to enter Executive Session; Ament seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 8:58*  
267 **AM Central Time.**

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269 *Ament moved to end Executive Session; Strauch seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 10:05 AM*  
270 **Central Time.**

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272 **PRRIP Executive Session Motions**

273 **GC Decision** – *Miller moved to authorize the EDO to seek appraisal of Tract W201601 for possible*  
274 *disposal; Ament seconded. Motion approved.*

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276 **Future Meetings & Closing Business**

277 Upcoming 2018 GC meetings:

- 278 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **June 12-13, 2018** @ Cheyenne, WY
- 279 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **September 11-12, 2018** @ Kearney, NE
- 280 ○ 2017 AMP Reporting Session – **October 16-18, 2018** @ Omaha, NE
- 281 ○ GC Special Session (FY19 Budget/Work Plan) – **November 13, 2018** (conference call/webinar  
282 only)
- 283 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 4-5, 2018** @ Denver, CO

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285 **Meeting adjourned at 10:07 AM Central Time.**

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287 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from March 13-14, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting**

- 288 1) Approved the December 05, 2017 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes and the March 1, 2018 GC Executive  
289 Session Conference Call minutes.
- 290 2) Approved the PRRIP Signatories recommendation to accept Headwaters Corporation's Internal Option  
291 for the PRRIP EDO and appointed Jason Farnsworth PRRIP Executive Director (ED) and Chad Smith  
292 PRRIP Deputy Executive Director (DED).
- 293 3) Approved the FY18 EDO Contract Addendum.
- 294 4) Approved publication of whooping crane habitat synthesis Chapters 2 and 3 and approved publication  
295 of the EDO response to the Alexander et al. Letter to the Editor.
- 296 5) Approved the expenditure of \$300,000 in FY18 funds in PRRIP Budget Line Item WP-1(b) for invasive  
297 species (phragmites) management and directed the EDO and related funding partners to work more  
298 aggressively to help find additional funding sources.
- 299 6) Authorized the EDO to seek appraisal of Tract W201601 for possible disposal.