



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

Monday, March 4, 2019 – 2:00 PM – 5:30 PM
Tuesday, March 5, 2019 – 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 (2019 GC Chair)
Bryan Clerkin – Alternate

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member
JoJo La – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jeff Fassett – Member (via conference call)
Jesse Bradley – Alternate

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member
Bob Mehling – Alternate
Owen Williams – Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Mark Czaplewski – Member
Devin Brundage – Member
Brian Barel – Member
Joe Citta – 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
Tom Smrdel
Seth Turner

Kevin Werbylo

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Chris Beardsley – Member
Brock Merrill – Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Eliza Hines – Alternate
Matt Rabbe – Alternate

Environmental Entities

Bill Taddicken – Member
Kristal Stoner – Alternate

Colorado Water Users

Deb Freeman – Alternate
Jason Marks – Alternate

Audience Members

Jeff Runge – Service
Mike Drain – CNPPID
Tom Econopouly – Service
John Shadle – NPPD
Rick Wilson – JEO
Jim Jenniges – NPPD
John Berge – NPNRD
Brandi Flyr – CPNRD
Lyndon Vogt – CPNRD
Matt Pillard – HDR
Cory Steinke – CNPPID
Lori Potter – Kearney Hub
Chris Elliott – NPPD
Michelle Koch – NGPC
Tyler Thulin – CNPPID

**MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2019****Welcome & Administrative**

LaBonde called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

GC Decision – *Ament moved to approve the December 10, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended; Strauch seconded. Minutes 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 the Public Access Subcommittee is active and will be making recommendations in June.

Water Advisory Committee (WAC)

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC last met via conference call on February 5. All items discussed are on the GC agenda this month.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC has not met since the last GC meeting. The next TAC meeting is April 30 at the EDO Conference Center in Kearney, NE.

Finance Committee (FC)

LaBonde said the FC last met via conference call on February 13 and discussed ISAC contract amendments, the predator trapping agreement, and the chemical application RFB.

Program Outreach Update**PRESENTATIONS**

- Tim Tunnell presented to the Nebraska Association of County Officials – Weed Superintendents on the land component of the Program on December 12, 2018 at the Younes Center in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Justin Brei presented to the Nebraska Land Improvement Consultants (NLIC) conference on January 16, 2019 in Kearney, Nebraska. His session was titled, “*Water Projects and Habitat Restoration for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program – Past, Present, and Future*”.
- Tom Smrdel presented to the River Restoration Northwest – Annual Stream Restoration Symposium on February 5, 2019 in Stevenson, Washington. His session was titled, “*Full Scale Sediment Augmentation on the Central Platte River*”.
- Tom Smrdel presented a poster session at the River Restoration Northwest – Annual Stream Restoration Symposium on February 5, 2019 in Stevenson, Washington. His poster was titled, “*Remote Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring*”.
- Bruce Sackett presented at the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Information Seminar in Grand Island February 7, 2019 about the Program accomplishments and the Public Access Program with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

- The Program exhibited at the annual meeting of the Four States Irrigation Council in Fort Collins, Colorado on January 9-11, 2019. We made 159 contacts.
- The Program exhibited at Colorado Water Congress in Denver, Colorado on January 30 – February 1, 2019. We made 270 contacts.



- 48 • The Program exhibited at the Joint Venture Rainwater Basin Information Seminar in Grand Island,
49 Nebraska on February 7, 2019. We made 78 contacts.

50

51 *UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS*

- 52 • Justin Brei will be part of the Rowe Sanctuary Speaker Series on March 7, 2019 at the Kearney Public
53 Library in Kearney, Nebraska. His presentation is titled, “*Past, Present, and Future Water Projects for
54 the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program*”.
- 55 • Dave Baasch will be presenting on Whooping Cranes to the Woman’s Educational Society of Colorado
56 College on March 18, 2019 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- 57 • Patrick Farrell will be presenting at the Audubon Crane Festival in Kearney, Nebraska on March 23,
58 2019. His presentation includes updates on the avian species and discussion of the process to reach
59 Program Milestones.
- 60 • Scott Griebbling is presenting at the American Water Resources Association Spring Specialty
61 Conference titled, “Setting Conditions for the Success of Integrated Water Resources Management” in
62 Omaha, Nebraska on March 25, 2019. His presentation is titled, *Collaboration for Environmental
63 Benefits and Regulatory Compliance: The Role of Integrated Water Resource Management in the
64 Successful Operations of the Lake McConaughy Environmental Account*”.
- 65 • Kevin Werbylo is presenting at the American Water Resources Association (AWRA) Spring Specialty
66 Conference titled, “Setting Conditions for the Success of Integrated Water Resources Management” in
67 Omaha, Nebraska on March 25, 2019. His presentation is titled, “*Applying IWRM to Managed
68 Groundwater Recharge for Environmental Purposes*”.
- 69 • On March 26, 2018 the Program will also have a panel at the AWRA conference titled, “*The Role of
70 IWRM in Creation, Governance, Success of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program*”. The
71 panel will be moderated by Scott Griebbling and Panelists are:
- 72 Jesse Bradley, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Lincoln, NE
73 Bryan Clerkin, Wyoming Water Development Office, Cheyenne, WY
74 Thomas Econopouly, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Lakewood, CO
75 Brandi Flyr, Central Platte Natural Resources District, Grand Island, NE
76 Jojo La, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Denver, CO
77 Bill Taddicken, National Audubon Society (Rowe Sanctuary), Gibbon, NE
- 78 • Dave Baasch and Tom Smrdel are presenting on the Program and are part of a panel discussion about
79 large landscape architecture on April 5, 2019 in Lincoln, Nebraska. The University of Nebraska-
80 Lincoln College of Architecture is holding their annual Landscape Architecture Symposium. The title
81 of the 2019 symposium is, “*Nexus: design, horticulture, ecology*”.
- 82 • The Program is also hosting a field trip for crane viewing at the AWRA conference in the PRRIP blinds
83 on March 23, 2019.
- 84 • The Program will be exhibiting at the Audubon Crane Festival in Kearney, Nebraska on March 23,
85 2019.
- 86 • The Program will be exhibiting at the AWRA conference in Omaha, Nebraska on March 25-27, 2019.

87

88 *MEDIA/OTHER*

- 89 • Fresh Water News, the newsletter of Water Education Colorado published an article on the Program on
90 January 9, 2019. Several Governance Committee members were interviewed and quoted in the article.
- 91 • The Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) Confluence, the newsletter of the CWCB, published
92 an article by Jojo La in their February 2019 issue.
- 93 • Kevin Werbylo was interviewed by Joshua Dill for an article in the February 2019 *Irrigation Leader*
94 magazine. The article was titled, *Providing Compliance for the Platte River Basin*.



95 **PRRIP FY19 Budget Update**

96 Farnsworth discussed the status of the FY19 budget, expenditures, and forecast for the rest of 2019.
97 Farnsworth and Baasch discussed the sole source request for Program grassland vegetation monitoring.

98
99 **GC Decision** – *Miller moved to approve the Prairie Legacy sole source agreement for grassland vegetation*
100 *monitoring; Taddicken seconded. Sole source agreement approved.*

101
102 **PRRIP First Increment Extension**

103 LaBonde discussed the status of the Extension legislation. Sen. Barrasso likely to introduce a bill in the
104 Senate within the next two weeks and will be talking to Senate colleagues from Colorado and Nebraska
105 about co-sponsorship with hearings scheduled shortly thereafter. The bill has been submitted for review
106 and some editorial changes have been suggested that will be distributed to the GC soon. Drain said as soon
107 as LaBonde knows of a bill number to get that out for future Congressional contacts. LaBonde agreed and
108 also suggested making contacts with other Senators to let them know this is coming. LaBonde also
109 suggested a joint letter of support from the three Governors. Ament said he talked to Sen. Gardner and he
110 is waiting for Sen. Barrasso to give his show of support and introduce a bill.

111
112 **PRRIP Adaptive Management Plan (AMP)**

113 Smith and Farnsworth discussed the status of the process of updating the Program AMP and how to address
114 the issue of examining target flows. The GC discussed the path forward and how to address target flows in
115 the process of updating the AMP. Discussion points included:

- 116 • Once the Extension legislation process is complete, consider a brief evaluation of existing target flows
117 and their effectiveness.
- 118 • The process of updating the AMP will take a long time and the EDO should consider a longer process
119 of Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) meetings on a monthly basis to allow for back-
120 and-forth discussion.
- 121 • Don't forget to consider instream flow rights of CPNRD and NGPC.
- 122 • Should consider the question of whether the Program needs an additional 10,000 acre/feet as a question
123 to explore through the AMP.

124
125 The GC agreed to re-initiate the Adaptive Management Working Group. Current membership:

- 126 • Reclamation – Brock Merrill
127 • USFWS – Matt Rabbe, Tom Econopouly
128 • Downstream Water Users – Mark Czaplewski/Brandi Flyr, Mike Drain/Dave Zorn, Jim Jenniges
129 • Environmental Entities – Rich Walters, Bill Taddicken
130 • States – Jojo La (Colorado), Barry Lawrence (Wyoming), Michelle Koch (Nebraska)
131 • Colorado Water Users – TBD

132
133 Barel's suggested that this be a standing agenda item on future GC meeting agendas.

134
135 **USFWS Consultation Report**

136 Rabbe discussed 2018 consultations. It was a lower year in terms of numbers compared to previous years
137 during the course of Program implementation. Freeman asked if the Service checked on the North
138 Platte/North Park depletion plan. Ted Kowalski had worked to address some issues that had been redlined
139 and needs to be part of the package available on the Program website. Smith said that will be updated.
140 Rabbe said the GC and the Service need to agree to several extensions for agreements related to
141 consultations. Freeman said to get agreement from the signatory parties to the agreements then bring it to
142 the GC for information purposes (they are not Program documents). Freeman asked about the federal



143 depletion MOAs and whether those need adjusted. Rabbe said he has reviewed them and they are still in
144 good shape.

145

146 **Other Business**

147 Taddicken recognized Kristal Stoner as a new Alternate GC member, she is the state director for Audubon.
148 The GC offered a welcome.

149

150 Farnsworth recognized Barels for his many years of service to the GC and the Program as this is his last
151 GC meeting. The GC offered congratulations.

152

153 **Meeting adjourned at 5:21 PM Central Time.**

154

155 **TUESDAY, MARCH 5, 2019**

156

157 LaBonde called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

158

159 **PRRIP Water Action Plan (WAP) Update**

160 Turner discussed the Water Objective Summary and the status of water project accounting and scoring.
161 Drain said we need to fill Barels' spot on the Scoring Subcommittee. Barels said Jeff Shafer (NPPD) would
162 be his replacement. Werbylo discussed the Cottonwood Ranch broad-scale recharge (BSR) project and the
163 Lakeside slurry wall project. Taddicken said he was contacted recently by someone concerned about
164 trapping and killing animals at the BSR project site. He contacted the EDO and was able to assure the
165 contact that there is no trapping program associated with that project. Farnsworth said compared to other
166 projects the slurry wall project is the most expensive water. Drain said this is a high capital item like J2 but
167 J2 has the potential to put in a large volume of water into the river. Farnsworth said we are stuck in a want
168 vs. need dilemma. LaBonde asked if we still need to go through the permitting process. Farnsworth said we
169 need to get the well permits from the Nebraska DNR. Freeman asked what the shelf life is of the permits.
170 Werbylo said the Corps permit would be an issue as well. LaBonde said permitting is a question mark until
171 they are granted. Freeman said nationwide permits expire every five years, if there is a specific permit the
172 duration of the permit can be longer according to the project. Barels said going through the permitting and
173 public notices if we intend to put the project on the shelf then that is not the best approach. Maybe the best
174 approach is to get more information and then have a plan to initiate the project further into the Extension if
175 it is necessary. LaBonde said design is authorized by the GC's December 2018 action. The road we are on
176 is to finish the design and put it on the shelf and wonders if there is GC consensus on that. The GC agreed.

177

178 Strauch asked how confident we are the other water projects will provide water to the Program for long-
179 term contracts. Farnsworth said our largest concern is the large pot of water associated with the CPNRD
180 surface water transfer and how long that will persist and other similar projects. Our intention will be to
181 transition them to Extension-duration projects and we will figure that out over the next year and a half.

182

183 Oamek discussed the proposal from Mammoth Trading requesting \$5,000 towards development of a phone
184 app as part of a tracking system for water use in the North Platte NRD. Farnsworth said there is \$25,000
185 in the PRRIP budget for water management incentives. In the past, that money has gone toward projects
186 like the UNL TAPS project related to irrigation. Some of these projects are less about conserving water and
187 more about irrigation efficiency which are not the same. This is an example of a small amount of money to
188 help on-farm using water more efficiently. Berge discussed the NPNRD and its investment in the project.
189 Drain asked if this is to test the technology instead of trying to get some chunk of water out of the NPNRD
190 at this point. Farnsworth said yes. Taddicken said this seems like a logical next step since NPNRD has put
191 meters on their wells. Oamek said there is a lot of farmer interest in this project. LaBonde wondered if this



192 is more a chance to potentially work with the NRDs on getting access to water but is not sure it is the role
193 of the Program to bring technology to farms, that seems like it should be the job of the NRDs. Drain said
194 his observation is that the NRDs will adopt it if it makes sense for their own purposes, the question for the
195 Program is whether a small investment from the Program could lead to more water for the Program. Miller
196 said this is not a lot of money for the Program and there is a potential for this concept to be positive for all
197 NRDs without coming back to the Program for more dollars. This is just a kind of seed money for a project
198 that could benefit the Program. LaBonde said we have been approached by this one company, but are there
199 other companies or ideas out there that might be beneficial? If we open this door, how many other
200 companies will come to us for seed money? LaBonde said he has reservations that this is a Program expense.
201 La asked we are able to participate in both TAPS and this new project. Farnsworth said that is a possibility,
202 we would just say this is how much money we have available. La asked if Mammoth will proceed with the
203 project with or without Program support. Oamek said Mammoth likely has the resources to proceed without
204 Program funding.

205
206 Ament said we are wading into crop management with this approach. The water piece is one part of a big
207 management scheme and it is hard to understand why the Program is wading into this. Barels said he does
208 not see a clear picture of how this could end up providing water to the Program given that groundwater is
209 owned by the state. There may not be a clear path to put this water into the Program's portfolio. Farnsworth
210 said one pathway would be through increases to the 10 percent of storable natural inflows that are added to
211 the Lake McConaughy EA during the non-irrigation season. Since the affected budget is in discretionary
212 funds, the EDO office can make the decision to fund or not fund the project.

213
214 LaBonde introduced the Pathfinder municipal lease item, recused himself, and passed the gavel to Vice
215 Chair Ament. Farnsworth provided background on the project.

216 **GC Decision** – *Strauch moved to approve the Pathfinder municipal lease; Miller seconded. Lease*
217 *agreement approved.*

218 **North Platte Choke Point Test Flow**

219
220 Brei discussed progress made at the choke point and plans for the test flow. Drain and Miller asked about
221 the involvement of the City of North Platte in flow planning. Brei said Jim Hawks from the City is part of
222 the ad hoc group working on the planning for test flow implementation. That also includes working with
223 the National Weather Service (NWS). Barels said the key to this seems to be the NWS interpretation of
224 impacts and the timing for making a decision. Brei said we will present them with a plan and let them react
225 to it. Barels said they should be able to identify impacts and what data they need to evaluate those impacts.
226 Drain said that is why we are working with them on flow planning as well as the associated monitoring
227 plan. Farnsworth said the flood proofing projects the Program paid for is directed at landowner projects that
228 the NWS gets. NWS determination of flood stage appears to be a visual reconnaissance of what is happening
229 during flood events. We are going to give them a series of data points to see what will work to help in the
230 NWS decision-making process. Bradley asked about sand dams for irrigation users and how to work with
231 them on potential impacts. Brei said we will use current guidance in the EA operations plan for those issues
232 but those will be part of the monitoring plan so we keep an eye on them.

233
234
235 Farnsworth discussed the CNPPID indemnity agreement for the choke point test flow. Freeman said it
236 would be helpful to talk generally about the relationship of the Program, the GC when it acts, the
237 Signatories, and the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) and who is covered when. La said Colorado
238 has concerns about the indemnity agreement and associated liability that need addressed before they can
239 support the indemnification. La requested a follow-up GC conference call to discuss this issue once their
240 questions as answered. Farnsworth agreed.



241 **PRRIP Water Valuation**

242 Farnsworth discussed this topic and the work he had Oamek do on looking at the prices and value for water
243 that will put the Program on a firm foundation in terms of water pricing. Oamek gave a presentation on
244 strategies on pricing leased water. LaBonde asked if Oamek has done analysis with recent commodity
245 prices. Oamek said yes and it has a dramatic impact on the price of corn. LaBonde said if we are basing
246 future leases on current prices, and if one of the benefits of the Program is that we offer long-term
247 agreements, that is one way to try to secure water at a reasonable price.

248
249 **PRRIP Land Management**

250 Tunnell provided the 2018 Land Work Report and a summary of land activities in 2018.

251
252 **Public Comment**

253 LaBonde asked for public comment. None offered.

254
255 **Executive Session**

256 *Beardsley moved to enter Executive Session; Ament seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 10:45*
257 **AM Central Time.**

258
259 **LaBonde ended Executive Session at 11:16 AM Central Time.**

260
261 **PRRIP Executive Session Motions**

262
263 **GC Decision – Mehling moved to decrease the Program's Payment for Lost Taxes for two properties**
264 **related to the J2 re-regulating reservoir project by 4.63%; Czaplewski seconded. Motion approved.**

265
266 **Future Meetings & Closing Business**

267 Upcoming 2019 GC meetings:

- 268 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **June 11-12, 2019** @ Cheyenne, WY (WY Water Development
269 Commission offices)
- 270 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **September 10-11, 2019** @ Kearney, NE
- 271 ○ 2019 AMP Reporting Session – **October 8-10, 2019** @ Omaha, NE
- 272 ○ GC Special Session (FY20 Budget/Work Plan) – **November 12, 2019** (conference call/webinar
273 only)
- 274 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 3-4, 2019** @ Denver, CO

275
276 **Meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM Central Time.**

277
278 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from March 4-5, 2019 GC Quarterly Meeting**

- 279 1) Approved the December 10, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended.
- 280 2) Approved the sole source agreement for Program grassland vegetation monitoring.
- 281 3) Agreed to re-initiate the AMWG.
- 282 4) Approved the Pathfinder municipal lease agreement.
- 283 5) Agreed to a follow-up GC conference call in the near future to resolve issues related to the choke point
284 test flow indemnity agreement.
- 285 6) Agreed to reduce Payment for Lost Taxes for two properties related to the J2 *re-regulating reservoir*
286 project by 4.63%.