



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

3  
4 **Meeting Location:**

5 PRRIP Executive Director's Office Conference Room  
6 4111 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 6  
7 Kearney, NE 68845  
8 (308) 237-5728  
9

10 **Meeting Attendees**

11  
12 **Governance Committee (GC) Table**

13 **State of Wyoming**

14 Harry LaBonde – Voting Member  
15 Brian Clerkin – Alternate  
16

17 **State of Colorado**

18 Don Ament – Voting Member (GC Chair)  
19 Carlee Brown – Alternate  
20

21  
22 **State of Nebraska**

23 Jeff Fassett – Voting Member  
24 Jennifer Schellpeper – Alternate  
25  
26

27 **Upper Platte Water Users**

28 Dennis Strauch – Voting Member  
29 Bob Mehling – Alternate  
30

31 **Downstream Water Users**

32 Mark Czaplewski – Member  
33 Brian Barel – Member  
34 Don Kraus – Member  
35 Kent Miller – Member  
36

37 **Executive Director's Office (EDO)**

38 Jerry Kenny, ED  
39 Jason Farnsworth  
40 Scott Griebing  
41 Bruce Sackett  
42 Sira Sartori  
43 Chad Smith  
44 Kevin Werbylo

**Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)**

Chris Beardsley – Voting Member  
Brock Merrill – Alternate

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)**

Michael Thabault – Voting Member (by phone)  
Tom Econopouly – Alternate  
Matt Rabbe – Alternate

**Environmental Entities**

Bill Taddicken – Voting Member  
Rich Walters – Voting Member  
Duane Hovorka – Member

**Colorado Water Users**

Alan Berryman – Voting Member  
Deb Freeman – Alternate

**Audience Members**

David Galat – ISAC  
Jim Hawks – City of North Platte  
Brad Anderson – EDO Special Advisor  
Russ Soucek – Nebraska Wildlife Federation  
Jeff Cowley – Wyoming State Engineer's Office  
Elizabeth Miller – NPNRD  
Cory Steinke – CNPPID  
Mike Drain – CNPPID  
Dave Zorn – CNPPID  
Jeff Runge – Service  
Jim Jenniges – NPPD  
Jim Schneider – Olsson Associates  
Matt Pillard – HDR

**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2016****Welcome & Administrative**

Ament called the meeting to order at 1:58 PM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

*The GC approved the June 7-8, 2016; July 26-27, 2016; and August 17, 2016 GC minutes by unanimous consent.*

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

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met via conference call on August 15, 2016. The single agenda item regarded Tract 1603 and the LAC recommended the GC pursue the tract. The tract sold at auction to a private individual.

***Water Advisory Committee (WAC)***

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC discussed the status of the J2 project, water leasing permits, CNPPID water leasing, Plan A and Plan B for Water Action Plan projects, broad scale recharge, slurry wall gravel pits, and a letter from the Tri-Basin NRD concerning the acquire and retire component.

***Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)***

Smith provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC has not met since April and the next meeting will be in conjunction with the AMP Reporting Session in October. The TAC has provided electronic input on several items including draft PRRIP manuscripts for publication and the EDO's pallid sturgeon memo.

***Finance Committee (FC)***

LaBonde provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC met twice since the June GC meeting. The first meeting on August 11 the FC approved two habitat complex bid packages, approved the fall diking RFQ, and held a second meeting on September 6 where the FC approved two contract amendments (broad-scale recharge permitting and sand dam removal modeling).

**Program Outreach Update****PRESENTATIONS**

- Kevin Werbylo presented "*Managing the Planform of the Central Platte River through Flow and Sediment Augmentation*" at the Rocky Mountain Stream Restoration Conference in Breckenridge, Colorado on July 20, 2016.
- Darren Beck presented "*Management of Channel Forming Storage Releases and Alluvial Recharge Projects for Habitat Restoration*" at the Rocky Mountain Stream Restoration Conference in Breckenridge, Colorado on July 20, 2016.

**UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS**

- The Program is exhibiting at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 13, 14, and 15, 2016 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.



- 91 • Patrick Farrell will be presenting at the Nebraska Natural Legacy Conference in Broken Bow, Nebraska  
92 on September 21, 2016. The title of his presentation is *Riverine habitat selection of Whooping Cranes*  
93 *during migration: Implications for managing habitat along the central Platte River.*
- 94 • Jerry Kenny and other EDO staff will be giving a tour of Program projects to the Upper Niobrara White  
95 Natural Resources District Board of Directors on September 24, 2016.
- 96 • The Program will be exhibiting at the Natural Resources Districts annual conference at the Younes  
97 Conference Center in Kearney, Nebraska on September 26 & 27, 2016.
- 98 • A series of basin-specific panels will look at water management in Nebraska at the Nebraska Water  
99 Center’s annual water symposium on October 20, 2016. Speakers on the Lower Platte panel include  
100 Jerry Kenny of the Program, Don Kraus of the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District  
101 and Mace Hack of The Nature Conservancy.
- 102 • The Program will be exhibiting at the South Platte Forum on October 26 & 27, 2016 in Loveland, CO.

103

#### 104 **MEDIA/OTHER**

- 105 • The Kearney Hub interviewed Jerry Kenny for an August 4, 2016 article on the J-2 reservoir being  
106 formally placed on hold by the Governance Committee.
- 107 • Mike Drain of the CNPPID, John Thorburn of Tri-Basin Natural Resources District, and Lyndon Vogt  
108 of Central Platte Natural Resources District were all interviewed for an August 4, 2016 Kearney Hub  
109 article on the effects of the J-2 hold on some of the project partners.
- 110 • The Kearney Hub did an August 20-21, 2016 feature on the Platte Basin watershed journey of Michael  
111 Forsberg and Pete Stegen which is part of the Platte Basin Timelapse Project. The duo traveled over  
112 1,000 miles by biking, hiking, and canoeing from the mountain headwaters of the Platte in Colorado to  
113 Plattsmouth, Nebraska where the Platte joins the Missouri.

114

#### 115 **PRRIP FY16 Budget/Contracts Update**

116 Kenny gave an overview of the status of the FY16 budget, related expenditures, contracts, and land income  
117 and taxes. Ament asked about farms owned by the Program. Sackett said they are generally all cash rent.

118

#### 119 **J-2 Reservoir Project**

120 Kraus gave an update on the status of the J-2 Project. CNPPID and the EDO are working on agreement  
121 amendment language to pause the project. Kenny said the ball is now in the court of the Program attorneys.  
122 Czaplowski asked how many acres CNPPID has acquired. Steinke said in the range of 30-40 acres.

123

#### 124 **USFWS Items**

125 Thabault discussed the final draft of the Service’s Milestones Report. Rabbe discussed some of the changes  
126 to the report such as noting the J-2 Project is now on hold. Freeman said the explanatory material that  
127 accompanies the milestones are not milestones themselves. The way they are characterized as sub-  
128 components that have not been achieved is a little strong. Those items guide us but they are not failed  
129 components. Rabbe said the way the Service went about it was to add the language of “While not  
130 required...”. Kenny said the EDO will work with the Service to make sure they have the information  
131 necessary to do proper reporting like incidental take, water reporting, and others. Barels asked if there will  
132 be a report or individual memos. Kenny said that is one of the things that needs to get sorted out.

133

134 Rabbe discussed the letters related to the Northern Long-Eared Bat (NLEB) informal consultation. The  
135 Service wrestled with the issue of clarifying tree size that might be considered habitat. They could not find  
136 an instance of being specific providing a size that would apply. The footnote definition used in the Service’s  
137 response letter to Reclamation is consistent with how the Service has approached this issue with everyone



138 else. Freeman asked if this means there is no grubbing, clearing, or other activities. Rabbe said on a case-  
139 by-case basis the Program can come to the Service's office to talk about specific circumstances.

140  
141 Rabbe discussed the Fall Flow Routing Test Release. The peak should be past Kearney now. We saw  
142 roughly 3,200 cfs at Overton and will see around 3,000 cfs at Grand Island. Runge said the idea for this  
143 came about during coordination discussions with the water users in the mid-2000's. The thought behind it  
144 is the canals are charged, losses would be less, so we can try a test release and see what the true losses are.  
145 Barel's asked if there is monitoring in the river to see what is going on. Rabbe said there are gages in the  
146 river and mechanisms for tracking water. The purpose was not to track channel change or species response.  
147 Barel's asked if it was just a hydraulic test. Rabbe said yes.

148  
149 Barel's asked the Service to use the EA Committee /Reservoir Coordinating Committee in developing future  
150 releases because people were impacted by this release and the communication was not broad enough for  
151 proper planning and responses. Rabbe and Thabault said that is noted and will be done in the future.  
152 Thabault asked for more clarification. Barel's said there are groundwater recharge permits and other  
153 diversions that could be made at this time that were impacted by the test release. We had to change canal  
154 operating plans and shut them down to not operate for groundwater recharge. We are not yet sure if the EA  
155 water has passed and if those canals can be re-opened. Thabault said he will work with his staff on this.

156  
157 **Cook Tract Water Items**  
158 Drain discussed the methodology to get a score for the Cook Tract well. Sartori gave a presentation on the  
159 project background.

160  
161 *LaBonde moved to approve the score for the Cook Tract well; Berryman seconded. Score approved.*

162  
163 **CNPPID Water Service Agreements (WSA)**  
164 Kenny discussed the WSAs for the Phelps Canal and Elwood Reservoir.

165  
166 *Barel's moved to approve the one-year extension of the Water Service Agreements for Phelps Canal and*  
167 *Elwood Reservoir; Beardsley seconded. Kraus, Czaplewski, and Miller abstained. Water Service*  
168 **Agreements approved.**

169  
170 **Water Action Plan Projects Update**  
171 Werbylo provided an update on general Water Action Plan projects, broad-scale recharge, and slurry wall  
172 pits and aquifers. Freeman asked if there are existing pits that could work for this. Sackett said there are  
173 very few that are available.

174  
175 **PRRIP 2016 EDO Technical Series**  
176 Farnsworth gave a presentation highlighting key points from the 2016 EDO Technical Series. Econopouly  
177 asked about the volume for the effective discharge. Farnsworth said it is not a volume approach but an  
178 integration of flow and sediment. Hovorka asked about the return interval. Farnsworth said that is under  
179 current flows. Runge asked about reverting to a dry period and the increase in disking. If we end up in a  
180 drier situation, what facilitates the increase in vegetation? Farnsworth said not having large bankfull or  
181 larger flows. Jenniges said the issue with vegetation is you can keep it out of the channel by keeping it wet,  
182 but if it establishes flow cannot remove it. Thabault asked if Farnsworth could speculate the level of support  
183 there is for the combination of flow and mechanical actions to get from one event to the next? Does a  
184 bankfull flow every three years help us get to the next 16-year event? Farnsworth said no, mechanical  
185 actions would still be required. Hovorka said phrag is now a noxious weed and a problem the NET funding  
186 is it is not set up to deal with noxious weed funding. The Program has a legal responsibility to control phrag



187 on Program lands. It's also very expensive and to expect that all landowners will do this control is a big  
188 ask. These are not easy issues to grapple with.

189

### Public Comment

191 Ament asked for public comment. None offered.

192

### Executive Session

194 *Fassett moved to enter Executive Session; LaBonde seconded.* **GC entered Executive Session at 4:58 PM**  
195 **Central Time.**

196

197 *Berryman moved to end Executive Session; Beardsley seconded.* **GC ended Executive Session at 5:30**  
198 **PM Central Time.**

199

### PRRIP Executive Session Motions

201 *LaBonde moved to approve allowing the Nebraska Community Foundation to sign Land Use Agreements*  
202 *for Tracts 1008, 1228, 1604, and 1605 on behalf of the Program; Barels seconded. Walters abstained on*  
203 *the vote related to Tract 1228.* **Land Use Agreements approved.**

204

205 **Meeting adjourned at 5:31 PM Central Time.**

206

207 **WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2016**

208

### Welcome and Administrative

210 Ament called the meeting to order at 8:02 AM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

211

### North Platte Choke Point

213 Anderson provided a presentation on the feasibility assessment of several options for the North Platte Choke  
214 Point. Taddicken asked if we looked at a model showing 5,000-7,000 cfs for inundation. Anderson said he  
215 looked at a gage height of 7 feet flood stage which is 4,000 cfs through the reach. The impact would be  
216 substantial at 7,000 cfs because the area is flat and those flows would be out of bank. Taddicken asked if  
217 we do Alternatives 2 and 3 does that add to the cfs we can get through the reach. Anderson we could convey  
218 3,000 cfs through the area under the recommended construction alternative. Miller said the problem with  
219 the higher water levels is the impact to groundwater. When river stage is raised, groundwater levels are  
220 raised as well. Buying out properties doesn't take into consideration the properties impacted by the raising  
221 of the groundwater (water in crawl spaces, yards, driveways, etc.). Hawks agreed with Miller and said we  
222 have this problem even at 6 feet. The inundation map is fine but it does not reflect the true magnitude of  
223 the problem through the community. Miller said the only way to deal with the groundwater issue and  
224 perceptions of being flooded is to do something structurally (dredging or structure around the west end of  
225 North Platte). Hawks asked if you negotiate a document with the owner of the property and pay them, what  
226 would that instrument be and how does that devalue the property? Kenny said it would be a flood easement,  
227 Sackett said it would be filed in county records. Hawks asked if you could get that property insured. Sackett  
228 said you could not build a structure and get it insured. Anderson said this project won't have any impact on  
229 insurability of a structure because this is so much smaller than a 100-year flood event, which is the event  
230 that insurance is tied to. That would be well out of the banks. Farnsworth said it is about 25,000-30,000 cfs.

231

232 Kraus said you would have to get agreement with 28 individuals and that is a challenge. Farnsworth said  
233 we would have to get the same agreement if we decide to build something in the channel as well. Anderson  
234 said his suggestion is to determine the groundwater level today; Kenny said we have monitoring wells out  
235 now. The second thing would be we could consider drain systems around any properties that would be



236 subjected to problems from groundwater. The issue is there will be maintenance costs associated with  
237 pumping and that would add to the total expense. Kenny said we did another project in the area along North  
238 River Road and we improved drainage to Whitehorse Creek. Since then, there have been a couple high flow  
239 years and that has worked well. Drain said there have been times when river stage is up and there have been  
240 no recent rains and there are water problems from groundwater. Miller said don't dismiss any alternative  
241 yet based on costs because there may be additional costs that are not yet factored in.

242  
243 Drain asked about the design of the canal and how it would function for its primary purpose (designed for  
244 2,000 cfs, carrying only 200 cfs for irrigation). Anderson said we can't have a dual structure, the existing  
245 canal would have to stay so there would need to be parallel canals. Farnsworth asked if we have a list of  
246 complaints from this summer when flows were over 3,000 cfs in June. Hawks said no but he could tell you  
247 who they are based on 30 years of experience. Kenny said clearly there are some groundwater items that  
248 need investigated and come back to the GC with more information. Merrill asked if we will have the same  
249 groundwater impact if we do something like the channel dredging. Anderson said yes. Fassett said we would  
250 be moving water only for a few days and not a couple months, so does that have an impact on groundwater  
251 if it is quick like that. Kenny said our wet meadow data suggests a short event will not cause those kind of  
252 groundwater impacts, but that prolonged releases for target flows could have a groundwater impact.

253  
254 Sackett asked if there is any restriction now in terms of continued building in this area. Hawks said the city  
255 does not allow any construction in the zone. Hovorka said he agrees with Miller that we should keep all the  
256 alternatives on the table at this point and learn more about them. Sackett said as he visited with the  
257 landowners in the area after the 2011 flood everyone was interested in talking about a solution. Now that  
258 some steps have been taken, there may not be as much support. You have to keep this mind as you consider  
259 which actions to take. Fassett asked what the big flow was in 2011. Kenny said about 7,000 cfs at North  
260 Platte. Kenny asked if the GC wants the EDO to spend any more time to look at the big canal option to the  
261 west of North Platte. Miller said it seems like that is not a good option to pursue. Kenny said it sounds like  
262 we have done enough for now on the canal. We will explore further the groundwater impacts of a raised  
263 stage and will come back to the GC with more information.

264  
265 Ament said there is a tremendous cost to all of these options and at the same time we are trying to put  
266 together a First Increment Extension and meet the water milestone. Everyone needs to keep in mind there  
267 is a limited amount of money that will be available to do any of this work. Barels said when he thinks about  
268 SDHF, target flows, and the choke point it seems like we need to sequence ourselves so we don't get too  
269 far ahead of ourselves on certain items.

270  
271 **Pallid Sturgeon**  
272 Smith summarized the EDO's pallid sturgeon memo and Galat gave a presentation from the ISAC on pallid  
273 sturgeon. There was a group discussion about pallid sturgeon issues and next steps. The GC agreed to  
274 incremental implementation of the four step process outlined in the EDO Pallid Sturgeon Memo (attached  
275 to these minutes for reference) with decisions by the GC to move from step to step. This includes building  
276 an internal Program pallid sturgeon workshop into the FY17 PRRIP budget and a subsequent expert  
277 workshop into the FY18 PRRIP budget, both with facilitation by Compass as an EDO Special Advisor.

278  
279 **PRRIP First Increment Extension**  
280 Ament discussed the recent meeting between the Signatories about the Extension. The Signatories offered  
281 the following bullet points for consideration in the Extension Proposal:

- 282  
283 • The Program is committed to achieving the minimum water milestone of 130,000 acre-feet in annual  
284 reductions to target flow shortages. However:



- 285           ○ The Program recognizes there are fiscal constraints to achieving this milestone, and  
286           ○ Scientific investigations need to be completed to confirm the need for 130,000 acre-feet in  
287           annual reductions to target flow shortages.
- 288       • The Program will invest the maximum amount of resources available to achieve at least 120,000 acre-  
289       feet in annual reductions to target flow shortages as quickly as possible during the First Increment  
290       Extension and will also invest in the science necessary to determine if the additional 10,000 acre-feet  
291       is justified.
  - 292       • The Program is committed to finding the additional resources necessary to achieve that additional  
293       10,000 acre-feet if justified by the science.

294  
295 LaBonde said what is driving this direction is budget numbers and available cash are being evaluated.  
296 Reclamation and Wyoming have said what they can bring to the table, Colorado as well, and that is short  
297 of the original estimated budget of roughly \$118 million. The last 10,000 acre-feet of water (120,000 to  
298 130,000 acre-feet) is worth about \$42 million out of that \$118 million budget. With the open question of  
299 which flows work and do we need the full 130,000 acre-feet, the idea is to move the last 10,000 acre-feet  
300 toward the end of the Extension once we answer the question of whether the full 130,000 acre-feet is needed.  
301 Kraus asked if we have put together proposed annual budgets match with hypothetical revenues now that  
302 we have had input on the potential available budget. Kenny said we have drafted a budget but we have not  
303 included this new approach of focusing on the 120,000 acre-feet number and adjusting the budget and cash  
304 flow requirements accordingly. Barels said we received a large amount of reading material for this meeting  
305 and the Downstream Water Users still need to review the Extension proposal and determine if they have  
306 comments they want to provide.

307  
308 The GC agreed to the following schedule for the Extension Proposal and budget:

- 309       • The EDO will distribute the revised draft Extension Proposal, based on GC discussion at the September  
310       meeting, to the GC on September 14, 2016.
- 311       • GC comments on that revised draft proposal are due to the EDO by September 30, 2016.
- 312       • The EDO will distribute the latest version of the Extension Proposal and budget to the GC for review  
313       by October 7, 2016
- 314       • The GC will have a conference call on October 14, 2016 at 10:00 AM Central Time to discuss the  
315       Extension Proposal and budget.
- 316       • One goal of the November 2, 2016 GC meeting in Denver is to get agreement on a final version of the  
317       Extension proposal and budget.

318

### 319 **Future Meetings & Closing Business**

320 Upcoming GC meetings:

- 321       ○ **November 2, 2016 @ Denver, CO** (Special Session – FY17 Budget and First Increment  
322       Extension Proposal & Budget)  
323       Country Inn & Suites – Denver International Airport
- 324
- 325       ○ **December 6-7, 2016 @ Denver, CO** (Quarterly Meeting)  
326       Warwick Denver

327

328 2016 AMP Reporting Session:

- 329       ○ **October 18-19, 2016 @ Omaha, NE** (ISAC meets alone with EDO on Oct. 20)  
330       Hilton Garden Inn Downtown

331

332 **Meeting adjourned at 11:52 AM Central Time.**



333 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from September 2016 GC meeting**

- 334 1) Approved the June 7-8, 2016 GC minutes.  
335 2) Approved the July 26-27, 2016 GC minutes.  
336 3) Approved the August 17, 2016 GC minutes.  
337 4) Approved the score for the Cook Tract well.  
338 5) Approved the Water Service Agreement for the Phelps Canal.  
339 6) Approved the Water Service Agreement for Elwood Reservoir.  
340 7) Approved allowing the Nebraska Community Foundation to sign Land Use Agreements for Tracts  
341 1008, 1228, 1604, and 1605 on behalf of the Program.  
342 8) Agreed to all the steps the EDO proposed for the pallid sturgeon process including building an internal  
343 Program pallid sturgeon workshop into the FY17 PRRIP budget and a subsequent expert workshop into  
344 the FY18 PRRIP budget, both with facilitation by Compass as an EDO Special Advisor.  
345 9) Set a timetable for revising the Extension proposal and budget with the goal of agreeing to final versions  
346 at the November 2, 2016 GC meeting in Denver, CO.