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

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Virtual Meeting**
*Meeting held in person at Executive Director's Office*
*Kearney, NE*
**Day #1:** Tuesday, Oct 21, 2025; 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM CT

### Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

**State of Wyoming**
Barry Lawrence – Member

**State of Colorado**
Kara Scheel – Member

**State of Nebraska**
Caitlin Kingsley – Member

**Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)**
Brock Merrill – Member

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)**
Steve LaBay – Alternate

**Environmental Entities**
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
Mike Drain – Alternate

### Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED
Chad Smith
Malinda Henry
Tim Tunnell
Seth Turner
Patrick Farrell
Justin Brei
Quinn Lewis
Ed Weschler
Libby Casavant
Josh Carrell
Alyx Vogel
Ethan Ideus
Jon Wentz
Tyler Matrangos

### Other Participants

Abe Kanz – Crane Trust
Terence Stroh – USBR
Mike Archer – NGPC
Jack Mensinger – DWEE
Shuhai Zheng – DWEE
Richard Belt – SPWRAP
Joel Jorgensen – NGPC
Blair Greimann – Stantec
Natalie Youngblood – GEI
Michael Scurlock – GEI
Chris Jaros – Stantec

**WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE**

Flyr called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM Central Time.

*AGENDA MODIFICATIONS*

No modifications to the agenda were offered.

Document: 01 – PRRIP TAC Quarterly Meeting Agenda_Oct_2025

*MINUTES*

Henry corrected a typo that was made in the original minutes, but no other revisions were received.

TAC MOTION: *Jenniges moved, and LaBay seconded a motion to approve the July 2025 TAC Meeting minutes.* Minutes approved.

DRAFT Document: 02_July 2025 TAC Minutes DRAFT w edits
FINAL Document: 22-23 July 2025 TAC Minutes FINAL

**SPECIES MONITORING**

*2025 SPRING WHOOPING CRANE MONITORING REPORT*

Ideus summarized monitoring results and habitat metrics for the spring 2025 whooping crane monitoring season. The EDO is asking for TAC recommendation for this report to go to the GC for review and approval. Zorn asked how discharge and habitat metrics relate to Program management. Ideus spoke to habitat metrics. Mean unobstructed channel width at whooping crane riverine use locations was 732 ft. The Program manages to create or maintain at least 650 ft of unobstructed channel width. Whooping crane riverine locations were on average 456 ft from nearest forest. The Program manages for an unforested corridor width of 1100 ft, providing the opportunity to maintain a distance of 550 ft from forest on either side of a mid-channel roost. Farrell spoke to the discharge question reminding the TAC of the current use of telemetry data as a better way to evaluate the importance of discharge as wetted width encountered by whooping cranes as they are making the decision to stop on the Platte. Zorn said if we are going to tie this to an EA release, the data looks like birds are not really choosing a specific flow. Whooping crane use is distributed over a wide range of discharge. If the Service is going to do an EA release, he would like to see it tied to a whooping crane preference. Flyr said the importance of discharge is probably more about depth. Ostrom said it is hard to discern any preference for discharge from these data, which is why we are doing the stopover vs. flyover analysis. Farnsworth said the stopover study will primarily be using wetted width. Patrick said wetted width represents how flow is distributed over the channel. Ostrom said the literature provides evidence that at least sandhills leave their roosts due to hydrocycling variability. EA releases, like the one done a year ago, may be used to mitigate this variability. Farnsworth noted that the discharge figure for spring 2025 shows most birds were gone before hydrocycling started. Jenniges said maybe birds stop first to the east because hydrocycling is more extreme in the west. Jenniges said we may need to look at the timing of cycling moving forward. This would be something to consider and reevaluate. Hurdle would be running the risk of not getting concurrence if you change the plan. Farnsworth reminded the group that in prior analyses we dropped a depth explanatory variable because a 2D model of depth distributions is a single snapshot point in time for something that changes rapidly and has a temporal mismatch to observed crane use locations. Also, there is enough appropriate depth habitat out there. Within any given mile there is a wide distribution of available depths at any discharge.

TAC MOTION: *Jenniges moved, and Ostrom seconded a motion to recommend the spring 2025 whooping crane monitoring report to the GC for their approval. Motion carried.*

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Send spring 2025 whooping crane monitoring report to the GC in December for review and approval.

Document: 03_Implementation of the Whooping Crane Monitoring Protocol - Spring 2025 Report TAC Draft
Presentation: 04_2025 Spring WC Report Presentation

*2026 LTPP MONITORING SEASON PLANNING*

Vogel and Carrell presented 2025 monitoring season outcomes including results from an evaluation of failed nests due to predation for nests with and without cameras. They requested TAC guidance on how to proceed during the 2026 monitoring season in terms of camera monitoring at nests, sites, fences. Kingsley asked how confident we are in nests that were failed-predated but without a camera. Did you use failed-unknowns? Carrell said he first analyzed only nests with enough information to fate them as failed-predated (known predated nests), but he also added failed unknowns to failed predated nests to repeat the analysis, which he will show in a minute. Vogel added that she used information from cameras at the site or at other nests to support the failed predation fate at nests without cameras. Carrell found a significant effect of cameras on nest fate. Though effect size differed across sites and years, the camera effect remained significant when site and year were taken into account. Because evidence to document losses to predation is largely provided by nest cameras, we would expect nest cameras to fail more often due to predation than nests without cameras. Nests without cameras likely fail to predation but are fated as failed-unknown due to lack of evidence. So, we added failed-unknown nests to failed-predated nests for both camera and non-camera nests and reran the analysis. When that was done, the effect of cameras on nest outcome was non-significant. We discussed why the effect of cameras goes away when you add failed-unknowns to failed predated. Farnsworth said it is difficult to tease apart whether the cameras cause predation or you are more likely to document predation on a camera nest. We discussed the main types of nest loss and where that information comes from. Kanz suggested we do a similar camera vs. no camera analysis with failed-weather nests. That proportion of loss due to weather should be random across camera vs. non-camera nests and serve as a baseline. You could then compare that effect size to what you got testing for a camera effect on failed-predated nests. Would that estimate the real size of your effect? Vogel discussed options for 2026 monitoring. Jenniges asked if we had any information about cameras increasing predation on adult birds. Vogel said we have not collected any data to support this. Jenniges said that just having people on the site regularly might mitigate predation. Ostrom asked about the purpose of using cameras in the first place? Henry said we are using cameras to quantify losses to predation (EBQ #8) and to evaluate our ability to mitigate predation (EBQ #9, do the fences and lights reduce predators and predation?). The question is whether we have the information we need after 5 years of implementation to answer these questions. If so, do we need the cameras, can they help us actively manage? Flyr asked why the Program stopped doing USGS inside monitoring? Jenniges said it was high effort and with associated cost. Farnsworth reminded the TAC that the Program did a formal comparison of data collected using inside vs. outside monitoring methods. We arrive at about the same answer with less effort and less disturbance by monitoring from the outside. However, shortly after we stepped back to outside monitoring only, we had two years

(2018-2019) of low fledge ratios, without information to formally pin it to predation. Hegg asked about nest caging. Jenniges said it raises nest success but doesn't have much impact on fledge ratios because you get them out of the nest, but chicks are predated at brood stage. Zorn said they saw an initial decrease in terrestrial predators, but that it resulted in an increase in avian predation in subsequent years. Mensinger asked about a more zonal camera set up. Henry said option 3 is a more zone-based option. It takes cameras off nests but still gets information on predator presence for management. Kanz asked about the predator community, does it vary much? Henry said yes. The full community stays pretty much the same now, but what we are having a problem with on a particular site each year varies. Kanz asked if we are modifying management in response to what is seen on cameras or it is a general set up based upon community you have already seen. Vogel said our trapper is responding and changing strategies based upon information given to him from cameras. Jenniges said we start with a general approach and we modify based upon information cameras give us. Jenniges said if you add failed-unknowns to failed-predated because many of the unknowns are predation, the test of camera effects is basically a wash. But with cameras out there if there is a risk, you can offset it by informing the trapper to manage better. Ostrom said she supports option 3, take cameras off nests, but use cameras at potential predator entry points to guide management. Jenniges supports something in between option 2, cameras on a select few nests to see which species are problematic, and 3, only at predator entry points. He suggested we add cameras to nests if we begin to see nest loss at a site, so a reactive rather than proactive experimental design. Hegg asked if perhaps we are blowing up the camera effect because multiple nests are lost at a site by a single predator in a single event, but all of them are treated as independent (pseudoreplication). She suggested we try separating our dataset into unique predation events. Flyr asked if there is any predator abundance data for the area that could be utilized. Jenniges said no real trapping industry currently, so density may be a problem. LaBay said Rabbe has reservations about continuing to use cameras. The Service is leaning toward options 3, cameras off nests but at predator entry points, and 4, no cameras. Farnsworth said analysis is confounded by cameras diagnosing predation. He would be more worried if productivity were lower at sites with cameras. Jenniges added, or nest success were lower at sites with cameras. Jenniges asked if there is any correlation between what you see on nest vs. site/shoreline cameras. Do you get the same information from both? Matrangos said site cameras pick up owls. Shoreline cameras get mammals. Vogel said nest cameras often pick up things that were not detected on the other two. LaBay asked why owls are attracted to cameras? Wentz said he has noticed owls responding to the difference in light emitted by the Arlo cameras compared to the trail cameras. Henry said she has seen many raptor species attracted to trail cameras in canopy studies as well – shiny, reflective surface that clicks when image captured. Farnsworth said he is less concerned given fledge ratios have remained high. When there are high losses at a site over multiple years, the birds go somewhere else. At least for now we have more habitat than birds. So as long as they have options, you don't see high annual reductions in fledge ratios.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- EDO will draft a hybrid plan for camera monitoring somewhere between options 2-3 for the TAC and Rabbe to consider.
- Rabbe can provide his comments on that to the TAC.
- In the meantime, further work on EBQ 8-9 from Josh and the working group can help provide some context for how much more data we might want to help reduce uncertainty around EBQ 8 and 9.
- Discuss again in January 2026

Presentation: 05_2025_October_TAC_Plover_Tern_Presentation

**SCIENCE PLAN**

*WC ROOST SITE SELECTION REPORT*

Farrell reminded TAC of the objectives, methods, results, and main takeaways from the WC Roost Site Selection analysis which has been previously reviewed and revised in detail by the TAC. The EDO is looking for a TAC recommendation for this report to go to the TAC.

Ostrom wanted to make sure that the last round of comments had been addressed to everyone's satisfaction. LaBay said he had talked with Rabbe about this. Rabbe felt the EDO had addressed his comments appropriately and was on board to recommend report to the GC.

TAC MOTION: *Jenniges moved, and LaBay seconded a motion to recommend the Whooping Crane Roost Site Selection Report to the GC for their approval. Motion carried.*

After getting GC approval, the EDO is planning on publishing the results of this study. Farrell discussed next steps for publication with the TAC. The introduction and discussion sections need revised to broaden them for a more general audience. That is where the work now lies. Farrell asked for volunteers to work with the EDO to revise the report into a broader publication. Flyr, Ostrom, and Mensinger volunteered to revise together with the EDO.

Document: 06_WC Roost Site Selection Report
Presentation: 07_WC Roost Site Selection Report

*PALLID STURGEON UPDATE FROM FALL SCIENCE MEETING*

Henry summarized the objectives of the Fall Science Meeting held on September 23-25th for those TAC members who were not present. The meeting focused on UNL's analyses to address research questions about pallid sturgeon moving into, out of, and through the lower Platte River as well as identifying and describing pallid sturgeon habitat in the lower Platte River. The 2D hydraulic model and lower Platte River hydrology were also discussed. The ISAC provided their feedback in a written report just prior to the TAC meeting. That report provided technical advice to both UNL and EDO to improve research outcomes and able to be integrated into Program decision frameworks. The ISAC recommended the Program clarify ecological and management benefits of immigration/emigration. The TAC and GC should consider whether it is better to have more PS moving into Platte? Or is it beneficial to have less movement out of Platte? Or do the answers to these questions differ depending upon circumstances, such as when water temperatures are high? UNL's annual report will address ISAC recommendations.

Henry let the TAC know that the Service will be conducting a 5-year species status review for pallid sturgeon. The Program has been asked for any new information on:

- Species biology: population trends, distribution, abundance, demographics, and genetics;
- Habitat conditions: including but not limited to amount, distribution, and suitability;
- Conservation measures that have been implemented that benefit the species;
- Threat status and trends in relation to the five listing factors (as defined in section 4(a)(1) of the Act); and
- Other new information, data, or corrections, including but not limited to taxonomic or nomenclatural changes, identification of erroneous information contained in the List, and improved analytical methods.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- The lead on the review, Nelson-Stastny, has been informed that PRRIP would like to participate in the review process.
- Henry will provide annual reports and Pullano's thesis to the Service by November 14, 2025. Heist's lab has a method's paper under USGS review but it has not been submitted for publication yet.

Document: ISAC Report on Pallid Sturgeon Research for September 2025 Meeting

*SEDIMENT AUGMENTATION PASSIVE ALTERNATIVES STUDY*

Greimann and Youngblood presented their results from an investigation of passive alternatives to mechanical sediment augmentation. Greimann said this was a reconnaissance or pre-appraisal level study. He reviewed a range of alternatives and their evaluation of performance and cost for each. The analysis consisted primarily of 1D and 2D sediment and hydraulic modeling. Costs presented were capital costs which did not include maintenance costs incurred during the life of the project. They did not evaluate acceptability, things like permitting, landowner agreements, etc. They compared each alternative to a "no action" scenario and showed how sediment balance was affected in each of three reaches – the J2 channel, the north channel, and the channel downstream of the Overton bridge. Drain asked to clarify the goal here. Are we protecting the J2 channel or the downstream channel? Is anything that reduces erosion in J2 channel a good thing? There are only two alternatives that produce less erosion in the downstream channel than the no-action alternative. Rerouting J2 flow through the sand dam channel and rerouting J2 flows over Jeffrey Island are the only two that reduce that erosion. Re-regulation by itself does not reduce downstream channel erosion. The reduction in peak flows does reduce erosion in the J2 channel, however that sediment is currently supplying the downstream channel and without it, the downstream channel erosion increases. Brei pointed out that many of these options will require mechanical work over time to move pilot channels around to maximize the erodible area accessed by flow. They are not fully self-sustaining or passive in that respect. The Program has spent $3-$5 / $yd^3$ for mechanical augmentation. The estimate for the option to reroute J2 flows over Jeffrey Island is $10.4/$yd^3$ in capital cost, with annual upkeep costs not included. Brei said the idea for the reconnaissance study was to find out if something rose to the top as feasible on its own or in combination with mechanical augmentation. He said none of these options do that. Henry said she has gathered from past conversations that there is a lot of interest on this issue from Environmental Entities. She asked those TAC members if they had questions or reservations about the study and if they gathered the same general takeaways from what they had heard. Ostrom said she understands that an option to improve J2 conditions should not have erosional consequences for the downstream channel. Kanz said it is nice to know that the mechanical augmentation done in the past is a cost-effective method. Mosier asked if re-regulation is feasible. Drain said hydrostepping is as far as they have gone. Jenniges said there would be a power interference cost to Central for eliminating hydropeaking that would need to be considered. Farnsworth said this is something for further conversation. Drain said the cost of mechanical augmentation is much more economic than costs incurred due to not running hydros at peak efficiency.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Coordinate with Stantec/GEI to finalize report and send out to TAC.
- Based upon TAC feedback, it may be discussed again at January 2026 TAC meeting.
- Otherwise, EDO sits on report until second round of evaluating effectiveness of sediment augmentation (including the no augmentation period for comparison) is finished. Then compare

results and costs of mechanical augmentation with those estimated for alternatives investigated here.

TAC ACTION ITEMS:

- Review final report, ask questions, provide feedback.

Presentation: 08_PRRIP_Passive_Augmentation_Progress_Mtg_2025.10.21_final

**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. CT.

**TAC MEETING END**

The TAC meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM CT.

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

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Virtual Meeting**
*Meeting held in person at Executive Director's Office*
*Kearney, NE*
**Day #2:** Wednesday, October 22, 2025; 8:00 AM – 12:00 NOON CT

### Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

**State of Wyoming**
Barry Lawrence – Member
Michelle Hubbard – Alternate
Cheyenne Love – Alternate

**State of Colorado**
Kara Scheel – Member

**State of Nebraska**
Caitlin Kingsley – Member

**Upper Platte Water Users**
n/a

**Downstream Water Users**
Jim Jenniges – Member
Brandi Flyr – Member
Dave Zorn – Member
Mike Drain – Alternate

**Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)**
Brock Merrill – Member

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)**
Steve LaBay – Alternate

**Environmental Entities**
Amanda Hegg – Member
Bethany Ostrom – Alternate
Melissa Mosier – Alternate

**Colorado Water Users**
Jason Marks – Member

### Executive Director's Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED
Chad Smith
Malinda Henry
Tim Tunnell
Seth Turner
Patrick Farrell
Josh Carrell

### Other Participants

Abe Kanz – Crane Trust
Terence Stroh – USBR
Mike Archer – NGPC
Jack Mensinger – DWEE
Shuhai Zheng – DWEE
Tyler Martin - DWEE
Brandon Gardels – NPPD
Richard Belt – SPWRAP
Calvin Miller – Special Advisor

**WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE**

Flyr called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM Central Time.

*AGENDA MODIFICATIONS*

No modifications to the agenda were offered.

Document: 01 – PRRIP TAC Quarterly Meeting Agenda_Oct_2025

**SCIENCE PLAN**

*WET MEADOW HYDROLOGY REPORT*

Miller, Special Advisor to the EDO, presented his work to address peer reviewer comments on Ch5 of the Wet Meadow Hydrology Report. He summarized the original CH 5 methods and conclusions. He also summarized peer reviewer concerns with Ch 5. He then explained the model chosen and how it was developed, validated, and utilized. Instead of trying to model a broad range of factors, the goal was to model in a way to answer the questions posed which were: 1) how much do you have to raise river stage to get desired outcomes, and 2) how much water would you need to put over the top do reach desired outcomes? He summarized results obtained and conclusions drawn. Ostrom asked if using surface water from the river to improve site conditions (reduce distance from surface to groundwater) would also cause a reduction in river stage and thereby reduce influx of water from the river channel into the site? Miller / Jenniges said it would be too small of a diversion from the river to reduce river stage enough to have that effect. Flyr asked why only 2014 for calibration? She also asked about ignoring pumping which is a big influence. Miller said leaving out pumping allows calibration of the model without pumping. You can then use the model to estimate pumping affects. Flyr said the quantity of water needed probably depends upon yearly precipitation, dry vs wet years. Miller noted irrigation wells also run more in dry years, drawing water table down further. Drain said also depends upon where you are located in the reach. LaBay asked about including vs. excluding precipitation. If left precipitation out, how do you explain agreement between your model and groundwater data. Miller said the calibration period during 2014 was a low precipitation period. It takes a sustained precipitation event for that water to reach the groundwater table. The amount of water that reaches the groundwater for each precipitation event is highly variable and harder to model because of the variability and array of contributing factors. Miller estimated that his model still captures 80-90% of the groundwater mechanics. Kanz asked Miller if he thought the revisions addressed the reviewer's original concerns regarding overfitting. Miller said yes. The current model includes only two parameters and they are uniform. Inputs are specific yield (how much water comes in and out when you pump) and transmissivity. LaBay asked about how those were derived, was there a geotechnical pumping test done? Miller said no independent geotechnical pumping test was done for this effort specifically. Miller used the data derived values and compared them to published values. Drain said there have been plenty of tests showing the input values used here are within the appropriate range. Drain / Flyr agreed that the values Miller used are appropriate for our aquifer. Kanz said given the explanations he heard today, he is on board with the modeling methods used and his concerns regarding overfitting have been addressed. His remaining concerns with Ch 5 are largely report formatting, grammatical errors, and lack of citations. As for the entirety of the Wet Meadows Hydrology report, he would like to see the introduction and discussion broadened out for publication to include a more broadly accepted definition of wet meadows. He has line edits he can send to the EDO for specific edits he would like to see made. The EDO will work with Kanz to incorporate those. Farnsworth reminded that the intent was not to write the report as individual publishable papers. Rather, we can expect 1-2 synthesis type publications from this report. Farnsworth said what the EDO

needs at this time is TAC guidance on whether to insert a cleaned up version of CH 5 into the report and move the report on to the GC, or bring it back to the peer reviewer. Kanz favors going back to peer reviewer. Flyr/Drain favor moving to GC. Drain said we usually only send back to peer review if there is some dispute as to whether concerns were not appropriately addressed. If we all agree they were address, then we don't need a peer reviewer to tell us that. Flyr said if the management actions modeled here are not something we want to pursue as a management item, why go through the time and effort to send it back to peer review? We don't want to get into a repeated back and forth with a peer reviewer. LaBay said this document is important for Service wet meadow goals. He favors going back to peer review to buy time for further review and to allow his colleagues who are not currently working to think more about this. Drain said we can just sit on this until the Service folks are back in the office, but don't need to buy time with a second review. Farnsworth said we didn't close the peer review loop for the original stage change study, and it came back to bite the Program several years later. Mosier asked about cost. Smith said reviewer would do another quick review to evaluate whether his concerns were addressed at no cost. TAC agreed to send Ch 5 back for peer review – quick review, did we address your concerns. Kanz said the overall Wet Meadow Hydrology Report needs edits before it can be used for decision-making. He has issues with the broader report, not just this chapter. Farnsworth/Smith said this report has already gone through multiple revisions and formal peer review which included responding to reviewer concerns and revising the report accordingly. Jenniges said he is unsure of what value there is in another revision of the report. We have a TAC written policy agreement that the GC approved to move forward on how the Program deals with grasslands and wet meadows. Smith said the Program jumped ahead of this report by making their policy decision on how to deal with wet meadows moving forward. We have a technical document to support that decision. It is unclear what further influence the report itself will have on policy decisions beyond what was already agreed upon. Kanz said he understands that for a technical report, this serves a purpose, but he would like to see the improvements he suggested in his email included in any publications that come from this.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- EDO will review Kanz' line edits for CH 5.
- EDO will work with Miller and Kanz to clean up CH 5.
- CH 5 will go back to the peer reviewer to see if concerns were adequately addressed.

TAC ACTION ITEMS:

- Kanz will send the EDO his comments on CH 5.

TAC MOTION: No motion made at this time.

Document: 09_Revised CH 5 Wet Meadow Hydrology

**WATER**

*2026 EA AOP*

LaBay gave a summary of the Service's Environmental Account Annual Operating Plan for 2026. Release priorities remain the same for 2026 as they were in 2025, with a germination suppression release for 30 days in June being of highest priority. The Service is considering a flow release specifically aimed at reducing *Phragmites* growth in the coming years. Henry asked for more information on what LaBay was thinking in terms of timing. LaBay said according to a study conducted on the central Platte by Galatowitsch et al. (2016), there is no evidence of *Phragmites* seed dispersal at any other time of year

except March, so an EA water release into July to suppress germination of *Phragmites* is not warranted. He is also considering targeting mid-aged plants. The idea is to provide lift of new growth into the channel with water, then shut it down to remove structural support resulting in the plants caving in on themselves. This is an idea that came from research in coastal regions. His thought was to start the release the 2nd week of May and run it for 40 days. Jenniges suggested maybe start in mid-May, run until June 1, take a couple weeks off, and then run again near end of June. Second run will wipe out anything (cottonwood willow seedlings ) that may have germinated in the middle period. Mosier asked about water volume required. Labay estimates 140,000 acre feet. That would leave nothing for whooping crane releases. Farnsworth said you would probably have to do it every other year to have enough water to do that and Labay agreed. Drain said we would need two years of good WY snowpack to get any water from WY. Farnsworth said if the Service would like to do something like this, he recommends running in through the same experimental design process as the germination suppression release. He thinks the GC would like to see it run as a management experiment with learning out the back end because of water-related policy implications. Drain asked about footnote 4 in Table 2 of the EA AOP document. He asked about the origin of the Lake McConaughy estimate at 431,000 acre feet. LaBay said it was provided at the EARCC meeting. Drain said 374,000 acre feet may be a better number but his time period and EA AOP time period may not match.

Document: 10_WY2026_Environmental_Account_AOP_Final

**FY2026 SCIENCE BUDGET**

*2026 DRAFT SCIENCE BUDGET*

Henry started off by reviewing Program Science priorities for 2026 and the budget line items that support these efforts. She then reviewed costs included in each line item. Hegg asked if the cost for river surveys was included in the TP-1 line item. Henry said no, those costs are in ED-1 as airboat time and EDO staff time.

The TAC had no edits to the DRAFT Science Plan budget, and it will move forward to the GC in November.

Documents: 11_DRAFT FY2026 PRRIP Science Budget
12_DRAFT FY2026 PRRIP Science Work Plan

**2026 TAC MEETING SCHEDULE**

*PROPOSED 2026 TAC MEETING SCHEDULE*

Henry proposed the following meeting schedule for the 2026 TAC quarterly meetings:
Jan 13-14 Kearney Nebraska
Late February Science Reporting Session – Virtual
April 21-22 Kearney Nebraska
July 21-22, Colorado, location TBD
Late summer/Fall ISAC Meeting Kearney, Nebraska
October 20-21 Kearney, Nebraska

Ostrom mentioned that late February is not ideal for Crane Trust. Smith said dates will largely depend upon ISAC availability, but he will keep that in mind. Scheel asked if we have had two ISAC meetings in the past. Farnsworth said yes, we used to have two meetings a year, one in February and one in fall.

Henry said Feb meeting will be more a rundown of Program science activities – more general overview. Summer/fall meeting will be more focused on evaluating Program science in terms of meeting Program Science Plan objectives and pulling information together for planning a Second Increment. TAC had no objection to the schedule proposed.

EDO ACTION ITEMS:

- Henry will send out calendar invites to get these dates/times reserved.

## TAC MEETING REVIEW & WRAP-UP

**MOTIONS**

- July 2025 TAC Meeting minutes approved.
- 2025 Spring Whooping Crane Monitoring Report recommended to GC for approval.
- Whooping Crane Roost Site Selection Report recommended to GC for approval.

## TAC MEETING END

The TAC meeting adjourned at 10:30 AM CT.