



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

Tuesday, June 10th, 2020: 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting held via WebEx

Note: All times Central.

Governance Committee (GC)

State of Wyoming

Harry LaBonde – Member (2020 GC Vice Chair)

Brandon Gebhart – Alternate (by phone)

Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)

Brock Merrill – Alternate

State of Colorado

Don Ament – Member

JoJo La – Alternate

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Steve Small – Member (2020 GC Chair)

Matt Rabbe – Alternate

State of Nebraska

Jesse Bradley – Member

Jennifer Schellpeper – Alternate

Environmental Entities

Brice Krohn – Member

Bill Taddicken – Member

Rich Walters – Member

Upper Platte Water Users

Dennis Strauch – Member

Bob Mehling – Alternate

Colorado Water Users

Alan Berryman – Member

Deb Freeman – Alternate

Kyle Whitaker – Alternate

Jason Marks – Alternate

Downstream Water Users

Devin Brundage – Member

Joe Citta – Member

Brandi Flyr – Member

Kent Miller – Member

Participants

Mike Drain, Cory Steinke, & Dave Zorn – CNPPID

Jim Jenniges, John Shadle, & Jeff Shafer – NPPD

Lyndon Vogt – CPNRD

Kristal Stoner – Audubon Nebraska

Mirko Kruse – Trout Raley (CO Water Users)

Greg Johnson – Colorado Water Cons. Board

Jeff Cowley – WY Water Devel. Commission

Tom Econopouly & Jeff Runge – Service

Philip Halteman – Compass

Executive Director’s Office (EDO)

Jason Farnsworth, ED

Bridget Barron Tim Tunnell

Justin Brei Seth Turner

Patrick Farrell

Scott Griebing

Malinda Henry

Mallory Jaymes

Kaley Keldsen

Kari Mohlman

Bruce Sackett

Chad Smith

Tom Smrdel



1 **WELCOME & ADMINISTRATIVE**

2 **Introductions** – Chair Steve Small called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM Central Time. Small greeted the
3 group, thanked everyone for persevering through this time, and thanked everyone for making a virtual
4 meeting work. Smith read the WebEx participant list as roll call.

5
6 **Agenda** – No modifications.

7
8 **Minutes** – Freeman noted two edits. Smith made the changes.

9
10 **GC Motion:** *LaBonde moved and Merrill seconded to approve the March 10-11, 2020 GC Quarterly Meeting*
11 *minutes as amended . **Amended minutes approved.***

12
13 **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

14 **Land Advisory Committee (LAC)** – Zorn provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC last met
15 on April 14. Meeting topics: recognized Mark Czaplewski and his retirement; discussion of the Platte River
16 Recreation Access (PRRA) program and associated changes. Rabbe said there were subcommittee and LAC
17 meetings discussing recommendations for the PRRA. There were 5-6 recommendations worthy to
18 implement as updates for 2020. Rabbe summarized the following changes that were adopted:

- 19
20 1. Open the channel of Area P to all uses.
21 2. Open Area B to all uses except deer hunting, starting after Fall 2020 whooping crane season.
22 3. Allow buddy applications to the rifle deer hunting lottery, where buddy applications can only apply
23 for one site.
24 4. Implement a second lottery drawing for unused site reservations using existing lottery applications
25 that were not drawn.

26
27 Zorn was elected 2020 LAC Chair, Shadle was elected 2020 Vice Chair. The next LAC meeting is August
28 11, 2020.

29
30 **Water Advisory Committee (WAC)** – Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC
31 met on May 5. Meeting topics: Nebraska DNR discussed how the state deals with excess flows; North
32 Platte choke point test flows; recapture wells near Cottonwood Ranch; state and federal depletions plans.

33
34 **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** – Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC
35 met on April 30 and May 28. Meeting topics: new learning and how to address it relative to Program
36 decision-making; WC monitoring; predator management at off-channel nesting sites; geomorphology and
37 vegetation monitoring. One GC agenda item later today is the issue of new learning. Freeman asked about
38 the issue of fledging and age of the sandpits, wondering if it has future management implications.
39 Farnsworth said it is a good question, Mohlman will provide an update later today so she can address that
40 during her presentation.

41
42 **Finance Committee (FC)** – La provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC met on May 27. Three
43 consensus action items – appointed Jojo 2020 Chair and Brandon Gebhardt 2020 Vice Chair; approved the
44 Quantum contract for annual LiDAR and aerial imagery; and recommended the GC approve the final
45 Extension indexing proposal (on GC agenda later today).



46 **OUTREACH UPDATE**

47 **Presentations**

- 48 • Patrick Farrell presented via Zoom to Conservation Nebraska about how the Program has positively
49 impacted the central Platte River for the targeted species. There were 31 participants in the Webinar.
50 • All other scheduled presentations for March and April were cancelled due to the COVID-19 social
51 distancing requirements.

52
53 **Exhibits/Sponsorships**

- 54 • All scheduled outreach exhibits for the months of March and April were cancelled due to the COVID-
55 19 social distancing requirements.

56
57 **Upcoming Presentations/Exhibits**

- 58 • None currently scheduled.

59
60 **Media/Other**

- 61 • George Oamek wrote an article for the Spring 2020 issue of Irrigation Today. The title was “*Survey
62 provides insight into on-farm challenges & decision-making*”. The article was in response to a Fresh
63 Water News article reporting that Colorado’s farm water use exceeds the national average.
64 • There were several articles published in March/April/May 2020 regarding the impact of the COVID-19
65 virus on the sandhill crane migration and the closure to crane visitors of Rowe Sanctuary and The
66 Crane Trust.

67
68 **FY20 BUDGET UPDATE**

69 Farnsworth discussed the status of the FY20 budget, expenditures, and forecast for the remainder of 2020.
70 He previewed two action items from the Budget Action Table for discussion later in the GC meeting today.

71
72 **INDEXING**

73 **Extension Indexing** – Merrill discussed the final proposal for indexing PRRIP funds during the Extension
74 and the indexing process moving forward. As proposed, this should maintain a straight 50/50 match.

75
76 **GC Motion:** *Strauch moved and LaBonde seconded that the GC concurs with the final Extension indexing
77 proposal. Extension indexing proposal approved.*

78
79 **TIERED BIOLOGICAL OPINIONS**

80 Rabbe discussed the calendar year 2019 consultations for Tiered Biological Opinions.

81
82 **ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

83 **Whooping Cranes** – Jaymes provided an update presentation on data from the spring 2020 whooping
84 crane migration. LaBonde asked about the population of 506 birds in Aransas and wondered if there are
85 other populations. Jaymes said yes, there is a small eastern migratory population and a small population
86 in captivity. Rabbe said there is also a non-migratory population in Louisiana and a flock in Florida. Drain
87 asked if there are birds we think of as in the Aransas population but they are not counted? Rabbe said
88 yes. For example, a juvenile wintered in Kansas this year. LaBonde said he read an article in a recent
89 “Pheasants Forever” magazine about a whooping crane born in Wisconsin that also stated the population
90 is at 667 birds. Jaymes said those birds would be considered part of the eastern migratory population.



91 **Terns/Plovers** – Mohlman provided an update on the status of 2020 tern/plover monitoring. Rabbe asked
92 about nests that have succumbed to predation so far this year. Mohlman said we cannot yet compare
93 predation data from this year to those of last year to determine whether predation is increasing or not.
94 There is still a lot of time in the breeding season for predation to occur, so we will make these comparisons
95 at the end of the season. Rabbe asked if predation was at Dyer and Blue Hole so far this year. Mohlman
96 said yes.

97
98 **Predator Control** – Farrell and Keldsen provided a background presentation and status update for the
99 tern/plover off-channel nesting site predation control pilot project. Zorn asked what is done with trapped
100 turtles. Farrell said to prove the concept we are capturing turtles and then releasing them back to the
101 same sites to try to recapture them and estimate population size. Removal may happen during future
102 iterations of this work depending on what we learn.

103
104 **New Learning/Science Policy Brief** – Smith discussed the Alexander et. al (2020) article and the EDO's
105 Science Policy Brief providing a brief assessment of the article on past and future Program decisions. Smith
106 said the EDO's determination is that, when applied by the Program, the Alexander et al. modeling tool
107 affirms the conclusion that SDHF will not create or maintain on-channel tern and plover nesting habitat
108 as hypothesized and the GC's decisions made as part of the tern/plover SDM process.

109 **WATER ACTION PLAN (WAP)**

110 **North Platte Choke Point** – Brei provided an update on the status of doing a test flow through the choke
111 point. We are hoping to conclude the test prior to August 5 this summer. Rabbe asked about flows
112 bumping up over 3,000 cfs. Brei said we would not intend to release more than the 6.5 feet which is
113 around 2,700 cfs. Rabbe said if our release was planned to be at the lower level but then something
114 unexpected bumped it up slightly higher, does it give us any certainty that there is still no impact? Brei
115 said if we saw events like that coming we would reduce our flows in advance. Berryman asked what flow
116 volume we are planning to release. Brei said we will be close to 50,000 acre-feet. Freeman asked if there
117 has been any shift in the perspective of the National Weather Service (NWS) on next steps if this proves
118 that we have requisite capacity to relax flood stage. Brei said it will mostly be our read at this point, they
119 are cooperative but non-committal. Farnsworth said that the NWS has been cooperative and at least
120 shown they intend to take it through their flood stage determination process if no impacts are
121 demonstrated by the test. The potential issues lay with judgment calls if somebody calls the NWS and says
122 they do not want flood stage revised because they are concerned about an ancillary issue. Freeman said
123 we have known this from the get-go but the additional coordination that has been happening can only
124 help. La asked if there is any additional discussion warranted in case travel restrictions due to COVID-19
125 would prevent NWS from participating in monitoring the test flow and that might cause problems with
126 analyzing and confirming the results. Brei said the Coordination Committee for this effort will discuss that.
127 Farnsworth said we will have an off-line conversation with the NWS to see if this would be a problem.

128
129
130 **Surface Water Leasing** – Farnsworth discussed the NPPD and CPNRD surface water leasing agreements
131 and the proposed changes to the FY2020 PRRIP budget to enter into these agreements. Gebhardt asked
132 why the CNPPID agreement was for 9 inches and these two agreements are for 6 inches. Drain said the
133 CNPPID agreement includes not taking any groundwater which partly results in this difference.

134
135 **GC Motion:** *Ament moved and Bradley seconded to approve both the CPNRD and the NPPD surface water*
136 *lease agreements and to authorize and approve the addition of \$1,650,000 for WPST-1 in the FY2020 PRRIP*



137 *budget for these agreements. Brundage, Citta, and Flyr abstained. **Agreements and budget changes***
138 **approved.**

139
140 **PUBLIC COMMENT**

141 None offered. Barron said that a note was added to the PRRIP website for this meeting telling interested
142 parties to contact Farnsworth if they wished to participate in the virtual meeting.

143
144 **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

145 *LaBonde moved and Ament seconded to enter Executive Session. **GC entered Executive Session at 11:01***
146 **AM Central Time.**

147
148 *Ament moved and Strauch seconded to exit Executive Session. **GC exited Executive Session at 11:57 AM***
149 **Central Time.**

150
151 **EXECUTIVE SESSION MOTIONS**

152 No motions offered.

153
154 **GC MEETING REVIEW & WRAP-UP**

155 **Action Items & Meeting Feedback** – No discussion.

156
157 **Upcoming Meetings:**

- 158 • GC Quarterly Meeting – **September 15-16, 2020** @ Kearney, NE
- 159 • GC Special Session (FY21 Budget/Work Plan) – **November 10, 2020** (conference call/webinar only)
- 160 • GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 01-02, 2020** @ Denver, CO
- 161 • 2021 AMP Reporting Session – **February 2021** @ Omaha, NE (specific dates TBD)

162
163 **GC MEETING END**

164 Meeting adjourned at 12:00 PM Central Time.

165
166 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from June 10, 2020 GC Virtual Quarterly Meeting**

- 167 1) Approved amended March 10-11, 2020 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes.
- 168 2) Approved the final Extension indexing proposal.
- 169 3) Approved the CPNRD and the NPPD surface water lease agreements and associated budget changes
170 in the FY2020 PRRIP budget.