



# Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

## Communications Plan

March 2026

### **Purpose**

The mission of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP or Program) is to serve the threatened and endangered species and the people and communities of the Platte River Basin. The purpose of PRRIP's communications plan is to enable that mission by building and maintaining support for the Program.

### **Key audiences and objectives**

PRRIP's primary target audiences are (1) key stakeholder entities, (2) area residents, and (3) recreational users. The plan's objectives are organized around these three audiences:

1. Build support for the Program among key stakeholder entities.
2. Increase awareness and understanding of the Program among area residents.
3. Increase recreational use of PRRIP public lands.

### **Partner focus**

The PRRIP Executive Director's Office (EDO) engages on a regular basis with a variety of partner/stakeholder entities, including those represented on the Governance Committee (GC). Existing partners, including GC members, have expressed interest in receiving communication content and materials from the EDO to share with their respective audiences, which collectively include the three primary audiences identified above. Other partners, existing and new, would likely be interested in doing the same.

Given the untapped communication potential of PRRIP partners and the fact that the EDO does not currently engage in (or have staff capacity for) significant direct public outreach, this plan focuses primarily on communicating through partners. Direct communication by the EDO with the key audiences identified above is secondary.

In addition to providing PRRIP with effective pathways for reaching key audiences via trusted messengers, this partner-focused approach has the potential to significantly strengthen the Program's relationships with existing partners and yield new relationships.

Reflecting this approach, the plan includes—for each objective—a primary partner-based strategy and one or more secondary direct strategies. In this plan, direct outreach by the EDO to target audiences is highly selective and limited; direct outreach channels and actions can be expanded in the future if deemed appropriate by the EDO and GC.

*Note: The term “partner” is used broadly here. Partners may include, for example, entities that are already invested in the Program (e.g., GC members), entities that work with the Program on specific fronts (e.g., the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission), entities that receive funding or other forms of support from the Program, and other entities that have overlapping interests (e.g., in conservation, water management, endangered species, outdoor recreation). Partners may come from the public, nonprofit, or private sector.*

## **Implementation**

The key to effective implementation of this plan is to assign a point person or team to keep track of the details and hold responsible parties accountable. Overarching responsibilities will need to be fulfilled, and a variety of tasks completed, over the course of multiple years. The point person/team role could be assigned to PRRIP staff or to a contractor.

In addition, efforts by various PRRIP staff will also be essential to plan implementation. Though some plan elements are already covered by current staff effort, other elements will create new demands. New demands will be relatively light and likely distributed across staff, according to responsibilities and expertise.

Rather than tackling all strategies and actions immediately, PRRIP intends to take a phased approach, focusing on a prioritized subset (indicated by **green text**) in the first year. Most of these prioritized actions will require greater time investment in the first year than in subsequent years. Unless PRRIP opts to make a higher surge investment in year one, remaining actions will be phased in—and time investment in ongoing actions will be increased—in years two and beyond.

Effective implementation of this plan is estimated to require a baseline of 125 hours per year (.06 FTE) by the point person/team and a baseline of 75 hours per year (.04 FTE) distributed across other PRRIP staff. This level of effort could be scaled down modestly by deprioritizing select plan elements. Conversely, it could be scaled up, enabling significantly more robust implementation and significantly greater support of partner communications.

PRRIP anticipates that a standing or ad hoc subcommittee appointed by the GC will oversee plan implementation, and that other subcommittees may play key roles. For example, design, implementation, and iteration of strategies and actions in support of Objective 3 will likely be completed in collaboration with the subcommittee that oversees recreational access.

## **Review and iteration**

This plan is intended as a living document. The overall approach and its specific constituents should be reviewed periodically (e.g., annually) and iterated as needed. To inform iteration, progress in plan implementation should be summarized for review by the GC at least annually.

# **1. Objective: Build support for the Program among key stakeholder entities.**

## **Summary**

The focal audiences for this objective consist of a variety of key stakeholder entities throughout the Platte River Basin, including governments, conservation organizations, and water-user organizations. The GC, which includes representatives of many of these key stakeholder entities, has primary responsibility for fulfillment of this objective through outreach and ongoing communication with such entities; the EDO's main responsibility is to support GC communications by providing the GC relevant content and materials. Under this plan, the EDO's direct communication with stakeholder entities beyond the GC is primarily focused on attending water-user and conservation organization events.

## **Target audience**

Key stakeholder entities (e.g., governments, conservation organizations, and water-user organizations) in the Platte River Basin

## **Communication partners**

Governance Committee members

## **Messages**

Message elements will be informed by those prioritized for other objectives (see below) but ultimately determined by Governance Committee members' specific needs and audiences.

## **Channels**

- Partner-based
  - To be determined by Governance Committee members' specific needs and audiences
- Direct
  - Water-user and conservation organization events

## **Metrics**

Given that measuring outcomes (i.e., stakeholder support) appears impractical, outputs will be measured as a proxy. For example:

- Number of communication products provided to GC members per year.
- Number of water-user and conservation organization events attended per year.

## **Strategies**

### **1.1. [Primary; via partners] Support Governance Committee communications with stakeholder entities.**

- 1.1.1. Action:** Identify and prioritize informational materials of most value to GC members for general use with key stakeholder audiences; interview interested GC members, draft descriptions of priority materials; iterate descriptions with each GC member and relevant PRRIP staff.

- Types of materials (e.g., brochures, handouts, infographics, slides)
- Topics (e.g., economic analyses, regulatory certainty, species outcomes, stewardship)

**1.1.2.** Action: Establish a protocol for GC members to request informational materials for specific uses and audiences (e.g., a single presentation slide on a particular topic).

**1.1.3.** Action: Produce/co-produce and provide GC members with priority informational materials (see 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above).

**1.1.4.** Action: As needed, revise and iterate materials based on feedback and questions from GC members and their audiences.

**1.2. [Secondary; direct] Continue attending water-user and conservation organization events and conferences.**

**1.2.1.** Action: Confirm GC authorization to continue attending Platte River Basin water-user and conservation organization events and conferences.

**1.2.2.** Action: Prepare/revise informational materials and booth/display materials as needed.

**1.2.3.** Action: Attend events and share informational materials; where appropriate and advantageous, staff booths with display materials.

## **2. Objective: Increase awareness and understanding of the Program among area residents.**

### **Summary**

This is the broadest of the plan's three objectives. Its focal audiences consist of people who live in the Platte River Basin, with emphasis on those who live in proximity to the critical habitat area. Primary communication partners include GC members, local conservation organizations, local media, and any entities to which PRRIP grants funds. Under this plan, the EDO's direct communication with residents is limited to website updates, press releases, and PSAs, and responsive interactions with adjoining landowners.

### **Target audience**

People who live in the Platte River Basin, especially those in proximity to the critical habitat area, including adjoining landowners

### **Communication partners**

Governance Committee members  
Other local conservation organizations  
Local media  
Grantees

### **Messages**

Broadly speaking, communications focus on conveying:

- Basic information about PRRIP.
  - Mission, purpose, land ownership
  - Management objectives and activities, including proactive actions
  - Good Neighbor Policy (including responsible tourism, avoidance of impact to local tax base)
  - Species outcomes (e.g., habitat improvement, successful nesting, population increases)
  
- The Program's broad benefits.
  - Public dollars, public benefits
  - Water source value
  - Value of the crane economy
  - River access and recreation opportunities in a private-ownership landscape
  - River health
  - River as a shared responsibility
  - Opportunities for youth (e.g., science; outdoor experiences)
  - Conservation without financial or regulatory burdens

Specific messaging will be informed by partners' needs and audiences.

## Channels

- Partner-based
  - Email and mailing lists
  - Social media
  - Websites
  - Events
  - Speaker series
  - Programming and curricula
  - Publications and broadcasts
  - Other channels to be determined in collaboration with partners
- Direct
  - PRRIP website
  - One-on-one communication with adjoining landowners

## Metrics

Given that measuring outcomes (i.e., area residents' awareness and understanding) appears impractical, outputs will be measured as a proxy. For example:

- Number of communications provided to partners per year.
- Number of connections established with new partners per year.

## Strategies

### **2.1. [Primary; via partners] Support partner communications with area residents.**

#### **2.1.1. Action: Contact partners and collaborate with them to identify opportunities for PRRIP-related communication.\***

- Available channels (see partner-based channels above)
- Relevant topics/messages (see messages above)
- Specific story ideas (e.g., phragmites prevention; the purpose of highly visible management activities; behind-the-scenes science; different ways people use the Platte River)

*\*Grantees are expected to incorporate some (if limited) PRRIP-related content into curricula and/or other communications.*

2.1.2. Action: Produce/co-produce and provide partners with priority content and resources (e.g., written content for email, social media, curricula; interview time for local media; speaker time for event or speaker series); include links/QR-codes to relevant PRRIP webpages where appropriate.

2.1.3. Action: Identify gaps and opportunities in current partner network and establish connections with new partners.

### **2.2. [Secondary; direct] Keep PRRIP website updated with information and resources relevant to area residents and partner communications.**

**2.3. [Secondary; direct] Issue press releases and PSAs on key management topics.**

- 2.3.1. Action: Follow up on seasonal water releases (rather than posting only a single newspaper notice).
- 2.3.2. Action: Explain the purpose of other highly visible management activities during or adjacent to timing of activity (e.g., grazing, cutting trees, machinery in the river).

**2.4. [Secondary; direct] Continue direct, responsive communication with adjoining landowners as needed.**

**2.5. [Secondary; direct] Continue offering presentations at the request of community groups, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions.**

### **3. Objective: Increase recreational use of PRRIP public lands.**

#### **Summary**

As stated in the Program Land Plan, “the Program will provide public access to fee title Program lands for recreation and educational purposes, when and where it is consistent with Program objectives and land use.” This objective is specifically focused on increasing recreational use as a way of engaging more people, especially area residents, and providing them with firsthand experiences of a subset of the Program’s public benefits. Its focal audiences consist of potential recreational users who live in proximity to PRRIP lands. Primary partners include GC members, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, and a variety of state and local entities with interests in tourism, conservation, recreation, and education. Under this plan, the EDO’s direct communication with potential recreational users is limited to website updates.

#### **Target audience**

Potential recreational users who live in proximity to PRRIP lands (e.g., hunters, anglers, birders, wildlife watchers, hikers, paddlers, families who enjoy riverside activities)

#### **Communication partners**

Governance Committee members

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC)

Local and state tourism/travel organizations

Local and state conservation and outdoor recreation organizations/chapters

Local outdoor recreation businesses

Local schools

Local media

#### **Messages**

Communications may include messages from those identified under Objective 2 (i.e., basic information about PRRIP; the Program’s broad benefits). They will also include messages about:

- Specific access opportunities
- Specific recreational uses (e.g., hunting, angling, birding, hiking, paddling, family activities)

#### **Channels**

- Partner-based
  - Email and mailing lists
  - Social media
  - Websites (including NGPC site)
  - Publications and broadcasts
  - Bulletin boards
  - Word of mouth (online, in-person; especially via people who have recreated there)
  - Other channels to be determined in collaboration with partners
- Direct
  - PRRIP website

## Metrics

Metrics directly track outcomes (i.e., recreational use).

- Number of people with reservations to use PRRIP lands annually.
- Number of people with reservations to use PRRIP lands during specific timeframes each year (e.g., a specific hunting season, specific months).
- Number of people with reservations to use PRRIP lands for specific purposes each year. [if NGPC gathers this information now or in the future]
- Observations and anecdotal reports of people recreating on PRRIP lands or on adjacent sections of the Platte River in various ways across seasons each year.

## Strategies

### **3.1. [Primary; via partners] Support partner communications with current and potential recreational users.**

#### **3.1.1. Action: Contact partners and collaborate with them to identify opportunities for recreation-related communication.**

- Available channels (see partner-based channels above)
- Relevant topics/messages (see messages above)
- Specific story ideas (e.g., different ways people use the Platte River; the purpose of highly visible management activities)
- Possible on-site events co-organized with partners (e.g., school field trips; youth-and-mentor fishing events)

#### **3.1.2. Action: Develop content about paddling/floating the Platte regardless of access point, telling river users why and how PRRIP areas are conserved and providing information about access-by-reservation areas.**

#### **3.1.3. Action: Enhance information provided to and by partners about access-by-reservation recreational areas (e.g., specific location information; information on the activity types each site is best suited to; diverse potential uses).**

#### **3.1.4. Action: Collaborate with NGPC to review and revise relevant NGPC webpages. See 3.1.3.**

#### **3.1.5. Action: Produce/co-produce and provide partners with priority content and resources (e.g., written content for partners' digital channels; flyers/brochures for bulletin boards).**

#### **3.1.6. Action: Identify gaps and opportunities in current recreational partner network and establish connections with new partners.**

### **3.2. [Secondary; direct] Keep PRRIP website updated with information and resources relevant to recreational uses. See 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.1.4.**