

# Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

## History

On July 1, 1997 the governors of Nebraska, Colorado and Wyoming and the Secretary of the Interior entered into a Cooperative Agreement to address the needs of four threatened or endangered species using the Platte River Basin. The named species were the endangered whooping crane, least tern, pallid sturgeon and the threatened piping plover. The agreement proposed a framework for a long-term Recovery Implementation Program to aid these species. Initially, the agreement was for three years to develop a basin-wide cooperative program. However, negotiations regarding the details of that program took place from 1997 to 2006.

In late 2006, the governors of Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and the Secretary of the Interior signed the final program agreement, effective January 1, 2007.

On May 8, 2008 the President signed into law legislation to implement the federal share of the Program as part of the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008. This authorized the federal funding for the Program.



Credit: Mark Peyton

## Description

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) brings together the states, federal government, water users and environmental groups to work collaboratively to improve and maintain the associated habitats for the designated species.

The long-term goal of the Program is to improve and maintain the associated habitats which includes: 1) improving and maintaining migrational habitat for whooping cranes and reproductive habitat for least terns and piping plovers; 2) reducing the likelihood of other species found in the area being listed under the Endangered Species Act; and 3) testing the assumption that managing water flow in the central Platte River also improves the pallid sturgeon's lower Platte River habitat .

The first increment of the Program is for 13 years, from 2007 to 2019.

## First Increment Goals

- Increasing stream flows in the central Platte River during relevant time periods. This includes reducing target flow shortages up to an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year.
- Protecting, restoring where appropriate, and maintaining at least 10,000 acres of habitat between Lexington and Chapman, Nebraska.
- Accommodating new water related activities consistent with long-term Program goals.

## Program Cost

The Program is estimated to cost roughly \$320 million in 2005 dollars with the monetary portion of that being \$187 million. The federal government will contribute \$157 million in cash, and Colorado and Wyoming will jointly contribute \$30 million. The remaining portion will come in land and water cost-share from the states. The total cost of the Program in terms of cash, water, and land will be shared equally between the federal government and the states.

## Location

While the program is designed to provide Endangered Species Act compliance for existing and certain new water related activities throughout the Platte River basin upstream of the Loup River confluence, the land acquisition and management for the target bird species will occur in the central Platte River region (Lexington to Chapman, Nebraska). Program water activities will be designed to provide benefits for the target bird species in the central Platte region and for the pallid sturgeon in the lower Platte River stretch (below the Elkhorn River confluence). These areas are generally known as the “associated habitats.”



## Governance Committee

The Program is led by an eleven member (10 vote) Governance Committee (GC) consisting of representatives of Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Platte River water users, North Platte River water users, Downstream water users and environmental groups.

The GC is assisted by an Executive Director and staff and several key standing committees including the Technical Advisory Committee, the Land Advisory Committee, the Water Advisory Committee and the Finance Committee. In addition, an Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) informs the GC on implementation of the Program’s Adaptive Management Plan.

## Accomplishments

Each year the Program submits to the Governance Committee an annual budget, detailed work plans for the water, land, and adaptive management aspects of the Program and an Accomplishment Report. These annual reports, as well as other Program information, are available online at [www.platteriverprogram.org](http://www.platteriverprogram.org).

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