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PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
January 28, 2008

Attendees

Mark Peyton, Chair
Jerry Kenny, Executive Director
Jim Jenniges
Mark Czaplewski
Ted Kowalski
Greg Wingfield
Chad Smith
Jennifer Schellpeper
Jason Farnsworth
Mike Fritz
Lisa Fotherby
Felipe Chavez-Ramirez
Kent Aden
Mike Besson – conference call
Kevin Urie – conference call
John Shadle, NPPD – conference call
Rick Wilson, USGS – conference call
Becky Mitchell – conference call
Beorn Courtney – conference call

Welcome and Administrative

Mark Peyton called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call. Kent Aden from CNPPID was added to agenda during the pulse flow monitoring discussion to talk about the vegetation removal efforts of the Platte Valley Weed Management Association and funding for activities related to LB 701 and the related Task Force.

TAC-Related Program Updates

Chad Smith provided an update on the status of submitted proposals on the Stage Change Study RFP and the Whooping Crane Monitoring RFP.

Smith discussed the draft rebar placement protocol drafted by the Executive Director's (ED) Office to provide guidance to the selected contractor for the whooping crane monitoring protocol to place rebar at transects for future survey/river profile (elevation) data gathering. Mark Czaplewski suggested editing the protocol to make it read "high bank" to provide more guidance to the contractor. Jim Jenniges suggested requiring one tie-in but not marked with flags, lath, etc., especially on private land. **Jason Farnsworth will revise the protocol based on the TAC discussion and Smith will re-distribute to the full TAC for final comment.**

Mark Peyton asked about the status of the water surface elevation analysis for whooping crane use sites being completed by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Jerry Kenny said work on the analysis continues and should be completed soon. Greg Winfield said that assuming this

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information continues to be gathered and analyzed during future whooping crane monitoring efforts that the selected contractor needs to be clear on what data needs to be collected and how it relates to this kind of analysis. Kenny discussed the conclusion of BOR's pilot analysis that using the HECRAS model is the best approach for estimating water surface elevation at whooping crane use sites. Kenny said that ongoing analysis of this type would cost the Program a few thousand dollars each year based on ongoing monitoring efforts. **Smith will distribute results of the pilot analysis and other related documents to the TAC for review.**

Becky Mitchell reported on the status of the revised geomorphology monitoring protocol. The revised protocol is nearly ready for distribution and review. **Smith will distribute the revised protocol to the TAC for review.**

Smith reported on the last meeting of the Adaptive Management Working Group meeting in Florida and the status of Adaptive Management Plan (AMP) experimental design and implementation of the FSM and Mechanical management strategies. The next meeting of the AMWG is March 12 at the Trust. **Smith will invite Kirk Schroeder and Kenny Dinan from the FWS in Grand Island to talk to the AMWG at that meeting about other restoration activities going on in the central Platte that may related to AMP implementation.**

Integration of Monitoring Efforts

Tern/Plover Monitoring

Jenniges provided an overview of current tern and plover monitoring efforts on the central Platte. NPPD and CNPPID have a FERC license requirement to spend up to \$100,000 in 1997 dollars (\$127,000 in 2008) to monitor effectiveness of habitat management. One of the specific items mentioned in the FERC License is terns and plovers. NPPD follows the Program protocol. Jenniges monitors sandpits from Odessa to Lexington and does an airboat survey from the Kearney Canal upstream to Lexington. Mark Peyton monitors at Lake McConaughy, a spoil pile at Cozad, near Gothenburg, and at Jeffrey Island. Czaplewski monitors sandpits from Chapman to Kearney, and helps with airboat surveys. Wingfield said the FWS monitors with airboat surveys from Chapman to the Kearney Canal headgates. Czaplewski said he has permission to go on the Broadfoot sandpits near Kearny and Newark but does not have permission to implement the full protocol. That sandpit has a lot of nesting activity and the Program should explore a short-term lease or some other access arrangement to ensure nesting activity can be monitored.

The full central Platte River is covered by airboat 3 times during nesting season (May, June, and July). There are constructed islands at the Trust; a pit by Shelton; and the Lonnie Leach pit near Rowe that are not being monitored, and the FWS islands created in 2007 are being monitored but the full protocol is not being implemented.

If birds increase their use of the river, the existing monitoring effort will be stretched. NPPD and CNPPID have a plan filed with FERC that has consensus of the FWS and Nebraska Game and Park Commission to do FERC license monitoring, that would allow some additional effort if needed.. The group began a discussion about how to supplement the existing monitoring structure and ensure the Program protocol is being implemented and Program monitoring needs are being met. There is potential for the Program to hire a technician, maybe housed at the Trust,

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who could help with several types of program monitoring. A scientific collecting permit from the FWS and NGPC is not needed to just monitor birds without disturbing them, but you do need a permit to look at eggs or move through a colony.

Mike Besson asked if we the Program should put out a RFP to secure a technician to do monitoring work. Peyton said it would seem easier to have a technician hired through Headwaters as opposed to using another contractor.

Jenniges suggested everyone involved in the current tern and plover monitoring effort should have a conference call every other week during the coming nesting season to assess the number of birds on river, needed resources, etc. **Smith said he will organize and host these calls.**

Beorn Courtney said a good model might be the flood casing program in Denver. Multiple firms are on call if and when there is a flood, with staff trained and prepared when available to monitor flood events. The Program could compile a list of firms in the area with available technicians that could help with monitoring efforts when needed.

Forage Fish Monitoring

Implementation of this protocol will require about a week of intensive labor to do 11 sites this summer. The Program can continue to partner with NPPD and CNPPID and use their equipment and some labor, but the Program should consider a student crew, staff help, or other assistance to make sure the protocol can be implemented and data collected and recorded.

Fritz suggested building a timeline for each monitoring effort into the monitoring matrix to see what summer monitoring work looks like, when pieces fit together, lag times, etc. **Smith said he would do that as the next step at refining the matrix.**

Tern/Plover Foraging Habits Study

The consensus of the group was to take out the reference in the draft RFP to determining fledge ratios and instead keep the RFP focused on foraging activity. **Smith will revise RFP and submit to the TAC for additional review and comment.**

Pulse Flow Monitoring

Kent Aden from CNPPID discussed LB 701 and the Task Force established to provide \$2 million/year to deal with invasives in fully and overappropriated basins. A sub-group of the Task Force has been meeting on possibilities for action on the Platte to deal with invasives and help improve streamflow conveyance. This activity should fit with pulse flows and pulse flow monitoring since the sub-group is looking at conveyance efficiency and water timing as metrics to measure. Aden believes there will be \$1.5-\$2 million available for Platte River work. The Program vegetation monitoring effort is of interest to sub-group, so it is important to coordinate efforts and see how activities link to each other. Fritz asked how the Task Force intends to document where treatments are occurring and to what extent. Aden said there is talk in the Task Force about the UNL School of Natural Resources serving as a clearinghouse (Web-based) for projects to show where, how many acres, when, and what was done (what kind of treatment).

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Jenniges said the Program needs to know if vegetation was treated at places like these to make sure we don't draw conclusions about pulse flow impacts if results are actually due to the spraying of invasives. Rick Wilson asked why the sub-group was talking about vegetation treatment in 2008, no activity in 2009, and the monitoring in 2010. Aden said existing knowledge about treating phragmites suggests that application should be in the fall of 2008 to translocate herbicide and then let the vegetation sit for a year with no disturbance to improve the amount of control. Fritz asked if there were any provisions for using some of the money for monitoring. Aden said maybe a little, but LB 701 is specific in talking about improving streamflow conveyance. Jason Farnsworth said the sub-group is thinking about a pilot study, which would include the Program vegetation monitoring protocol as a part of that. There may also be the opportunity to tie activities to the Program geomorphology monitoring protocol.

Pulse Flow Monitoring

Wingfield said the pulse flow at this point is looking like about two days of 3,000 cfs at Overton. The question remains about whether to monitor all the way down through habitat reach. A small group is meeting in North Platte on February 5 to look at different flow-related aspects of what pulse flow might be, including the possibility of flow from the Jeffrey return. If there is no federal Program authority, the FWS will consider doing a pulse flow with no bypass at Tri-County and seeing how that affects gains and ramp rates, if trash piles up on water structures, etc. The goal is to try to track stage at as many places as possible.

Wilson said the USGS has extensive pulse flow monitoring experience from the Missouri with the Corps. USGS knows that there is limited funding for pulse flow monitoring, so they are looking more at a proof of concept approach that focuses on discharge measurements. The Nebraska DNR is willing to work in partnership with the USGS. Wilson said it seems like the monitoring focus should be on the stretch from Lake McConaughy to North Platte if flow is only coming from Kingsley Dam. If the Program is considering a J-2 release in conjunction, then that is a different scenario and USGS recommends monitoring in the upstream end and also taking discharge measurements in Overton and other places downstream. At Lexington or Cozad, we could use pressure transducers with logging monitors to give stage over time during whole the duration and could put transducers upstream of J-2 and at Overton stream gage. From that, we could determine the impact of flow. USGS also recommends that if they would already be doing discharge monitoring, it would be of interest to re-survey Cottonwood Ranch transects. Paul Kinzel with the USGS could do 54 transects before the pulse flow, and then maybe subset of 10 after the J-2 flow (not relevant if only using McConaughy water). Wilson said re-surveying transects at Cottonwood Ranch would require about a three day effort of 3-4 people. USGS could also do real-time water quality monitoring.

Wilson asked the thoughts of the TAC on what flow will arrive at North Platte if 3,000 cfs is released at Lake McConaughy. Lisa Fotherby said the Program is really focused on flow below J-2. We don't expect to see a lot of geomorphic change due to the 2008 pulse flow, but the Program is looking at this as an opportunity to check flow, the effects, potential landowner impacts, etc. The unsteady flow model will help to describe how the pulse flow attenuates. There is a short timeframe and a small pulse, so we will focus more on a water tracking effort. Fotherby said monitoring at the upper end near Lake McConaughy would help to calibrate the unsteady flow model.

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Additional Business

Smith will ask Dale Strickland and Clayton Derby about the status of 2007 tern/plover report, the CA-collected whooping crane report, and their thoughts on a proposal to do a CA-collected tern/plover data report.

Closing Business

The next meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee will be held in conjunction with the Adaptive Management Working Group on March 12, 2008 at the Trust in Alda, Nebraska. The last two hours of the day will be reserved for the TAC meeting, based on agenda items that need addressed specifically by the TAC.

Meeting adjourned.