



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Homewood Suites DIA – Denver, CO
April 22, 2009

Attendees

Mark Peyton, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (Chair)
Chad Smith – ED Office
Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
Justin Brei – ED Office
Beorn Courtney – ED Office
Sabre Duren – ED Office
Lisa Fotherby – Bureau of Reclamation
Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resources District
Martha Tacha – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Matt Raabe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Jim Jenniges – Nebraska Public Power District
Rich Walters – TNC
Kevin Urie – Denver Water

Welcome and Administrative

Peyton called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call. One item added to the agenda related to a University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) phragmites study. Czaplewski moved to approve the February TAC meeting minutes; Wingfield seconded. **February 2009 TAC meeting minutes approved.**

AMP/IMRP Updates

AMWG Mechanical Actions workshop: Fotherby provided comments on the workshop notes and Smith will make changes and incorporate them into the Science Plan.

ISAC Meeting: Sent minutes from ISAC meeting. Smith is developing a list of questions for the ISAC to address from workshop in Kearney and new questions as well. A draft will be sent out soon for comments. ISAC will give report to GC. Ask GC members to submit questions. Need to make sure stay within scope for ISAC.

Tern/plover Foraging Study: Crew leader is working on site locations, making sure can get access, permits, etc. By May, the full crew will be here and the study will be up and running. Some or all would like to participate in river surveys. They will be living at Elm Creek. Program airboat will be delivered soon.

Plovers are already on the shore of Lake McConaughy. Need to make sure where nests are. Kirk Schroeder (USFWS) and John Campbell (USGS tern/plover foraging habits study field crew leader) need to talk and get new Partners constructed islands on GPS (38 islands in about 8 or 9



groupings). Campbell needs to contact Tacha about participating in river surveys. Tacha said it's important to pay more attention to the islands built up. What does it do to river surveys? There are many more islands being built in the river this year. Should we check for terns/plovers once a week during the nesting season at constructed sites? Smith said yes, that is what is required by the protocol.

Smith said last year the goal was set to have one meeting per week, but only ended up meeting twice over 16 weeks. It would still be a good idea to keep everyone coordinated. Tuesday morning emails will be sent out asking people for an update and if USGS crew needs help, they can try to resolve it.

Forage Fish Monitoring: Need NPPD nets, shockers, and other equipment. If anyone wants to help in field, it would be helpful. Smith and Jenniges will coordinate the effort this summer and will seek assistance from Program partners.

Program Monitoring Protocols

Water Quality Monitoring - Biocontaminants: EA worked with NDEQ to develop a method for sampling *E. coli* – grab samples during peak migration and coordinate with NDEQ. Smith said to do it properly would take a very serious, extensive research project. Monitoring will begin in 2010. It was asked if there were substantial objections to this. It would take genetic analysis to be able to know which animal the contamination was associated with. Tacha was concerned the proposed monitoring does not address the issue. Is it better to do something bad, than nothing at all? The TAC agreed to proceed with the proposed methodology and decide at a later time if a more robust research approach is required.

Aerial Photography: The GC approved a budget increase to \$40,000 to secure imagery in May/June this year. Program will secure a contractor for three years – one flight per year. Jenniges said his only comment was it could be hard to take pictures on late May/June. Take pictures at 1,200 cfs for all years for comparison? Point of late May/June is to have a nest initiation reference. Brei said typical flows in May/June are ~2,000 cfs, with one in three year flows of 3,500 cfs at Overton. Fritz said to specify in RFP that contractor will provide imagery after final flight of acquisition year.

TAC approved the aerial photography RFP.

Geomorph/In-channel Vegetation: Smith said there has been one test run on vegetation monitoring; another one will be in May. Farnsworth said the vegetation sampling changed substantially, but not much change to geomorphology component. Started at Chapman and working upstream. Farnsworth said the grid spacing may change – they are making sure they aren't missing bars. Tim Tunnell (ED Office) is talking to folks 500 m up and downstream of anchor points for access, so should get measurements for both banks. It's not a formal lease, just a written agreement. Farnsworth said the access would be a max of two days per year – one for geomorphology and one for vegetation. Need to strive to be good neighbors and not overstay our welcome with our studies.



Sediment Augmentation Feasibility Study RFP

There were substantial comments from Fotherby and Scott McBain (Program advisor). Smith said trying to keep RFP focused on specific goal of sediment balance. Need modeling work done by contractor. Still working on broader modeling approach. So may have some repetition in finer scale sediment model and the broader modeling of the system. Need to be doing sediment, islands, and flows at the same time. Start on finer scale model. Topographic sediment data important and will be useful for larger model. Fotherby said initially she didn't know where RFP was going, but Smith addressed her comments. Jenniges said to model all the way down to the diversion rather than just one mile. All needs to be in sync and taken down to diversion. Smith said we're not going to specify which model, instead letting the contractor propose.

Farnsworth said HEC-RAS is base for a lot of other models (original thinking), but feel it's better to give people flexibility to use what they think is the best tool. Instead of having Ayres do topography surveys for this feasibility analysis, Smith said the Program will keep it as a separate task in the RFP. Farnsworth said the model for sediment augmentation will be very topography dependent – don't want to build a model off of someone else's bathymetry.

Smith proposed adding permit application as Task 10 in the RFP. Farnsworth said the conceptual design is 20-30% of the final design. It has to be pretty decent final design for Corps approval, especially to be prepared for mitigation. Jenniges said probably need to do more than 20-30% because CORPs wants to make sure choosing least harmful alternative. Farnsworth said most contractors won't want to ballpark costs without knowing how much work will go into the permit process for the Corps. Urie said it would be more efficient to bid out Phase I (feasibility analysis) and Phase II (final design documents and permit application) together.

Smith said he decided to make pre-proposal meeting mandatory with not conference call line available to get contractors to Kearney to talk about the RFP and how it fits in the context of adaptive management. Fotherby asked about the timeframe for the contract. Smith said he assumed 1.5 years for Phase I, and then add time for Phase II. Fritz asked about accuracy of LiDAR. Smith said the reason to do additional bathymetric data is to get topography under water that we didn't get with LiDAR. Fotherby said they just used pretty good data for modeling, then if need higher resolution for monitoring, can gather additional topographic data.

Wingfield said the RFP is a very good product that will help to reduce a lot of uncertainty that still existed about sediment augmentation even after the December 2008 workshop. Smith asked the TAC to help distribute the RFP widely once approved by the Finance Committee to ensure it gets in front of all the right contractors.

TAC approved the sediment augmentation feasibility analysis RFP, with changes as discussed.

Habitat Measurements

Smith said there was a meeting last year to pick out habitat criteria, if we apply with aials, etc. Smith had Farnsworth and Brei look into how to apply the Program habitat criteria to help



acquire data for input into the Rapid Prototype models. Farnsworth gave a presentation to the TAC – minimum habitat criteria (Electronic version of presentation sent to all TAC members).

Tacha said we need to have temporal criteria incorporated into minimum habitat criteria. Farnsworth agreed, but it's difficult to determine small time range to incorporate into criteria. Smith said we will capture imagery in late May/June and as close to 1,200 cfs as possible. Smith asked if we are OK with criteria incorporating habitat that will be inundated at times; Jenniges said no. Wingfield said if flow happens early in season, small amounts of 'take' OK if it has long-term benefits. The BO recognizes this. Smith said some islands will be built that will be overtopped with FSM flows. He said the Missouri River group found the most successful bird sites are 3-6 ft above the waterline. He asked if we are defining habitat that's not really habitat. Tacha said we're probably not going to know for several years. The birds will let us know. Smith said it's important to pay attention to what is not being used. Farnsworth said these issues will be really important when designing FSM at Elm Creek. That would be a good time to have these types of discussions. He recommended deferring until we design. Wingfield said one thing is easy to do – look at sites and what birds are already telling us. Tacha said 1,200 cfs is different elevation depending on channel width.

Farnsworth described the assessment for this year. Tacha said it is really beneficial to have transects of islands before birds come. Smith said it's an issue because most of them are not on Program lands – need to work more closely with the Partners program to keep track of what is being constructed, where it is on the river, and how to monitor and assess that habitat. Jenniges asked if Ayres could capture some of the elevation and size data for nesting islands when they are on the river. Tacha said she wondered that as well because she can't do it all by herself. Wingfield recognizes this as a problem. Ayres is doing their survey in July, but Jenniges said that would still provide useful information. Farnsworth said when Partners islands are being constructed someone needs to collect GPS data and share it with the Program so we can keep track of habitat. Martha asked if she could coordinate with the USGS crew to assist with keeping track of birds if necessary and appropriate; Smith said yes. Wingfield said he'd do a better job coordinating with partners for next year; being sensitive to the Program's needs. Smith said the Program is probably going to need to invest in summer techs to count birds.

TAC agreed to address the habitat assessment and tern/plover monitoring protocol issues at the meeting in June.

Wet Meadows Information Review and CEM Refinement

Smith discussed the sole-source request for the Trust to conduct an information review on wet meadows and refine the wet meadows Conceptual Ecological Model (CEM). Czaplewski asked for clarification – we wouldn't be paying them for work they've already done, correct? Smith said no. Jenniges said the first step is for the Program to identify a clear definition of "wet meadows" and what they mean for the Program. Peyton said the Trust is the most qualified to do the work. Czaplewski said clearer deliverables are needed. Wingfield agreed that the Trust is probably most qualified, but he thinks a better business approach would be to include others potentially in the steps prior to updating the CEM. Not comfortable with it being sole source.



Urie agreed and said he thinks the GC would rather see this go through the RFP process like the pallid sturgeon info review. Several other TAC members agreed.

Smith asked if this work is important enough to go through an RFP process. Peyton said yes and that wet meadows are very important for the Program. He said it did not appear the TAC would approve this sole source agreement. Smith suggested that wet meadows be discussed at the July AMWG workshop. **The TAC agreed to this approach.**

Phragmites

Farnsworth provided an update on the phragmites study being conducted by a UNL graduate student. Funding has run out for the study and the task force overseeing the study (which includes representatives of several Program participants) is asking the Program to support the research with \$40,000 in each of the next two years (\$80,000 total). The study is focused on phragmites management methods and which method is most effective. The money situation is a recent occurrence and so things are on the fast track to keep the study going. Peyton asked if we paid this year, would it be possible to re-submit to the Trust for next year. Farnsworth said yes. Peyton said the Program should not become the funding source for everything. Smith agreed strongly and said the Program needs to develop a process for prioritizing and assessing research projects to keep them on point with Program need. Czuplewski said the GC would not be able to approve it until June. Smith said there is more on-point research like scour that needs to be addressed but he thinks it is good research, just bad timing. Jenniges said he could not make a recommendation without reviewing the study plan; several TAC members agreed.

The TAC agreed that without reviewing the study plan in detail and ensuring this study is linked to broader Program need they could not provide a recommendation of support for the funding.

Closing Business

The next TAC meeting is June 17th in Kearney, NE (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Central time) at the ED Office conference room. That meeting will focus on issues related to tern and plover habitat and monitoring.

Meeting adjourned.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from April 2009 TAC meeting

- 1) Approved minutes of February 2009 meeting.
- 2) Agreed to keep biocontaminants monitoring piece in the water quality monitoring protocol
- 3) Approved the aerial photography RFP.
- 4) Approved the sediment augmentation feasibility analysis RFP, with changes.
- 5) Agreed to focus on tern and plover habitat and monitoring issues at the June 2009 meeting.
- 6) Did not approve the sole-source recommendation for the wet meadows information review; instead agreed to discuss wet meadows at the July 2009 AMWG workshop.
- 7) Did not support funding for the UNL phragmites research project.