



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
 ED Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE
 November 23, 2009

Attendees

Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (Chair)
 Jerry Kenny – ED Office
 Chad Smith – ED Office
 Dave Baasch – ED Office
 Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
 Steve Smith – ED Office (Teleconference)
 Laura Belanger – ED Office (Teleconference)
 Ted Kowalski – Colorado Water Conservation Board (Teleconference)
 Jeff Runge – U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Felipe Chavez – Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust
 Pat Engelbert – HDR
 Brock Merrill – Bureau of Reclamation (Teleconference)
 Rich Walters – The Nature Conservancy
 Mark Pegg – UNL (Teleconference)
 Mike Besson – State of Wyoming
 Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resource District
 Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
 Martha Tacha – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Matt Rabbe – USFWS
 Tom Riley – Flatwater Group (Teleconference)

Welcome and Administrative

Peyton called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call.

Agenda modifications – None

Mark Czaplewski moved to approve the September TAC meeting minutes; Felipe Chavez seconded. **September 2009 TAC meeting minutes approved.**

Lower Platte River Stage Change Study Update

Engelbert provided an update and presentation on the Lower Platte Stage Change Study Report. C. Smith indicated ED Office provided input/guidance to help HDR set up the parameters used in their model, including timing of diversions and diversion amounts.

Tacha asked if they used average daily flow and Engelbert indicated they used mean daily flow at Grand Island and Louisville for their analyses.

Chavez asked about connectivity issues at lower discharges and Pegg indicated connectivity is an issue if it prevents sturgeons from reaching spawning areas or getting between areas of deep



water. If flats become prevalent habitat, fish can't access available forage or spawning habitat. Spawning occurs late March early April through May in Missouri River.

Fritz indicated UNL caught most sturgeon during summer and fall and intend on collecting fish next spring and that the report doesn't include information regarding DO and temperature issues and wondered if should be considered. Pegg and Engelbert indicated temperatures wouldn't change much during spring, but may during late summer or fall which could impact DO. Pegg indicated they didn't catch many sturgeon until temperatures started to drop and then catch increased near confluence of Missouri River, but they don't know why at this point. Sturgeon may be using the lower Platte as a staging area in fall to prepare for spring migration, to access food, or get to out of flows of the Missouri River. Next couple of years of data may allow them to determine why sturgeons are using lower Platte River.

Runge indicated the Program will divert flows during times of excess and will be putting water into river during periods of low flows and that the Lower Platte Stage Change study will be a good tool for looking at the effects of Program activities.

Besson indicated we need to figure out how diverting flows at Overton will impact flows at Grand Island and subsequently at Louisville.

Kenny agreed that looking at excess flows at Grand Island is not directly related to excess flows at Overton because the river gains flow between Overton and Grand Island. Diversions can only occur upstream of Overton and would be much less than 4,000 cfs. Timing of diversions will be critical.

Runge indicated that the Program's ability to divert water would likely be project specific.

C. Smith stated this tool will help us understand how Program activities could impact pallid sturgeon. Next step of Stage Change Study will be to include information in final report to be delivered to ED Office in December, present at AMP Reporting Session in February, and present to GC in March to determine next steps we should take for pallid sturgeons.

Besson stated we need to figure out a scoring system to balance target flows, weather, and pallid sturgeon.

Tern and Plover Monitoring Report

Baasch led discussion and briefly described what was included in the report and asked for feedback on layout, format, data, etc. C. Smith elaborated on how ED Office came up with the format for the report encouraged people to provide feedback.

Chavez asked Baasch for opinion on whether data being collected is adequate to answer questions related to nest and chick survival or if other methods could/should be used. Baasch indicated that observing sites on a monthly basis may not be adequate, however, members of the TAC and ED Office have been discussing the need to monitor more frequently (every 2 weeks) and that we are in the process of developing a more intensive research protocol. C. Smith indicated there is a need for more in depth research in order to answer specific questions related to tern and plover response to management activities.



Tacha said it would be helpful to define terms used in report (managed island, constructed island, etc.) and to explain why some river surveys were not conducted in various reaches (low flows). Tacha stated we should include information on water releases during certain times.

Word version will be available, without pictures, for everyone to review by November 24th.

Revisions due to Baasch by December 18th.

In the future we may need a protocol for reporting management activities where many contractors and organizations are performing work on the river.

Program RFPs

C. Smith indicated he updated wet meadows RFP to include comments provided by Jenniges and Rabbe. TAC discussed suggestions for Proposal Selection Panels for both RFPs and Kenny indicated GC needed to approve both panels.

Wet Meadows Information Review & CEM Refinement RFP

Fritz indicated the definition of wetlands needs to include individual free-standing wetlands, back-water sloughs, and wetland habitat associated with wet meadows. Studies relating to whooping crane (WC) use of wet meadows in RFP need to include prey base. Fritz also pointed out a need to identify any research needs and make recommendations on methods for monitoring WC use of wet meadows when we revise the CEM.

Rabbe indicated the service identified additional species to consider when developing land management plans and conducting research studies for wet meadow habitat (river otter, Sandhill crane, Platte River caddisfly, western prairie fringed orchid, and regal fritillary). C. Smith asked if the species should be explicitly listed in the RFP. Chavez indicated specific species should not be highlighted in the report because it would make it a different review could make the proposal more complicated and expensive. C. Smith indicated it would make the project more than we budgeted for. Peyton agreed with Chavez and indicated wet meadow RFP should review information specific to WC and not include all species of concern. C. Smith indicated Program wet meadow hypotheses all are aimed at WC. Tacha indicated when Program document was developed caddisfly was not a species of concern. Chavez, Besson, Fritz, and Runge stated future literature reviews could include other species, but suggested this RFP should address information on WC and flag documentation of other species of concern.

Chavez indicated high-quality wet meadows needs to be clarified in the RFP to be specific to WC. Non-natural wet meadows could be more or less important to WC than natural wet meadows. C. Smith indicated he could change the text to high-quality wet meadow as habitat for WC. Tacha indicated concern of directing the reviews. Rabbe indicated we agreed we would create wet meadow habitat according to Land Plan Table 1 characteristics. Peyton and Chavez indicated high-quality wet meadow definition should be strictly related to WC. C. Smith indicated RFP was written to address wet meadow habitat for WCs along the Platte River. Tacha said we don't have to limit the literature search to only include WC use of wet meadows and along the Platte River. Farnsworth, and others, expressed a concern of including information on dissimilar wet meadows (e.g., Hungarian or Alpine wet meadows).



C. Smith indicated we could include other species and wet meadows, but it would be much larger project. Peyton and Chavez indicated component 3 of the RFP includes information the Service is looking for. Chavez, Farnsworth, and C. Smith stated this should be a literature review to build on and not the final review of literature.

Chavez and Fritz suggested re-wording RFP to be specific to wet meadows and wetlands associated with wet meadows along the Platte River. Tacha suggested adding “in Platte river valley” after “in wetlands and wet meadows” in section 2B.

1-D Hydraulic/Sediment Modeling RFP

Steve Smith discussed several important points:

- Study area broken into 2 parts.
- After development, the model would be property of the Program.
- RFP addresses the level of detail included in the model.
- Sediment-transport model will include a mobile bed component.
- Names of selection committee will be made available at December GC meeting.

Tacha suggested include information on how they’ll address how flow splits and tributaries (e.g., Wood River canal) that enter the Platte River will impact model.

S. Smith indicated they would include a statement in the protocol on how they would address tributary inflows into the model. Modeling would include Platte River flow splits and tributary inflows.

C. Smith indicated Program had money in 2009 budget for Wet Meadows Information Review & CEM Refinement RFP and that RFP will go out Monday. The 1-D Hydraulic/Sediment Modeling Protocol is included in the 2010 budget and will go out in January if approved.

TAC approved the 1D modeling RFP under the provision that a statement would be added to require contractors to say how they will deal with boundary conditions including tributary inflows.

2009 AMP/IMRP Activities Update

C. Smith led discussion on status of Program monitoring protocols and reports.

- **Tern and Plover Monitoring Protocol** – Finalizing revisions from peer reviewers and small TAC October session.
- **Geomorphology/In-Channel Vegetation monitoring Protocol** – C. Smith received comments, he will summarize and discussed summary with Ayers and Olson December 10th.
- **Water Quality Monitoring Protocol** – Peer review comments are summarized will have a teleconference meeting with water quality working group next Monday.

ED Office intends to provide revised tern and plover, forage fish, and water quality monitoring protocols to TAC in January.

- **Forage Fish Monitoring Protocol** – Need more feedback on how to revise protocol



- **Forage Fish Monitoring Report** – Jenniges is finalizing report for 2009
- **Tern/Plover Foraging Habits Study Report** – brief summary of methods are included in 2008-2009 tern and plover report; final report will be provided by NPWRC in December.
- **Geomorphology/In-Channel Vegetation monitoring Report** – GC office will receive report in December.
- **Water Quality Monitoring Report** – GC office will receive report in December.
- **Whooping Crane Monitoring Report** – Report will be completed by AIM in December, river profiles not completed as of yet.
- **Whooping Crane Telemetry Project** – Whooping Crane Trust received the 2009 money from the Program

Baasch asked if WC telemetry locations along the Platte River would be combined with WC sightings during aerial surveys. Chavez and Fritz stated data collected from radio-collared birds could be compared to data collected through WC monitoring protocol to help address issues related to detectability.

FY 2010 Program Budget & Work Plan

C. Smith said complex and tract specific management plans were guided by the LAC. Plans need to be reviewed by TAC and comments need to be returned to Farnsworth by January 8th so we can discuss comments at the mid-January TAC meeting and present plans to GC in March. Budget items will be presented to GC in December.

Besson asked how much money was applied to modeling efforts; Kenny stated \$400,000 was included in budget.

Closing Business

Peyton served as TAC chair for 3 years; we will elect new chair for the TAC in January, 2010.

Peyton stated Cory Steinke is taking over the chair for the Water Action Committee and suggested it probably would not be a good idea for Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District to chair two Program advisory committees.

AMP reporting session in Denver scheduled for February 17 & 18.

Next TAC meeting will be January 21st, 2010, 9:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m. Central time

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m. Central time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from November 2009 TAC meeting

- 1) Approved TAC September 2009 minutes.
- 2) Word version of the 2008-2009 tern and plover monitoring report will be distribute to TAC for track-change comments on November, 24th 2009. Comments due December 18th, 2009.



- 3) TAC approved wet meadows information review and 1-D modeling RFPs, including recommended changes.
- 4) Set TAC meeting for January 21st, 2010.
- 5) TAC will elect new Chair at the January 21st TAC meeting