PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Executive Director's Office – Kearney, NE

September 15, 2009

Attendees

Scott Woodman, Chair, Landowner
Mark Czaplewski, Vice Chair, Central Platte Natural Resources District
Bruce Sackett - ED Office
Justin Brei - ED Office
Jason Farnsworth - ED Office
Tim Tunnell - ED Office
Chad Smith - ED Office
Greg Wingfield - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Matt Steffl - Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Ted LaGrange - Nebraska Game & Parks Commission
Harry LaBonde - State of Wyoming
Mark Peyton - Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
John Shadle – Nebraska Public Power District
Joe Frank - State of Colorado, Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District (by phone)
David Raffety - Tri-Basin Natural Resources District
John Thorburn - Tri-Basin Natural Resources District
Larry Reynolds - Tri-Basin Natural Resources District
John Heaston - The Nature Conservancy
Brock Merrill - U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (by phone)

Welcome and Administrative

Chairman Scott Woodman called the meeting to order at 9:10 am Central Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

Woodman asked for agenda modifications and none were provided.

Harry LaBonde made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 15, 2009 LAC meeting. The motion was seconded by Greg Wingfield and approved.

GC Meeting Update

Mark Czaplewski gave an update on GC activities since the LAC last met. The GC met on August 11 & 12 in Denver, CO and held a conference call on August 31.

Czaplewski reported that the GC asked for the opportunity to review the final easement documents and terms before full approval of Tract 0805. On the August 31 conference call, the GC approved the purchase of tract 0903. The GC also voted to move to a quarterly meeting schedule in 2010.
The next meeting of the Governance Committee will be held October 13-14, 2009 in Kearney, NE.

**Update on Land Management**

Tim Tunnell introduced the draft management plans that were distributed to the LAC prior to the meeting and requested comment. These plans were developed with guidance from a working group meeting held July 27, 2009. Comments discussed by the LAC centered mostly around the lack of detail in the draft plans. Wingfield said that the LAC needs to approve the land management plans, and the plans should include at least enough detail to facilitate that effort. LaBonde agreed the plans need more detail, and that the place for that detail is likely in the annual work plans. Smith said those details are still being developed by the TAC and AMWG, and will continue to be hammered out over the next 6-8 months. LaBonde said the first year plans should typically include activities like surveying and maintenance activities while the later work plans would include restoration activities. It should be made clear that years 2-5 are subject to change due to science needs, but known activities should be included as they are currently scoped out. Farnsworth said these initial drafts were spurred by the need to develop the Program’s 2010 budget. Actual land management plan approval is not necessary until April 2010. Thorburn said plans should include more detail on agricultural management practices when warranted. These would include potential implementation of things like crop rotations, irrigation plans, fertilization plans, and best management practices.

Wingfield reminded the LAC of the need to include time for USFWS consultation on land management plans prior to final approval. This process consists of submittal of a letter to the USFWS expressing no expectation of take citing actions in the management plan, and receiving a letter of concurrence from the USFWS. LaGrange said the same issue may arise with state listed species. LaGrange will pursue clarification on the process with state participants.

Heaston said the Program should create a list of standard practices to be performed on Program lands that could be approved by the State and USFWS on a regional basis, to allow basic Program activities to occur before a finalized management plan. Similar models may be obtained from environmental groups already performing restoration in the central Platte. Wingfield said that many practices are already identified in the document that the draft management plans refer to in the methods sections (“Habitat Management Methods for Least Terns, Piping Plovers, and Whooping Cranes”).

**Other Committee Coordination Information**

Smith gave the LAC an overview of how the TAC and AMWG are tackling adaptive management plan objectives. The broad categories of AMP experimentation include: habitat selection, paired experimental design, flow-sediment-mechanical test sites, wetlands and wet meadows, and conservation monitoring. Smith then walked the LAC through the central Platte reach, covering how the AMWG sees current Program properties/complexes fitting into the AMP picture.

**Public Comment/Closing Business**
Chairman Woodman asked for public comments, none were offered.

The next meeting of the LAC will be held in Kearney, Nebraska at the Executive Director’s Office on Wednesday, November 18, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. central time.

**Executive Session**

John Heaston moved to go into executive session with LAC members, alternates, and technical staff to review details of land offerings. The motion was seconded by Mark Czaplewski. The motion carried and the committee entered executive session at 11:24 a.m.

Mark Peyton moved to come out of executive session. Mark Czaplewski seconded and the motion carried. The committee came out of executive session at 12:24 p.m.

**Discussion of Evaluation Team Recommendations**

**Tract 0818**

Larry Reynolds moved to forward tract 0818 to the GC with a recommendation to approve commencement of appraisals and negotiations. The motion was seconded by Harry LaBonde.

Wingfield referenced the evaluation team recommendation and said the USFWS cannot support consideration of the river portion of tract 0818 as complex habitat. Reynolds and LaBonde provided clarification that the motion on the table did not include a recommendation to classify tract 0818 as complex or non-complex, and the motion was voted upon.

The motion did not carry unanimously. In accordance with the Program document, a memo outlining views for and against the motion will be provided to the Governance Committee in place of a LAC recommendation.

**Tract 0917**

Harry LaBonde moved that the LAC postpone consideration of 0917 until such time that the GC has taken final action to purchase or not to purchase tract 0818. Motion carried.

**Tract 0918**

John Heaston moved to table tract 0918 pending discussions with the Platte River Whooping Crane Trust and other environmental groups concerning this tract. Motion carried.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Woodman at 1:10 p.m.