



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting Minutes**  
 Staybridge Suites Conference Room – Denver, CO  
 December 7, 2010

**Attendees**

- Jerry Kenny – ED
- Chad Smith – ED Office
- Dave Baasch – ED Office
- Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
- Steve Smith – ED Office
- Jim Jenniges – Nebraska Public Power District
- Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resource District
- Martha Tacha – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Jeff Runge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Matt Rabbe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Tom Econopouly – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Suzanne Sellers – Colorado Water Conservation Board
- Kevin Urie – Colorado Water Users
- Pat Golte – Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
- Jennifer Schellpeper – Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

**Welcome and Administrative**

Smith welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined information to be covered during the meeting, and the group proceeded with a roll call.

**Mock Synthesis Report: Initial Review**

C. Smith led the discussion and walked through information included in the Mock Synthesis Report Version 1.0.

*Big Questions:*

Jenniges stated he wasn't sure if the Big Questions related to habitat were beneficial where Program partners can't agree on a definition of habitat for the species so determining if the species responded to an increase in 'habitat' would be tough. Baasch said the Program has to come to an agreement on what habitat is for each of the species so we can address the questions and hypotheses the Program has. Jenniges stated Program partners have tried to resolve this issue for several years and haven't been able to resolve it. Runge stated the WC metrics on page 16 of the Report lay out what we will be evaluated and provide the building blocks for determining what habitat is for WC. Jenniges suggested maybe we should evaluate changes in the various metrics that people feel influence bird use. Rabbe said we could explicitly state that changes in bird response are in relationship to what the Program defines as habitat. Tacha said a problem with the report is that it appears to mix riparian and non-riparian habitat for WC. Farnsworth stated mechanical actions may be used in both habitat types. Smith stated ED Office staff made a concerted effort to avoid winner/loser types of answers when evaluating the



effectiveness of the 2 management strategies. Tacha stated the 2 management strategies are not mutually exclusive and asked what questions the GC would ask at the end of the first increment. Farnsworth and Baasch stated they would likely want to know how much it will cost to continue to improve or maintain habitat for the species on the Platte River. Tacha said the GC would likely ask if the Platte River is important to the species and C. Smith stated Big Question 6 was our attempt to address that question. Smith stated the Program documents state that the Program will implement an FSM and MCM strategy to evaluate species and habitat response. Farnsworth stated that adaptive management is supposed to reduce uncertainty and not necessarily to test specific hypotheses. Runge felt more emphasis in the big questions should be placed on species response rather than cost. Tacha asked if we will be able to answer Big Questions 1a and 2a without agreeing on what habitat is. C. Smith stated the definition of habitat will be bounded by the metrics we are collecting data on. Rabbe stated that in the end we may find that a combination of the 2 strategies may be best for creating and maintaining habitat. Rabbe stated Big Question 3 should include flow and sediment rather than just flow. Runge stated the sole purpose of the FSM strategy was for channel maintenance while the MCM strategy is a combination of channel and habitat maintenance and habitat building purposes. Farnsworth stated another objective of the FSM strategy was to improve hydrology of wet meadow. Runge said reducing shortages to peak flow would improve hydrology of wet meadows because of the longer duration of peak flows. Runge felt we should have a Big Question related to effectiveness of the Program's strategy to manage land in complexes. Jenniges and Czaplewski disagreed.

Czaplewski suggested Big Question 5 read 'Have Program actions avoided adverse impacts to pallid sturgeon in the lower Platte.' Rabbe suggested we wait until the GC determines how the wording should be stated. Econopouly asked why none of the Big Questions are related to species of concern. Smith stated species of concern were not included because we have no guidance how to evaluate such questions because the Program has no hypotheses or conceptual models related to species of concern. Smith said if we wanted to address questions related to species of concern then he felt we would need to develop hypotheses and conceptual models.

Runge stated there were no flow related hypotheses or variables in Table 3.2 for terns and plovers. Smith stated flow related hypotheses were classified as tier 2 hypotheses, but that Program staff would be evaluating hypotheses relating flow to forage fish in the upcoming year.

#### *Management/Criteria Decisions:*

Tacha asked C. Smith to use lighter colors in the tables so that the font stands out more and their easier to read. Rabbe asked if Decisions 5 and 6 are related to Lutey's 2002 Species Recovery Objective Report and if the specific numbers in his Report were adopted by the Program. Urie stated we need to be very careful how Decision questions 5 and 6 are phrased. Smith, Jenniges, and Tacha indicated the Program did not adopt those recovery objectives because partners couldn't agree on them. Runge asked how target flow shortages factored into decision making. Smith stated he wasn't clear how shortages to target flow are related to implementing adaptive management on the Platte River. Jenniges stated he felt some decisions the GC would need to make at the end of the first increment are: 1) did you acquire 10,000 acres, 2) is the land in complexes, 3) did we manage the land toward table 1 characteristics in the Land Plan, and 4) how did the species respond. Urie added 5) have we learned enough to make changes in the future. Smith said those thoughts were what he tried to capture in Decisions 8 and 9. Smith



stated he at the end of the first increment we would analyze all the data, classify our learning into 3 categories (green, yellow, blue), and provide this information to the GC so they will know what was learned during the first increment and will consider this as well as many other factors when negotiating a second increment.

#### *Candidate Performance Measures:*

Smith stated he updated Table 3.3 since Version 1.0 was sent to the TAC and that the revised version outlines how and when data will be collected and who will collect and analyze the data. Jenniges said the ISAC has suggested the Report should point out places where the data analysis can't concretely answer questions we want to answer (i.e., interpretation of the data; e.g., West Report). Tacha and Runge stated the Performance Measures should elaborate more on factors the Program can't control, but that influence the species and their use of the Platte River. Rabbe asked if we considered comparing the number of nests per pair of birds on the Platte River on an annual basis to determine if there are changes in the number of birds showing up on the Platte River and deciding to move on to another system to nest. Baasch and Jenniges said it would be tough or impossible to determine exactly how many terns and plovers actually showed up and evaluated whether or not to nest on the Platte River on an annual basis without banding. Baasch said he would include an estimate of the number of nests per pair based on the number of adults divided by 2 in future annual tern and plover reports.

Smith said he would incorporate comments people had on Version 1.0 of the Mock Synthesis Report into Version 2.0 and asked people to provide comments by 31 December, 2010.

#### **Adaptive Management Implementation Plan**

Farnsworth led the discussion and stepped through Version 1.0 of the Adaptive Management Implementation Plan. Tacha asked Farnsworth what timeframe would be used to determine when/how many times the Program would progress through the AM cycle. Farnsworth said he would address this question later in his presentation (covered when Farnsworth discussed the figure on page 9). Rabbe expressed concern of losing opportunities to learn about FSM with the flow schedule outlined on page 9 with the EA account where it is and natural flow events. Farnsworth stated the reason for delayed implementation of the full FSM strategy are related to Corp permits and that the Corp seems to be more comfortable with ramping up to full FSM implementation, but that we plan to ramp up as quickly as possible and will learn what we can about the various pieces of the FSM strategy while we ramp up. Econopouly suggested Farnsworth include an additional column in the diagram on pages 10-12 to provide guidance for the GC as to when we need them to perform specific tasks.

#### **Caddisfly Research**

Farnsworth led the discussion and stepped through the Caddisfly Research Experiment Proposal developed and submitted to the Program by University of Nebraska Kearney. Jenniges stated the Service would need to weigh-in on what would happen if Program-funded research impacts a candidate species for future listing where it is a species of concern. Farnsworth indicated the Program wouldn't contract with UNK until the Service provides us formal documentation that covers the Program in the event unexpected outcomes arise. Sellers stated Colorado Water Users



have policy concerns with the research that haven't been fully developed. Tacha expressed support of pursuing opportunities to conduct research on species of concern such as caddisfly.

**Meeting Scheduling and Closing Business**

C. Smith will set a date for the next TAC meeting via email once we receive feedback on Version 1.0 of the Mock Synthesis Report and the Adaptive Management Implementation Plan.

**The TAC are asked to submit comments on the Mock Synthesis Report 1.0 to C. Smith by 31 December, 2010 and the Adaptive Management Implementation Plan 1.0 to Farnsworth by 31 December, 2010.**