



1                   **PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
2                   **Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
3                   ED Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE  
4                   3 March, 2010

5  
6    **Attendees**

7    Mike Besson – State of Wyoming (Chair)  
8    Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District  
9    Jerry Kenny – Executive Director  
10   Chad Smith – ED Office  
11   Dave Baasch – ED Office  
12   Jason Farnsworth – ED Office  
13   Justin Brei – ED Office  
14   Steve Smith – ED Office (teleconference)  
15   Beorn Courtney – ED Office (teleconference)  
16   Jim Jenniges – NPPD  
17   Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resources District  
18   Martha Tacha – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
19   Matt Rabbe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
20   Greg Wingfield – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
21   Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
22   Doug Hallum – Nebraska Department of Natural Resources

23   **Welcome and Administrative**

24   Besson began by presenting Mark Peyton a Certificate of Appreciation for serving as TAC Chair  
25   from 2007 to 2010.

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

27   Agenda modifications – Smith indicated the TAC would discuss the Revised Wet Meadow  
28   Information Review RFP to determine if the TAC could agree to proceed with the revised RFP.

29   Besson asked for a motion to approve the January TAC meeting minutes

30   Jenniges stated Table 1 should not be referenced when speaking of minimum habitat criteria in  
31   the Complex Land Management Section of the January TAC meeting minutes. The group  
32   agreed we should remove ‘minimum habitat’ throughout the discussion within the Complex  
33   Land Management Plan Section.

34   Jenniges moved to approve the January TAC meeting minutes with suggested changes; Tacha  
35   seconded the motion. **January, 2010 TAC meeting minutes approved with suggested**  
36   **changes. All approved.**

37   **2010 PRRIP Monitoring and Research Protocols**

38   *2010 Tern and Plover Monitoring Protocol* – Smith led discussion and explained how a small  
39   group of TAC members and others interested in our tern and plover monitoring protocol met at



40 Valentino's on January 29<sup>th</sup> and suggested changes and agreed to the changes that were made.  
41 Smith indicated Baasch put together a summary memo of changes that were made.

42 Fritz indicated he would like more details within the methods section (i.e., specify how  
43 measurements would be collected). Baasch stated he would go through the protocol to insure the  
44 details of how measurements would be obtained were included in the text or in the list of  
45 definitions outlined in the Methods Section.

46 Besson asked if Smith and Baasch could briefly identify the changes that were made to the  
47 original protocol; Smith stated the changes were highlighted in the 2-page memo Baasch put  
48 together. Baasch, Smith, and Jenniges mentioned many of the 'major' changes outlined in the  
49 memo (i.e., float eggs, collect habitat measures during initial observation, survey river and  
50 sandpits twice a month, fledging date, etc.).

51 Peyton asked if we should be counting chicks at 24 days also. Baasch stated chicks would be  
52 monitored twice per week until they fledge. Tacha agreed we should be counting chicks at 24-25  
53 days. Smith and Jenniges indicated we could use 28 days as the upper limit for monitoring  
54 chicks where they would be monitored every 3-4 days anyway.

55 Fritz stated we needed to clarify when monitoring would begin if nests or chicks are observed on  
56 land we have permission to enter and on lands that are privately owned. Baasch indicated he  
57 would clarify this in the protocol. Fritz said he would like to have the words 'off-site' removed  
58 when referring to the data collected after the survey is complete (i.e., river flows, active channel  
59 width, etc.). Terminology was removed.

60 Tacha said we needed to specify how incidental observations were handled. Baasch indicated  
61 the protocol would be revised to specify how these observations would be handled. Rabbe asked  
62 if these incidental observations would be included in the report; Baasch said yes.

63 Besson asked if the TAC was comfortable with approving the Revised Tern and Plover  
64 Monitoring Protocol. Smith asked for a clarification of all the changes that had been discussed.  
65 The group began outlining the new revisions and the discussion led to further revisions. The  
66 group came to an agreement that vegetative height should be measured and recorded as the  
67 maximum height of any plant within the 1-yd<sup>2</sup> area around the nest.

68 Czaplewski reminded Baasch to update datasheets to reflect revisions made during the TAC  
69 Meeting and suggested adding information on egg floating techniques. Baasch stated he would  
70 make these revisions and add the egg floating guideline from the Corps' Tern and Plover  
71 Monitoring Handbook as an appendix to the Protocol.

72 **Peyton moved to approve the Revised 2010 Tern and Plover Monitoring Protocol with**  
73 **suggested changes and Tacha seconded the motion; all approved.**

74 *2010 Tern and Plover Monitoring and Research Activities –*

75 Baasch discussed and briefly presented information on data that will be collected for the 2010  
76 Tern and Plover Pilot Study Research Protocol. Baasch informed the TAC that we have  
77 identified 3 Summer Technicians and intend on offering them positions this week. Czaplewski  
78 commented the preliminary work schedule table in the Research Protocol should include the  
79 Lexington to Chapman area and Baasch explained that the table was only intended to represent



80 the area that he and the summer technicians plan to survey during 2010; the Service will survey  
81 Grand Island to Chapman and other Program partners are planning to survey sandpits other than  
82 Broadfoot South Pit which it appears we will have more access this year than in the past.  
83 Baasch stated we are coordinating with USGS-Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center to help  
84 collect the research portion of the data collected during 2010 so we are not disturbing nests more  
85 than necessary. Wingfield asked if the Program's crew (Baasch and 3 technicians) and USGS  
86 personnel would be working at separate sites and how the work will be coordinated. Baasch  
87 stated he intends on spending as much time as possible with the USGS crew to obtain training  
88 with banding birds and that the Program's crew will assist USGS in collecting the research data  
89 as much as possible; however, much of the data is collected via digital images that Baasch will  
90 view and record data from.

91 Tacha stated we needed to coordinate closely with Rowe Sanctuary (Bill Taddicken) to inform  
92 him of our intended monitoring/research during 2010.

93 Jenniges stated he felt we needed another objective to address how data will influence  
94 management activities. Smith indicated he would cover how we will use data collected during  
95 2010 and how data collected in the future could be used to guide management decisions later in  
96 the day. Besson asked if Jenniges was comfortable with this response and he stated he was.

97 *PRRIP Water Quality Monitoring Protocol –*

98 Courtney led discussion and highlighted some of the changes that were made to the protocol and  
99 discussed Peer Review suggestions that were not made because they did not relate directly to  
100 Program activities. Courtney opened it up for questions and comments. Besson stated the Water  
101 Quality Protocol was good because it highlighted the fact that the data we are collecting relates  
102 to Program activities and is not collected to determine the status-quo water quality issues.

103 Courtney indicate that she was going to ask EA to reorganize Appendix E so it follows the  
104 Protocol and more clearly.

105 Tacha stated to Courtney that inflows upstream of the Grand Island gage station (Wood River)  
106 can be significant and that these inflows are not affected by the Program. Courtney stated this  
107 was good to know.

108 **Jenniges moved to approve the PRRIP Water Quality Monitoring Protocol with changes**  
109 **Courtney indicated she would ask EA to make to Appendix E; Czuplewski seconded the**  
110 **motion; all approved.**

111 **Cottonwood Ranch OCSW & Flow Consolidation Conceptual Design RFP**

112 Farnsworth discussed preliminary plans for creating OCSW and consolidating flow, dealing with  
113 excavated OCSW sand, permitting issues related to such work, and potential alternative options  
114 in the future at Cottonwood Ranch.

115 Besson asked what agency is in charge of managing the flood plain. Farnsworth indicated the  
116 Counties are, but many of them are unaware of it. Besson stated the word 'one' was left out of  
117 line 82; Farnsworth indicated he would add it.

118 Jenniges indicated the Service should have a member on the selection committee; Wingfield  
119 indicated Rabbe would participate.



120 Fritz stated concern with permitting issue timelines and Farnsworth and Smith indicated ED  
121 Office staff was moving forward with wetland delineations and moving as quickly as possible to  
122 obtain permits. Wingfield asked if delineations at Cottonwood Ranch are happening within  
123 channel and Smith indicated they were for island construction at Elm Creek and channel  
124 widening at Cottonwood Ranch. Wingfield indicate the Service is finalizing a Tier 2  
125 consultation letter for the approved land plans, which among other things will include  
126 information on executive orders related to non-jurisdictional wetlands. Kenny stated he needed  
127 to write the letter for the Service to reference related to this issue.

128 Jenniges indicated at some point we needed to decide if consolidation should be done and if so,  
129 who (contractor, TAC, etc.) should decide where the consolidation should be done. Farnsworth  
130 indicated we should have the contractor meet with TAC to make this decision. Smith indicated  
131 that ED Office staff and NPPD could discuss this issue and get contractor input later. Peyton  
132 added that it would be good to include contractor input in the discussion of what should be done  
133 at Cottonwood Ranch. Farnsworth indicated that we are not planning on going through the  
134 interview process for this RFP. Besson pointed out the fact that there are a lot of experienced  
135 candidates that could submit a proposal and it could be difficult to choose the final candidate.  
136 Farnsworth agreed.

137 Besson asked for nominees for the selection committee; several potential members were named.  
138 Wingfield indicated we should ask for a representative from Colorado. Czaplewski asked if  
139 Nebraska should have a representative. Wingfield asked if we should consider asking Lisa  
140 Fotherby to set in on the discussion sessions and Besson indicated we had other representatives  
141 (i.e., Chester Watson) that participated in the development of the RFP.

142 Suggested RFP Selection Panel included: Farnsworth, Jenniges, Smith, Rabbe, Besson, and  
143 potentially a representative from the State of Colorado.

144 **Jenniges moved to approve the Cottonwood Ranch OCSW & Flow Consolidation**  
145 **Conceptual Design RFP and Fritz seconded the motion; all approved the RFP.**

146 BREAK

#### 147 **AMP Implementation**

148 Smith led the discussion and gave an ‘AMP Reporting Session Metrics’ presentation, indicated  
149 he was working on the Mock Report, and outlined how he foresees ranking hypotheses outlined  
150 in the Program’s AMP and measuring Program success. Smith demonstrated how he envisions  
151 ranking hypotheses and showed a preliminary example using tern and plover hypotheses outlined  
152 in the AMP. Smith indicated he would rank the remaining hypotheses in the AMP in a similar  
153 fashion so that by late April or May we can hold a small TAC group meeting to further refine  
154 and finalize prioritizing the hypotheses for TAC approval and then have a workshop in the fall to  
155 address issues related to data analyses.

156 Besson asked how often Smith planned on writing the mock report. Smith indicated the mock  
157 report would be a tool to be used as needed. Jenniges stated he thought the Mock Report would  
158 be created one time and the data collected each year would be entered in to produce an ‘Annual  
159 State-of-the-Platte Report’. Smith agreed and stated the mock report would also be updated as  
160 we start answering current hypotheses.



161 Wingfield indicated what Smith presented is essentially outlined in the AMP. Smith agreed.  
162 Wingfield stated that water-dependent variables need to be viewed with respect to the tern and  
163 plover hypotheses and that a lot of hard thinking will need to be done in order to make this  
164 happen. Czaplewski agreed and asked if Smith would be looking for GC approval next week.  
165 Smith stated that was not his intention but wanted the GC to know how we were proceeding and  
166 to let them know there will be a large time commitment for the TAC to help the ED Office  
167 prioritize the hypotheses and develop the scientific plan. Besson and Smith indicated this  
168 information should be incorporated into the AMP which would require GC approval; Jenniges  
169 stated he didn't feel this would ultimately change the AMP. Besson and Smith indicated that by  
170 prioritizing the hypotheses, some of the original 42 hypotheses likely would not be addressed  
171 during the first increment so it would require GC approval.

172 Jenniges stated the Tier or Ranking system Smith described and habitat availability are not  
173 related or tied to the Program's land management plans. Smith stated he could add another  
174 column to show how our experimental design fits into the matrix.

175 Besson stated it didn't seem realistic to address all 42 hypotheses with the data we will collect  
176 during the next 10 years. Jenniges stated we have whooping crane and other data since 2000  
177 which is similar to the data we will be analyzing. Smith pointed out that the ISAC advised us to  
178 analyze data annually and learn from data collected each year. Jenniges stated that learning  
179 annually is OK, but that we needed to be careful about making management decisions based on  
180 yearly data. Wingfield stated that some things can be learned in a year, but some of the  
181 hypotheses may not be fully addressed within the first increment and that he liked the way Smith  
182 was beginning the process of prioritizing hypotheses.

183 Fritz indicated the ranking systems between species and land and water related activities need to  
184 be tied together. Kenny asked for clarification on the water tie-in where we have objectives to  
185 meet species habitat requirements and target flows. Fritz indicated he was referring to the whole  
186 water action process including timing of flows, flows for sediment transport, habitat management  
187 for species, etc.

188 Fritz indicated Smith may need a comment column to explain justification of ranking system.

189 Tacha asked Smith if he planned to send the information he presented to all TAC members;  
190 Smith stated he wanted to rank the other hypotheses and distribute a preliminary ranking system  
191 for all hypotheses to the AMWG committee to review and then send the TAC a revised version  
192 of the ranking system for all hypotheses. Tacha said we need to keep the purpose and goals of  
193 the Program in mind (water shortfalls, etc.) while prioritizing the hypotheses. Jenniges agreed  
194 this was a good idea; however, he stated the Adaptive Management Plan was developed because  
195 people weren't exactly sure how to benefit the species and this procedure will provide a decision  
196 matrix to determine what actually benefits the species.

#### 197 **Revised Wet Meadows Information Review RFP**

198 Smith led the discussion and explained revisions were made to the RFP (removed whooping  
199 CEM refinement, etc.) to help capture whooping crane information as well as information related  
200 to other species of concern to hopefully allow the TAC to reach an agreement at the advisory  
201 level without requiring a GC vote to determine how to proceed.



202 Tacha indicated the Service would favor the revised RFP. Jenniges stated he was fine with the  
203 revised RFP; however, he stated he was fine with the previous version and questioned what the  
204 Service wants to learn from the literature search. Czaplewski indicated the RFP listed a few of  
205 the species of concern, but that various Program documents identify numerous species of  
206 concern and questioned why a few species were included in the list and not others. Rabbe stated  
207 he thought it was appropriate to gather all the information in one place and decipher how we  
208 should proceed. Czaplewski asked where we draw the line as far as what species to include in  
209 the information review and stated several examples of the number of species identified as  
210 ‘species-of-concern’ in various Program documents. Jenniges stated the RFP expands the range  
211 of information related to the number of species concerned, but that it retracts the scope because  
212 the contractor does not have to develop CEMs. Jenniges asked if we need to put land  
213 management actions for wet meadows on hold until the information review is completed.  
214 Czaplewski asked if we should put the original ‘objective 3’ back into the RFP (develop  
215 whooping crane CEM) because whooping cranes are a target species. Wingfield stated he felt  
216 the Program committed to Land Plan, Table 1 guidelines that the Service and others thought  
217 defined whooping crane, and other species, habitat and the information review could help refine  
218 these definitions so the Program can identify and develop this type of habitat. Jenniges and  
219 Besson asked if the Service’s definition of wet meadow was based on characteristics present at  
220 Mormon Island. Besson stated his interpretation of wet meadows is based on previous  
221 Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). Besson, Jenniges, and Czaplewski questioned whether  
222 ‘Mormon Island’ wet meadow habitat is available to purchase or develop. Wingfield suggested  
223 we choose properties that are most likely to result in wet meadow habitat and make an attempt at  
224 restoring these habitats to develop wet meadow hydrology. Jenniges stated the RFP was  
225 developed based on the fact that people have attempted to restore wet meadow habitat for 30  
226 years and haven’t achieved what they set out to accomplish and that the Program would not be  
227 able to determine if they succeeded in this mission in the next 9 years. Tacha agreed it takes a  
228 long time to develop organic soils in areas that don’t have organic soils.

229 Smith indicated the TAC was short on time for the day and wanted the group’s position on the  
230 Revised RFP and wanted to know if a collection of manuscripts would help discern some of the  
231 issues the TAC is facing. Czaplewski stated his concerns were with timing and priorities and he  
232 thought the priority was whooping cranes rather than the other species of concern.

233 Besson stated his understanding is the RFP was designed to identify opportunities to purchase  
234 lands that have the potential of developing wet meadow habitat. Jenniges indicated he thinks this  
235 is more of a political issue and stated attempts to develop wet meadow habitat have not resulted  
236 in the desired outcome. Besson asked if people were aware of this when they developed the  
237 Program Document and Jenniges indicated they weren’t because the restorations were newly  
238 developed (<10-years old) and we are now seeing the results of their efforts.

239 Farnsworth stated we not only need to know where wet meadows should be developed, but what  
240 they should look like. When we add other species of concern to the list, several of these species  
241 require habitat that is much different than what whooping cranes select and need to meet their  
242 requirements.

243 Czaplewski asked if we should consider including the original ‘objective 3’ (CEM refinement  
244 reduce the scope to only include refining a CEM for whooping cranes. Smith stated he took the



245 CEM portion out of the original RFP so that we could get a large amount of information on wet  
246 meadows, whooping cranes, and other species of concern and decide how to proceed.

247 Czaplowski stated his concern was the revised RFP elevates an information review of species of  
248 concern rather than focusing the literature review on wet meadows habitat for whooping cranes  
249 that includes information on the other species of concern. Hallum stated DNR would likely be  
250 concerned with elevating the priority of other species of concern with respect to target species.  
251 Wingfield indicated if we can provide habitat for whooping cranes that benefits other species  
252 than it would be a good idea to do so. Jenniges indicated this is subjective and relates to one's  
253 value system. Hallum inquired what other species the Service was considering because what  
254 action was taken would benefit some species and not others. Fritz indicated that management  
255 from year-to-year would likely change so the Program could provide benefits for different  
256 species of concern which would justify an RFP for a broader literature review.

257 Besson asked if we would be better to attempt to settle the discussion after we had information  
258 collected under the revised RFP. Smith stated that if the TAC could agree to proceed with some  
259 version of the revised protocol so it didn't become a 'GC issue' we would be better off.

260 Besson stated he felt the TAC should agree to proceed with the revised RFP to determine if the  
261 submitted proposals meet our objective(s).

262 **Fritz moved to approve the Revised Wet Meadow Information Review RFP as written and**  
263 **Tacha seconded the motion; Motion Approved; Czaplowski and Peyton abstained.**

264 **Smith indicated the Wet Meadows RFP would be removed from the March 9-10 GC**  
265 **meeting agenda**

266 **Suggested Selection Panel:** Smith, Rabbe, Fritz, Hallum, Czaplowski, Baasch, Heaston, and  
267 Jenniges.

#### 268 **Closing Business**

269 Next TAC meeting will be 29 April, 2010, 9:00 a.m.– 12:00 p.m. Central time

270 **Meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m. Central time.**

#### 271 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from November 2009 TAC meeting**

- 272 1) Mark Peyton was awarded a Certification of Appreciation for serving as TAC chair
- 273 2) Approved January 2010 TAC minutes with suggested revisions.
- 274 3) Approved the 2010 PRRIP Tern and Plover Monitoring Protocol with suggested revisions.
- 275 4) Approved the Revised PRRIP Water Quality Monitoring Protocol with revisions suggested  
276 by Courtney.
- 277 5) Approved the Cottonwood Ranch OCSW & Flow Consolidation Conceptual Design RFP.
- 278 6) Recommended the Selection Panel for the Cottonwood Ranch OCSW & Flow Consolidation  
279 Conceptual Design RFP include: Farnsworth, Jenniges, Smith, Rabbe, Besson, and  
280 potentially a representative from the State of Colorado.
- 281 7) Approved the Revised Wet Meadow Information Review RFP; 2 members abstained.



- 282 8) Wet Meadow RFP discussion will be removed from the March 9-10 GC Agenda.
- 283 9) Recommended the Selection Panel for the Revised Wet Meadow Information Review RFP  
284 include: Smith, Rabbe, Fritz, Hallum, Czaplewski, Baasch, Heaston, and Jenniges.
- 285 10) Next TAC meeting scheduled for 29 April, 2010, 9:00am – 12:00pm Central Time.

286

287 **Note:** The issue of including additional objectives (lines 93–96) was never directly addressed in  
288 the context of the Pilot Study Research Protocol during the meeting. In his review of the  
289 minutes, Jenniges reiterated he felt additional objectives should be added to the 2010 Pilot Study  
290 Research Protocol:

- 291 • Objective 4. Analyze data and present results of pilot study relative to performance and  
292 decision criteria for hypothesis T1, P1, TP1, and TP5.
- 293 • Objective 5. Compare research data collection and analysis verses land management  
294 experimental design to evaluate habitat selection.