



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting Minutes
ED Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE
November 3, 2010

Attendees

Mike Besson – State of Wyoming (Chair)
Jerry Kenny – ED
Chad Smith – ED Office
Dave Baasch – ED Office
Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
Steve Smith – ED Office (via teleconference)
Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
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
Doug Hallum – Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Suzanne Sellers – Colorado Water Conservation Board
Felipe Chavez-Ramirez – Whooping Crane Trust
Kevin Urie – Colorado Water Users (via teleconference)
Brock Merrill – US Bureau of Reclamation (via teleconference)

Welcome and Administrative

Besson called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call. Czaplewski asked to add a discussion of the ‘TAC Activities’ spreadsheet to the agenda. C. Smith and Besson agreed to add this to the agenda.

Besson suggested 2 changes to the September 1, 2010 TAC meeting minutes (replace ‘of’ with ‘a’ on the bottom of page 1 and replace the acronym CAP with Conservation Action Plan. The group approved the September 1, 2010 TAC meeting minutes with edits Besson suggested without a motion. **Minutes approved.**

PRRIP Peer Review

Scientific Review Services

C. Smith discussed the plans for peer review during 2011 and informed everyone that the ED Office recommends sole sourcing PBS&J to assemble peer review panels because the cost was very reasonable. Peyton asked if the \$25,000 was the cost of contracting with PBS&J and if paying the peer reviewers would be on top of that cost. Smith stated this was correct and that the Program budgeted \$150,000 for 6 peer review panels during 2011 and that line item covered the cost of contracting PBS&J. C. Smith indicated the pool of candidate organizations to provide



services that PBS&J does is very small and that PBS&J did a very good job for Program in the past so it made sense to hire them. Czaplewski stated the table of peer review documents should include a peer review of the Wet Meadows Review the Trust is developing. Smith stated the last line item in that table was intended to be for that review. Czaplewski state that since the tenure terms of a couple ISAC members is up for consideration in 2011 we should budget for costs associated with searching for additional candidates to be considered for the ISAC panel. C. Smith state the tenure for the ISAC is 3 years and that he would include that specific line item and add an additional \$5,000 to the PBS&J budget table making it \$30,000. Runge supported inclusion of a general line item in the PBS&J table (pg. 3) so the money could be applied to the wet meadow review or another worthy project.

Czaplewski moved to recommend the request to sole source PBS&J to organize the peer review panels with the provision of adding a budget item for possible ISAC replacement during 2011. Jenniges seconded the motion. All supported the motion.

Scope of Work for Stage Change Study Peer Review

Runge stated the peer review for the Stage Change Study Scope of Work included a request to provide an assessment as to “whether managing flows in the central Platte affects pallid sturgeon habitat in the lower Platte” which would require a collaborative effort between reviewers to develop a joint conclusion because multiple disciplines are involved in the study (i.e., geomorphology, pallid sturgeon, etc.). Smith stated he intended for this to be a technical review and suggested deleting “including their applicability and relation to specific Program issues (e.g., whether managing flows in the central Platte affects pallid sturgeon habitat in the lower Platte)” from the bottom of page 1 because the ED Office , TAC, ISAC, etc should draw these conclusions. Runge stated this was reasonable as long as people are aware there will need to be and additional step (ISAC, TAC, etc review) after the peer review process is completed. Farnsworth said it would make sense to have the ISAC and TAC draw these conclusions where they are more familiar with Program operations.

Runge stated the listed areas of expertise were similar and really only included 3 different areas and that he felt including a hydrologist and someone with an expertise in fish habitat modeling would be beneficial. Smith agreed and stated we could include a pallid sturgeon ecologist with experience in fish habitat modeling, riverine physical process / geomorphology, river engineering and hydraulic modeling, hydrology and hydrologic analysis, and a statistician.

Peyton asked what the timeline for the review process would be. Smith stated we would begin the process of reviewing the Stage Change Study in January and that the review should be completed by May 2011.

Jenniges moved to recommend the Scope of Work for the peer review of the Stage Change Study review with the revisions discussed (updated list of areas of expertise sought, and deletion of “including their applicability and relation to specific Program issues (e.g., whether managing flows in the central Platte affects pallid sturgeon habitat in the lower Platte)” from the bottom of page 1). Peyton seconded the motion. All supported the motion.



2011 Tern and Plover Monitoring and Research Proposal and Permit Amendments

Baasch led discussion and informed everyone that we proposed to implement the Tern and Plover Monitoring Protocol that was approved during 2010 as well as collecting additional information such as: take picture of nest, float all eggs rather 1, distance to non-suitable nesting habitat, substrate size. Baasch stated several parameters would be recorded off-site by viewing pictures and that a GIS would be used to calculate distance to predator perch, waterline, and conspecific and other species nest which would minimize time spent within the nesting colony. Jenniges stated the group needed to decide if we wanted pictures taken directly above the nest or off to the side. Tacha asked if the camera was secured to the tripod so that it couldn't fall on the nest; Baasch stated the camera was secured to the tripod prior to entering the sites. Baasch stated we could record the data while in the field, but taking the picture saved time. Tacha stated she was comfortable with taking pictures of nests where the camera was secured to a tripod and we save time in the nest colony, improve consistency in the data (single observer), and are able to preserve an image of each nest to be used in the future if needed.

Baasch discussed Activities and Hypotheses outlined in the Program's AMP that he felt the Monitoring Protocol could address and also those that couldn't be addressed with the data being collected. Czaplewski pointed out there were discrepancies in the definition of suitable habitat in the 2011 Tern and Plover Monitoring and Research Proposal (1 acre with <20% vegetative cover vs. 1.5 acres with <25% vegetative cover). There was some discussion of the wording use in the protocol and Baasch stated the information came directly from the Program's Monitoring Protocol, but that we could clarify that permission was needed to search suitable nesting habitat if located on private property. Fritz stated we need to develop a flow chart that outlines what will happen (data collected, times entered, times observed from outside, etc.) at sites with and without nests. Baasch stated the current Monitoring Protocol will not allow us to address tern and plover forage activities and hypotheses outlined in the AMP, priority hypotheses such as 'Is there an interaction between river and sandpit habitat,' and other hypotheses like are the central Platte populations source or sink populations, what's the importance of riverine and non-riverine habitat to terns and plovers, how do central Platte terns and plovers contribute to the overall recovery goals for the populations, etc. Baasch stated we propose to collect temperature data as well as to sample for forage fish and invertebrates at suitable nesting sites during 2011. Peyton asked how we would relate substrate temperature to insect abundance. Baasch stated we would sample invertebrates every 2 weeks to see if temperature influences insect abundance. C. Smith stated the Program's Tier 1 Hypotheses do not include anything that deals with forage availability. Farnsworth stated the Program's budget included money to determine if forage limits terns and plover reproduction and if so, what factors influence forage availability. Baasch stated he would remove the temperature, insect sampling, and forage fish sampling components from the 2011 proposal.

Baasch explained that we intended to conduct inside surveys for adults, nests, chicks, and fledglings (as well as the outside surveys conducted under the Monitoring Protocol) using the grid-searching pattern use by USGS in the Foraging Habits Study the past 2 years. Smith and Peyton asked if data collected at the nest and chick banding would occur while conducting inside surveys; Baasch said yes, sites would be entered twice per week to: search/count adults, nests, chicks, and fledglings; collect data at new nests; band chicks, etc.



Baasch briefly discussed some of findings from monitoring and banding efforts during 2009 and 2010 and explained the number of tern and plover nests, chicks, and fledglings were up during 2009 and 2010 from 2007 and 2008 and that nest success for nests associated with banded adults was higher than the success of nests associated with un-banded adults for both terns and plovers.

Baasch discussed amendments to the Program's State and Federal Research Permits the ED Office requested of USFWS and NGPC including: detail of time, temperature, wind, etc. restrictions; a provision for banding tern and plover adults and chicks; a provision for a minimal level of take; and adding Baasch as the Principal Investigator on each of our permits. Tacha indicated the Service didn't have an issue with any of the requested amendments other than adding a banding provision. Tacha stated she believed the reason the Foraging Habits Study couldn't make comparisons between sandpits and river islands was because the sample size on the river was too small so banding on the river would not be allowed until the number increased to where comparisons could be made. Smith asked Tacha what number would be required for the Service to allow banding on the river. Tacha said she was not sure, but the current level was too low. Baasch asked what number needs to be equal; adults, nests, etc. Tacha said she wasn't sure what numbers needed to be equal, but that the populations on the river need to be higher before the Program will band on the river and not until the benefits of banding out-weigh the risks associated with banding. Smith asked if banding terns and plovers would be allowed at the sandpit sites. Peyton stated that one of the components of the Program is to determine how important the river is to the reproductive success and species-wide range of terns and plovers and to determine if the Platte River is a source or sink to the overall populations. Rabbe asked Tacha if banding would be allowed on sandpits sites during 2011. Tacha said she would have to talk Carol Aaron (USFWS) Monday and would let us know whether banding would be allowed on the sandpit sites during 2011.

Smith stated ED Office Staff would stay in contact with the Service to determine whether or not banding would be allowed anywhere during 2011 and will submit our request to amend the Program's State and Federal Permits as discussed. Fritz stated the final sentence in top paragraph of the permit amendment memorandum should read, "All banding proposed during 2011 will be conducted by an experienced bander hired, trained, and supervised by USGS personnel covered under USGS's Master Bander Permit (09352)." Baasch asked who we needed to require USGS provide to oversee the banding efforts; Fritz said Colin Dovichin (USGS-NPWRC). Fritz said that the maximum number of individuals entering sites needs to be included in our permit also.

Chavez asked if the concern with banding was related to a mortality issue or a sample size issue and stated he would be more concerned if were a mortality issue. Peyton asked if banding was only being restricted on the Platte River or if the Service was looking at ending banding everywhere. Tacha said the Service was not ending banding everywhere, but banding threatened and endangered species has to tie to the recovery of the species. Chavez asked how the lower Platte is different than the central Platte. Tacha said there are a lot of terns and plovers on the lower Platte. Peyton stated that researchers band terns and plovers on the Great Lakes where the population is very small as well. **Smith stated the ED Office will put together a flow chart outlining the number of times per week we propose to enter sites to collect data as well as a 1-page memo outlining justification for banding terns and plovers on the central Platte.**



AMP Implementation Documents

Smith stated the ED Office would send the TAC a rough draft of the Mock Report, Implementation Plan, and a write-up of the hypothesis sequencing and conceptual models. Smith suggested the TAC schedule an ‘informal’ meeting in Denver on December 7th (9:00-12:00) prior to the GC meeting to discuss these documents. Czaplewski stated that he felt this meeting would be worthwhile, but would like additional time to provide feedback on the documents at a later date also and Smith agreed the documents would undergo several reviews and revisions. Smith stated the ISAC would be available to have the AMP Reporting Session on March 1st and 2nd or March 2nd and 3rd and asked the group if they had any conflicts with these dates. **The AMP Reporting Session was scheduled for March 1st and 2nd.**

FSM ‘Proof of Concept’ Actions

Farnsworth discussed the Proof of Concept experiment at the Elm Creek Complex and stated the document he sent the TAC was an initial draft of the RFP. Farnsworth stated the ED Office would like to sole source Tetra Tech (Bob Mussetter) to conduct the work because of the quality of work Bob has done for the Program in the past, his understanding of the Program, and the timeline we are up against (implementation January, 2011). Jenniges stated that if we want baseline data we need to implement the research in December or January; Besson agreed. Besson asked Farnsworth if it would be possible to put the RFP out for bid and be ready to implement the research by February or March. Farnsworth said he didn’t think so, but that Tetra Tech could have people on the ground conducting the research if we pursue the sole source route of contracting them. Farnsworth also stated there are benefits with having the organization hired to develop the models (Tetra Tech) collecting the data that go into producing the models; Jenniges and others agreed. Fritz, Jenniges, and Czaplewski suggested we have Tetra Tech develop a full proposal including a work plan and budget even if we sole-source them for the work. Jenniges stated that if the Program does not sole source this work, we will not get baseline data; others agreed.

Runge asked if there were any merits to also monitoring a Property such as the Wyoming Property to have a comparison (test/control site). Farnsworth stated the ED Office considered this approach; however, we wouldn’t have enough replicates and much of what is being modeled are physical processes that are fairly well known. Jenniges stated he would like to see how the ED Office and Tetra Tech plan to use models in the field to come to conclusions about river processes in the end.

Czaplewski moved to recommend sole sourcing Tetra Tech for the ‘Proof of Concept’ study and to have Tetra Tech (Bob Mussetter) develop a proposal, budget, and work plan. Peyton seconded the motion. All supported the motion.

FY 2011 PRRIP Budget and Work Plan

Smith highlighted recent proposed changes to the Program’s budget including line items G-1, TP-1, and, PD-3 & IMRP-3. The ED Office proposed we acquire LiDAR data annually beginning in 2010 at an expense of \$75,000 (likely less in the future). Farnsworth stated we get vegetation data as well when we collect LiDAR data. Smith indicated the ED Office has \$300,000 in the budget for tern and plover monitoring, but depending on whether or not we band terns and plovers (i.e., contract USGS) the budget for that line item may decrease. Kenny stated



if it banding is uncertain at the time the budget is approved, we would budget for \$300,000 to cover the costs of banding/increased monitoring if approved. Smith indicated the IMRP-3 budget has remained the same since the last time the TAC reviewed the 2011 budget; however, the budget for PD-3 was decreased because the Mock Synthesis Report and Data Analysis Plan will be written by ED Office staff with input from special advisors [Carl Schwarz (Simon Fraser University) and Darcy Pickard (ESSA)] and the TAC and will be funded through line item IMRP3. Czaplewski stated we need to add \$5,000 to DP-3 budget line item to cover costs associated with contracting PBS&J to conduct a search for potential candidates to replace ISAC members if they cycle off. Czaplewski pointed out that the budget for line item PD-3 should be \$115,000 as outlined in the work plan and discussed during the meeting rather than \$150,000. Line item WQ1 in the budget increased from \$253,000 to about \$280,000 to cover costs of water quality monitoring and some additional analyses.

Jenniges asked where he could find the details of what the money proposed in the work plan will be used for and asked what the \$222,900 for Cottonwood Ranch under the land management section would be used on. Farnsworth said \$175,000 of that money was likely for installing the bridge and that it shouldn't have been included. Farnsworth indicated he and Tim Tunnel (ED Office) would clean up the work plan budgets in the upcoming weeks. Kenny stated ED Office staff would include more detail in the Work plans to specify what the proposed money would be spent on.

Meeting Scheduling and Closing Business

Set an informal TAC meeting to discuss rough drafts of the Mock Report, Implementation Plan, and write-up of hypothesis sequencing and conceptual models on December 3, 2010 in Denver 9:00AM–12:00PM MST.

Scheduled the AMP Reporting Session for March 1st and 2nd 2011.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from May 2010 TAC meeting

- 1) Approved September 2010 TAC meeting minutes.
- 2) Recommend the request to sole source PBS&J to organize the peer review panels with the provision of adding a budget item for possible ISAC replacement during 2011.
- 3) Recommended the Scope of Work for the peer review of the Stage Change Study with the revisions discussed (updated list of areas of expertise sought, and deletion of “including their applicability and relation to specific Program issues (e.g., whether managing flows in the central Platte affects pallid sturgeon habitat in the lower Platte)” from the bottom of page 1).
- 4) The ED Office will put together a flow chart outlining the number of times per week we propose to enter sites to collect data as well as a 1-page memo outlining the justification for banding terns and plovers on the central Platte River and will submit this information to the FWS and NGPC.
- 5) Recommended sole sourcing Tetra Tech (Bob Mussetter) for the ‘Proof of Concept’ study and to have Tetra Tech develop a proposal, budget, and work plan.
- 6) Included \$5,000 in PD-3 line item in the budget to cover costs associated with identifying new ISAC members as their terms end.