



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting Minutes**  
ED Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE  
September 1, 2010

**Attendees**

Mike Besson – State of Wyoming (Chair)  
Jerry Kenny – ED  
Chad Smith – ED Office  
Dave Baasch – ED Office (via teleconference)  
Steve Smith – ED Office (via teleconference)  
Jason Farnsworth – ED Office  
Justin Brei – ED Office  
Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District  
Jim Jenniges – Nebraska Public Power District  
Rich Walters – The Nature Conservancy  
Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resource District  
Martha Tacha – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Jeff Runge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Doug Hallum – Nebraska Department of Natural Resources  
Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission  
Pat Engelbert – HDR

**Welcome and Administrative**

Besson called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call. No agenda modifications were offered.

Walters moved to approve the May 2010 TAC minutes; Fritz seconded. **Minutes approved.**

**PRRIP Web Site Training**

Brei discussed the various features of the PRRIP web site and walked through how to post, access, and modify documents on the site.

**2010 PRRIP Tern and Plover Monitoring, Research, and AMP Projects Update**

Baasch provided preliminary results from the 2010 tern and plover monitoring efforts conducted by ED Office personnel and USGS. Overall, the number nests and nest and brood success was higher during 2010 than 2007-2009. Fritz asked Baasch when we observed the fledgling Forester's tern and Baasch stated they were observed June 28th. Besson asked if the numbers were up because more people were looking or if the numbers were truly up during 2010. Baasch stated it was likely a combination of both, but that he felt the numbers were truly up during 2010. Baasch stated Jenniges reported more nests, chicks, and fledglings during 2010 than previous years and USGS conducted the Foraging habits study during 2009 so the number of people actually looking was not any higher during 2010 than 2009. However, Baasch stated the fledgling counts may have been influenced by the additional time we spent on the airboat



specifically searching for and documenting fledglings during August. Tacha asked if it we could get a preliminary write-up from USGS prior to the September 27<sup>th</sup> Tern and Plover Meeting. C. Smith stated he had one, but stated that Mark Sherfy was fairly reluctant to provide this initial summary because USGS hasn't had time to go through the data to ensure it was accurate. C. Smith stated he has requested that they provide a complete summary prior to September 27<sup>th</sup>. Czaplewski asked what the time frame for getting the Program's 2010 report would be. C. Smith stated an initial draft of the report would be completed by late 2010 and the final draft would be completed by early 2011. Baasch stated he hoped to have the Report finalized by the end of 2010, but this depends on his other responsibilities. Czaplewski asked C. Smith if the September 27<sup>th</sup> meeting would result in a decision on whether to continue the Foraging Habits study. C. Smith stated this would be discussed at the September 27<sup>th</sup> meeting and that a decision would need to be made prior to the December GC meeting due to budget implications so we would likely have another TAC meeting in October. C. Smith covered the positives and limitations Sherfy expressed in USGS's preliminary summary. Tacha asked Baasch if he asked Jane Ledwin (USFWS) or the Missouri River folks about the least tern that we photographed that was presumably banded on the Missouri River during 2007. Baasch stated he did not confirm this with anyone other than USGS and that Colin Dovichin stated he felt the tern was likely banded on the Missouri River during 2006 or 2007 when they used a different attachment method.

C. Smith provided a brief summary on the Geomorphology and In-channel Vegetation Monitoring (Ayres and Olson), Water Quality Monitoring (EA), Vegetation Research (USDA), Wet Meadows Information Review (Whooping Crane Maintenance Trust), and Sediment Augmentation.

Runge asked if we planned to Peer Review the Wet Meadow Information Review this year and if we would have another meeting this year to organize a peer review panel. C. Smith asked if he wanted a peer review of the Wet Meadow information summary and Runge stated he thought it would be appropriate to peer review the synthesis portion where the Wet Meadow review was such an important issue. C. Smith stated the review would likely not occur until 2011 given the timing of the Trust's report, but that we would need to organize a review panel at the next TAC meeting so we can include this in the Budget.

Hallum asked if the 150,000-ton sediment deficit was of a specific type and Farnsworth said most of the deficit was smaller material, but that if we put the smaller sediment in the system it would mostly be transported out the other end of the system annually. C. Smith added that whatever sediment we put in the river would be tied to natural hydrology and not short duration high flows. Farnsworth stated Bob Mussetter (Flatwater Group) said we needed to be pretty selective about the sediment we use. C. Smith said it appears the best strategy may be to augment sediment at 3 locations (Cook, Dyer, and Overton Sand and Gravel).

Farnsworth provided a brief summary of the design for the anticipated off-channel sand and water work. Peyton asked what the maximum height above water would be and Farnsworth stated maximum height would be 16-18 feet above the water line and 10-12 feet above existing ground which is lower than many sandpits where nesting has occurred. Farnsworth stated we



can't go much higher or slopes would be too steep for nesting. Peyton asked if the slopes would be 4:1 along the water line and Farnsworth said that was correct and that this design was consistent with existing pits. Czapslewski asked if there would be bridge over Spring Creek to do the work and Farnsworth said there would be. Peyton asked if the pit would be dug with an excavator and Farnsworth said we would let the contractor decide how to build the pit. Fritz stated 4:1 slope seemed pretty steep for plover chicks and Farnsworth showed what the slope would be and the group agreed it wasn't as steep as it sounded. Czapslewski asked how the permitting is coming along.

Farnsworth discussed work planned at Cottonwood Ranch work (channel widening and tree removal/burning) and Elm Creek area (tree clearing, nesting island construction, disking, etc) that is anticipated for this fall. Farnsworth stated the Permit issues were facing seem to be resolved so the work should happen this fall. Czapslewski asked what transpired with the permitting. Kenny stated the Corps has resolved the issue 'lead federal agency' issue so permitting should now move forward.

C. Smith and Farnsworth explained that ED Office is in the process of putting together the Mock Report and briefly discussed would be included in the Report.

#### LUNCH BREAK

C. Smith talked through the proposed 2011 AMP budget.

Tacha asked about the status of the Conservation Action Plan (CAP) report and how it would be used. Kenny stated the report is under development, but that he hadn't seen it yet. Jenniges stated the CAP report was supposed to be completed the first week of September (John Heaston is leading the efforts). Czapslewski asked if we could include a notation in the budget stating the report is pending.

Hallum asked if there was any modeling being done on the South Platte and Kenny said there was not; just hydraulics on the North Platte for SDHF tracking. Czapslewski asked if the AMWG still existed and C. Smith stated it did, but the use of this group has been sporadic.

Tacha asked if we planned to collect LiDAR data during 2011 and C. Smith said we did not. Jenniges asked if we planned to collect LiDAR more frequently where the cost has decreased and its utility has increased. Farnsworth said we would like to collect the data every other year or every third year.

Hallum suggested we consider collecting land-based LiDAR as proposed in one of the geomorphology monitoring proposals or multi-spectral imaging for vegetation.

Czapslewski asked if Riverside would continue to maintain and update the database and website; Farnsworth said they did.



Runge asked if we should budget for a pallid sturgeon workshop. Runge stated FWS and NGPC plan to hold a workshop to discuss pallid sturgeon research on the lower Platte. C. Smith said we could include a line-item for the workshop if we wanted to, but he hadn't considered it. Besson suggested we leave this line item out.

C. Smith stated we need to decide what forage fish monitoring/research we will do in the future before the budget is finalized.

Runge stated we really need to think hard about whooping crane monitoring contributions to the data analysis report before we make changes to the protocol. C. Smith said we would discuss how to proceed with the whooping crane monitoring contract and protocol during the September 7<sup>th</sup> Whooping Crane Workshop.

Peyton asked why the Program is conducting water quality monitoring and C. Smith said it isn't really clear at this point but our contract goes through 2011 so we could decide if or how to proceed at that point. Runge suggested that the data analysis report would help to identify the contributions of water quality monitoring in addressing Program hypotheses.

Tacha asked if it was wise to quadruple the permitting budget and asked if anyone else had concerns with it. C. Smith and Farnsworth outlined the various permitting needs and requirements for 2011.

Jenniges asked how the peer reviewers will review the Wet Meadow Information Review. Runge stated the peer reviewers would ensure the synthesis and interpretation of the reported data is appropriate. Peyton and Hallum stated they weren't clear on how the peer review would be done or who would do it. Besson stated the focus of the Wet Meadow Information Review is to come up with a definition of Wet Meadow and he isn't sure how to review that. C. Smith said ED Office staff and FWS would discuss if/how to proceed with reviewing the Wet Meadow Information Review. Runge stated there will be more and more reports coming out every year and many of them will likely need to be peer reviewed.

### **Stage Change Study Peer Review**

C. Smith informed everyone that 5 people were selected to review the Stage Change Study report; Dan Pridal (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) couldn't review it because of scheduling conflicts, Larry Weber (University of Iowa) agreed to review the study, and C. Smith hadn't heard back from Aaron DeLonay (USGS), David Gaeuman (Trinity River Restoration Program), or Jack Schmidt (Utah State University) yet. C. Smith asked if there were any objections to the panel that was selected. Hallum said since the Stage Change Study was a modeling exercise at least one of the reviewers should have a modeling background. C. Smith stated Larry Weber has experience with 1-D, 2-D, and 3-D modeling and has worked with 2-D models on river systems before, but if there was some else we should consider then let C. Smith know. Hallum stated he wasn't aware C. Smith requested names of potential reviewers and asked how this group of 5 people was selected from the 30 names that were submitted. Jenniges asked if there could be any potential conflicts of interest with the authors of the Stage Change Study. C. Smith stated he



wasn't aware of any conflicts and said he sent the list of potential reviewers to the authors so they could confess any potential conflicts of interest. Fritz asked if we should identify another person to replace Dan Pridal. C. Smith said we could identify another person to get more of an overlap between the Platte and Missouri River. C. Smith said we could slow the process down a little so that Dan may be able to serve on the panel. Hallum stated he would be inclined to include a couple of people with modeling experience on the review panel. C. Smith said he would ask Dan if he could review the Stage Change Study if the timeline was backed up 30 days and if not would identify another person to perform the review. Runge stated that a Missouri River fish habitat modeler may be an appropriate substitute if one of the selected panel members could not participate. Hallum stated we need to ask the reviewers to determine if the scope of the Stage Change Study was complete and thorough. Tacha asked if the reviewers would determine whether the research study appropriately addresses the management objectives or not. C. Smith said that determination would be made internally.

C. Smith asked if everyone agreed to the Peer Review panel if Dan Pridal can participate also; everyone agreed.

### **Meeting Scheduling and Closing Business**

Set a two-day TAC meeting:

November 3 – TAC meeting (Kearney) 2:00PM–5:00PM CST

November 4 – TAC meeting (Kearney) 8:30AM–12:00PM CST

### **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from May 2010 TAC meeting**

- 1) Approved May 2010 TAC meeting minutes.
- 2) TAC approved the members of the Peer Review Panel for the Stage Change Study if Dan Pridal can participate in the review. If Dan can't participate, C. Smith will identify another potential reviewer and send the name out to the TAC to approve or reject.