



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
 ED Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE
 August 10, 2011

Attendees

Mike Besson – State of Wyoming (Chair)
 Jerry Kenny – ED Office
 Chad Smith – ED Office
 Dave Baasch – ED Office
 Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
 Justin Brei – ED Office
 Steve Smith – ED Office (teleconference)
 Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
 Jim Jenniges – Nebraska Public Power District
 Jeff Runge – U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
 Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resource District
 Tom Econopouly – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (teleconference)
 Martha Tacha – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (teleconference)
 Matt Rabbe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Jeff Runge – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Greg Wingfield – Rowe Sanctuary
 Suzanne Sellers – Colorado Water Users
 Kevin Urie – Colorado Water Users (teleconference)
 Mary Harner – Crane Trust
 Pat Engelbert – HDR

Welcome and Administrative

Besson called the meeting to order and the group proceeded with a roll call. Harner, Jenniges, and Besson suggested a few editorial changes for the May TAC meeting minutes that Baasch made. Besson move to approve the May 2011 TAC minutes with changes suggested by Harner, Jenniges, and Besson; Rabbe seconded the motion; all approved. **May TAC Minutes approved with suggested changes.**

2009 PRRIP Monitoring and Research Reports

C. Smith provided an update on the progress of AMP research projects and reports including the Directed Vegetation Research (Final), Tern/and Plover Foraging Habits Study Report (Draft report will be submitted to the EDO during the week of August 14), Stage Change Study (Peer Reviewing the study; review will be complete within 30 days), McFadden's Tern and Plover Modeling reports (EDO staff have reviewed draft reports; will be available for TAC review by the October TAC meeting), Spring 2011 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report (Final), and the Whooping Crane Monitoring RFP (Clayton Derby, WEST is contracted through 2015 and AIM will coordinate and supervise the fieldwork).



Jenniges asked which of the studies would be peer reviewed and the group discussed potential studies/protocols to be reviewed and decided to peer review the Directed Vegetation Research, Sediment Augmentation Pilot Study Design and Monitoring Protocol, Tern and Plover Foraging Habits Study, and Elm Creek Complex FSM Proof of Concept Design. (Stage Change Study is currently being peer reviewed). Runge asked about the future need to peer review the analyses that would be included in annual monitoring reports.

Jenniges moved to have the above mentioned 4 research projects peer reviewed during 2011 (total of 5 Peer Reviews during 2011 including the Stage Change Study) with the Directed Vegetation Research and Sediment Augmentation Pilot Study Design and Monitoring Protocol having priority and the other 2 will occur later in the year when they are ready for peer review. Rabbe seconded the motion; all approved.

Brei discussed progress on the LTPP Habitat Availability Analysis being conducted by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Group. Brei explained that Rainwater Basin Joint Venture Group has classified imagery and identified all bare sand habitat for the 2008 season and are filtering the data according to the Program's Minimum Habitat Design Criteria to determine availability of 'nesting habitat' now; 2009-2011 data will be classified and evaluated during the upcoming months. Runge stated that 1997 represented PRRIP baseline for flows and habitat, and asked if the 1998 imagery could be evaluated as well. Brei indicated once the models were set up that data could be evaluated as well. Jenniges indicated we could identify bare sand area for all years in which imagery was collected and could use 2008 LiDAR to estimate suitable nesting habitat area. Czaplewski asked what the timeline for was for completing the Project. Brei indicated imagery classification is scheduled to be completed by January 2012 and all 4 analyses are scheduled to be completed within 12 months.

Brei indicated the LiDAR and Aerial Photography RFP would be available for review on the TAC website by the end of August. The contract and RFP will have the same specs as the current contracts, but will be a combination of the contracts for collecting aerial imagery and LiDAR as has been done the past few years and will be for a period of 3 years.

Farnsworth discusses the progress of the Q1.5 analysis being conducted by EDO staff and informed the TAC that we have struggled with getting data from Joel Jorgensen (NGPC). The final report will be written up based on the evaluation of actual bar elevation data on the lower Platte River.

Baasch provided an update on the Binfield/McCormick Caddisfly Study and mentioned baseline data was collected during 2011, tree removal is planned for this fall/winter, and that UNK will monitor the effects of various treatments next spring/summer/fall. Sellers stated she didn't believe the caddisfly study was ever approved by the GC. The Caddisfly study was discussed during the December, 2010 TAC Meeting and Colorado (Sellers) raised policy concerns with the Program conducting studies on caddisfly. Runge stated woody vegetation clearing is a management practice to benefit the whooping crane, and a study such as this can help prescribe on the ground management actions (i.e., tree removal, etc) that are least likely to impact the caddisfly. Sellers indicated Colorado lawyers would prefer to have this type of work conducted on non-Program lands. Kenny asked what parts of the Project the Program was funding. C. Smith stated the tree removal work was approved in the LAC budget (\$15,000) and a Program



memo indicated UNK would receive an estimated \$23,843 for the graduate student work (\$3,663.78 paid to date). Fritz stated the Program has a requirement not to contribute to the listing of additional species and the Caddisfly is a candidate species and the issue of management is very real on several tracts of land and without this information there is a potential for the Program to push the species closer to listing. Rabbe agreed that the research would contribute knowledge to the Program about how our management actions could affect caddisfly. Sellers stated the research project should be approved by the GC so that the policy decisions can be made. Urie supported Sellers position that there are policy issues associated with the project that should be decided by the GC. Kenny stated the baseline monitoring that has been conducted thus far is within the confines of what we are supposed to be doing and that tree removal has not been conducted to date. Baasch mentioned that Mike Cavallaro (UNK graduate student) is surveying additional Program properties as well to document caddisfly presence and abundance (similar to what Lindsay Vivian did in the past). **Caddisfly Research Project will be discussed at the September GC Meeting.**

WC Telemetry Project

C. Smith discussed the current status of the WC Telemetry Study. C. Smith explained that the project participants held a conference call recently to refine the partnership agreement so that the Program is listed as a core partner and has access to the data. The Project team is currently developing a Project budget through 2016, is refining the partnership agreement, and compiling information requested by the TAC and GC to support Program participation in the project.

WC Database Update

Baasch discussed the status of the WC Data Compilation being conducted by Environmental Advisors, LP and informed the TAC that we are seeking input from the TAC on additional sources of whooping crane data to be included in the Program database. Baasch will post the table outlining all sources of data compiled into the database to date to the Program website for the TAC to provide feedback.

Tacha stated we needed to make certain 'data quality' (i.e., confirmed sighting, etc) is identified in the database. Baasch stated that the original data will be housed in the database along with all information identifying the source, quality, etc. Rabbe asked if the sub-observations related to multiple observations of the same crane or crane group would be included in the database; Baasch said sub-observations would be. Fritz stated some of the databases are of different quality (NGPC Heritage database, USFWS database, etc) so the metadata needs to differentiate between discrepancies in the databases. Czaplewski asked why we weren't incorporating the telemetry data to the database. Baasch stated the type of data collected was completely different, but the 2 databases can be merged in the future. Fritz stated that observations of radio-marked whooping cranes included in the database should make note of the fact that additional data exists in a separate database.

WC Habitat Selection Research and Habitat Availability Analysis

Kenny briefly provided background on the IGERT Program, described the relationship the Program has developed with the UNL-IGERT Program, and the process the Program has gone through to identify a potential candidate to contribute funding to the IGERT Program.



Baasch briefly introduce the Whooping Crane Habitat Selection Study and Habitat Availability Analysis proposal that Trevor Hefley (UNL-IGERT Student) submitted for consideration by the Program. Sellers asked if the term of the study was for 2 summers; Kenny stated the term actually began in 2010 and will continue through 2014. Sellers asked if we could have the student do additional work for the Program; Kenny said the student ultimately needs to graduate, but that the relationship the Program would have with the student would be much more integrated than paying a University and having the student hand us a dissertation when they graduate. Sellers asked if Trevor was asking for \$25,000 for 2 summers. Baasch stated the \$25,000 would cover more time than the 2 summers and that Trevor would be working on additional Program work during the fall and spring semesters as well; Baasch will re-word the proposal to clear up the confusion.

Runge stated there is a lot of detail (timeline, work products, etc.) missing from the proposal. Also, methods for habitat analysis to answer big questions for the whooping crane is currently missing but would eventually be detailed in the Synthesis Report. Runge had concerns about the proposal's emphasis on methods used by Howlin et al. (2008) which may not reflect best methods to answer the big questions. Peyton and others suggested the Research Proposal would be of value for the Program. Besson asked if the EDO could work with Trevor to develop a detailed work/study plan. Fritz stated he felt an analysis such as this should be considered again once all the telemetry data have been collected. Farnsworth stated what EDO staff was requesting was support for retaining an IGERT student with the understanding that the TAC will have an opportunity to review and provide feedback into the final proposal and study plan.

Sellers asked which budget line item included funding for the IGERT Student; Kenny stated it was in the IMRP-2 (directed research) line item. Sellers stated she didn't see where the IGERT Program was mentioned in the budget; C. Smith looked back and stated it was included in the 2010 budget, but the language was not carried over to the 2011 budget. Kenny said we would add the IGERT Program contribution to the GC agenda for September. Urie stated he felt the GC's intent since 2009 was to contribute to the IGERT Program, but since it was not explicitly spelled out in the 2011 budget that it should be confirmed at the September GC Meeting.

The TAC supported the idea of funding the IGERT student. The EDO and TAC will work with Trevor to refine the proposal and develop a scope of services including timelines. The Whooping Crane Habitat Selection Research Project will be discussed as an action item during the October TAC meeting.

Permit Status Update

Kenny provided and update on the status of the Elm Creek Complex in-channel work Permit and the Sediment Augmentation Permit for work and Cottonwood Ranch and the Cook-Dyer Property. Kenny explained we received several letters of support from various agencies (USFWS, CPNRD, etc), however, that the Dawson County surveyor, a local property owner, and the Tri-basin NRD expressed concern and ultimately requested a public hearing. Kenny stated that the Corps' Colonel will decide whether there will be a public hearing or not. Kenny said that due to the delays, regardless of whether there is a public hearing or not, the work likely would not be initiated until spring 2012.



Runge asked if the Nebraska DEQ expressed concerns with water quality issues associated with augmenting sediment. Farnsworth and Kenny stated they had met or attempted to meet with Nebraska DEQ (Terry Hickman) and the Kansas City EPA and they expressed no concerns. Jenniges asked if the Nebraska Erosion and Sediment Control Act could be used to stop sediment augmentation in the future. Kenny stated that it doesn't appear the law applies to the proposed sediment augmentation, but that the Program has retained legal counsel to render a legal opinion about whether the Act is applicable to sediment augmentation or not.

Wet Meadow and ISAC Workshops

C. Smith discussed the outcome of the June 20-21 Wet Meadow Workshop and the July 12-14 ISAC Workshop. At the Wet Meadow Workshop, we established a Wet Meadow Working Group that interested parties can participate in. The primary function of the group would be to evaluate properties for wet meadow consideration and to contribute to wet meadow portions of the land management plans.

Priority Hypotheses and Project Tracking

C. Smith presented a proposed format for tracking the status of evaluating Priority Hypotheses that will be posted to the Program's website so everyone knows how we are addressing each of them. A similar format will be devised to track the various research projects the Program is involved with.

Closing Business

Next TAC meeting scheduled for 5 October, 2011, 1:00pm– 5:00pm and October 6, 9:00am – 12:00pm Central time.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. Central time.

Summary of Action Items/Decisions from August 2011 TAC meeting

- 1) Approved May 2011 TAC minutes with suggested revisions from Harner, Jenniges, and Besson.
- 2) The TAC supported peer reviewing the Directed Vegetation Research, Pilot Scale Design and Monitoring Protocol for Sediment Augmentation, Tern and Plover Foraging Habits Study, and Elm Creek Complex FSM Proof of Concept Design (Stage Change Study is currently being peer reviewed). The Directed Vegetation Research and Sediment Augmentation Pilot Study Design and Monitoring Protocol will have priority and the other 2 will occur later in the year when they are ready for peer review.
- 3) **Caddisfly Research Project will be discussed at the September GC Meeting.**
- 4) The TAC supported the idea of funding the IGERT student. **The EDO and TAC will work with Trevor to refine the proposal and develop a scope of services including timelines. The Whooping Crane Habitat Selection Research Project will be discussed as an action item during the October TAC meeting.**
- 5) Next TAC meeting scheduled for 5 October, 2011, 1:00pm– 5:00pm and October 6, 9:00am – 12:00pm Central time.