



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Land Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Executive Director’s Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE**  
**February 1, 2012**

**Meeting Participants**

**Land Advisory Committee (LAC)**

**State of Wyoming**

Harry LaBonde – Member, Wyoming State Engineer’s Office

**State of Colorado**

Suzanne Sellers – Member, Colorado Water Conservation Board (via phone)

Kevin Urie – Alternate, Denver Water (via phone)

**State of Nebraska**

Ted LaGrange – Member, Nebraska Game & Parks Commission

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)**

Matt Rabbe – Member, USFWS

**U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBOR)**

Brock Merrill – Member, USBOR (via phone)

**Power Districts**

John Shadle – Member (Vice-chair), Nebraska Public Power District (via phone)

Mark Peyton – Alternate, Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District

**Environmental Entities**

John Heaston – Member, The Nature Conservancy

Bill Taddicken – Alternate, Audubon Rowe Sanctuary

**Local Nebraska Rep. – Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD)**

Mark Czaplewski – Member (Chair), CPNRD Staff

**Local Nebraska Rep. – Tri-Basin Natural Resources District (TBNRD)**

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**Local Nebraska Rep. – Joint CPNRD/TBNRD**

John Thorburn – Member, TBNRD Staff

Jim Bendfeldt – Alternate, CPNRD Board

**Executive Director’s Office (EDO)**

Jerry Kenny, Executive Director

Jason Farnsworth

Justin Brei

Bruce Sackett

Tim Tunnell

David Zorn

**Other Participants**

Mark Morten, The Crane Trust



1 **Welcome and Administrative**

2 Chairman Czaplewski called the meeting to order at 9:00 am Central Time and the group  
3 proceeded with introductions.  
4

5 Czaplewski asked for agenda modifications. Czaplewski reminded the LAC of the need to form  
6 an ad hoc committee to examine the Program’s progress on land objectives so far, and to discuss  
7 priorities moving forward. This will be discussed following the executive session with the  
8 review of complex acres.  
9

10 Shadle amended the November 28, 2011 LAC minutes to clarify that the method for flow  
11 consolidation at Cottonwood Ranch in 2012 will be via sand dams.  
12

13 **LaBonde made a motion to approve the minutes from the November 28, 2011 LAC**  
14 **meeting, as modified. The motion was seconded by Shadle and passed unanimously.**  
15

16 **GC Update and Other Committee Coordination Information**

17 *GC Update*

18 Czaplewski updated the LAC on recent GC activities. In December, the GC approved the 2012  
19 Program budget, work plan, and ED Office contract. The GC had a lot of discussion surrounding  
20 future Program financing and issues with the Federal budget. The GC decided that federal  
21 dollars will be used to fund 100% of the FY2012 budget in order to alleviate some of the  
22 concerns. Overall First Increment contribution percentages will not change, only the timing of  
23 the expenditures of the signatories.  
24

25 The GC appointed Mike Tabeau of the USFWS as GC chair for 2012, and appointed Don Ament  
26 as vice-chair. Long-time GC member and Cooperative Agreement participant John Lawson is  
27 retiring and was recognized.  
28

29 In land-related issues, the GC approved the exchange of land (1111) at 2009003, approved  
30 proceeding with appraisals and negotiations for tract 1109, and approved expenditure for an  
31 appraisal of land to be exsessed on the east part of 2011001. The GC also extended the deadline  
32 for disposal of the east part of 2009008 for one year (to December 12, 2013).  
33

34 The next GC meeting will be held on March 13 & 14, 2012 in Kearney, NE.  
35

36 *Other Committee Coordination*

37 Farnsworth updated the LAC on recent TAC activities. On February 15, the wet meadow  
38 working group will assemble to identify existing wet meadow areas within the Program  
39 associated habitat area. The TAC is also attempting to schedule a workshop to look at the  
40 Program target flows. The USFWS is planning a flow release using Environmental Account  
41 water in mid-February. The annual AMP reporting session is scheduled for March 27 & 28 in  
42 Denver, CO. The annual reporting session features reports and presentations by Program  
43 contractors on their activities during 2011.  
44



45 Kenny updated the LAC on recent WAC activities. The WAC meets next on February 7 in  
46 Ogallala, NE. They are working to wrap up feasibility investigations for the J-2 reregulating  
47 reservoir. Negotiations for this project are under way with the project partners (State of  
48 Nebraska, CNPPID, and PRRIP). LaBonde asked if the land acquisitions for the J-2 reservoir  
49 site will be vetted through the LAC. Kenny said not in the same way as habitat lands. The  
50 project needs and planning will occur through the project team. Czaplewski asked if there was a  
51 firm schedule for the J-2 project. Kenny said there is no firm schedule. The intent is to have an  
52 agreement ready for the March GC meeting. The J-2 reregulating reservoir is extremely  
53 important to the Program meeting its water goals. Thorburn asked if PRRIP will own the J-2  
54 reservoir property. Kenny said CNPPID will own the property and the Program will hold a  
55 sponsorship agreement with CNPPID.

56  
57 On the groundwater recharge pilot project, inflows to the pit were concluded in January.  
58 Monitoring of the wells and drains between the pit and the river is still under way. The WAC is  
59 also continuing work on the water management incentives water action plan alternative,  
60 currently trying to develop purchase or lease arrangements that encourage water acquisitions by  
61 the Program.

62  
63 At the North Platte chokepoint area, West Central WMA is focused on vegetation clearing and  
64 chopping. Disking was planned, but is not currently being attempted due to flow and weather  
65 conditions. During the flood flows this past year flows of around 2,300 cfs were achieved  
66 through this reach, but are currently back to around 1,900 cfs due to redeposited sediment. A  
67 goal of the Program is to pass 3,000 cfs through this reach without exceeding flood stage.

68  
69 Shadle asked if there has been any progress on Program 404 permits. Kenny said there are  
70 currently two applications pending – one for sediment augmentation activities, and one for  
71 channel restoration actions at the Elm Creek Complex. All indications are that the permits will  
72 be granted, but nothing is currently in-hand. The Nebraska DEQ issued a water quality  
73 conditional certification letter that requires a variance due to the methodology being used (sand  
74 pumping).

75  
76 Brei updated the LAC on land management planning efforts under way. Drafts for three of five  
77 properties have been distributed to the workgroup so far. Comments from the workgroup are due  
78 on February 21, and the intent is to have drafts for the entire LAC by the next meeting in April.

79  
80 Heaston updated the LAC on the Excess Land Workgroup's progress on a plan for disposing of  
81 excess land at 2009008. The workgroup will meet on February 7 to discuss the mechanics of a  
82 sale, finalize the excess area, discuss preferred buyer vs. open sale, and discuss the plan for the  
83 irrigated acres.

84  
85 **Present Work in Progress**

86 Tunnell gave a presentation and handout covering land management/maintenance activities that  
87 have occurred since the last LAC.

88



89 **Cropland Conversion on 2009002**

90 Farnsworth lead discussion of seeding the crop field on 2009002 back to grass. The management  
91 plan calls for reseeded, but further examination of this alternative shows potential  
92 implementation challenges. Given the location of this field adjacent to Interstate 80, and crossed  
93 by a major power transmission line, prescribed fire will not be an option for grassland  
94 management. Additionally, this area of the tract serves the Program as buffer to the river  
95 channel, and making it more attractive to target species, or other species, may have negative  
96 impacts as a result of those disturbances. Before the ED office invested in seed and labor to  
97 carry out the management plan, the LAC was asked to weigh in on whether or not to leave it as  
98 dryland crop or carry out the conversion. The LAC agreed that it would be best left in cropland  
99 at this time. This change will be noted in the next annual work plan for tract 2009002.

100  
101 Tunnell also asked the LAC for input on the plan for grazing leases and fencing on tract  
102 2010004, as lease negotiations are currently under way. Tunnell would like to remove some of  
103 the cross fences, and reduce the number of tenants on the tract. The current stocking rate would  
104 be maintained so it is not grazed any heavier or lighter than in past years. These changes are in  
105 the upcoming draft management plan for this tract, but would like to proceed with the changes  
106 for this season. Thorburn expressed concern about changing the methods used previously on this  
107 tract. Tunnell said the stocking rates are not to be changed, only the number of tenants. Rabbe  
108 said that baseline monitoring of grassland should be implemented beginning this year as well.  
109 Thorburn said this should include not only height and structure, but species composition.  
110 Additionally, administrative concerns (ie. adding or removing tenants) should not interfere with  
111 implementation of the Program’s best management actions. The LAC consented to the removal  
112 of the cross fence and resulting reduction of tenants. Tunnell will coordinate the execution of  
113 baseline grassland monitoring for this tract.

114  
115 **Land Offering Reviews**

116 **Peyton moved to go into executive session with LAC members, alternates, and technical**  
117 **staff to review details of land offerings. The motion was seconded by Bendfeldt. The**  
118 **motion carried and the committee entered executive session at 10:47 a.m.**

119  
120 **Thorburn moved to come out of executive session. LaBonde seconded and the motion**  
121 **carried. The committee came out of executive session at 11:55 a.m.**

122  
123 *Tract 1202*

124 **LaBonde moved to accept the evaluation team’s recommendation and forward tract 1202**  
125 **to the Governance Committee with a recommendation to pursue appraisal and negotiations**  
126 **for fee title acquisition as non-complex habitat. Motion seconded by Rabbe and passed**  
127 **unanimously.**

128  
129 *Tract 1203*

130 **Rabbe moved to accept the evaluation team’s recommendation and forward tract 1203 to**  
131 **the Governance Committee with a recommendation to pursue appraisal and negotiations**  
132 **for fee title acquisition as non-complex habitat, and to allow acquisition of property to the**



133 east between tract 1203 and Road 436 if available. Motion seconded by Taddicken and  
134 passed unanimously.

135

136 *Tract 0837*

137 **Peyton moved to recommend that the GC re-appraise tract 0837 and continue further**  
138 **pursuit of acquisition as complex habitat. Motion seconded by Thorburn.** Rabbe said he  
139 does not believe this parcel retains the priority and value for the Program that it once did when it  
140 was first approved in 2008. Rabbe said the First Increment milestone of 10,000 acres is being  
141 quickly approached and tying up 196 acres for this tract as opposed to some other higher priority  
142 area is not a position he is ready to support. The LAC discussed its placement as buffer to the  
143 upcoming Cherry Avenue interchange project. Bendfeldt believes that although the current  
144 zoning does not allow commercial development on the south side of the interchange/interstate, a  
145 change to this zoning requires only the approval of the city council and would not be surprising  
146 after the project is completed. Heaston said he believes that there is an agreement in place with  
147 the USFWS that prevents any south access via that interchange project, and these details should  
148 be tracked down with USFWS. **Motion did not pass unanimously.** This tract will be  
149 forwarded to the GC with viewpoints in support and in opposition to the motion for their final  
150 consideration.

151

#### 152 **Review Complex Acres**

153 Farnsworth gave the LAC a refresher presentation on definitions of complex and non-complex  
154 habitat, and provided an update on where the Program stands with respect to those goals and  
155 milestones. The Program milestone for land acquisition is 10,000 acres, 800 acres of which is to  
156 be non-complex habitat. The adaptive management plan further divides this 800 acres into 400  
157 acres of non-complex off-channel sand and water (OCSW) habitat for terns and plovers, and 400  
158 acres of palustrine wetland habitat for whooping cranes. The Program has acquired through  
159 purchase, lease or easement, 347 acres of non-complex habitat – all of which are OCSW habitat.  
160 Of these 347 acres, approximately 242 acres are “new” OCSW habitat created by the Program  
161 and approximately 105 acres are “existing” OCSW habitat rehabilitated by the Program. The  
162 adaptive management plan calls for a split of approximately 200 acres of “new” and 200 acres of  
163 “existing” OCSW. Currently, the Program has acquired no non-complex palustrine wetland  
164 areas.

165

166 Czaplewski discussed an item from the November 28, 2011 LAC meeting about forming an ad  
167 hoc committee to examine the status of the Program with respect to land acquisition milestones  
168 and look at priorities. Rabbe said the committee should examine the current ownership by bridge  
169 segment. Czaplewski said it should include both complex and non-complex objectives. **The**  
170 **committee will be chaired by Matt Rabbe. Other members are: LaBonde, Taddicken,**  
171 **LaGrange, Sellers, Peyton, Merrill.**

172

#### 173 **Review Possible Road Closure at 2010001**

174 Sackett presented the potential for pursuing the closure and right-of-way abandonment of I Road  
175 at tract 2010001 with Phelps County. The road accesses only property owned by PRRIP and  
176 NPPD and no private landowners would be affected. This closure would allow more unified



177 management of tract 2010001 – currently divided by I road – and reduce the potential for  
178 disturbance and trespass. The LAC agreed that this would be beneficial and asked Sackett to  
179 begin this process with the County.

180

181 **Public Forum/Next Meeting**

182 Chairman Czaplewski asked for public comments, none were offered.

183

184 **The next meeting of the LAC will be held Wednesday, April 24, 2012 at 9:00 a.m. central**  
185 **time.**

186

187 **Public Access Program Review**

188 Staff from the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission gave a presentation to the LAC  
189 summarizing the first few months of the Program’s Platte River Recreation Access (PRRA)  
190 program. NGPC was contracted by the Program to facilitate controlled access for recreation  
191 including hunting, fishing, hiking, mushroom hunting, turkey hunting, and bird watching  
192 according to the Program’s Public Access Policy. NGPC developed a website to allow public to  
193 make reservations for these activities on certain Program properties, and provided staff to  
194 oversee the Program and enforce the Public Access Policy. Present from NGPC were Matt  
195 Steffl, Northwest District Supervisor – Habitat Partners Section and PRRA project manager;  
196 Ryan Chramosta, Wildlife Conservation Technician II and the day-to-day PRRA program  
197 oversight; and Justin Haahr, Wildlife Biologist – Habitat Partners Section. The presentation  
198 included a summary of the policy administration and the use of the program by the public to-  
199 date.

200

201 The current contract with NGPC extends through June 30, 2012. Czaplewski would like to add a  
202 review of the Program’s Public Access Policy to the agenda for the April LAC meeting. This  
203 review would include recommendations for any changes in allowed activities, and a  
204 recommendation for an extension of the contract with NGPC. To facilitate this review,  
205 Czaplewski has asked that the public access subgroup be reformed to guide the discussion at the  
206 April LAC. The group is: Heaston, Rabbe, LaBonde, Raffety, Steffl (or other NGPC rep).

207

208 **Closing Business**

209 With no further business, the meeting was adjourned by Chairman Czaplewski at 1:35 p.m.