



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Wet Meadow Working Group Meeting Notes
ED Office Conference Room
March 27-28, 2013

Attendees

Mike Besson – State of Wyoming (TAC Chair)
Jerry Kenny – ED
Chad Smith – ED Office
Jason Farnsworth – ED Office
Dave Baasch – ED Office
Jim Jenniges – Nebraska Public Power District
Mark Czaplewski – Central Platte Natural Resource District
Matt Rabbe – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Suzanne Sellers – State of Colorado, Colorado Water Conservation Board
Rich Walters – Nature Conservancy
Mark Peyton – Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District
Mike Fritz – Nebraska Game and Parks Commission

Wet Meadow Working Group Meeting Notes

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

Wet Meadow Ground Water Monitoring Project

Baasch introduced the discussion and described the Service's concern about the placement of the weather station on the Fox tract due to the possibility of it being considered an obstruction. Baasch showed a map showing what he understood were potential issues (fetch, etc.) with placing the weather station in various locations on the property.

- Kenny – gave a description of the data that would be collected by the weather station.
- Rabbe – should place the weather station away from the large wetland features that were created on the property.
- Jenniges – why not place the station near the road; Baasch and others stated the road, trees, sandpit, etc. may bias the weather data (fetch, reflectance, etc.).
- Rabbe – should move the station approximately 600 feet east-northeast of the center of the field; no one objected.

Whooping Crane Wet Meadow Habitat Classification

Baasch led the discussion and described the Service's concern about some of the areas that currently were classified as whooping crane wet meadow areas by Rain Water Basin Joint Venture (RWBJV). The primary concerns were associated with trees that were not identified as obstruction features, but other concerns included hydrology and topography at a few sites. Brei stated the WMWG needed to discuss any issues they had with the current whooping crane wet meadow areas during the meeting because once changes were incorporated RWBJV would re-run the assessment and the 2010 results would be ready for GC approval.

- Rabbe – few sites north of I-80 near Lexington don't appear like they would ever have subirrigated soils (i.e., not all wet meadows are equal), but the Service would accept including them because the areas are grassland and generally have the topography of a wet meadow area.



- Besson – would the Service consider these areas wet meadow whooping crane habitat in a habitat selection type of analysis; Rabbe said they could be included in such analyses.
- Baasch – does Lloyd island have the hydrology to make it a whooping crane wet meadow; Jenniges stated since the early 1990's he had not seen water on the ground. Rabbe and others suggested the site be removed from consideration as a potential wet meadow area; no one objected; the site was removed.
- Jenniges – if the site was modified (add slough/swale features, could it become wet meadow in the future; several suggested it could; no one objected.
- Baasch – Cottonwood Ranch-Morse Tract area – remove additional trees and include wetland areas that were classified as trees; no one objected.
- Baasch – SW of Elm Creek Bridge – not sure if the grasslands with pivots were land leveled or not; site visit confirmed the site still had a ridge and swale topography and should be considered whooping crane wet meadow; no one objected. The potential wet meadow area was re-drawn to exclude the cropland and area south and east of the cropland that had a lot of trees; no one objected.
- Baasch – John's tract area – is the area west of the John's tract along the trees a crop field; Jenniges and Brei stated it was hayed or grazed grassland and appears different because of management actions; field not excluded; no one objected.
- Rabbe – McCormick tract – area on the western side is surrounded by trees so the wet meadow area should be redrawn to exclude this area; no one objected. The group visited this site.
- Baasch – John's tract is covered with brush and is being considered for removal; Jenniges stated we need a set of criteria to determine if sites should be removed or not. Jenniges - the site has good hydrology and has been managed by the Trust as wet meadow for several years. Rabbe - lack of management has resulted in more of a shrubland. The WMWG decided to consider the John's tract wet meadow habitat as we don't have a way to discern vegetative structure; no one objected. The group visited this site.
- Rabbe – site 2.5 miles south and west of Elm Creek Bridge – site is mostly upland grassland, is out of the Platte valley and more representative of the sandhills. Due to a lack of traditional wet meadow topography, it should be removed; no one objected.
- Baasch – site NW of the Odessa Bridge – remove additional trees; no one objected.
- Baasch - site NE of the Odessa Bridge – remove additional trees and crop field along the north part of the area; no one objected.
- Baasch - site NW of the Kearney – site considered for removal as potential wet meadow area because there has been an active sand and gravel mine from 2009-2011 and a cabin was built in 2012; site visit confirmed the sand and gravel mining operation should be considered a disturbance 2009-2011 and the cabin in 2012; no one objected. Road buffers in this area will be fixed to align with the roads. No one objected.
- Baasch – Rowe-Younkin area north of channel – remove additional trees and cropland; no one objected.
- Baasch – Rowe-Younkin area south of channel – remove additional trees; no one objected.
- Baasch – Gibbon-Shelton 1 mile east of Gibbon Bridge and south of channel – remove additional trees in NW corner; no one objected. Grassland to the east excluded likely due to the ¼ mile distance to disturbance (house and roads) gold standard criteria.
- Baasch – West of Shelton bridge and east of railroad – remove additional trees; no one objected.



- Baasch – Hannon WPA – 1 field considered for removal based on hydrology; site visit confirmed all fields should be considered potential wet meadow habitat; remove additional trees; no one objected. Group visited these sites.
- Baasch – Alda Farms area – remove crop fields; no one objected.
- Baasch – Binfield – include additional trees in the triangle grassland; no one objected.
- Baasch – Trust – remove additional trees and include 2-track road east of headquarters; no one objected.
- Baasch – Trust south of channel – include additional grassland near Alda road, center roads, remove additional trees, and driveways were discussed but not removed as a disturbance; no one objected. Visited the Martin Meadow Tract.
- Baasch – north of Phillips – draw south boundary based on LiDAR data, remove additional trees, and include wetlands that were classified as trees; no one objected.

The WMWG conducted several site visits the afternoon of the 27th and morning of the 28th as discussed above and during follow-up discussions agreed to make the changes discussed during the 2-day workshop. RWBJV will make the suggested changes and will re-run the 2010 off-channel habitat availability assessment. All participants agreed they would recommend GC approval of the off-channel habitat classifications once RWBJV re-ran the 2010 assessment.