



PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM
Technical Advisory Committee Conference Call Minutes
August 13, 2014

Meeting Participants

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Table

State of Colorado

Suzanne Sellers – (Chair)

State of Wyoming

Barry Lawrence – Member

State of Nebraska

Jesse Bradley – Member

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

Matt Rabbe – Member

Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)

Brock Merrill – Member

Environmental Entities

Rich Walters – Member

Upper Platte Water Users

Colorado Water Users

Kevin Urie – Member

Downstream Water Users

Mark Czaplewski – Member

Jim Jenniges – Member

Mark Peyton – Member

Executive Director’s Office (EDO)

Jerry Kenny (ED)

Chad Smith

Jason Farnsworth

Dave Baasch

Trevor Hefley

Other Participants

Tom Econopouly (FWS)



Welcome and Administrative

Sellers and Smith called the conference call meeting to order and asked for agenda modifications; none offered.

TAC Minutes

Smith asked the group if they had any suggested changes for the June 23 TAC meeting minutes or the June 23, 2014 Grassland Management Workshop Notes. Baasch pointed out that the minutes from the June 23 TAC meeting included track-change edits that had been made since being posted to the website; Jenniges asked if the edits changed the content of the conversation or if they were editorial in nature; Baasch said the edits were more editorial. **Jenniges moved to approve the June 23, 2014 TAC minutes and the June 23, 2014 Grassland Management Workshop Notes; Merrill seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

Tern and Plover Synthesis Chapter Peer Review

Smith provided background information on the 5 chapters and briefly discussed the feedback the EDO received on the Chapters and the Peer Review Scope of Work from the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and Downstream Water Users (DWU). Rabbe added the questions the Service provided to the EDO were intended to direct peer reviewers to address major areas of Program uncertainty. Rabbe stated the Service was satisfied with the modifications the EDO made to the questions that were included in the Peer Review Scope of Work. Jenniges stated the DWU were satisfied with the EDO responses to their comments.

Czaplewski asked if the Peer Review Scope of Work would include a detailed schedule for the review process; Smith said the final Scope of Work would include a detailed schedule. Smith added he planned to discuss the timeframe with Tom Sinclair (Program Contractor for the peer review process) to ensure a reasonable schedule is developed for this multi-document review; Czaplewski said he supported the approach. Rabbe asked what backgrounds were being targeted for the peer review panel; Smith said they are targeting tern and plover experts and geomorphologists as well as individuals with these backgrounds that have experience applying their expertise to large scale river conservation or restoration program management actions.

Czaplewski moved the TAC recommend GC approval of the Peer Review Scope of Work (including a detailed schedule); Peyton seconded the motion; all supported the motion.

Smith said the EDO will review the list of peer review candidates that we should receive by August 15 and will provide the TAC a list of candidates the EDO recommends serve on the peer review panel. The TAC will be asked to respond in support of or opposition to the EDO recommendation via email and/or conference call and the results of those discussions will be presented to the GC in September.

Additional Peer Review and Publication

Smith informed the TAC Natasha Bankhead is preparing articles for the directed vegetation and lateral erosion research and that Hefley is in the process of finalizing a draft of the forage fish



article; all of which the EDO was directed by the GC to prepare for Program consideration for publication in 2014. Farnsworth informed the TAC Chester Watson (Program Special Advisor) developed a white-paper he wrote for the Program into an article to consider for publication given the information was cited in the State of the Platte Report. Smith added the Watson document is the first article that has been written for the Program to consider for publication, but that the document was not on the initial list of documents to prepare and consider for publication in 2014. Sellers suggested the Program consider if the Watson article was controversial for the scientific community or the Program before moving forward to ensure the Program wouldn't receive negative feedback that would confuse what was considered best available science. Rabbe said he supported the idea of publishing the Watson article regardless of whether or not it was controversial given the information has not been reviewed and could be used to direct Program management actions; Peyton agreed. Farnsworth said the primary take home message in the Watson article is that it would be difficult or impossible to change channel form to improve habitat conditions for the target species without mechanical intervention. Smith suggested the TAC review the Watson article and the Forage Fish article (and possibly the 2 vegetation research articles Bankhead is developing) and have a discussion about the articles at the AMP Reporting Session and develop a recommendation for the GC to consider in December; Sellers and others voiced support for this approach.

Target Flow Special Advisor Scope of Work

Smith led the discussion on the Scope of Work for Independent Expert on “target Flow Process with the TAC and informed the TAC Kent Loftin (past ISAC member) began working under the Scope of Work that was included in the meeting packet. Rabbe said one of the main challenges will be how or if the Program incorporates flows into the process from the FWS coordination act that aren't specific to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Jenniges agreed and stated there is a lot of concern that new target flows will be additive and since some of the target flows aren't related to ESA they will need to be dealt with by the GC. Smith emphasized the Scope of Work Kent Loftin is working from only deals with researching and providing logistics for how the Program might chose to deal with target flows and/or scoring water projects during a potential second increment. Sellers asked if the EDO planned to send the Scope of Work to the GC; Smith said the Scope of Work had already been presented to the GC and that Kent Loftin was performing the tasks as a Special Advisor to the EDO as outlined in the FY2014 budget. Jenniges said he felt the EDO was operating as discussed by the GC and that he felt the biggest concern would be for the EDO or Program to go too far too fast. Jenniges suggested making target flows a standing item on every GC agenda; Smith said he would agree with making target flows a standing agenda item if the GC decides to go down the path of revising target flows. Urie suggested the EDO clearly articulate the objectives of the efforts to the GC in September; Smith agreed and stated the EDO would do so.

Sellers asked what the phrase “push presenters toward addressing real context of Platte River” in item C on page 1 of the Scope of Work meant. Smith said the phrase is intended to mean the Program has a defined set of management actions it can implement, the Program is not an



ecosystem restoration program, and target or environmental flows need to be discussed in the context of the 3 target bird species. Sellers suggested the Scope of Work be clarified to include this additional information; Smith agreed.

Spring 2014 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report

Baasch informed the TAC he had made some edits to the Spring 2014 Whooping Crane Report after it was distributed to the TAC. Baasch stated the original report had an error in the location of Crane Group 2014SP15 in Table 1 and the database so he corrected the error and updated Appendix A so it contained correct information.

Jenniges moved to accept the 2014 Spring Whooping Crane Monitoring Report, as revised and discussed during the meeting, as final; Peyton seconded motion; all supported the motion.

Permitting Services RFP Discussion

Smith said he would distribute the request for proposals seeking a contractor to provide permitting services for the Program to the TAC and asked them to respond to the email if anyone had concern. Smith informed the TAC the Finance Committee would review and discuss the RFP at the upcoming meeting and that the plan was to seek GC approval at the September GC meeting.

Closing Business

Jenniges mentioned he noticed the Finance Committee was being asked to consider an RFQ for channel disking on August 8th and asked if the Program decided the past 2 natural high-flow events did not remove enough vegetation in the channel. Farnsworth said there are several areas on Program properties where disking will be required to remove vegetation this fall. Rabbe said Partners for Wildlife did not plan to disk Rowe Sanctuary or Crane Trust properties because they felt those areas were in good shape. Baasch suggested Rabbe look at the properties himself because he wouldn't consider the properties very suitable habitat for any target species given the vegetation. Rabbe said it would be important to document where disking and herbicide application occurred so we could tease out the effects of water and mechanical management actions in the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring study. Farnsworth said the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring contractor included analyses specifically intended to parse out the effects of water versus mechanical actions in their report that the TAC would have in the upcoming weeks.

Rabbe asked if the high flow event in June 2014 reduced phragmites and cottonwood recruitment; Jenniges and others said cottonwood establishment was minimal but phragmites seemed to establish on the higher islands that get disked. Jenniges said he was concerned that disking may chop up the existing plants that get washed downstream and colonize new areas. Farnsworth said one of the interesting findings from the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring analyses was that periods that were cooler and drier during the middle and late half of the summer result in increased phragmites recruitment. Rabbe asked if that meant 2014 was bad for cottonwood and good for phragmites establishment; Jenniges and others said that was correct.

Jenniges asked if the Service had surveyed the Loup River to determine if the nests that were estimated to have been initiated around July 10th had hatched and if the chicks were ready to fledge. Rabbe said they planned to do the survey on August 18th which would be when the majority of the chicks would be 15-18 days old.



Upcoming 2014 TAC Meeting Schedule

TAC trip to CAMNet Rendezvous on Trinity River in California – October 6-8, 2014.

TAC Budget Meeting/conference call tentatively scheduled for October 8th while in California.

AMP Reporting Session – October 14-16, 2014 – Omaha, NE

Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm Central time.

Summary of Decisions from the August 2014 TAC Meeting

1. The TAC approved the June 23 TAC minutes and the June 23 Grassland Management Workshop Notes.
2. The TAC recommends GC approval of the Peer Review Scope of Work that will include a detailed schedule.
3. The TAC plans the review and discuss publication of the Watson article and Forage Fish article (and possible the vegetation scour and lateral erosion articles) with the ISAC at the 2014 AMP Reporting Session.
4. The TAC accepted the Spring 2014 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report as final.
5. The TAC will review the Permitting RFP and will respond via email if they had any concerns.