



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Executive Director’s Office Conference Room – Kearney, NE  
January 22, 2014

**Meeting Participants**

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Table**

**State of Wyoming**

Mike Besson – Member (Chair)

**State of Colorado**

Suzanne Sellers – Member

**State of Nebraska**

Brandi Flyr – Alternate

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

Matt Rabbe – Member

**Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**

Brock Merrill – Member

**Environmental Entities**

Mary Harner – Alternate

**Upper Platte Water Users**

**Colorado Water Users**

Kevin Urie – Member (WebEx)

**Downstream Water Users**

Mark Czaplewski – Member

Jim Jenniges – Member

Mark Peyton – Member

**Executive Director’s Office (EDO)**

Chad Smith

Jason Farnsworth

Dave Baasch

Scott Griebling

**Other Participants**

Mike Fritz (NGPC)

Eliza Hines (FWS)

Pat Engelbert (HDR)

Gary Lingle (AIM)

Mike Drain (CNPPID)

Tom Econopouly (FWS; WebEx)



### **Welcome and Administrative**

Besson and Smith called the meeting to order and asked for agenda modifications; Baasch asked to modify the agenda to get approval of the spring and fall 2013 whooping crane reports during the meeting as well.

### **TAC Minutes**

Besson asked the group if there were any changes to the October 30, 2013 TAC conference call minutes. Besson and Czaplewski suggested 2 minor edits to the minutes; Baasch made the changes. **Czaplewski moved to approve the October 30, 2013 TAC minutes with edits suggested during the meeting; Jenniges seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

### **TAC Chair Nomination**

Sellers offered to serve as the 2014 TAC Chair; Jenniges moved to nominate Sellers as the 2014 TAC Chair; Czaplewski seconded the motion; all supported the motion.

### **PRRIP Data Requests, Scientific Articles, and Related Items**

Baasch thanked the TAC for their time in reviewing Trevor Hefley's final IGERT publication and informed the TAC we removed all references to the critical habitat area other than mentioning it was a subset of the Program area. Baasch also briefly discussed the utility of the model for the Program. Jenniges asked if Hefley's article would be approved by the GC as the GC directed; Baasch stated he wasn't sure if it mattered, but the data Trevor published on was the Service's data rather than Program data. Baasch stated we could hold up the publication process if the GC needed to approve the article for publication; the TAC generally felt holding up the process where the TAC reviewed it wasn't necessary. Farnsworth said Chester Watson would be a better final product to take through the entire processes of seeking GC approval. Smith said he would present Hefley's published or unpublished article to the GC in March.

Harner briefly discussed a couple recent articles the Trust had accepted for publication, one of which included data the Program collected during winter 2012 and the other was in regards to observations of whooping cranes consuming leopard frogs.

Baasch mentioned the USGS and Trust developed a proposal to use Program stopover study data to conduct a hazard assessment for whooping cranes within the migration corridor. Harner elaborated on the remote sensing part of the of the study plan. Fritz asked if they would only include information collected within the 1-mile buffers; Baasch said he believed they plan to use the data collected within the 1-mile buffer as training data in imagery classification that could be extrapolated across the landscape.

### **PRRIP Peer Review and Publication**

Smith led the discussion and informed the TAC the peer review and publication list was the most discussed topic at the December GC meeting and presented the most recent draft list of all the documents the Program planned to have peer reviewed and/or published in 2014. Smith stated the FWS recently reviewed the list and provided recommendations for what they felt should be peer reviewed (documents 5 and 6 in the meeting packet). Sellers said she understood the GC's



recommendation to be that if something was to be published it would be done for a specific reason and not simply to be considered best available science. Sellers said she thought the GC intended for the TAC and Service to whittle down and prioritize the list with a smaller number of documents. Sellers said Mike Tabeau (FWS GC Representative) said the list presented to the TAC would be much smaller than what currently was on the table for consideration. Hines and Rabbe said the current list should be considered a “Cadillac version” that could be whittled down. Jenniges asked if the EDO would need to produce 2 documents for each item, 1 to be peer reviewed and another to be published; Smith and Baasch said the reviewed documents would be 1 in the same so only 1 document would need to be drafted. Hines said the Program would probably get a more rigorous review from peer review than the publication process. Smith said the ISAC guidance for the Program was not to elevate State of the Platte Report assessments to a 2 thumbs up or down until the foundational documents had been peer reviewed or published. Smith and Hines said the ultimate goal of peer review and publication is to help the GC make decisions. Hines said the Service would look at the current list and start to whittle it down where possible.

The TAC went through the document titled “USFWS DRAFT January 2014: Joint EDO FWS Peer Review/Publication list” point by point. Jenniges questioned how or why the Program would the peer review minimum habitat criteria that were developed and agreed to by the Program’s TAC.

Farnsworth said data Gary Lingle collected was compiled and used by the Water Districts in the draft EIS and may be proprietary. Jenniges said a solution to the problem would be to cite Appendix G of the Biological Opinion for the best available data as the Service referenced Lingle’s data 28 times in the Biological Opinion. Rabbe and Hines said the Service wasn’t saying one way or another whether the data was good or not, but questioned whether the methods would pass a rigorous review associated with being published. Jenniges and Farnsworth said historic data can never be improved or changed; Hines and Rabbe said they would talk to Jeff Runge to see what his intentions were on reviewing the Lingle data. Farnsworth said Runge should specifically be asked how one would replicate results of what happened 30 years ago.

Farnsworth said the 1-D Hydraulic model was peer reviewed; Rabbe said Runge’s question was whether or not the 1-D Hydraulic model was compared to the Bureau’s model. Farnsworth said it was not because the Bureau’s deficit estimate was an average of some measurements and model results that were not comparable. The Program is validating models to field collected data rather than to other model results which should be much more appropriate.

Smith said the EDO is merging several white papers dealing with FSM into a single manuscript that Farnsworth is working on now. Rabbe said if the individual white papers were being compiled and written up for publication then that would be good enough for the Service. Sellers asked what the advantage of publishing the white papers would be. Farnsworth said he really wasn’t concerned about publishing, but a lot of organizations are struggling to figure out how to quantify habitat now so publishing the work would be very beneficial to the Program and other organizations; Besson said that is exactly the type of information the ISAC said should be published to contribute to the larger body of science. Smith added several of the white papers are comprised of foundation information for the Program. Jenniges asked if the documents referenced in point 4 were available on the Program Library; Farnsworth said most of them are, but that the search function on the Program library keeps breaking so it isn’t very useful now. Farnsworth said every critique the EDO



has ever written can be found in the TAC Library in a folder called Literature Reviews, but we are trying not to add items to such folders in the future.

Farnsworth said the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Protocol was peer reviewed and the 2013 Comprehensive Analysis and Report would be peer reviewed as well. Rabbe reviewing the protocol should suffice.

Smith said the Stage Change Study was peer reviewed and would be written as a publication focusing on hydraulic parameters and how the study would be used as an operational tool. Jenniges asked if the EDO would work with the contractors that collected the data and allow them to be coauthors. Smith and Farnsworth said we would work with the authors to publish the information. Sellers asked why we would publish the stage change study where it has been accepted as final by the GC. Smith said there is a question in the State of the Platte Report that could move to a 2 thumbs up or down by publishing a report. Jenniges questioned whether publishing the stage change study would change the opinion people had about the study or not.

Jenniges said if the TAC all agreed flow consolidation is not a conceivable management option, the GC should be made aware of it. Smith said the contractor would finalize the report that would be peer reviewed and send to the GC. Rabbe said it may not make a lot of sense to peer review the flow consolidation report given everyone agreed it likely wasn't possible. Czaplewski said the new information should be institutionalized in the State of the Platte Report. The TAC seemed to agree it made most sense to finalize the report and make a decision at that point on whether or not to peer review the report.

Jenniges suggested the data analysis plan for the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Research be developed and peer reviewed with the report. Farnsworth said they will clean up the plan and that will be available soon. Jenniges asked if the Forge Fish Report was available on the Program website; Baasch said the report was on the website, but that Trevor Hefley was reformatting the report for publication that Jenniges and Peyton would be asked to co-author since it was their data.

Smith said the EDO is considering revisions to the peer review question form such as having categories like 'accept,' 'accept with revisions,' or 'reject' and then have the reviewers list specific revisions they would require before accepting a report as final. Smith said it would be up to the GC to decide if reviewers would be asked to re-review a report or not as that would be procedural change to what's laid out in the Program document. Sellers suggested we leave the process as it is and make a determination on a case by case basis if the TAC and GC feel it would be best to give the peer reviewers a chance to respond to revisions. Farnsworth said it wouldn't be a change in the protocol to ask reviewers to be specific about the changes they need to see to go from an 'accept with revisions' to 'accept'. Hines and Sellers said we could make the stipulation to request specific details in the RFP scope of work so all reviewers were aware of what the Program expected.

### **AMP Implementation Reports**

#### *2012 Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Report*

Farnsworth provided an update on the status of the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Report and informed the TAC the 2012 report was nearly completed. Farnsworth also discussed some specific changes that would be made to future reports (i.e., focus on analyses that really matter



to the Program). Rabbe expressed concern with the TAC not having an opportunity to comment on the reports. Rabbe questioned if the mechanical vegetation removal in spring of 2010 in the Elm Creek reach prior to the high flow events of 2010 and 2011 impacted the results of the study given there wasn't as much vegetation to remove with flows; Farnsworth said there was a lot of areas that weren't managed as well that were evaluated. Jenniges added 3-5 year old vegetation was never hypothesized to be removed by flows so we had to set the vegetation back to test if flows could remove 1-2 year old vegetation and found out we had to go back and mechanically remove the vegetation again in 2013. Rabbe said it seemed there were significant reductions in vegetation reach wide at the anchor points and even through spraying may have caused a lot of the reduction there is no way to prove the Service wrong that flow wasn't the cause of vegetation removal even if the spraying caused the vegetation to be killed. Jenniges said the only way to prove the Service wrong would be to quit spraying and mechanically removing vegetation on an annual basis. Rabbe said where spraying is going to continue, we still need to remove the vegetation and we can do that with disks or flow. Smith said Bob Mussetter is working on the Final Report for the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring Report that will be peer reviewed and will address any concerns and comments the Service or others may have. Besson suggested the Service comments be reformatted, addressed by Mussetter, and attached to the 2012 report as an addendum; Rabbe and others supported the approach.

*2013 USGS Tern and Plover Report*

Baasch discussed a few editorial changes he had made to the annual report and informed the TAC Mark Sherfy of the USGS is working on a summary report that incorporates all banding and observation data collected to date. The summary report will be discussed during upcoming meeting when the Program decides whether or not to continue banding on the Platte River. The report will be updated and published following the 2014 nesting season. Jenniges asked how the summary report compared to the habitat selection analysis publication Baasch planned to write during 2014. Baasch said the summary report would be a summary of banding data and observations and the habitat selection analysis would be use/availability study based on the habitat availability assessments and all Program nesting data collected to date. Baasch asked the TAC to add any edits they had to the report soon so the annual report could be finalized.

*2013 Grassland Vegetation Monitoring Report*

Baasch said he thought the report was in pretty good shape, but that he made a few edits to the report within a few days of the meeting. Czaplowski asked what the schedule for the grassland vegetation monitoring was; Baasch said the original plan was to implement the protocol every 3 years (2013, 2016, and 2019). Baasch said the monitoring protocol would need to be re-written to better describe what needs to happen the next go around now that all the plots and methods had been established. The EDO will re-write the protocol prior to the 2016 monitoring season.

*2013 Whooping Crane Stopover Study Report*

Baasch said he felt the Report was very well written and in a format that was very useful for the Program; Smith agreed and asked the TAC to review the report in the upcoming days so it could be finalized. Czaplowski stated the report was more of a spring report than an annual report; Baasch agreed and said with the timing of data collection and entry it may be best to have the annual reports incorporate data collected during the fall and spring rather than spring and fall which may require a



modification to the agreement. The 2014 annual report will include summaries of data collected during fall 2013 and spring 2014 as well as previous data and would be reported at the 2014 AMP Reporting Session. Baasch said the next step would be to incorporate any edits the TAC may have and get a copy of the database to the Program so the Report could be finalized. Baasch asked the TAC to review the report by February 5<sup>th</sup> so it could be finalized.

*2013 Sediment Augmentation Pilot Study Report*

Smith discussed the report and said the biggest thing that stood out to him was the complexity of augmenting sediment and the inter- and intra-bridge segment variability. Peyton said he was surprised by the amount of erosion that occurred in the north channel along Jeffery Island during the fall 2013 high-flow event and mentioned there were areas without trees that lost 20-30 feet off the bank. Rabbe asked if the sediment loads during the fall 2013 high-flow event were different than during the 2010 and 2011 flows; Farnsworth said measurements were made, but we don't have the results back yet.

*2013 Spring and Fall Whooping Crane Monitoring Report*

Baasch informed the TAC WEST incorporated suggested edits in the Spring Report and that the Fall Report was available for their review quite a while and we would like to finalize the reports if possible. Peyton said it was confusing how crane groups and bird numbers were reported. Baasch and Lingle said the confusion is in the way different crane groups are assigned on a daily basis. **Besson moved to accept the Spring Report as final; Jenniges seconded the motion; no one objected. The TAC agreed the Fall 2013 Report will be considered Final once we get the population counts from Aransas for winter 2013-2014.**

**Independent Science Review (ISR) RFP**

Smith discussed the RFP with the TAC and asked for any feedback. Czaplewski said the background section should be removed as it applied to another RFP; Smith said he would remove it.

**Jenniges moved to support the Independent Science Review RFP after removing the background section; Merrill seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

**AMP Implementation Update**

Smith led the discussion and informed the TAC the EDO would be wrapping up the 2013 State of the Platte Report in the upcoming weeks and that would be distributed to the TAC so it could be finalized at the March GC meeting.

**2014 TAC Meeting Schedule**

- Whooping crane workshop February 19, 2014.
- Late April or early May ISAC meeting focused on terns and plovers
- CamNet tour October 6-8 on the Trinity River in California
- AMP Reporting Session October 14-16 in Omaha
- Need to schedule a workshop to discuss LTPP & WC Habitat Availability Assessment Results
- Need to schedule a workshop to discuss vegetation management
- Need to schedule meeting to discuss the FY2015 budget
- Need to discuss continuing to implement the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring protocol



### **Wet Meadow Hydrology Study Update**

Griebling presented an update for the Wet Meadow Hydrology Study. Besson asked if we had observed anything surprising to date; Griebling said the degree of response to precipitation events at the Binfield site was a bit surprising. Fritz asked if the soils were different at the Binfield and Fox sites and if that is what caused the differences in response to precipitation events; Griebling said he thought the biggest difference was the starting elevation of ground water levels at Binfield being closer to the surface. Sellers asked how much spikes in river stage due to precipitation events influenced ground water levels; Griebling said it is difficult to parse out what is due to precipitation, river stage, and runoff events, but it should be possible to parse out the effects once we collect more data.

### **2013 High Flow Imagery**

Farnsworth led the discussion presented photos and video taken before, during, and after the high-flow event that occurred during fall 2013. Farnsworth also showed the TAC fall 2013 LiDAR imagery that appeared to show none of the macro forms in the Rowe stretch of river were affected by the high flow event during fall 2013. Rabbe showed some photos that the Service took before and during the high-flow event. Farnsworth stated the biggest change observed to date appears to be that the constructed tern and plover islands at the Elm Creek Complex were eroded away.

### **Closing Business**

**Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm Central time.**

### **Summary of Decisions from the January 22, 2014 TAC Meeting**

1. The TAC approved the October 30, 2013 TAC minutes with edits suggested during the conference call.
2. The TAC moved to accept the Spring 2013 Whooping Crane Report as final and agreed the Fall 2013 Whooping Crane Report would be considered Final once we get the population counts from Aransas for winter 2013-2014.
3. The TAC moved to support the Independent Science Review RFP after removing the background section.
4. The TAC discussed and scheduled the following meetings:
  - Whooping crane workshop February 19, 2014.
  - Late April or early May ISAC meeting focused on terns and plovers
  - CamNet tour October 6-8 on the Trinity River in California
  - AMP Reporting Session October 14-16 in Omaha
  - Need to schedule a workshop to discuss LTPP & WC Habitat Availability Assessment Results
  - Need to schedule a workshop to discuss vegetation management
  - Need to schedule meeting to discuss the FY2015 budget
  - Need to schedule a meeting to discuss continuing to implement the Geomorphology and Vegetation Monitoring protocol