



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**  
**Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**  
June 23, 2014

**Meeting Participants**

**Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Table**

**State of Wyoming**

**State of Colorado**

Suzanne Sellers – (Chair)

**State of Nebraska**

Jesse Bradley – Member

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

Matt Rabbe – Member

**Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)**

**Environmental Entities**

Rich Walters – Member

**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)**

Jerry Kenny (ED)

Chad Smith

Jason Farnsworth

Dave Baasch

Trevor Hefley

Scott Griebling

**Other Participants**

Mike Fritz (NGPC)

Jeff Runge (FWS)

Harry LaBonde (State of Wyoming GC)



### **Welcome and Administrative**

Sellers and Smith called the conference call meeting to order and asked for agenda modifications; Smith added 3 discussion topics to the agenda; Loup River EA/FERC relicensing comments, update on the Lower Platte River tern and plover data request, and Whooping Crane Telemetry Project Data use plans.

### **TAC Minutes**

Smith asked the group if there were any changes to the January 22 TAC minutes, February 19, 2014 Whooping Crane Workshop Notes, or the April 22-23 ISAC-TAC Meeting Notes. **Czaplewski moved to approve the January 22 TAC minutes, February 14, 2014 Whooping Crane Workshop Notes, and the April 22-23 ISAC-TAC Meeting Notes; Jenniges seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**

### **Loup River EA/FERC Relicensing Comments**

Smith provided background information and an update on the status of the comments the EDO prepared to inform FERC about citations of central Platte River and or Program data publications and reports. Kenny emphasized the request for comment on the EA was simply to comment on whether central Platte data, reports, and publications were cited appropriately or not. Smith informed the TAC Brian Barels (NPPD) contacted the EDO to discuss the comments and suggested they not be submitted to FERC. Smith said the EDO has decided the only comment that would be submitted to FERC was information regarding the Program's position not to cite or use the 2008 WEST Report for decision making on the central Platte River.

Fritz expressed concern over the process of the EDO submitting comments on behalf of the Program where a Program participant approached the EDO to provide comment on another Program participant's document. Fritz said there would be a conflict of interest if another Program organization provided comments that were at odds with what was submitted by the TAC. Runge suggested the Program only submit final, approved documents for the record and not a develop a formal position on any topic; Farnsworth said the EDO did not intend to take a position or side in the comments, but only statements of the citations that were and were not cited appropriately. Jenniges said the 2008 WEST report has never been anything except a draft report that he and others provided comments on that have never been addressed. Rabbe asked if there was a final version of the 2008 WEST report; Farnsworth said the report has never been finalized and that in February of 2014 the TAC discussed the issues with the report again and considered adding a preface indicating the report would not be used for Program decision making, but the group decided it would be more appropriate to include the preface in the upcoming report. Rabbe pointed out that the EA was developed a year or more prior to the EDO discovering the issues with the 2008 WEST report and the TAC discussion/recommendation not to use the report for making Program decisions. Kenny, Farnsworth and Smith acknowledged they knew that was the case and said the EDO felt we have an obligation to inform FERC about the Program's position on the report.



Farnsworth pointed out the Program has taken a position that until reports and/or data are published or peer reviewed and finalized it is not considered best available science, but now there is a draft report that the Program no longer stands behind that is being cited by a Program participant. Farnsworth said citing the 2008 WEST report in the EA for the Loup River would establish a precedent that it was best available science for whooping cranes in Nebraska. Jenniges asked if the WEST report was ever made available to the public; Baasch said the report is posted and available on the Program's website. Runge said that in the absence of replacement science, the 2008 report should be considered collectively with other whooping crane documents as the best available science. Runge added the focus should be on whether there are critical flaws that warrant not looking at the report versus whether the study methods could have been improved, and said the former may be the case in this situation. If there is documentation of critical errors, the report shouldn't be used at all. Farnsworth asked how we apply those standards to Program data. Runge said the Program is different than the Service in that there are legal standards that describe best available science. Runge said the TAC has a process and it is best for the Program to follow that process versus what the Service uses for ESA. Jenniges said it seems there are 2 standards for best available science; several agreed that was their interpretation of the conversation also. Runge said it is best for the Service to use peer reviewed reports in making decisions which is why the Service is a strong proponent of Program peer review. However, in absence of peer reviewed science, the Service is mandated to use the best available science.

**Smith and Kenny said the EDO would submit the TAC minutes, 2008 report, and comment regarding the Program's position on the 2008 WEST Report to FERC.** Rabbe asked if the submission would be from the Program or Headwaters Corporation; Kenny said the submission would be from the Program.

#### **Lower Platte River Tern and Plover Data Request**

Smith informed the TAC the EDO submitted a formal request to Joel Jorgensen (NGPC) for tern and plover monitoring data collected on the lower Platte River. Jorgensen sent the EDO a CD with some data, but the data we received didn't contain enough information to allow the EDO to analyze the data using the same assumptions/methods that are used when analyzing central Platte River data. Fritz and Jenniges pointed out that the survey effort on the lower Platte River was not nearly as intensive to what is used on the central Platte River. Smith and Baasch said they understood that, but that we are not sure the Program can use the data we were provided to make comparisons between the central and lower Platte River tern and plover survival rates. Farnsworth said he was most interested in survival rates and productivity for the nests that are initiated following inundation events, but the data were provided does not include fledgling counts or fates nests and chicks that were initiated later in the season.

Peyton asked who owned the lower Platte River data; Fritz said some of the data was collected and owned by NGPC and other data was collected by the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership.



Czaplewski asked if Mary Bomberger Brown (Tern and Plover Partnership) collected additional data beyond what was contracted through NGPC. Fritz said he believed some of the data was collected through the University of Nebraska and not NGPC. Czaplewski asked if the data was submitted to NGPC and Service to fulfill permitting requirements; Fritz said, similar to the Program, they are not required to submit the detailed data for the permitting process. Peyton questioned how NGPC could avoid providing the data where it was funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust funds.

Rabbe said it seems the Program reports could be interpreted as minimum survival rates and the lower Platte should be viewed as maximum survival rates. Baasch said they use different assumptions about nest and chick survival rates than what are used on the central Platte River so comparing reported survival rates and productivity is not appropriate. Baasch said he assumes tern chicks that were seen at 19 days of age and not seen when they would have been 23 days of age survived and fledged at 21 days of age; however, chicks observed at 15 days of age and not observed at 19 days of age are assumed to have failed. Jenniges said we could analyze Program data using the methodology and assumptions used on the lower Platte River to come up with comparable survival rates. Farnsworth agreed, but said he didn't feel it was appropriate to assume chicks that were last observed when they were 10 days old survived and fledged. Jenniges said we could enter the encounter history data and come up with an estimate of survival probabilities similar to what it appears is reported on the lower Platte River.

#### **Whooping Crane Telemetry Data Analysis Proposals/Plans**

Smith informed the TAC Hefley developed 3 Telemetry Data Use Plans that describes the data the Program plans to analyze and how the Program plans to use the telemetry data. The Data Use Plans would eventually be submitted to the Whooping Crane Tracking Partnership (WCTP) team for their approval. Sellers asked if the reports or publications would be EDO/PRRIP documents or WCTP documents; Baasch said the reports and publications would likely be coauthored by several individuals within the WCTP as well as Program individuals that want to contribute to producing the documents. The Data Use Plans are presented to the WCTP and individuals that are interested in the project can volunteer to contribute and be a coauthor if they want to. Hefley said there currently are 17 Data Use Plans that have been developed by the WCTP in addition to the 3 that he developed. Baasch said the Program has the ability have Data Use Plans, reports and publications peer reviewed if we chose to. Hefley said he would likely develop a Data Use Plan for publishing the data so that it can be cited in the various reports and publications. Baasch told the TAC to let the EDO know if they had an interest in any other analyses of the telemetry data so we could develop a Data Use Plan.

**The TAC set a deadline of 5:00PM on Friday June 27, 2014 to complete their reviews of the 3 Program Telemetry Data Use Plans.**



**Horn et al. Response**

Smith provided background information on the response to Horn et al. 2012 publication and asked the TAC for their thoughts on how we should proceed with the response since the publication was 2 years old. Runge said the response did well in documenting the limitations of a subset of methods described in Horn et al. 2012. Runge said while the Horn et al. publication may have serious implications for the implementation of the Program’s AMP, and one possible approach to addressing implications is by referencing implications in the State of the Platte Reports rather than through publishing a formal response. For example, concern about channel aggradation referenced in Horn et al. 2012 can be addressed through long-term Program geomorphic monitoring that could be used to identify trends in aggradation. Rabbe said he felt there was value in submitting the response for publication so it is peer reviewed and that even if it isn’t published there will be a record of why the response wasn’t accepted for publication (i.e., >2 years old, fatal flaw in the response, etc.). Fritz says if the response is not published only because it has been too long, then the Program could decide if we use it when determining what the best available science is. Czaplewski recommended the Program submit the response for publication. Runge asked when the response is considered final and made available to the public; Smith said if the response is published it would be considered final and if not the GC would need to make a decision on whether the Program considers it the best available science or not.

**Czaplewski moved the TAC recommend the GC support publication of the Horn et al. Response document; Rabbe seconded the motion; all supported motion.**

**Tern and Plover Chapter Discussion**

Smith discussed the revised Tern and Plover Chapters and preface that were sent out for review. Smith told the group the preface and first 2 chapters were new and are a ‘final’ draft, but that Chapter 4 and 5 were the same version that they saw when they first reviewed the original 3 Chapters and that these chapters would be revised and sent to the TAC by July 15. Jenniges said it seemed the EDO was trying to move more quickly than needed and that the 5 chapters could likely be boiled down into a single publication if some of the data was removed. Farnsworth agreed, but said he developed the information into 5 chapters so that each chapter was focused on individual topics and that each of the chapters are intended to build on each other.

Rabbe said he didn’t feel all TAC comments needed to be addressed during the revision process where the current plan is to peer review the chapters. Jenniges said major concerns should probably be addressed during the revision process. Baasch said major issues that we may not be able to address during the revision process could be identified and addressed in the peer review scope of work. Smith asked if the TAC was comfortable with the EDO moving forward with revising Chapters 4 and 5, putting together a scope of work for the peer review, and having Tom Sinclair (contractor for the Program’s peer review) start identifying potential candidates for the peer review panel. The group indicated support to move forward with the chapters.

**Jenniges moved the TAC support for the EDO to finalize revisions to Chapters 4 and 5, prepare the tern/plover synthesis chapter peer review packet, and have Tom Sinclair start identifying candidates for the peer review panel; Czaplewski seconded the motion; all supported the motion.** The TAC will make a recommendation for peer review panelists at the



upcoming meeting in August and will make a recommendation the GC approve peer reviewing the Chapters during the September 2014 GC meeting.

### **2012-2013 Tern and Plover Monitoring and Research Report**

Baasch briefly discussed the revised 2012-2013 tern and plover monitoring report as well as the document prepared in response to the downstream water user's comments that explains how comments were addressed or in some instances why a comment wasn't addressed in the report.

**Rabbe moved to accept the 2012-2013 Tern and Plover Report as final; Jenniges seconded motion; all supported the motion.**

### **Spring 2014 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report**

Jenniges suggested we include a table of channel metrics in the report; Baasch said the EDO will develop a table to include in the report. Several TAC members requested more time to review the report. Final comments on the SP2014 Whooping Crane Report are due Friday July 4<sup>th</sup>.

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

Griebing provided an update on the Wet Meadow Hydrologic Monitoring and Evapotranspiration Study. Czaplewski asked if there were any parts of the study plan that concerned WAC members; Griebing said there weren't. Sellers said the working group and WAC had provided input along the way. Sellers asked if the real-time ET data was only being developed in Nebraska; Bradley said Desert Research Institute, Rick Allen, ISA and others were working on the project and that the goal was to eventually have real-time ET data worldwide. Bradley asked how we would determine if we need to collect direct measurements; Griebing said we would compare direct measurements to crop coefficient data to see how they compare. Kenny said if we went direct measurement route it would involve Bowen Energy Ratio Towers or Eddy Covariance Towers which are expensive and more difficult to maintain and work with. Rabbe asked if the accuracies are off are we confident we will catch it; Griebing said we will evaluate water balance to determine if the ET estimates seem reasonable. Rabbe asked if the plan was to peer review the protocol before the study or during the review process for the final report; Griebing said the current plan is to peer review the monitoring plan this fall.

Baasch asked why there was a 4 inch difference between ET and precipitation between the Binfield and Fox sites; Griebing said the difference corresponds to differences in precipitation. Sellers asked if the spike in groundwater elevation was related to river stage or precipitation; Griebing said the Binfield site has been difficult to parse out the effects of each because there seems to be a difference in soil porosity near the surface as compared to deeper soils. Sellers asked if we could do some Geotech samples; Griebing said we collected some samples, but it's not abundantly clear exactly what is going on.

**Rabbe moved to support ET Monitoring Study Plan; Jenniges seconded the motion; all supported the motion.**



**Upcoming 2014 TAC Meeting Schedule**

TAC Tern and Plover Chapter focused Meeting scheduled for August 13, 2014 – Kearney, NE 9:00  
 TAC Budget Meeting/conference call tentatively scheduled for October 8<sup>th</sup> while in California.  
 TAC trip to CAMNet Rendezvous on Trinity River in California – October 6-8, 2014.  
 AMP Reporting Session – October 14-16, 2014 – Omaha, NE

**Meeting adjourned at 12:00pm Central time.**

**Summary of Decisions from the June 2014 TAC Meeting**

1. The TAC approved the January 22 TAC minutes, February 14, 2014 Whooping Crane Workshop Notes, and the April 22-23 ISAC-TAC Meeting Notes.
2. The EDO will submit the TAC minutes, 2008 report, and comment regarding the Program’s position on the 2008 WEST Report to FERC on behalf of the Program.
3. The TAC set a deadline of 5:00PM on Friday June 27, 2014 to complete their reviews of the 3 Program Telemetry Data Use Plans.
4. The TAC recommended the GC support publication of the Horn et al. Response document.
5. The TAC recommended the EDO finalize revisions to Chapters 4 and 5, prepare the tern/plover synthesis chapter peer review packet, and have Tom Sinclair start identifying candidates for the peer review panel. The TAC will make a recommendation for peer review panelists at the upcoming meeting in August and will develop a recommendation the GC approve peer reviewing the Tern and Plover Chapters during the September 2014 GC meeting.
6. The TAC accepted the 2012-2013 Tern and Plover Report as final.
7. The TAC set a deadline of 5:00PM on Friday July 4, 2014 to complete their review of the Spring 2014 Whooping Crane Monitoring Report.
8. The TAC recommended support of the ET Monitoring Study Plan.