



**PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM (PRRIP or PROGRAM)  
Governance Committee (GC) Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, September 12, 2017 – 2:00 PM – 5:45 PM  
Wednesday, September 13, 2017 – 8:00 AM – 11:30 AM

**Note: All times Central.**

**Meeting Location:**  
PRRIP EDO Conference Center  
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6  
Kearney, NE 68845  
(308) 237-5728

**Governance Committee (GC)**

**State of Wyoming**

Harry LaBonde – Member  
Bryan Clerkin – Alternate

**State of Colorado**

Don Ament – Member  
Suzanne Sellers – Alternate

**State of Nebraska**

Jeff Fassett – Member

**Upper Platte Water Users**

Dennis Strauch – Member  
Bob Mehling – Alternate  
George Williams – Alternate  
Jeb Steward – Alternate

**Downstream Water Users**

Lyndon Vogt – Member  
Don Kraus – Member  
Brian Barels – Member  
Kent Miller – Member  
Mark Czaplewski – Member

**Executive Director’s Office (EDO)**

Jerry Kenny, ED  
Dave Baasch  
Jason Farnsworth  
George Oamek  
Bruce Sackett  
Chad Smith  
Tom Smrdel  
Kevin Werbylo

**Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation)**

Chris Beardsley – Member (2017 GC Chair)  
Brock Merrill – Alternate

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

Michael Thabault – Member

**Environmental Entities**

Rich Walters – Member  
Bill Taddicken – Member

**Colorado Water Users**

Alan Berryman – Member  
Deb Freeman – Alternate

**Audience Members**

Jim Jenniges – NPPD  
Eliza Hines – Service  
Matt Rabbe – Service  
Tracy Zayac – North Platte NRD  
Lori Potter – Kearney Hub  
John Cambridge – HDR  
Tom Econopouly – Service  
Cory Steinke – CNPPID  
Pat Engelbert – HDR



**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2017**

**Welcome & Administrative**

Beardsley called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

**GC Decision** – *Ament moved to approve the June 6-7, 2017 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes and the August 8, 2017 GC Conference Call minutes; LaBonde seconded. Both minutes approved.*

**Program Committee Updates**

*Land Advisory Committee (LAC)*

Sackett provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The last LAC meeting was May 16, the next meeting will be October 10.

*Water Advisory Committee (WAC)*

Steinke provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC had a conference call on August 8. Topics included Cottonwood Ranch, slurry walls, irrigation water baselines, Central Platte water leasing, NPPD excess flow water, and the Pathfinder municipal account.

*Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*

Sellers provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC voted electronically to support moving ahead with BOR modeling for sediment and vegetation and to support full-scale sediment augmentation. On August 29, the TAC held a conference call and recommended the GC support the two motions on the GC agenda for today related to the Whooping Crane Documents Joint Peer Review. TAC members were invited to give comments on the whooping crane telemetry manuscript drafted by the USGS. The next TAC meeting will be as part of the AMP Reporting Session on October 17.

*Finance Committee (FC)*

LaBonde provided an update on the latest FC activities. The FC approved the bid package for full-scale sediment augmentation. The FC also approved two other actions via email: HDR contract amendment for permitting slurry walls, and a bid package for Pawnee Complex habitat restoration.

**Program Outreach Update**

**PRESENTATIONS**

- The Platte Valley Weed Management Area group (PVWMA) had a field day on June 8, 2017 at the Bartels property. They reviewed the effects of different herbicide treatments used for phragmites control initiated by Working EcoSystems, LLC and the effects of prescribed fire to accretion ground. The group viewed the Elm Creek to Odessa stretch by airboat and observed helicopter spraying.
- Jerry Kenny and Jason Farnsworth presented on the Program to the participants of the 2017 Water & Natural Resources Tour on June 27-29, 2017. The tour was primarily sponsored by the Nebraska Water Center and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District. The tour stopped at the Cottonwood Ranch complex for the PRRIP presentation.
- Jerry Kenny presented on the Program to stakeholders of the South Platte Master Plan (SPMP) at Morgan Community College in Fort Morgan, Colorado on July 17, 2017. The SPMP is a study of flood mitigation and recovery possibilities along 130 miles of the South Platte River from the Morgan-Weld county line to the Nebraska State Line.



94 ***EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS***

- 95 • The Program sponsored the University of Nebraska – Lincoln Annual Water & Crops Field Day on  
96 August 24, 2017 at the West Central Research Extension Center in North Platte, Nebraska. Bruce  
97 Sackett and George Oamek attended the event.  
98

99 ***UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS***

- 100 • Jerry Kenny and Jesse Bradley from the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources will be panelists  
101 at the Nebraska College of Law – Nebraska Water Law annual seminar on October 6, 2017 in Lincoln,  
102 Nebraska. The title of the panel is Nebraska and the Trump Administration. The focus of Dr. Kenny’s  
103 information will be the impact of the administration on the PRRIP and the Program’s First Increment  
104 accomplishments.
- 105 • The Nebraska Natural Legacy Project will be holding their annual meeting at the Lied Lodge in  
106 Nebraska City, Nebraska on October 10 & 11, 2017. Patrick Farrell will be presenting, his session is  
107 titled; *Sandhill Crane roost locations in relation to flow and channel width along the central Platte  
108 River*. Dave Baasch will also be presenting, his session is titled; *Life History and PRRIP contributions  
109 to the continued existence of interior Least Terns and Piping Plovers along the central Platte River*.
- 110 • Kevin Werbylo will be presenting at the Sustaining Colorado Watersheds Conference in Avon,  
111 Colorado on October 11, 2017. His session is titled; *Sharing resources to restore endangered species  
112 habitat in the Platte River Basin*.
- 113 • The Program is exhibiting at Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island on September 12, 13, and 14, 2017  
114 in the Natural Resources Districts building. Husker Harvest Days is recognized as the World’s Largest  
115 Totally Irrigated Working Farm Show™ and features the most extensive state-of-the-art information  
116 and technology available for today’s agricultural producers.
- 117 • The Program will be exhibiting at the South Platte Forum on October 25 & 26, 2017 in Loveland,  
118 Colorado.  
119

120 ***MEDIA/OTHER***

- 121 • Lori Potter wrote several articles for the Kearney Hub on the Program, the Platte River, and Nebraska  
122 water issues as a result of her participation on the Nebraska Water and Natural Resources tour. The  
123 articles were published between July 1 and July 9, 2017.
- 124 • The Program contributed outreach funds to a downtown Kearney mural project. The mural is on the  
125 side of a downtown building and features cranes flying over the Platte River at sunset. Sponsors names  
126 are listed at the bottom of the mural.  
127

128 **PRRIP FY17 Budget Update**

129 Kenny gave an update on the status of the 2017 PRRIP budget and associated land income and taxes. Kenny  
130 said it looks like we will end up with expenditures of about \$10 million by the end of this year. Stuart asked  
131 if money in the budget carries over if you don’t spend it. Kenny said if we don’t spend it, it is available in  
132 future years.  
133

134 **PRRIP Funding**

135 Kenny said this item was put on the agenda because of discussion in Washington about a possible  
136 government shut down. There is now a Continuing Resolution until December 8. Merrill said we should  
137 table this until the December 17 GC meeting. LaBonde said he agreed. Fassett asked if we have done this  
138 kind of arrangement on funds before. Kenny and Merrill said yes in 2013.  
139

140 **GC Decision** – *This item is tabled until the December GC meeting.*



141 **J-2 Project Quarterly Report**

142 Kraus discussed the J-2 quarterly report. Second quarter expenses were higher because there was an  
143 underestimate of expenses for the unnamed tributary analysis. Kraus said CNPPID may kick in some funds  
144 for this because it has value beyond the J-2 project. Fassett asked what is a do-nothing budget and what  
145 will costs be in 2018. Kraus said tasks are complete, the only issue is groundwater well recording. Steinke said  
146 a house needs to be torn down on one of the properties plus some lot mowing. Ament said we are bothered  
147 by ongoing items because we are looking at a large expenditure for water in the Extension so there are  
148 questions about these ongoing costs for a project that is not going forward. Strauch asked why we are  
149 maintaining and keeping this property, can't we dispose of it. Steinke said we own two properties, one of  
150 which is being taken care of through a lease. Kenny said we are maintaining ownership of the two small  
151 properties because the project is now on hold, if you get rid of the properties then you are saying we have  
152 given up on the project.

153

154 Fassett said maybe we need to convert this agreement to some kind of maintenance approach. Merrill said  
155 there are two issues: 1) if you terminate the agreement, Central will close out the account and the money  
156 will go back into the account and that will likely have to go back into the federal pot, and 2) there are about  
157 \$30 million obligated to the J-2 and we would have to find some way to re-obligate these funds which can  
158 be difficult. LaBonde said we could leave J-2 on hold until we have better information on other projects  
159 and then could re-obligate the money at that time.

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161 **PRRIP Publication & Peer Review**

162 Smith discussed the results of peer review of the joint whooping crane documents (WEST report and habitat  
163 synthesis chapters).

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165 **GC Decision** – *LaBonde moved and Ament seconded the following motions related to the Joint Whooping*  
166 *Crane Documents Peer Review:*

167

168 *#1 – The Governance Committee (GC) approves the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommendation*  
169 *to accept the WEST Report (Correlates of Whooping Crane Habitat Selection and Trends in Use in the*  
170 *Central Platte River) and the PRRIP Whooping Crane Habitat Synthesis Chapters, revised by the Executive*  
171 *Director's Office in response to peer review comments and TAC comments, as FINAL. These documents*  
172 *are approved by the Governance Committee as final with the understanding they will be used for decision-*  
173 *making purposes, and with the understanding the revised documents and all associated peer review*  
174 *documents will be made available to the public and posted on the Program web site.*

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176 *#2 – The Governance Committee approves development of publication manuscripts for WC Habitat*  
177 *Synthesis Chapters 2 and 3, subject to TAC and GC review and approval for final publication.*

178

179 **Both motions approved.**

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181 Smith provided a brief overview of the status of several Program publications.

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183 **CNPPID Water Service Agreements (WSA)**

184 *Cottonwood Ranch WSA*

185 Kenny discussed the WSA for the Cottonwood Ranch pipeline related to broad-scale recharge. Beardsley  
186 asked if we are really just looking at the wellfield option versus the pipeline reduced/buyback option. Kenny  
187 said yes. Kraus said the other issue to discuss is assignment of the project if the Program goes away. Barels  
188 said NPPD is working with the Program on an agreement given that this is a new purpose for Cottonwood  
189 Ranch that is not covered by the existing agreement with the Program for terrestrial habitat. Ament said the



190 most important thing is to deliver water where it needs to be so there is an operational concern. How do  
191 you determine what is the most certainty in terms of a pipeline or a wellfield? Kraus said for a pipeline, the  
192 first rule is the water has to be in excess of target flows. LaBonde asked if Central could deliver excess  
193 water during the irrigation season. Kraus said they had not looked at that much and that is not how the  
194 project has been modeled at this point. Steinke said if there is excess in the river, this project would be able  
195 to take the water.

196  
197 Strauch asked where the point of diversion is. Kraus said at North Platte, which is 75 miles away. Strauch  
198 asked if that would preclude other opportunities for water projects above that point. Kenny said we are  
199 trying not to create that problem. Berryman asked if there has been an operational study of what water  
200 might be available. Kenny said that is underway. Beardsley asked when we could be operational with the  
201 well field. Kenny said sometime after 2018, about 6-12 months later than the pipeline. Barel said Kenny  
202 should visit with DNR about well siting because if they are too close to the bank you would need a surface  
203 water permit. Kenny said that is what we are going for. Berryman asked Kenny if he had any concern about  
204 long-term operation of a wellfield. Kenny said it would be more complex operationally but can be handled,  
205 but there are advantages to the simplicity of a pipeline.

206  
207 Beardsley said he is hearing the pipeline is a good option financially and operationally but there are more  
208 questions that should be answered. LaBonde said another issue is to have the site-specific issues tied up at  
209 the same time.

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211 **GC Decision** – *This item is tabled until issues are resolved around certainty, assignment, use of the land,*  
212 *and other items discussed today.*

#### 213 *Phelps Canal WSA and Elwood WSA*

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215 Kenny discussed the details of both WSAs. Fassett asked how much water we have benefitted from for  
216 these projects. For Phelps Canal, a little over 16,000 acre-feet. Beardsley asked why we are moving from  
217 one-year agreements to two-year agreements. Kenny said just for ease of use. Thabault asked if we can  
218 score the Elwood project. Kenny said that process is tied up with some COHYST issues and other matters.

219  
220 **GC Decision** – *Berryman moved to approve the Phelps Canal and Elwood WSAs; Strauch seconded. Kraus*  
221 *abstained. WSAs approved.*

#### 222 223 **CNPPID Irrigator Water Leasing Agreement (WLA)**

224  
225 Kenny discussed the Irrigator WLA. It would be the third year of a pilot project. This is establishing a water  
226 market in Nebraska and paving the path that there can be a water market in Nebraska – water is a commodity  
227 itself. It is now starting to get traction and we can only do this if it is a full allocation year. This is the same  
228 agreement we have exercised for the past two years. Beardsley asked if the fee is the same. Kenny said the  
229 \$10,000 is the same. Stuart asked if Kenny could explain how the Environmental Account (EA) is credited  
230 through this agreement. Kenny said the EA was part of the original ante-in to the Program. That is storage  
231 volume of 100,000 acre-feet in Lake McConaughy. If space is available, up to 200,000 acre-feet can be  
232 used but it is the first to spill in Lake McConaughy fills. This water would be credited on October 1  
233 assuming there is space available in the EA. That is generally never a problem. Once it is in the EA, the EA  
234 Manager (Hines) makes the determination as to when releases will be made. Thabault asked about the mid-  
235 season change if there is a full allocation to begin with but conditions change. Steinke said such conditions  
236 are highly unlikely but Central would have to adjust the amount of water available if an allocation change  
237 occurred late in the year. Kenny said if there is an extraordinarily rare event this might happen but it means  
238 the Program is treated no differently than the irrigators. Kenny said this is protection for the Program too.  
We won't be completely kicked out of the market, instead we will just have a reduced amount.



239 **GC Decision** – *LaBonde moved to approve the Irrigator WLA; Thabault seconded. Kraus abstained. WLA*  
240 *approved.*

241  
242 **PRRIP Economic Impact**

243 Oamek delivered a presentation on the EDO white paper on PRRIP economic impacts. Zayac asked why  
244 the impact to groundwater irrigators shows up as being higher with the Program. Oamek said that is  
245 attributable to a timing issue related to implementation of LB 962 and a reduction in irrigated acres, but  
246 that this was going to be re-examined as the timing had not played out as originally thought. Zayac asked  
247 how this is determined. Oamek said three ways: 1) direct impact to irrigators; 2) indirect impacts; and 3)  
248 fiscal impacts (money contributed to local government). Thabault asked how we can capture the last slide  
249 a little better from a quantitative perspective (recreational access, hunting, tourism, local dollars for habitat  
250 restoration work, etc.). Oamek said that is something we will also work on.

251  
252 **WAP Projects Update**

253 Werbylo, Engelbert, and Cambridge provided an update on the broad-scale recharge project at Cottonwood  
254 Ranch.

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256 Kenny said there would be a delay in announcing the contractor for the slurry wall project until after  
257 Executive Session tomorrow.

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259 **Meeting adjourned at 5:35 PM Central Time.**



**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2017**

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**Welcome & Administrative**

Beardsley called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM Central Time. The group proceeded with introductions.

**PRRIP First Increment Extension**

LaBonde discussed the status of the First Increment Extension. The states wrapped up their portion of the Extension at the June 2017 GC meeting and now the federal portion of the process through NEPA is underway. Merrill provided an update on next steps in the NEPA process. Rabbe said the Service will be conducting a formal consultation that will end up with a Final Supplemental Biological Opinion.

**PRRIP Web Site & Database**

Farnsworth discussed the status of the PRRIP web site and database and next steps. The EDO learned that our current web site is running on very old technology and it can no longer be updated. We now propose to develop a RFP for the GC to review and approve so that we can do a complete refresh on the web site and database. Farnsworth said the GC should think about a selection panel and appoint at least some people with an IT background. At first glance, the cost is looking like it will be between \$200,000-\$400,000 with potentially lower maintenance costs into the future than we have now. This fits within the budget estimated for this work into the Extension. Rabbe asked if as the web site is being developed, is there any plan to have committee involvement to help map that out. Thabault said it could be something like a User Input Panel. Farnsworth agreed that would be a good step. Merrill said we will have to ensure that the new site will work with federal functionality. Farnsworth said that will happen. Beardsley asked if we have done public outreach on what people would like to see. Farnsworth said no. Beardsley said we might want to consider that as the web site is built.

**Public Comment**

Beardsley asked for public comment. None offered.

**Executive Session**

*Czaplewski moved to enter Executive Session; Strauch seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 8:20 AM Central Time.*

*LaBonde moved to end Executive Session; Ament seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 10:21 AM Central Time.*

**PRRIP Executive Session Motions**

**GC Decision** – *Taddicken moved to approve the EDO entering into a management agreement for Tract 1718 to develop a MCA tern/plover island; LaBonde seconded. Motion approved.*

**Future Meetings & Closing Business**

*Upcoming GC meetings:*

- 2017 AMP Reporting Session – **October 17, 2017 @ Omaha, NE**
- GC Special Session (FY18 Budget) – **November 14, 2017 @ Denver, CO**
- GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 5-6, 2017 @ Denver, CO**

**Meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM Central Time.**



307 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from September 12-13, 2017 GC Quarterly Meeting**

- 308 1) Approved the June 6-7, 2017 GC Quarterly Meeting minutes and the August 8, 2017 GC Conference  
309 Call minutes.
- 310 2) Tabled discussion of PRRIP Funding related to a potential government shutdown until the December  
311 GC meeting.
- 312 3) Approved the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommendation to accept the WEST Report  
313 (Correlates of Whooping Crane Habitat Selection and Trends in Use in the Central Platte River) and  
314 the PRRIP Whooping Crane Habitat Synthesis Chapters, revised by the Executive Director’s Office in  
315 response to peer review comments and TAC comments, as FINAL. These documents are approved by  
316 the Governance Committee as final with the understanding they will be used for decision-making  
317 purposes, and with the understanding the revised documents and all associated peer review documents  
318 will be made available to the public and posted on the Program web site.
- 319 4) Approved development of publication manuscripts for WC Habitat Synthesis Chapters 2 and 3, subject  
320 to TAC and GC review and approval for final publication.
- 321 5) Tabled further discussion of the Cottonwood Ranch WSA until issues are resolved around certainty,  
322 assignment, use of the land, and other items discussed today.
- 323 6) Approved the Phelps Canal and Elwood WSAs.
- 324 7) Approved the Irrigator WLA.
- 325 8) Approved the EDO entering into a management agreement for Tract 1718 to develop a MCA  
326 tern/plover island.