





**TUESDAY, JUNE 12, 2018**

**Welcome & Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 2:11 PM Mountain Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

**GC Decision – LaBonde moved to approve the following GC Minutes; Ament seconded. Minutes approved.**

- *March 13-14, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting, as amended by the State of Colorado.*
- *April 20, 2018 GC Executive Session Conference Call.*
- *April 30, 2018 GC Executive Session Conference Call.*
- *May 29, 2018 GC Executive Session Conference Call.*

**Program Committee Updates**

*Land Advisory Committee (LAC)*

Czaplewski provided an update on the latest LAC activities. The LAC met on April 2 and on May 16-17. The main items of discussion include review of the Public Access Program with recommended changes; Land Management Plan updates; and a land tour (at the May meeting).

*Water Advisory Committee (WAC)*

Turner provided an update on the latest WAC activities. The WAC met on May 1. The main items of discussion include several WAP project updates; reporting guidelines for water leasing projects; Phelps County canal groundwater recharge report; WAP fact sheets being prepared by the EDO; COHYST; state and federal depletion plans; and a water project tour.

*Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)*

Merrill provided an update on the latest TAC activities. The TAC met on May 10. The main discussion items include whooping crane monitoring, sediment augmentation, recommended PRRIP publications, Dippel off-channel sand and water design, and pallid sturgeon.

*Finance Committee (FC)*

LaBonde said the FC had not met since the last GC meeting. Farnsworth requested a short FC meeting at the conclusion of the GC meeting today or tomorrow for consideration of two items.

**Program Outreach Update**

*PRESENTATIONS*

- Dave Baasch presented on *Habitat Selection by Whooping Cranes within the Platte River Valley and the Migration Corridor*, at the Audubon Crane Festival on March 24, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Patrick Farrell presented on *Habitat Selection by Sandhill Cranes within the Platte River Valley*, at the Audubon Crane Festival on March 24, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska.
- Jason Farnsworth presented on Platte River water accounting and ways that future water management activities may influence crane habitat at Rowe Sanctuary on March 31, 2018.
- Patrick Farrell presented on *Sandhill Crane Roosting Habitat and River Flows*, at the Platte River Basin Ecosystem Symposium on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center.
- David Baasch presented two sessions at the Platte River Basin Ecosystem Symposium on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at the Crane Trust Nature and Visitor Center. The first session is *Whooping Crane Habitat along the Big Bend of the Platte River* and the second is *Least Tern and Piping Plover Nesting Ecology in Off-channel Habitats*.

47 EXHIBITS/SPONSORSHIPS

48 • The Program exhibited at the Audubon Crane Festival March 22-24, 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska. We  
49 made 134 contacts.

50 • The Program was a Station Sponsor for the 2018 Nebraska Envirothon, which was held on April 25<sup>th</sup>,  
51 2018 at the Niobrara State Park in Niobrara, NE. The Envirothon has high school teams competing in  
52 seven areas of environmental studies; soils, aquatics, forestry, wildlife, range, invasive species, and  
53 current environmental policy.

54 • The Program sponsored the school days of the Fort Kearney Outdoor Expo on May 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
55 in Kearney, Nebraska. The school days provides more than 50 hands-on educational activities and  
56 demonstrations to connect youth to the great outdoors. The school days are attended by more than 2,000  
57 area students.

58 UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS/EXHIBITS

60 • Jason Farnsworth will be part of a panel on Platte River Stewardship at Rowe Sanctuary on June 20,  
61 2018. The panel is part of a class for Senior College of Central Nebraska.

62 • Jason Farnsworth will be presenting a Program update at the North Platte stop of the Nebraska Water  
63 Tour on June 26, 2018.

64 • Don Ament will be presenting on *The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program and Ag*, at the  
65 Colorado Ag Water Alliance 2018 Ag Water Tour in Sterling, Colorado on July 12, 2018.

66 MEDIA/OTHER

68 • After the March 2018 Governance Committee meeting, the Kearney Hub published an article regarding  
69 the Program's Broad Scale Recharge and Slurry Wall projects and pending construction.

70 • The Kearney Hub published an article on March 23, 2018 regarding Program and Program partners  
71 habitat work for whooping cranes and the resulting whooping cranes that utilized the habitat in March.  
72 Dave Baasch was interviewed for the article.

73 • Rowe Sanctuary was featured in an article in the Kearney Hub Weekend Natural Resources section  
74 (April 7-8, 2018) regarding their celebration of "American's Greatest Migration" and the 25<sup>th</sup>  
75 anniversary of the Nebraska Environmental Trust. Habitat work and management by Rowe and its  
76 partners that benefits cranes was the primary focus of the article.

77 • The Platte Basin Timelapse Project was featured in an article in the Kearney Hub Weekend Natural  
78 Resources section (April 21-22, 2018). Michael Forsberg was interviewed and provided information  
79 about the project and the 50 cameras tracing the river from the Rocky Mountain headwaters to where  
80 the Platte flows into the Missouri River. The Program is a sponsor of the project.

81 • The North Platte Telegraph published an article on May 22, 2018 regarding the work being done on the  
82 North Platte river related to the choke point. Jason Farnsworth and Justin Brei were interviewed for the  
83 article.

84 • On June 3, 2018 The World Theatre in Kearney, Nebraska had the premiere screening of "*Follow the  
85 Water*." The documentary follows photographer Michael Forsberg and videographer Pete Stegen as  
86 they travel 1,300 miles by bike, canoe and foot from one end of the Platte River Basin to the other.  
87 NET Producer Christine Lesiak as well as Forsberg and Stegen were in attendance to answer audience  
88 questions after the screening. The film was dedicated in memory of Jerry Kenny.

89 **PRRIP FY18 Budget and Work Plan**

90 Farnsworth discussed the status of the FY18 budget.

91 **PRRIP Indexing**

92 Merrill discussed the indexing worksheet. The new Program cash ceiling is \$214 million.

95 **PRRIP First Increment Extension**

96 LaBonde discussed the status of the Pathfinder proposal project. Wyoming does not believe it is appropriate  
97 to bring this project forward, though Wyoming does support extension of the Program. The draft legislation  
98 has been revised to remove this proposal. The legislation has been transmitted to the Wyoming  
99 Congressional delegation. Discussions continue about whether that legislation can be moved forward this  
100 year. Ament said Colorado has run this through the Governor's office and the Governor approves of the  
101 Extension. Ament sent a letter to the Colorado Congressional delegation explaining the purpose of this.  
102 Brown said she and La have been working with the Governor's office and handed off the proposed  
103 legislation to the Colorado delegation last week. Sen. Gardner is in contact with Sen. Barrasso's office to  
104 determine an initial path through the Senate. Kraus asked about the Upper Colorado River program funding  
105 bill. La said that bill was moving on the House side and there may be a Senate hearing this week on that  
106 bill. Fassett said Gov. Ricketts has talked to the Nebraska Congressional delegation about this and Fassett  
107 has received numerous letters of support for the Extension from Nebraska parties.

108  
109 Merrill discussed the public meetings for the NEPA process. Reclamation has received some comments on  
110 the proposed Extension and is now in a holding pattern while the formal consultation process continues  
111 with the Service. Thabault said the Service is running a little behind but there will be an internal review  
112 draft of the biological opinion this week and he hopes to transmit a draft to Reclamation by the end of June.  
113 The plan is to get back with this group (GC) in July to discuss the draft biological opinion. Thabault hopes  
114 for a final biological opinion transmitted to Reclamation by August. Merrill said that would mean the NEPA  
115 process would conclude in September of this year. Fassett asked if briefings up through the departments  
116 have occurred. Thabault said there have been paper briefings to Service leaders in Headquarters, having a  
117 draft biological opinion will precipitate more formal discussions. Merrill said he and Beardsley have briefed  
118 the Commissioner and Merrill said he briefed the Assistant Secretary and both briefings were received very  
119 well. Merrill said they are looking at a GC meeting in Denver the last half of July to discuss the draft  
120 biological opinion.

121  
122 Taddicken asked if it would be valuable to have Audubon's National Policy Team talk to members of  
123 Congress about supporting the legislation. LaBonde and Ament suggested that supporting parties write  
124 letters of support to their members of Congress. Fassett that would be most helpful once the path through  
125 Congress is identified.

126 **PRRIP Pallid Sturgeon Process**

127 Smith discussed the status of the Pallid Sturgeon Process and work done since the September 2017 GC  
128 workshop. Barels suggested that at the September 2018 GC meeting, the ED should go through the details  
129 of the Pallid Sturgeon White Paper and provide a clear synopsis of where we are at. Additionally, the EDO  
130 should also consider bringing Program hydrology back into the discussion and may need to look at things  
131 other than connectivity. He also stated that the Program should be careful about bringing Missouri River  
132 thinking to the Platte and find a way to fit into that pallid sturgeon work and not be consumed by it. Thabault  
133 agreed and said the Program should find opportunities to leverage Missouri River work and partnerships to  
134 the benefit of the Program. La said that when the GC talked about this again in September, the EDO should  
135 provide some insight to the GC as to where things stand with the other two objectives identified by the GC  
136 as priorities during the September 2017 workshop. Farnsworth said the objective for the EDO white paper  
137 on pallid sturgeon was to look into the Extension and how the Program might spend money and resources  
138 to get answers to questions important to the Program. Smith said the EDO will be working with Compass  
139 during the summer to do more strategic thinking about next steps with pallid sturgeon and will come back  
140 to the GC at the September meeting with a more robust discussion.

142 **PRRIP Water Action Plan (WAP) Projects**

143 Farnsworth led a discussion of the status of WAP projects. Brown said it might be helpful to add some  
144 clarifying language from the Extension document that specifies the goal of reaching 120,000 acre-feet as  
145 early as possible during the Extension.

146 ***Cottonwood Ranch (CWR) Broad-Scale Recharge (BSR)***

147 Werbylo gave a presentation on the status of the CWR BSR.

149 ***CNPPID Water Service Agreement (WSA)***

150 Farnsworth discussed the Water Service Agreement with CNPPID for water delivery to this project. Kraus  
151 said after reviewing the NPPD agreement for land use, he now has questions about what is going on with  
152 assignment of the project if the Program goes away. The main concern is what happens if no Program  
153 signatory accepts assignment of the project. Barels said if edits are made to this section in the CNPPID  
154 agreement, then that changes the NPPD agreement. LaBonde asked about Exhibit F and priorities for excess  
155 flow. Within the body of the agreement it says Central may enter into agreements for additional uses of  
156 excess water, which will diminish the availability of Program sharing. Maybe future excess contracts should  
157 be noted as taking a lower priority to satisfy contracts that are already in place. LaBonde said this agreement  
158 should include language anticipating future extensions because the facilities we are building will have  
159 lifespans of 50 years or more and the Program will extend beyond 2032. LaBonde suggested adding  
160 language that specifies the agreement may be modified by up to three, 13-year extensions. Freeman said  
161 we could consider language that says the agreement is subject to any possible extensions or adjustments to  
162 the existing FERC license.

164 ***Cottonwood Ranch Land Use Agreement***

165 Farnsworth discussed the Land Use Agreement with NPPD for the CWR BSR project. Farnsworth agreed  
166 to work with NPPD and CNPPID to draft termination and extension language for both agreements that will  
167 be discussed with the GC via a conference call.

169 ***Slurry Wall Project***

170 Werbylo gave an update on the Lakeside Slurry Wall project. Wilson and Stine from JEO gave a  
171 presentation on project design. Rabbe asked how much water can be added to the river at one time from  
172 this project. Werbylo said 50 cfs for roughly two weeks. Strauch asked if we can start construction before  
173 the miner gets to the full western end of the pit. Werbylo said if he continues to mine he could be on site  
174 another 2-3 years.

176 **177 Meeting adjourned at 5:46 PM Mountain Time.**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 13, 2018****Welcome and Administrative**

Fassett called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM Mountain Time and the group proceeded with introductions.

**PRRIP WAP Projects Update*****North Platt Choke Point***

Farnsworth updated the group on the status of work at the North Platte choke point. Miller suggested the EDO discuss options for the choke point with the North Platte City Administrator and have him attend the September GC meeting for the more detailed discussion with the GC on this issue. Uriel asked if the road bridge is a key issue restricting flow. Farnsworth said it is more of a conveyance/capacity issue due to channel aggradation. Miller said there are some people in the area that believe the bridge is the key issue. Uriel said he wonders if we need to consider helping to rebuild the bridge which might help with capacity and sediment transport. Miller and Farnsworth said it does not seem as though the bridge is the key issue. Strauch asked if we would have to get all landowners to agree to flood easements or buyouts. Farnsworth said yes and that will be the challenge. Freeman said she appreciates the effort on this because it is so important in terms of the Program efficiently using water. We need a continued, deeper drill-down on this issue in the near future. Taddicken agreed. La asked if the new berm will wash out under a 100-year flood and if the permit allows that berm to be re-built. Farnsworth said yes.

***Scoring Subcommittee***

Farnsworth said we have projects that are ready to be scored so the GC needs to review the roster and update the subcommittee membership to help with that process. Farnsworth asked the GC to send him names for an updated list by the end of next week. LaBonde asked if there is structure to that committee in terms of membership and operation. Griebing said it was a mix of technical representatives to help with the process of detailing proposed project scores.

***Lakeside Slurry Wall Project***

Farnsworth asked for guidance from the GC regarding the next steps with this project and whether to move to full design. There appears to be only one other potential option for another similar project during the Extension (Stall property north of current proposed project). Werbylo and Farnsworth said that would mean with this concept, at the end of the Extension we might be looking at about 4,000 acre-feet at a cost of roughly \$16 million. One option would be to turn this property into the last tern and plover OCSW habitat site and re-task JEO to design recapture well networks for CWR BSR and possibly Elwood recharge. Rabbe asked how much controllable water releases the Program would get out of the recapture well networks. Werbylo said probably in the ballpark of 10 cfs unless we build a larger network that might get us up to 40 cfs. Farnsworth said from a score perspective that would be about 4,000 cfs annually. Farnsworth said that one of the limitations we are running up against for slurry walls is capacity loss on projects due to spoil from the mining operation having to be dumped back into the pit. La asked if there are concerns whether keying into the caprock won't really work. Wilson said we believe it will work. Taddicken asked if the fact that the miner has mined to the south border of the property will raise project costs. Stine said we are prepared to deal with that problem, the presence of the county road will be helpful with that.

LaBonde said we have been talking about building one of these as a proof of concept and he encourages the group to move forward with this to see what we are dealing with. He encourages the GC to go forward with the final design. Hines said the Service would prefer to spend the money on the choke point and recapture wellfields. LaBonde said we should do the wellfields as well. Hines said the \$11 million price tag is high and it seems like it should be spent elsewhere. Taddicken said when the GC talked about the proof of concept idea we thought we might have several replicates. Now, it appears it is a lot of money for one

50 project and there may only be one other possible replicate. We have a lot of water in Lake McConaughy  
51 that we can't use. Fassett said he is becoming more nervous about the level of expense for this project but  
52 it is hard to take any option off the table. LaBonde said working at the choke point means more water from  
53 the North Platte River and that water is going to become more expensive. Hines asked how much it would  
54 take to get to final design. Werbylo said roughly \$300,000 in addition to the \$180,000 already spent. Barels  
55 said he was thinking about the Program goals and what is in the Extension document. We still have the  
56 water goal to achieve for the Extension and he is concerned dropping a project like this now reduces the  
57 likelihood that we can achieve this goal. It seems like we don't have a choice but to move forward.  
58 Farnsworth said if all these projects come on board we will just get over the 120,000 acre-feet goal.  
59 Econopouly asked if we shelved the slurry wall money could we instead go back at look at some of the  
60 more expensive projects that we bumped out by the slurry wall projects. Farnsworth said that would mean  
61 re-looking at options like acquire and retire and mainly leasing water and moving it through Lake  
62 McConaughy.

63  
64 Berryman said if we build this and go into a Second Increment, costs will come down. Kraus said it would  
65 give you better ideas for the Second Increment even if we don't get another one done during the Extension.  
66 LaBonde said beyond proof of concept, this project would give us 9% of the water we are trying to achieve.  
67 Mehling said leased water costs every year and won't always be available. Merrill said we should look at  
68 dollars per acre-foot over the life of the project instead of just initial construction costs. Over 50 years, that  
69 might bring the true cost of this water down to a level that is more financially palatable.

70  
71 **GC Decision** – *LaBonde moved to authorize the EDO to move forward with the Lakeside Slurry Wall  
72 Project into final design and construction; Berryman seconded.* Merrill said Reclamation and the Service  
73 request this motion be tabled until the GC receives further information from the EDO and can discuss the  
74 matter at the proposed July 2018 meeting in Denver to discuss the draft Extension biological opinion. The  
75 GC agreed. Motion tabled.

76  
77 **PRRIP Publications and Peer Review**

78 Smith and Farnsworth discussed recent and proposed PRRIP publications.

79  
80 **GC Decision** – *Czaplewski moved to approve publication of three publications – whooping crane Chapter  
81 4; whooping crane diurnal habitat selection; Sandhill crane use; Strauch seconded. Publications approved.*

82  
83 **PRRIP Monitoring Update**

84 Baasch discussed the latest results of PRRIP whooping crane and tern/plover monitoring. Fassett said he  
85 likes having this update at GC meetings.

86  
87 **PRRIP Website and Database**

88 Farnsworth gave the GC an update on the status of the re-design of the PRRIP website and database.

89  
90 **Platte River Recreational Access (PRRA) Program**

91 Rabbe discussed the PRRA Program and results of user surveys from this past season and recommendations  
92 from the LAC for updating the Public Access Policy. Taddicken asked if the proposed changes needed to  
93 be updated to say only one other person can access a property with a user to retrieve a deer, etc. Rabbe said  
94 we should leave the language general in case it would take one or more people to help. Brown asked if we  
95 needed to consider requiring written approval for this. Taddicken said it would be difficult to always get  
96 written permission. Sackett said it will result in those people needing to get through the system which can  
97 be a burden, it seems like the best approach is to leave discretion to NGPC. But, you do need to ask



98 permission of the NGPC. Urie suggested we keep it a verbal approval unless NGPC reports that this is  
99 becoming problematic. Rabbe said NGPC is updating the website to provide a better user experience.

100  
101 **GC Decision – Czaplewski moved to approve the following changes to the Public Access Policy; LaBonde**  
102 **seconded. Motion approved.**

- 103 • *Reduce the total number of concurrent active reservations per user from five to three.*
- 104 • *Allow multiple youth to be added to the rifle deer season permit, with a maximum of one youth*  
105 *allowed on-site at a time with the permitted adult.*
- 106 • *Enroll the Dippel tract into the PRRA for all uses. The area of access will be the same as the area*  
107 *allowed by the Crane Trust for the Open Fields & Waters program, including river channel access.*  
108 *Permit numbers for the Dippel site will be four for the rifle deer season and six for general use.*
- 109 • *Remove Area K and the south portion of Area I from the PRRA at the end of May 2018, pending*  
110 *their sale by PRRIP. Area I will be reduced to five permits for general use and four for the rifle*  
111 *deer season.*
- 112 • *Update the Public Access Policy to give NGPC the latitude to grant additional access to friends or*  
113 *family of a permitted user, for the purposes of harvested game retrieval only and only during the*  
114 *rifle deer season, on a by-request basis using their best judgment in the spirit of the PRRA program*  
115 *and policy. Users must call NGPC's PRRA representative to request this access. A statement will*  
116 *be added to the permission slip notifying users of this policy.*

117  
118 **Public Comment**

119 Fassett asked for public comment. None offered.

120  
121 **Executive Session**

122 *Strauch moved to enter Executive Session; Taddicken seconded. GC entered Executive Session at 10:14*  
123 **AM Mountain Time.**

124  
125 *Ament moved to end Executive Session; Mehling seconded. GC ended Executive Session at 10:55 AM*  
126 **Mountain Time.**

127  
128 **Headwaters Conflict of Interest Policy**

129 Farnsworth discussed the outline of a Conflict of Interest Policy related to Headwaters and work other than  
130 serving as the EDO for the Program. Headwaters is focused on being independent “honest brokers” for the  
131 Program and takes very seriously any conflicts of interest or even perceptions of conflict of interest. It  
132 would be helpful if Headwaters had input from the GC as to how best to navigate situations if we are  
133 approached to do work or team on work. Hines said most of the issues relate to when a regulatory action is  
134 related to the Program. Farnsworth said we also know there are perception issues related to non-Program  
135 regulatory actions. Fassett said maybe Headwaters could come to a small committee of the GC to discuss  
136 issues when they arise. Freeman said it makes great sense to have a smaller group to help provide  
137 Headwaters with additional helpful input. Urie said maybe the Signatories would work best as that group.  
138 Farnsworth agreed that is how Headwaters would proceed.

139  
140 **Future Meetings & Closing Business**

141 Upcoming 2018 GC meetings:

- 142 ○ GC Special Session (draft Extension biological opinion) – July or August 2018
- 143 ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **September 11-12, 2018** @ Kearney, NE
- 144 ○ 2017 AMP Reporting Session – **October 16-18, 2018** @ Omaha, NE



145       ○ GC Special Session (FY19 Budget/Work Plan) – **November 13, 2018** (conference call/webinar  
146           only)  
147       ○ GC Quarterly Meeting – **December 4-5, 2018** @ Denver, CO  
148

149 **Meeting adjourned at 10:07 AM Mountain Time.**

150

151 **Summary of Action Items/Decisions from June 12-13, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting**

152 1) Approved the following GC minutes:  
153       • March 13-14, 2018 GC Quarterly Meeting, as amended by the State of Colorado.  
154       • April 20, 2018 GC Executive Session Conference Call.  
155       • April 30, 2018 GC Executive Session Conference Call.  
156       • May 29, 2018 GC Executive Session Conference Call.  
157 2) Tabled the following motion for discussion at the proposed July 2018 GC meeting – *To authorize the*  
158 *EDO to move forward with the Lakeside Slurry Wall Project into final design and construction.*  
159 3) Approve publication of three publications – whooping crane Chapter 4; whooping crane diurnal habitat  
160 selection; and Sandhill crane use.  
161 4) Approved the following changes to the Public Access Policy:  
162       • Reduce the total number of concurrent active reservations per user from five to three.  
163       • Allow multiple youth to be added to the rifle deer season permit, with a maximum of one youth  
164           allowed on-site at a time with the permitted adult.  
165       • Enroll the Dippel tract into the PRRA for all uses. The area of access will be the same as the area  
166           allowed by the Crane Trust for the Open Fields & Waters program, including river channel access.  
167           Permit numbers for the Dippel site will be four for the rifle deer season and six for general use.  
168       • Remove Area K and the south portion of Area I from the PRRA at the end of May 2018, pending  
169           their sale by PRRIP. Area I will be reduced to five permits for general use and four for the rifle  
170           deer season.  
171       • Update the Public Access Policy to give NGPC the latitude to grant additional access to friends or  
172           family of a permitted user, for the purposes of harvested game retrieval only and only during the  
173           rifle deer season, on a by-request basis using their best judgment in the spirit of the PRRA program  
174           and policy. Users must call NGPC's PRRA representative to request this access. A statement will  
175           be added to the permission slip notifying users of this policy.