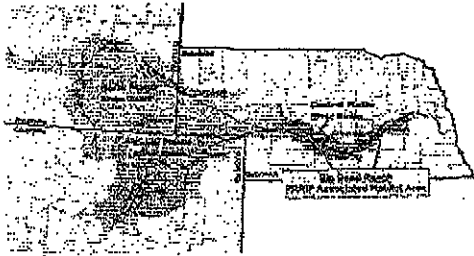


PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM



In 1997, Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska and the Department of Interior formed a unique partnership with the goal of developing a shared approach for managing the Platte River. Water users from the three states and local and national conservation groups joined the effort. Together, these stakeholders developed an innovative approach for improving the management of the Platte — for the health of the ecosystem and the people that depend on it.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program is the result of that planning effort. The Program is focused on implementing this shared vision for creating and maintaining habitats on the Platte.

Program Components

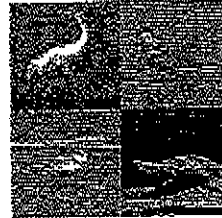


- **WATER:** increasing stream flow in the central Platte River during relevant periods
- **LAND:** Enhancing, restoring and protecting habitat lands for the target bird species
- **ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT:** Accommodating certain new water-related activities

Target Species

A primary focus of the Program is enhancing, restoring and protecting habitat lands for the following species:

- Whooping Crane
- Least Tern
- Piping Plover
- Pallid Sturgeon



Search this site...

Login

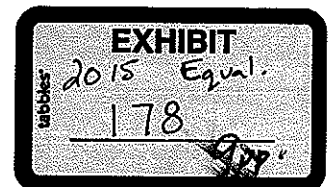
Recover My Password



[About the Program](#) | [News & Information](#) | [Public Involvement](#) | [Publications and Data](#) | [Contractors](#) | [Contact Us](#)

For more information, contact the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Office:
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6 / Kearney, Nebraska 68849 / Tel: (308) 237-5728 / Fax: (308) 237-4651

© 2015 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program



178:1

7/24/2015

PLATTE RIVER

RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Program Information

The program has three main elements:

- Increasing stream flows in the central Platte River during relevant time periods
- Enhancing, restoring and protecting habitat lands for the target bird species
- Accommodating certain new water-related activities

These elements will be implemented according to underlying principles that require interests in land to be acquired only from willing participants and that avoid increasing tax burdens to local citizens by paying taxes or their equivalent on program lands. Program lands will be held by a Land Interest Holding Entity (rather than by the federal or state governments) and will be managed under a "good neighbor" policy.

Background and History

Efforts to relicense Kingsley Dam on the North Platte River in western Nebraska, the presence of threatened and endangered species, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1994 Biological Opinion on Platte River operations provided the backdrop for conflict over the Platte's vital water. Rather than engage in years of courtroom battles over limited water supplies and individual river species, the governors of the three basin states joined with the Secretary of Interior in July 1997 to sign the "Cooperative Agreement for Platte River Research and Other Efforts Relating to Endangered Species Habitat along the Central Platte River, Nebraska."

As a part of the Cooperative Agreement, a Governance Committee (GC) was formed to lead the negotiation process. The GC consisted of representatives of the three basin states; the Bureau of Reclamation; the Fish and Wildlife Service; water users from each of the three basin states; and environmental groups. The work of the GC concluded in early 2006 with a Final Program Document containing direction for all key elements necessary to implement a program to manage land and water resources to provide benefits for four "target species" on the river in Nebraska: the endangered whooping crane, interior least tern and pallid sturgeon, and the threatened piping plover. The secretary of interior and the governors of Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska all signed the Final Program Agreement and the program commenced on January 1, 2007.



Program Goals, Governance and Management

The program is being implemented in an incremental manner, with the first increment covering the 13-year period from 2007 through 2019. The overarching goal of the program is to utilize federal and state provided land, water and scientific monitoring and research to secure defined benefits for the target species and their habitats in the central



Platte River. The program will also provide Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance for existing and certain new water-related activities in the Platte basin upstream of the Loup River confluence for potential effects on the target species. In addition, the program will reduce the likelihood of other species in the area being listed under the ESA. Further, the program will mitigate the adverse effects of certain new water-related activities through approved depletions plans.

It is important that the program establish and maintain an organizational structure that will ensure appropriate state and federal government and stakeholder involvement in the program. As during the Cooperative Agreement, the program is led by a Governance Committee (GC) consisting of representatives of Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, South Platte River water users, North Platte River water users, Nebraska water users, and environmental groups. The program also establishes key standing advisory committees to assist the GC in implementing the program. Those committees include the Technical Advisory Committee, the Land Advisory Committee, the Water Advisory Committee and the Finance Committee. In addition, an Adaptive Management Working Group (AMWG) has been formed to inform the GC on implementation of the program's adaptive management plan.

Program Area

While the program is designed to provide ESA compliance for existing and certain new water related activities throughout the Platte River basin upstream of the Loup River confluence, the land acquisition and management for the target bird species will occur in the central Platte River region (Lexington to Chapman, Nebraska). Program water activities will be designed to provide benefits for the target bird species in the central Platte region and for the pallid sturgeon in the lower Platte River stretch (below the Elkhorn River confluence). These areas are generally known as the "associated habitats."

Program Administration

Current Program Budget

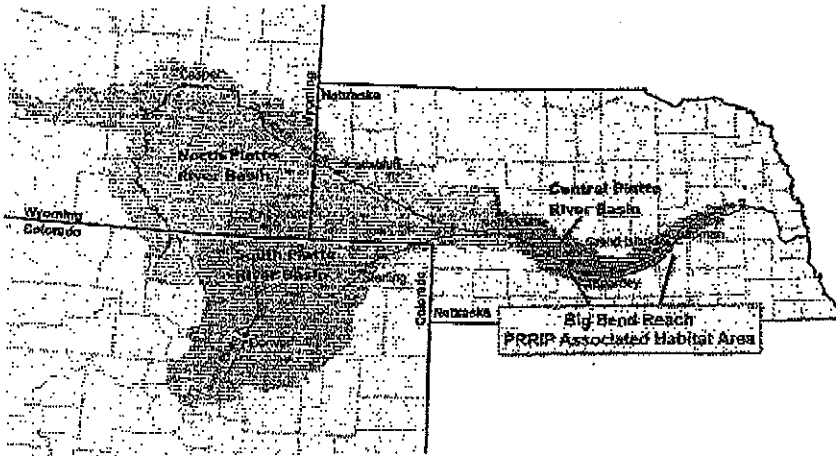
December 2 2014 FINAL Master PRRIP FY2015 Work Plan

Current Program Work Plan

FINAL Master PRRIP FY2014 Work Plan

178:2

Pages - Program Information



Program Costs and Cost Sharing

The program is estimated to cost roughly \$320 million in 2005 dollars with the monetary portion of that being \$137 million. The federal government will contribute \$157 million in cash, and Colorado and Wyoming will jointly contribute \$30 million. The remaining portion will come in terms of land and water from the states; Nebraska's entire contribution will be of this nature. The total cost of the program in terms of cash, water and land will be shared equally between the federal government and the states.

About the Program | News & Information | Public Involvement | Publications and Data | Contractors | Contact Us

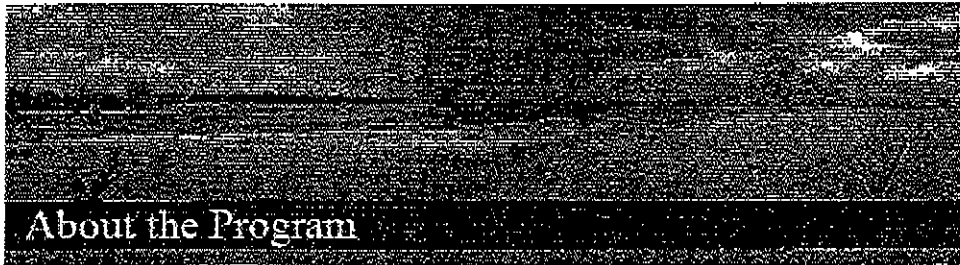
For more information, contact the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Office:
 4111 4th Avenue, Suite 5 / Kearney, Nebraska 68845 / Tel: (308) 237-5723 / Fax: (308) 237-4651

© 2015 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

178:3

PLATTE RIVER

RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM



About the Program



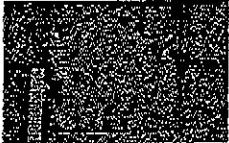
Water Plan

The program's objective is to use incentive-based water projects to provide sufficient water to and through the central Platte River habitat area to assist in improving and maintaining habitat for the target species. During the first increment, the program will focus on re-timing and improving flows to reduce target flow shortages by an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year. In addition to the improved flow conditions, small pulse flows in the spring are intended to create vegetation-free sand bars suitable for plover and tern nesting. Read more...



Land Plan

The program objective during the first increment is to protect, restore and maintain 10,000 acres of habitat. The program's long-term objective for land is to acquire land interests, restore where appropriate, and maintain and manage approximately 29,000 acres of suitable habitat along the central Platte River between Lexington and Chapman. Land acquired during this increment will be credited to this long-term objective as will certain lands meeting criteria established by the Governance Committee but are managed by other entities, such as environmental organizations or utility and irrigation districts. Read more...



Adaptive Management Plan

An Adaptive Management Plan (AMP), which provides a systematic process to test hypotheses and apply the information learned to improve management decisions, is central to successful program implementation. The AMP was a collaboration between program partners and cooperators under the guidance of experts from around the country and is centered on priority hypotheses that reflect different interpretations of how river processes work and the best approach to meeting program goals. Read more...

[Search this site...](#)

[Learn More About the Program](#)

Background and History

Efforts to re-locate Kingsley Dam on the North Platte River in western Nebraska, the presence of threatened and endangered species, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's 1994 Biological Opinion on Platte River operations provided the backdrop for conflict over the Platte's vital water. [Learn more...](#)

Program Goals, Governance and Management

The program is being implemented in an incremental manner, with the first increment covering a 13-year period from 2007 through 2019. [Learn more...](#)

Program Area

While the program is designed to provide ESA compliance for existing and certain new water related activities throughout the Platte River basin upstream of the Loup River confluence, the land acquisition and management for the target bird species will occur in the central Platte River region. [Learn more...](#)

Program Costs and Cost Sharing

The program is estimated to cost roughly \$320 million in 2005 dollars with the monetary portion of that being \$187 million. The federal government will contribute \$157 million in cash, and Colorado and Wyoming will jointly contribute \$30 million. [Learn more...](#)

[About the Program](#) | [News & Information](#) | [Public Involvement](#) | [Publications and Data](#) | [Contractors](#) | [Contact Us](#)

For more information, contact the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Office:
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 5 / Kearney, Nebraska 68945 / Tel: (308) 237-3728 / Fax: (308) 237-4651

© 2015 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

178:4

PLATTE RIVER

RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Water Plan

The program's objective is to use incentive-based water projects to provide sufficient water to and through the central Platte River habitat area to assist in improving and maintaining habitat for the target species. During the First Increment, the program focus will be on re-timing and improving flows to reduce target flow shortages by an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year. In addition to the improved flow conditions, small pulse flows in the spring are intended to create vegetation-free sand bars suitable for plover and tern nesting.

Flow re-timing will be accomplished in part by releases from the Environmental Account (EA) in Lake McConaughy. The EA is a portion of the water stored in Lake McConaughy that is set aside and managed by the Fish and Wildlife Service for the benefit of the target species. Other actions will include slightly revised operations of other water systems; general re-timing of Platte River system water projects and other project management actions; and implementation of new water supply and conservation projects in the basin. Success of the Water Plan also relies on implementation of agreed-upon New Depletions Plans in the three states and by the federal government in accordance with the program goal of offsetting new depletions to the Platte River that occurred after July 1997.

Water and the Endangered Species Act

The waters of the Platte River serve the people of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska in many ways. Federal and non-federal water projects in the Platte River Basin, including 15 major dams, provide municipal and industrial water supplies for about 5 million people, irrigate millions of acres of farmland, and generate millions of dollars of hydroelectric power. These projects also provide flood control, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat.

Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), federal agencies must ensure that water projects do not harm the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or adversely modify critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concluded that the threatened piping plover and the endangered whooping crane, least tern and pallid sturgeon, could be affected by water diversions and other changes in land use throughout the Platte River Basin.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) brings together the states (Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska), federal government, water users, and environmental groups to work collaboratively to improve and maintain the associated habitats for the designated species. The Program is intended to address the ESA concerns including loss of habitat in Central Nebraska by managing key land and water resources in the central Platte region and in the process avoiding harm to the lower Platte River stretch.

Changes in the Platte River

Historically, flow from snowmelt runoff was so large and full of sediment that it helped to remove vegetation from the Platte River and kept the river wide and shallow with bars stretches of sand. It provided a safe place for cranes and other birds to rest at night, allowing the birds to keep predators in sight. Terns and plovers also used the sandbars for nesting and raising their young.

Over the past century, 70% of the water that was originally in the Platte has been removed or retimed by storing it in reservoirs. Without these flows and the sediment load carried, sandbars and riverbanks have become overgrown with vegetation and the channels confined and narrow.

To restore the habitat, the Program will clear trees and other vegetation, increase flows at critical times, and augment sediment volumes in the river. The Program, together with the USFWS will also release "pulse flows" of water, a flow of 5,000 to 8,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) for three days in the spring, to help clear sandbars and maintain a braided river. Such pulse flows would on average, be planned for two out of three years. One (1) cfs equals about 450 gallons per minute.

First Increment Goals (2007-2019)

The overall water objective of the Water Plan for the First Increment is to improve flows by an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year (by reducing shortages to "target flows"). Target flows were developed by the USFWS and are the way the Program will compare river flows and measure progress.

One acre-foot is the amount of water required to cover one acre to a depth of one foot and equals about 325,580 gallons. For comparison, the capacity of Lake McConaughy at a normal full level is approximately 1,740,000 acre-feet.

The Program will increase flows through using existing projects and re-timing return flows to the river. Three initial projects: Tamarack I in Colorado, the Pathfinder Modification in Wyoming, and the Nebraska Environmental Account, will contribute to meeting the water objective. If put into action and operated as described in the Program Water Plan, the three projects will be credited for an average of 80,000 acre-feet per year toward the First Increment water objective.

The remaining portion of the water objective (50,000 to 70,000 acre-feet per year) will be met through a program of water conservation and water supply activities. Potential projects are identified in the Program Water Action Plan, which was updated in 2009. Under most circumstances, the water used for the "pulse flows" will also count toward the objective.

Water Plan

The Water Plan is the road map developed to meet the First Increment Goals. A study titled "Reconnaissance-Level Water Action Plan" was prepared in 2000 and utilized to formulate the Program's Water Plan. The study identified potential water conservation and water supply projects (such as storage reservoirs, ground water recharge, water leasing, and improved water management) and estimated the amount of water that could be re-regulated/conserved and credited toward the Program objectives. It described the process for moving projects through feasibility studies and implementation, with the approval of the Governance Committee. The study was updated in 2009 and focuses on water projects that can be implemented to achieve the First Increment Objectives.

Water Projects



178:5

New Water Related Activities

The flow objectives described above are intended to improve Platte River flows compared to flow conditions when the Cooperative Agreement was signed. In addition, water use has increased or will increase above 1997 levels and must be offset. The three states and the federal government each have plans ("depletion plans") that describe how they will offset impacts to target flows from water-related activities that were started after July 1997. Water used to offset these activities does not count toward the First Increment Goals because it is replacing impacts from new activities. Any changes to depletion plans must be reported to and approved by the Program's Governance Committee.

[About the Program](#) | [News & Information](#) | [Public Involvement](#) | [Publications and Data](#) | [Contractors](#) | [Contact Us](#)

For more information, contact the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Office:
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6 / Kearney, Nebraska 68845 / Tel: (308) 237-5728 / Fax: (308) 237-4851

© 2015 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

178:6

PLATTE RIVER

RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Land Projects

Land Plan

During the First Increment, the program objective is to protect, restore and maintain 10,000 acres of habitat. The program's long-term objective for land is to acquire land interests, restore where appropriate, and maintain and manage approximately 29,000 acres of suitable habitat along the central Platte River between Lexington and Chapman. Land acquired during the program's First Increment will be credited to this long-term objective as will certain lands that meet criteria established by the Governance Committee but are managed by other entities, such as environmental organizations or utility and irrigation districts.

The initial focus of land activities will be on acquiring interest in land considered part of "habitat complexes" of interest to the program—riverine habitat, wet meadow habitat and associated buffers. Noncomplex habitat such as sandpits (important to the terns and plovers) and wetlands (important to whooping cranes) will also be considered. Land-related activities will be guided by the executive director and the Land Advisory Committee in partnership with landowners along the central Platte.



Background

Under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), federal agencies must ensure that water projects do not harm the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species or adversely modify critical habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that habitat for the threatened piping plover and the endangered whooping crane and least tern, was significantly reduced by water diversions and other changes in land use through the Platte River Basin. In addition, the pallid sturgeon could be negatively affected by Platte River basin activities.

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) brings together the states (Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska), federal government, water users, and environmental groups to work collaboratively to improve and maintain the associated habitats for the designated species. The Program is intended to address the ESA and loss of habitat in Central Nebraska by managing key land and water resources in the central Platte region and the lower Platte River stretch.

Definition of Habitat Lands

The initial focus of the land acquisition process is on habitat complexes. A habitat complex consists of wet meadows, channel areas, and buffers. Channel area is the portion of the river that conducts flow and is bound on either side by stable banks or permanent islands with vegetation that obstructs view. At low flows it includes interconnected small channels and exposed sand or gravel bars and non-permanent islands. Wet meadows are areas with a generally level or low-lying undulating surface consisting of a mosaic of swales with wetland soils and vegetation and ridges with upland native or restored grasslands. Buffer is used to shield wet meadow or channel habitat areas from potential disturbances.

Purpose

The purpose of the Program's land plan is to acquire interests in lands between Lexington and Chapman, Nebraska, to restore them where appropriate, to maintain them, and otherwise to manage them so that they provide benefits to the target species based on the individual features of the land while using some or all of the characteristics of habitat complexes. Habitat acquisition is to be on a willing seller/willing lessor basis. All land acquisition and management decisions will take into account the costs, the relative benefit to the target species, and contribution toward fulfilling the Program's objectives. The Program will manage its lands in accordance with a good neighbor policy.

Budget

The First Increment (13 Years, 2007- 2019) land budget is \$39,131,000 (not including cash equivalent credits) in 2005 dollars. The budget covers acquisition of property rights and restoration and maintenance of Program lands during the first increment. The costs will also include tax payments and potential mitigation of adverse impacts.

Process of Land Acquisition

The Program is led by a Governance Committee (GC) consisting of representatives of Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Fish and Wildlife Service, South Platte River water users, North Platte River water users, Nebraska water users, and environmental groups.

The GC is assisted by an Executive Director and staff and several key standing committees including the Land Advisory Committee. The Land Advisory Committee provides advice and recommendations to the Governance Committee related to land acquisition, management and other land-related issues. The Executive Director's Office, working with the Land Advisory Committee, evaluates all parcels of property identified for possible acquisition. The evaluation process provides the information necessary for the Governance Committee to decide which lands to acquire.

Land Interest Holding Entity (LIHE)

Because the Governance Committee and Program are not legal entities that can enter into contracts or hold property, the Program uses a Land Interest Holding Entity (LIHE) (The Platte River Recovery Implementation Foundation) to hold title to Program lands, or to enter into leases, easements, and other contractual arrangements for Program lands. All purchases, leases, easements, and other land-holding transactions are made at the direction of the Governance Committee, working through contractual arrangements with the LIHE. The Platte River Recovery Implementation Foundation was established through the Nebraska Community Foundation. To avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the LIHE is prohibited from managing Program lands.

First Increment Goals (2007- 2019)

The overall goal of the Land Plan for the First Increment is protection and restoration of 10,000 acres of habitat for the three bird species. While the initial focus of the First Increment is on acquiring habitat complexes, non-complex habitat lands will also be considered. The Governance Committee will consider non-complex habitat lands that provide

178:7

Pages - Land Plan

demonstrable benefits to the target species such as sandpits and existing or restorable non-riparian wetlands and wet meadows within the Program's area of interest. No more than 800 acres of the 10,000 acres acquired during the First increment will be non-complex habitat unless it is determined through the Program's Adaptive Management Plan that additional non-complex habitat lands should be acquired.

[About the Program](#) | [News & Information](#) | [Public Involvement](#) | [Publications and Data](#) | [Contractors](#) | [Contact Us](#)

For more information, contact the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Office:
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6 / Kearney, Nebraska 68845 / Tel: (308) 237-5728 / Fax: (308) 237-4551

© 2015 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program



Landowner Information

One of the primary objectives for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program is to protect, restore where appropriate, and maintain at least 10,000 acres of habitat in the central Platte River area between Lexington and Chapman. This area of interest generally includes lands on and within three miles on either side of the Platte River. The Program can achieve this goal through a number of methods, including purchasing land outright, as well as through easements or leases.

Once an interest is acquired in a property, the Program may undertake restoration activities to make the land suitable habitat for the endangered whooping crane, least tern, or threatened piping plover. These activities typically include clearing and maintaining in-channel islands and sandbars free of vegetation, and/or clearing tall woody vegetation away from river banks to maintain wide open channel areas.

If you have land that you are interested in selling or leasing to the Program, please complete the contact form linked below.

[Landowner Contact Form](#)

[About the Program](#) | [News & Information](#) | [Public Involvement](#) | [Publications and Data](#) | [Contractors](#) | [Contact Us](#)

For more information, contact the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Office:
4111 4th Avenue, Suite 8 / Kearney, Nebraska 68845 / Tel: (308) 237-5728 / Fax: (308) 237-4651

© 2015 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program

178:9