



2017
BIENNIAL REPORT
18



PLATTE RIVER
RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

PROGRAM TARGET SPECIES



- Top Left Piping Plover | 1986 Federally Listed as a Threatened Species
Top Right Pallid Sturgeon | 1990 Federally Listed as an Endangered Species
Bottom Left Whooping Crane | 1967 Federally Listed as an Endangered Species
Bottom Right Interior Least Tern | 1985 Federally Listed as an Endangered Species

*Serving the threatened and endangered species
of the Platte River as well as the people who live here.*



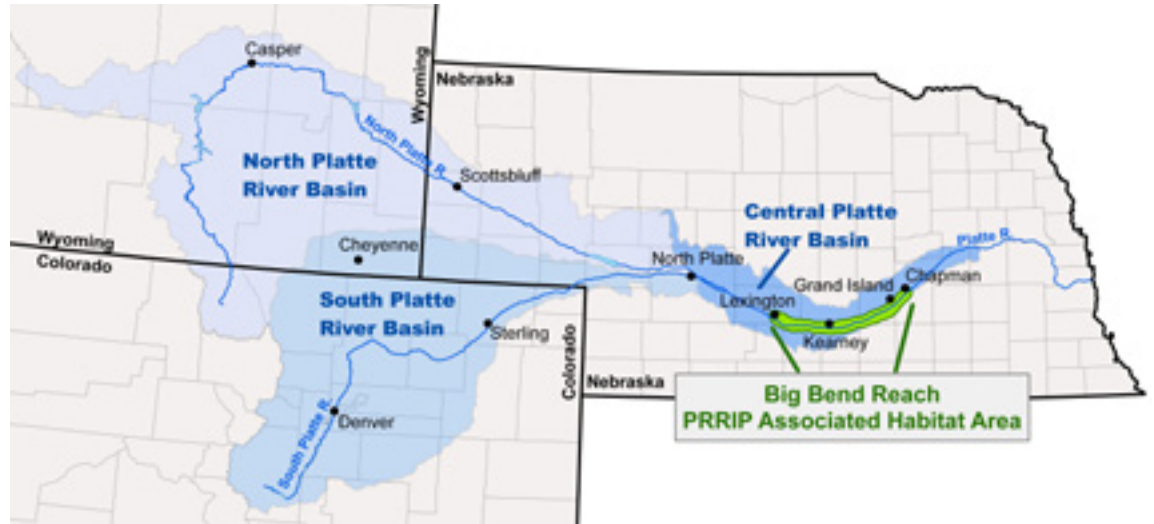
From the Executive Director

JASON FARNSWORTH

As we in the Executive Director's Office reflect on Program accomplishments over the past two years, we are continually reminded that the Program's success is a testament to the commitment and expertise of a broad range of stakeholders. Here are a just few examples of the many important contributions that deserve to be recognized.

- Program Governance Committee leadership has been remarkably stable during the First Increment of the Program. Many of the state, water user and environmental representatives that negotiated the Program in the early 2000s also negotiated the First Increment Extension. Most of these remaining original representatives have or will soon retire. They deserve to be recognized for their commitment which helped grow the Program from an air of guarded cooperation to a spirit of open and robust collaboration.
- The Governors of Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming have all expressed strong support for the Extension and have urged Congress to pass federal authorizing legislation. The strong coordinated support from the states is a testament to the hard work of Governance Committee representatives from the three states and water user groups that worked to educate new administrations.
- The NEPA process for the Extension was completed in 2018. The entire process went smoothly due to the professionalism of the Program's federal partners at the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as well as Reclamation's technical support contractor EMPSi.
- The Extension is necessary due to the difficulty in securing adequate water to achieve the First Increment water objective. Water users within the basin have recently come together to develop innovative projects such as the CPNRD surface water exchange pilot project that may make it much easier to meet the water objective during the Extension.
- Lastly, this is the first Biennial Report since the Program's Executive Director Dr. Jerry Kenny passed away unexpectedly in January of 2018. Jerry's calm leadership and acerbic wit were instrumental in helping the Program mature into a model for successful recovery programs. Jerry's legacy is writ large in Program achievements as well as the many people (including myself) that he encouraged and mentored along the way.

As I write this, Extension authorizing legislation has been introduced in both the Senate and House of Representatives. The Governance Committee has reconstituted the Adaptive Management Working Group to assist in updating our Adaptive Management Plan for the Extension and we are in the mist of constructing our first large-scale water supply project. Jerry's assessment in the last biennial report remains true: our sense of urgency persists, things continue to move quickly, and we maintain a well-founded sense of realistic optimism for the future.



Program History

On July 1, 1997 the governors of Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and the Secretary of the Interior entered into a Cooperative Agreement to address the needs of four threatened or endangered species using the Platte River Basin while allowing water development to continue to occur. The named species were the endangered whooping crane, least tern, pallid sturgeon and the threatened piping plover. The agreement proposed a framework for a long-term Recovery Implementation Program to aid these species. Initially, the agreement was for three years to develop a basin-wide cooperative program. However, negotiations regarding the details of the program took place from 1997 to 2006.

In late 2006, the governors of Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and the Secretary of the Interior signed the final program agreement, effective January 1, 2007. In May 2007 an Executive Director was selected and began his tenure with the program on July 1, 2007. On May 8, 2008 the President signed into law legislation to implement the federal share of the Program as part of the Consolidated Natural Resources Act of 2008. This legislation included authorization for the federal funding for the Program.

The Program provides Endangered Species Act compliance for water related activities within Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming, while working to recover the threatened and endangered target species. The Program was originally authorized for a 13-year First Increment, which began in 2007, at an estimated cost of roughly \$320 million in 2005 dollars with the cash portion being \$187 million. The federal cash contribution is \$157 million. Colorado and Wyoming jointly contribute another \$30 million. The remaining portion consists of land and water from the states; Nebraska's entire contribution is of this nature. The total cost of the Program in terms of cash, water, and land is shared equally between the federal government and the states. Federal funds are appropriated on a year-to-year basis and distributed as needed. Wyoming provides funds on roughly a quarterly basis and Colorado provides funds in lump sum blocks.

During the First Increment, Endangered Species Act compliance is measured through progress in achieving ten Program Milestones that are related to the First Increment Objectives. The First Increment land objective and associated milestone has been achieved. The Program currently protects 12,758 acres of habitat in the Associated Habitat Reach (AHR).

The First Increment water objective has not been achieved, nor has the Nebraska Depletion Plan. All State initial water projects and the Colorado, Wyoming, and Federal depletions plans are operational. The Program currently provides approximately 110,000 acre-feet towards the First Increment objective of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet. Additional water projects in the planning and/or design phase are expected to provide at least an additional 10,000 acre-feet of water. However, they will not be operational prior to the end of the First Increment in 2019 and will require more funding than what is currently available during the First Increment. Consequently, the water milestone will not be achieved.

The 2006 Final Program Agreement makes provision for the Agreement to be extended or amended by the written agreement of all signatories. The Signatories are proposing a 13-year Extension of the First Increment. The Extension will not change First Increment objectives or the implementation framework. Nor will it modify the milestones. During the Extension, the Program will acquire an additional 1,500 acres to create a new habitat complex as well as reach 120,000 acre-feet of water as quickly as possible. The additional time will allow the Program to complete and operate Program water projects in support of the research and monitoring that are necessary to determine if an additional 10,000 acre feet are needed and provide a sound knowledge base upon which to structure a Second Increment.

Executive Summary

This is the sixth accomplishments report of the Program, covering 2017 and 2018, and highlights the accomplishments achieved during that time. This report is organized to mirror the structure of the Program and is correspondingly divided into four main sections; Land, Water, Adaptive Management, and Program Administration and Outreach. This year, the report also includes information from the States regarding their contributions and accomplishments.

LAND

The First Increment land objective is to protect, and restore as necessary, 10,000 acres of habitat within the 90-mile AHR. Of that total, 9,200 acres are to be in the form of on-channel habitat complexes and the remaining 800 acres split evenly between off-channel palustrine wetland and tern/plover nesting habitat. To date, 12,784 acres have been protected through sponsorship agreements, purchases, leases, or perpetual easements from willing sellers/partners. The Complex habitat land goal has been exceeded. One hundred fifty (150) acres remain to fulfill the Non-Complex goal.

Since the last biennial report in 2016, a 784-acre tract was purchased in the Gibbon to Shelton bridge segment to form the Program's seventh habitat complex. Habitat restoration activities have been completed on all properties and the Program has transitioned to maintenance of restored habitat and general land stewardship. All of these activities are conducted under the good neighbor policy and the Program has maintained good relationships with tenants and neighbors. As part of this policy, the Program pays property taxes on all purchased lands totaling just under \$140,000 in both 2017 and 2018.

WATER

The focus of the Program's Water Plan in 2017 and 2018 was the continued development of projects that will cumulatively achieve the Water Plan objective of reducing shortages to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service target flows by an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year (afy) as measured at Grand Island, Nebraska. Projects to retime excess flows and the purchase or lease of water were the primary focus of these efforts. The initial state water projects—the Environmental Account (EA) in Lake McConaughy (Nebraska), the Pathfinder Modification Project (Wyoming), and Tamarack I (Colorado)—were completed by 2012 and are credited with providing 80,000 afy toward the Program's water objective.

Additional operational Water Action Plan (WAP) projects include groundwater recharge on canal systems owned by the Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD), Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), and Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID). CNPPID's Elwood Reservoir is also used as a groundwater recharge facility. In addition, the Program began construction of a broad-scale recharge facility at the Cottonwood Ranch Complex in 2018. Recharge projects jointly contribute approximately 11,000 afy towards the water objective. During the last two years, surface water leases have also become an important source of Program water. Leases with the State of Wyoming, CPNRD and CNPPID provide approximately 20,000 afy towards the water objective.

In addition to these water supply projects, the Program continues to work to increase flow capacity through the North Platte chokepoint to 3,000 cfs to allow larger flow releases from the

Lake McConaughy Environmental Account. In 2018, the Program constructed the State Channel rehabilitation project which was designed to eliminate nuisance flooding at 3,000 cfs in the vicinity of the chokepoint. In late 2018, the Program began working with the National Weather Service to increase flood stage as a result of the State Channel project.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Adaptive Management Plan activities in 2017 and 2018 focused on management action implementation, monitoring, and data synthesis. Notably, the Program became the first large-scale endangered species recovery program in the country to complete one full loop of the adaptive management (AM) cycle. In 2016, the Governance Committee (GC) used a Structured Decision Making (SDM) process to complete the final “Adjust” step of AM by agreeing to change management actions for terns and plovers based in part on the results of data analysis and synthesis from AM implementation. The Program implemented management actions for tern and plover in-channel and off-channel nesting habitat in response to this GC decision-making. Additionally, the Program completed synthesis and peer review of investigations related to the ability of Flow-Sediment-Mechanical actions to create and maintain highly favorable in-channel whooping crane roosting habitat, setting the stage for GC decisions related to management actions for whooping cranes. Systematic monitoring for whooping cranes, least terns and piping plovers, geomorphology, and vegetation continued in both years. Aerial imagery and LiDAR were also collected both years. The Program remained a Core Partner for the Whooping Crane Telemetry Tracking Project. Independent science activities included three peer reviews, two meetings of the Independent Scientific Advisory Committee, publication of eight (8) manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals, and Program-wide Adaptive Management Plan Reporting Sessions in both years.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND OUTREACH

Through 2018, the Program has expended over \$128 million. After the initial two years, expenditures have averaged about \$12.5 million a year, fluctuations driven primarily by land acquisitions and water project expenditures.

While all of the Executive Director’s Office is considered Administrative, staff efforts are largely focused on providing technical and organizational support for the planning and implementation of land, water, and adaptive management activities of the Program. Besides providing direct technical services, Program staff also provides technical support, oversight, and direction to all Program contractors.

Public outreach educates and informs the public about the Program and Program activities through a variety of venues. Since 2013, the Program has been one of the sponsors of the Nebraska Educational Television time-lapse project on the Platte River and a sponsor of youth outdoor education at Rowe Sanctuary, Prairie Loft and South Platte River Environmental Education. The Program sponsored five events in 2017–2018 and we made over 5,813 contacts at Program exhibits at various professional conferences and public events. The Executive Director’s Office staff presented on various aspects of the Program to a variety of audiences in 2017 and 2018 (22 and 16 presentations respectively).

While not directly an EDO function, one of the key benefits provided by the Program is a streamlined Section 7 Consultation process. During the First Increment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have provided 196 streamlined Section 7 consultations through calendar year 2018.

An aerial photograph of a wide river winding through a landscape. The river is blue and occupies the upper middle portion of the frame. The banks are a mix of sandy, light-brown soil and green vegetation. In the foreground, there are large fields of green crops, likely corn, and a field of golden-brown, harvested crops. The sky is a clear, bright blue. A white rectangular box with a thin border is centered over the middle of the image, containing white text.

**ACQUIRING, ENHANCING,
RESTORING AND PROTECTING
HABITAT LANDS FOR THE
TARGET BIRD SPECIES**



LAND

Objective Acquisition, protection and restoration of 10,000 acres of habitat for the three avian species

Key Concepts Willing seller/willing buyer

Good Neighbor Policy

Will not shift tax burden

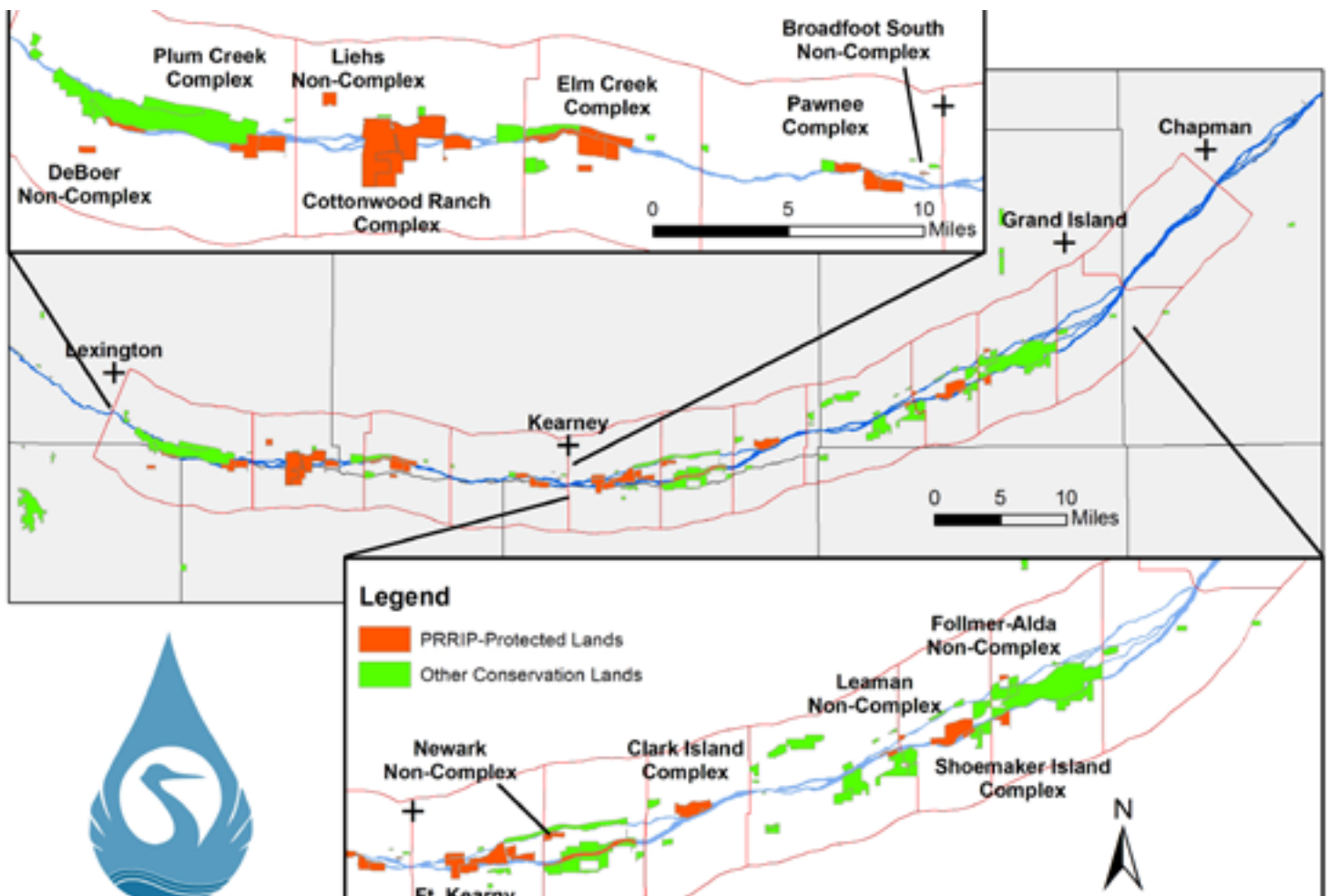
Highlights Acquisition of an additional 784 acres in the Gibbon and Shelton bridge segment, named the Clark Island Complex

All properties were evaluated for surplus potential to provide funds for purchase of Clark Island Complex. Three properties were identified and two were sold, reducing holdings by 645 acres

Widespread public support of Platte River Recreation Access Program (PRRA)

Taxes paid in eight Nebraska counties

PRRIP Acquired Lands and Other Conservation Lands



The Program evaluated a total of twenty-two potential habitat properties in 2017– 2018 and purchased a 784 acre tract in the Gibbon to Shelton bridge segment. In addition, all Program land was evaluated for surplus potential and two tracts of land were sold in 2018. At the end of 2018, the Program owned, leased or had management agreements on a total of 12,758 acres.

A new 784 acre habitat complex, named the Clark Island Complex, was established in the Gibbon to Shelton bridge segment in 2018. The Program also entered into a management agreement on a 10 acre tract at the downstream end of the AHR near the Chapman bridge.

The Program manages 12,113 acres of complex habitat distributed across seven habitat complexes and single complex habitat tracts in three additional bridge segments. The 645 acres of non-complex habitat consist of four off-channel sand and water nesting sites and two palustrine wetlands. In 2017 the Program paid \$139,245.08 in taxes and \$137,662.38 in 2018.

PRRIP LANDS AND ACRES

Name	Number of Acres
Cottonwood Ranch Complex	3,552
Fort Kearney Complex	2,190
Shoemaker Island Complex	1,411
Elm Creek Complex	1,438
Plum Creek Complex	866
Gibbon to Minden	834
Clark Island Complex	784
Pawnee Complex	742
Alda to Grand Island	286
Grand Island to Chapman	10
Total Complex Land	12,113
Total Non-Complex Land	645
Grand Total	12,758



Platte River Recreation Access

In Nebraska, 97% of the land is privately owned. The opportunity for recreational use of the land by the general public is therefore limited. The Platte River Recreation Access (PRRA) program is in its eighth year. The PRRA provides the public the opportunity to use selected portions of the over 12,000 acres controlled by the PRRIP during times when targeted species are not present. The PRRIP contracts with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC) to administer and enforce the PRRA. The PRRA website (www.platteaccess.org), allows the public to access and sign up for dates available to use open land along the Platte River. The sites are available to a limited number of people each day and are completely closed to public access during the target species protection periods. Permission slips must be in hand to access land, and enforcement is a priority in order to follow the Program's good neighbor policy.

Allowed activities include; deer hunting, turkey hunting, hiking, fishing, bird watching, mushroom collecting, and limited waterfowl and small-game hunting.

Following are statistics on usage of the land.

As of 2018, the PRRA had 19 sites and 6,205 acres available to the public

In 2017 the PRRA had 281 users and 374 users in 2018

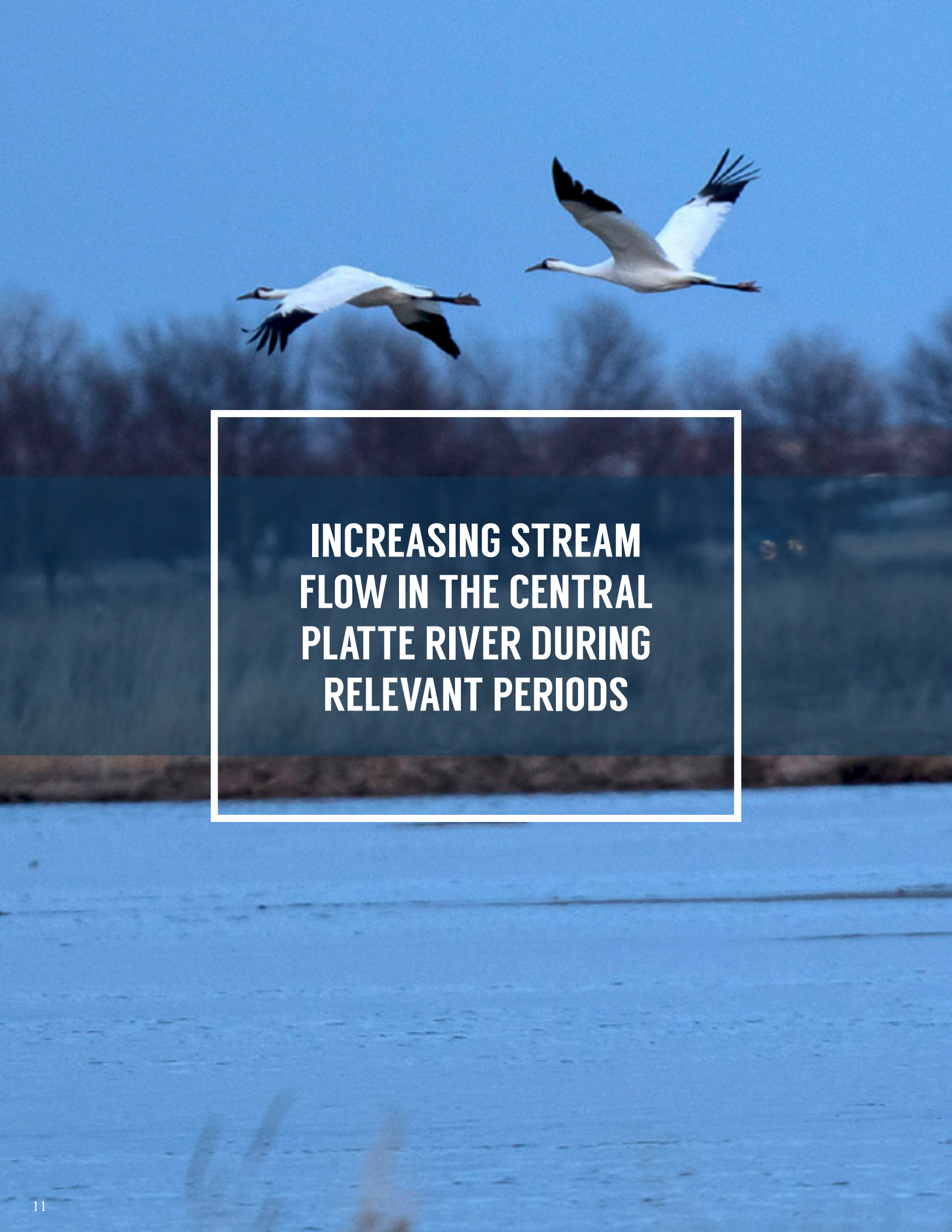
The most popular recreational activity is hunting, followed by hiking and bird watching (primarily in November, December and March)

Distance from the users' home to the site ranged from two miles to 990 miles

89% of users surveyed learned of the PRRA program by word of mouth and/or previous usage of the program

83% of users were moderately to very satisfied with their recreational experience on the property

76% of users would recommend PRRA sites to friends and relatives

A photograph of two white cranes in flight over a wide, blue river. The cranes are captured in mid-flight, with their wings spread wide, showing dark feathers on the underside of their wings. The background consists of a clear blue sky and a line of trees on the far bank. The overall scene is serene and natural.

**INCREASING STREAM
FLOW IN THE CENTRAL
PLATTE RIVER DURING
RELEVANT PERIODS**

WATER

Objective Reducing deficits to usfws target flows by average annual of 130,000 to 150,000 AFY at Grand Island
Short Duration High Flow (SDHF) for Adaptive Management

Key Concepts Addressing New (Post-1997) Water-Related Activity Impacts
Three States and Federal Depletions Plans
Addressing Existing (Pre-1997) Water-Related Activity Impacts
Three Initial Projects–Tamarack i (CO), Pathfinder Modification (WY), Lake McConaughy Environmental Account (NE)
New water conservation/supply projects
Short Duration High Flow (SDHF)

Highlights Design and permitting were completed and construction began on the first broad-scale recharge project, located at the Cottonwood Ranch complex in Phelps County, Nebraska.

The Program continued a successful pilot project to lease surface water from irrigators within the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) system, with increasing numbers of enrolled acres in each successive year of operation.

Retiming of excess flows through groundwater recharge during the non-irrigation season continued to be successful, with operations involving six irrigation canals and an existing reservoir.

Construction of the State Channel flood risk reduction project at the North Platte chokepoint was completed in 2018.

Water Objective

REDUCING SHORTAGES TO TARGET FLOWS BY AN AVERAGE OF 130,000 TO 150,000 ACRE- FEET PER YEAR (AFY)

A combination of reregulation and water conservation/ supply projects will contribute to Platte River streamflows during periods of shortage

Initial water projects by the three Platte Basin states—the Environmental Account (EA) in Lake McConaughy (Nebraska), the Pathfinder Modification Project (Wyoming), and Tamarack I (Colorado)—collectively provide 80,000 AFY toward the Program’s First Increment water objective. The EA was operational once the Program began in 2007; the Pathfinder Modification Project, including the Pathfinder EA and the Wyoming Municipal Account, became operational in 2012; and the Tamarack I project was partially operational at Program inception in 2007, with associated wells, recharge basins, and other facilities constructed between 1997 and 2014.

The remaining portion of the First Increment water objective (50,000 to 70,000 AFY) will be met through a diverse portfolio of incentive-based water conservation

and water supply activities, first identified in the 2000 Reconnaissance-Level Water Action Plan (WAP). Progress toward the development of these additional projects since the inception of the First Increment was reported in the 2009 and 2014 WAP updates. Program water plan activities during 2017–2018 focused on the operation of existing WAP projects and design of new water projects.

Implemented and Proposed Water Action Plan (WAP) Projects to meet Program objectives

Nebraska Groundwater Recharge

Excess flows diverted into canals and a reservoir in the Central Platte region seep into the underlying groundwater aquifer. This recharged water will gradually return to the Platte River as baseflow accretions over a period of months to years.

Recharge operations using the Phelps County Canal in the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) system were first implemented in 2011 and



continued to be successful through 2018. A total volume of about 6,950 AF was diverted into the canal for recharge on behalf of the Program in 2017–2018.

A well installed on Program property to recapture recharged water from the Phelps County Canal and enhance the project yield pumped 210 AF into the Platte River during times of shortage in 2017–2018.

Diversions of excess flows for recharge through the CNPPID's Elwood Reservoir continued during 2017–2018, totaling 26,400 AF for the Program.

The Program continued diversions of excess flows into the Thirty Mile, Cozad, and Orchard-Alfalfa canals for groundwater recharge under agreements with the Central Platte Natural Resources District (CPNRD). These diversions resulted in groundwater return flows to the Platte River of about 4,250 AF in 2017–2018.

Excess flow diversions into the Gothenburg and Dawson County canals resulting in 6,300 AF of net groundwater recharge were made after the end of the 2017 and 2018 irrigation seasons under an agreement with the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD).

Nebraska Water Leasing

In 2013, the Program signed an agreement with the CPNRD to lease the net consumptive use credit from transferred surface water rights under the Thirty-Mile, Cozad and Orchard-Alfalfa canals. For the first three years of project operation, the transferred surface water was returned to the Platte River at the canal headgates. In 2018, a pilot exchange project was successfully executed to instead credit 14,251 AF to the Lake McConaughy EA.

The Program continued the successful implementation of a pilot project to lease surface water from irrigators on lands within the CNPPID system. The enrolled irrigated acreage increased in each successive year, with 1,275 acres in 2017 and 2,055 acres in 2018. For each enrolled acre, 9 inches (0.75 AF) of water are credited to the Lake McConaughy EA after the end of the irrigation season.

In 2011, the Program signed an agreement with the Wyoming Water Development Office to lease water from the Pathfinder Municipal Account. A total of 17,700 AF was purchased by the Program and released from Pathfinder Reservoir under the Municipal Account Lease during 2017–2018. This water is recaptured in the Lake McConaughy EA before eventual release through the critical habitat reach further downstream.





WAP Projects in Development

Program staff continued to refine the broad-scale recharge (BSR) concept and pursued implementation of the first such project at the Program's Cottonwood Ranch complex. Engineering design and permitting were completed with the aid of outside consultants during 2017–2018. Construction began in October 2018, and the project is expected to be operational by the end of 2019. CNPPID constructed and will operate a pipeline to deliver water from the Phelps County Canal to Cottonwood Ranch.

Design of the Program's first slurry-wall gravel pit project at the site of an existing sand and gravel mine located southwest of Elm Creek, Nebraska, began in 2017 and

progressed nearly to completion by the end of 2018.

Program staff are also in the early stages of planning, designing, and permitting a network of recapture wells to pump water recharged through the Phelps County Canal and Elwood Reservoir to the Platte River during times when there are shortages to target flows. This will allow for more efficient use of those groundwater recharge projects.

The Program continues to pursue mutually beneficial partnerships with irrigation districts to contribute additional water to the Lake McConaughy EA and improve overall Platte River flow conditions.



North Platte River Chokepoint Capacity Enlargement Activities

The Program completed construction of the State Channel project at the North Platte chokepoint in 2018. This project will direct high flows away from flood prone areas and down a previously abandoned river channel. The Program continues to investigate other methods for increasing channel capacity and reduce flood risk in the area, including disking and vegetation removal to improve conveyance. A potential high flow release is being planned in order to test the status of the North Platte River chokepoint capacity.

The Program continued to support and collaborate with The Platte Valley and West Central Weed Management Areas to work toward control of invasive vegetation in the river channel from Lake McConaughy to Columbus, Nebraska. These efforts include spraying and mechanical efforts to kill and remove vegetation from the channel to restore conveyance capacity and enhance habitat.



**SYSTEMATIC PROCESS TO TEST
ACTIONS AND APPLY INFORMATION
LEARNED TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT
OF LAND AND WATER**



ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Objective Improve production of least tern and piping plover from the central Platte River Valley

Contribute to survival of whooping cranes during migration

Avoid adverse impact from Program actions on pallid sturgeon populations

Within overall objectives 1–3, provide benefits to non-target listed species and non-listed species of concern and reduce likelihood of future listings

Key Concepts All research tied to management actions

Scientific rigor is essential for meaningful learning

Developing useful scientific information to assist with decision making

Highlights Completed peer review of investigations related to the ability of the FSM actions to create and maintain highly favorable in-channel whooping crane roosting habitat.

Implemented management actions for tern and plover in-channel and off-channel nesting habitat based on results of Governance Committee's decisions from Structured Decision-Making process.

Published 8 manuscripts related to target species and Program management actions.



Monitoring

Whooping Cranes

Annual spring and fall migration monitoring in 2017 and 2018

Completed reports for both years

Terns and Plovers

Annual nesting season monitoring in 2017 and 2018

Completed reports for both years

Geomorphology and In-Channel Vegetation

Remote monitoring conducted in 2017 and 2018

LiDAR and Aerial Photography

Aerial imagery acquired in both 2017 and 2018

LiDAR successfully flown in 2017 and 2018

Bathymetric LiDAR successfully flown in 2018

Research

Whooping Cranes

Completed whooping crane telemetry tracking project

Developed manuscript to be published in 2019:

Heterogeneity in migration strategies of a long-distance migrant



Terns and Plovers

Completed extensive band re-sighting of terns and plovers on central Platte River during both years to track reproductive success, site fidelity, and survival over time (continue re-sighting efforts in 2019 and 2020)

Implemented a 2-year predator abundance study during 2017 and 2018

Implemented a 2-year predator fence study during 2017 and 2018

Developed manuscript to be published in 2019:

Comparison of survey techniques for documenting interior least tern and piping plover productivity along the central Platte River, 2013–2016

Wet Meadows Hydrology Investigations

Completed data collection during 2017 and 2018

Independent Science Review

Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC)

Two Independent Scientific Advisory Committee (ISAC) meetings in 2017 and 2018

Specific ISAC input on Program implementation of adaptive management, annual State of the Platte reports, and thinking about the next stage of adaptive management in the Program Extension

Peer Review

Completed peer review and secured Governance Committee acceptance of the whooping crane habitat synthesis chapters and the WEST Report



Independent Science Review, Cont.

Publications

Investigating whooping crane habitat in relation to hydrology, channel morphology and a water-centric management strategy on the central Platte River, Nebraska (Heliyon)

Sandhill crane use of riverine stopover sites along the central Platte River in Nebraska, USA (Western North American Naturalist)

Integrating species-centric and geomorphic-centric views of interior least tern and piping plover habitat selection (Heliyon)

Reproductive ecology of interior least tern and piping plover in relation to Platte river hydrology and sandbar dynamics: Response to the letter to the editor (Ecology and Evolution.)

Interior Least Tern and Piping Plover nest and brood survival at managed, off-channel sites along the central Platte River, Nebraska, USA 2001–2015 (Avian Conservation and Ecology)

Nest-site selection by Interior Least Terns and Piping Plovers at managed, off-channel sites along the Central Platte River in Nebraska, USA (Journal of Field Ornithology)

Reproductive ecology of interior least tern and piping plover in relation to Platte River hydrology and sandbar dynamics (Ecology and Evolution)

Interior least tern productivity in relation to flow in the central Platte River valley (Great Plains Research)

Implementation

Complex Management and Habitat Rehabilitation Actions

Implemented full-scale sediment augmentation operations in the south channel above the Overton bridge. Approximately 60,000 tons of sediment were augmented in both 2017 and 2018.

Completed “Restoration and Management Framework for PRRIP Habitat Complexes” in 2018



Plum Creek Complex management actions—Conducted prescribed fires on grassland areas in 2017. Maintained off-channel bare-sand nesting habitat on sandpit peninsulas in 2017 and 2018.

Cottonwood Ranch Complex management actions—Maintained off-channel bare-sand nesting habitat in 2017 and 2018. Implemented active pumping and structural improvements to improve wet meadow whooping crane habitat suitability and hydrology. Disked in-channel areas in 2018.

Elm Creek Complex management actions—Conducted prescribed fires on grassland areas in 2017. Disked in-channel areas in 2018.

Pawnee Complex management actions—Burned area cleared of trees in 2017, applied preemergent herbicide in 2017 and 2018. Disked in-channel areas in 2018.

Ft. Kearny Complex management actions—Conducted prescribed fires on grassland areas in 2017 and 2018. Seeded restored wet meadow with high-diversity, local ecotype forb mix in 2017 and continued active pumping to improve whooping crane wet meadow habitat suitability. Cleared trees and burn, buried tree piles along north channel from 2009 wildfire in 2018.

Clark Island Complex management actions—Conducted prescribed fires on accretion grassland area in 2018.

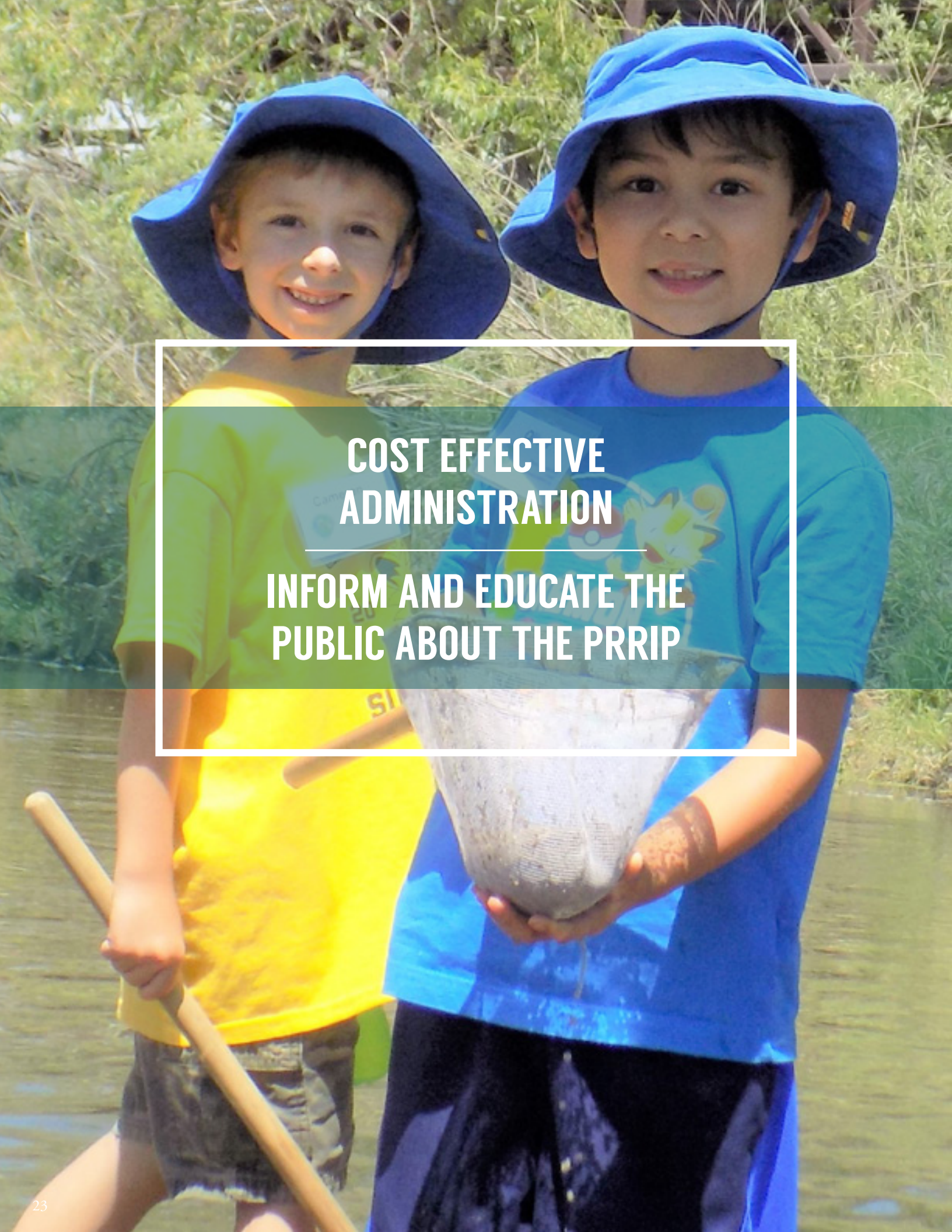
Shoemaker Island Complex management actions—Conducted prescribed fires on Binfield North and conducted in-channel river disking in 2017. Conducted tree/brush mulching within wooded channel to facilitate yellow flag iris control efforts.

Non-complex tern and plover habitat—Continued herbicide treatments and maintained bare-sand nesting habitat at Follmer Alda, Leaman East, Newark East, Newark West and Broadfoot South in 2017 and 2018. Cleared 7 acres of islands on the Penrose tract in 2017.

Non-complex palustrine wetland habitat—Completed evacuation of wetland habitat for whooping cranes at DeBoer and seeded DeBoer and Leihs with commercial wetland seed mix in 2017. Continued active pumping to improve whooping crane wetland habitat suitability in 2017 and 2018.

Planning

Adaptive Management Plan Reporting Sessions in 2017 and 2018—gathering of ISAC, Technical Advisory Committee, Governance Committee, Program staff, Program contractors, Special Advisors, and interested parties to discuss results of previous year's monitoring and research, data analysis, and data synthesis



**COST EFFECTIVE
ADMINISTRATION**

**INFORM AND EDUCATE THE
PUBLIC ABOUT THE PRRIP**



PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION & OUTREACH

Administration Highlights Total of \$25 million expended on Program with over \$128 million expended since 2007

Oversight of 231 different consultants, contractors, and vendors during 2017–2018 and 395 since 2007

Outreach Highlights Provided funding for experiential programs for children and youth that educated over 18,000

Over 5,800 contacts with the public at Program exhibits

The organizational structure of the PRRIP is different than many of the other existing Recovery Implementation Programs. The key organizational difference is that the actual day-to-day implementation actions are carried out by an independent entity, Headwaters Corporation (a private sector firm), rather than a government agency. The services of the Executive Director and Program Staff are provided through a contract with Headwaters Corporation. In most other recovery Programs, these implementation functions are performed by federal employees acting through their specific agency. This fairly unique structure was selected to truly embody the collaborative nature under which the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program has been undertaken.

Control of the Program rests with a group of stakeholders that prominently includes State and Federal representatives, water users and environmental groups. Governance of the Program is provided by representatives of the Department of Interior; the States of Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming; water users; and environmental groups.

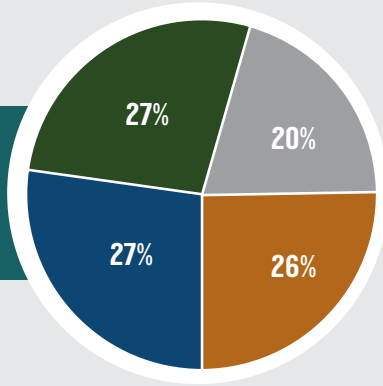
Represented in the Program's Governance and Advisory Committee structure are a broad spectrum of diverse stakeholders from a variety of organizations and entities, including: the Bureau of Reclamation, Fish and Wildlife Service, the State of Colorado, the State of Nebraska, the State of Wyoming, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Colorado Department of Water Resources, Denver Water, Greeley Water and Sewer Department, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District, Wyoming Water Development Commission, Wyoming State Engineers Office, Casper-Alcova Irrigation District, Goshen Irrigation District, Pathfinder Irrigation District, Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Central Platte Natural Resources District (NRD), Twin Platte NRD, Tri-Basin NRD, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, Nebraska Public Power District, The Nature Conservancy, The Audubon Society, and The Crane Trust.

Through 2018, the Program expended over \$128 million. The total expenditures by year are shown on the graph on the following page. After the initial two years, expenditures have averaged about \$12.5 million a year, fluctuations driven primarily by land acquisitions and water project expenditures.

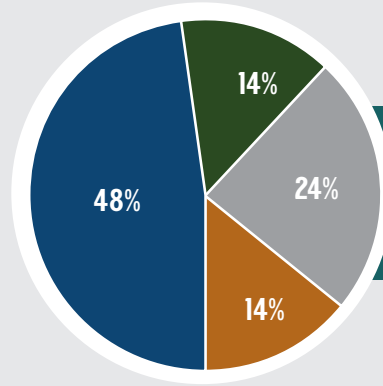
The series of pie charts on the next page provide a breakdown of the expenditures by category; Land, Water, AMP and Other (implementation support, administration, oversight and outreach costs). The charts tell a clear story. The distribution of expenditures in 2017–2018 show significant expenditures for water. This contrasts with the distribution for 2007–2016, when there is balance between expenditures for water, land and science. Expenditures in 2017 and 2018 foreshadow the ultimate distribution we expect for the First Increment spanning 2007–2019.

PRRIP EXPENDITURES

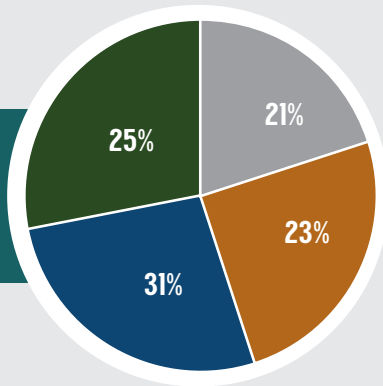
2007–2016 Expenditures



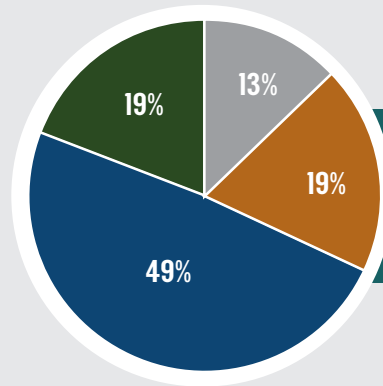
2017–2018 Expenditures



2007–2018 Expenditures



2007–2019 Estimated Expenditures



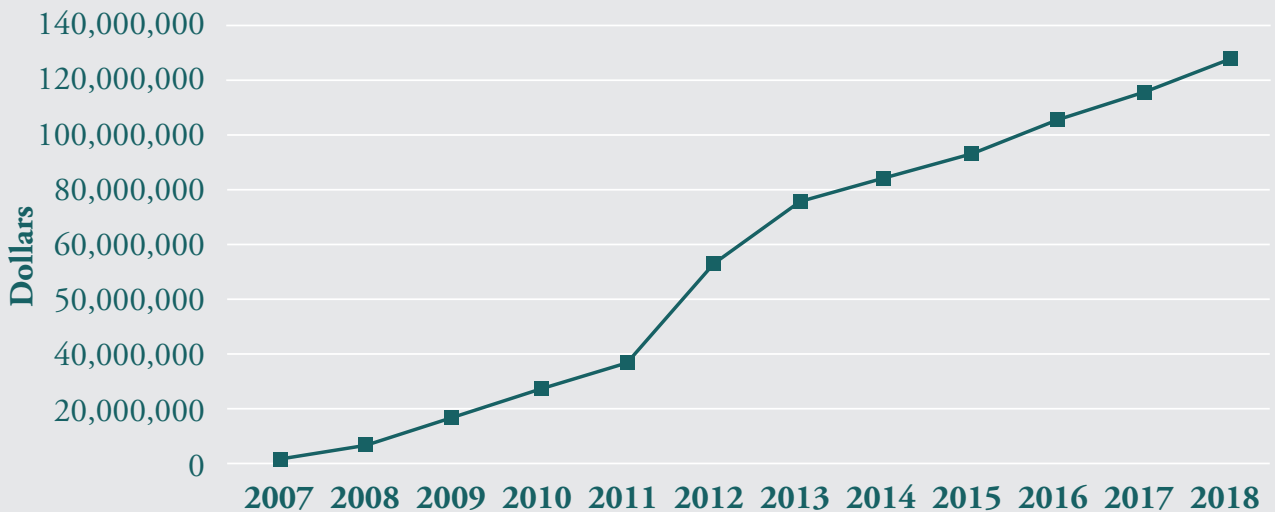
AMP

WATER

LAND

OTHER

YEAR BY YEAR EXPENDITURES



Outreach

The Platte Basin Timelapse Project

The Program continued funding of the Platte Basin Timelapse Project (PBT) in 2017 and 2018. The PBT is a partnership of the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Michael Forsberg Photography, and Michael Farrell Photography and Fine Art. The project has nearly 60 timelapse camera systems placed throughout the 90,000 square-mile basin, from its headwaters along the Continental Divide in the Colorado Rockies to the river’s confluence with the Missouri River on Nebraska’s eastern border. Each timelapse camera tells one part of the story of the proverbial drop of water as it makes a journey of roughly 900 river miles through the Platte River Basin. In 2017 Michael Forsberg and Pete Stegen followed the water; biking, hiking and canoeing from the headwaters of the North Platte River to the mouth of the Platte where it flows into the Missouri. The documentary, Follow the Water, showcasing their two-month adventure premiered in June 2018 in Kearney, Nebraska and was shown several times in Nebraska since its statewide release in 2018. The documentary was first broadcast nationally on PBS on Earth

Day April 22, 2019. In 2018 a PBT camera was installed at Cottonwood Ranch to replace other cameras lost to high flows. The PBT website also has an educational component with Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) based educational curriculum for late elementary, middle and high school science students. The curriculum includes lesson plans, learning objectives and handouts on subjects such as Platte River prairies, habitats & ecosystems. The PBT also has an internship program for college students and has three graduate students on the project. The website is www.plattebasintimelapse.com.

Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary

The Program helps fund the educational programs at the Iain Nicolson Audubon Center at Rowe Sanctuary in Nebraska. Rowe Sanctuary’s outdoor, experienced-based education programs provide children, families and adults with opportunities to experience the Platte Valley ecosystem and its wildlife by utilizing indoor and outdoor classrooms, viewing blinds, and trails that meander along



the Platte River, through wetlands, wooded areas and prairie remnants. Platte River Safari Camp is for children in 2nd through 5th grades. Campers take part in a variety of activities focused on the Platte River and surrounding areas that include natural and physical science, language arts, history, agriculture, music and art. Flying Higher Camp (grades 6th through 8th) is a hands-on ecology camp that takes campers into the realm of scientific surveys and identification. In addition to these camps, Rowe Sanctuary also offers outdoor classroom education and Rowe Adventures. In 2017, 145 campers experienced nature first-hand at a camp and 1,849 family members attended an educational program. In 2018, 130 campers experienced nature first-hand at a camp and 1,623 family members attended an educational program.

South Platte River Environmental Education (SPREE)

The Program continued funding in 2017 and 2018 for The Greenway Foundation's South Platte River Environmental Education (SPREE) program in Colorado. Over the course of its 44-year history, The Greenway Foundation has introduced tens of

thousands of children to the South Platte River through SPREE. On SPREE excursions children learn about the river, its role in Denver's history, and that the South Platte River was, and still is, Denver's most valuable natural resource. In 2017, SPREE educators guided nearly 6,000 learners on environmental education field trips along the most urban stretches of the South Platte River and taught nearly 1,000 children at three summer camp locations. In 2018, SPREE educators guided nearly 6,000 learners on environmental education field trips along the most urban stretches of the South Platte River and taught over 600 children at two summer camp locations. The program's largest impact is on the 5,700 students attending the fifteen designated SPREE schools that bring each kindergarten through 5th grade student on a field trip every year. These 15 Denver public schools represent a highly diverse and underserved population of students that often do not have the information or resources to participate in outdoor environmental activities. The field trips help these children build a connection to the River as well as the knowledge and skills that they will need to be active and engaged decision makers.



Prairie Loft

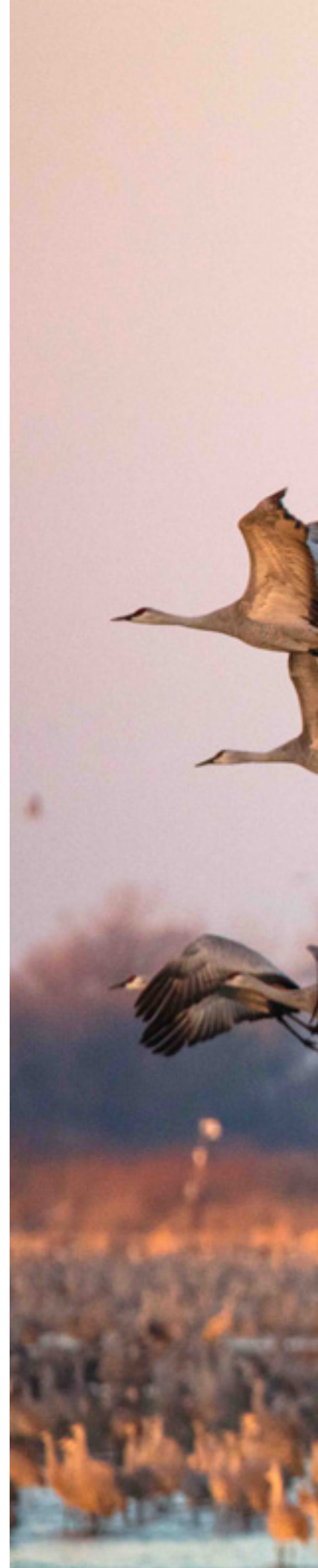
The Program helps fund the educational program of the Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor and Agricultural Learning in Nebraska. Prairie Loft's mission is to teach agriculture appreciation, outdoor education, cultural traditions, and the wise use of natural resources. Prairie Loft is helping to create systemic change in the wider Nebraska community by introducing teachers, students, families, and groups to the cognitive and physical benefits of spending time together in active outdoor learning. Education programs involve preschool, elementary and middle school students and their families through hands-on, place-based learning programs. Prairie Loft offers field trips, school programs, community events, monthly Family Outdoor Club programs, and summer camps including Outdoor kids Camp, Junior Farmhands Camp, and Grandparents Camp. Lessons use scientific inquiry, develop problem-solving skills, encourage social interactions, teach leadership skills, and engage creative thinking. Subjects include plant science, soils, water, food origins, and wildlife and habitat. Prairie Loft annually averages 10,800 visitors to their site and has provided off-site presentations to an additional 7,500 people. In 2017 attendance at Prairie Loft field trips and lessons was 2,365 students and 870 teachers/parents, in 2018 attendance was 2,442 students and 953 teachers/parents in addition to thousands more at community events and other programs.

Silverback Films

In March 2017 the Program, along with the Crane Trust and Rowe Sanctuary; hosted in their respective blinds on the river, videographers from Silverback Films who were working on their natural history series, Our Planet. The series highlighted some of the most important wilderness regions on the planet and the animals within them, from the perspective of their significance to biodiversity conservation. Silverback filmed the sandhill cranes on the Platte River as part of the Fresh Water episode of the series. The eight-part series, made in partnership with the World Wildlife Federation, will be broadcast on Netflix in 2019.

Symphony of Life

The Program funded two time-lapse cameras for the Symphony of Life project in 2017. The cameras were placed on Program property to capture the crane migration. The Symphony of Life is a project to visualize nature in North America in a way never seen before, through synchronized time lapse cameras in the 15 major eco-regions in North America. The video from the cameras will be used to help create a new type of map that shows nature events happening in each region of the continent. The user could also view a year's worth of synchronized time-lapse playing across the map and watch as the seasons change and migrations play out across the continent.





PROGRAM EXHIBITS & SPONSORSHIPS

2017 Exhibits	State	Contacts
4States Irrigation Council – January	Colorado	135
Colorado Water Congress – January	Colorado	425
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture – February	Nebraska	135
Audubon’s Nebraska Crane Festival – March	Nebraska	156
Kearney Children’s Museum – May	Nebraska	N/A
Husker Harvest Days – September	Nebraska	2,504
South Platte Forum – October	Colorado	188
Prairie Loft Harvest Fest – October	Nebraska	N/A
Kearney Children’s Museum – October	Nebraska	N/A
NE Water Resources Association/NE State Irrigators Association Conference – November	Nebraska	156

2017 Sponsorships	State
NRD Legislative Conference – January	Nebraska
Nebraska Environthon – April	Nebraska
UNL—Water & Crops Field Day – August	Nebraska

2018 Exhibits	State	Contacts
4States Irrigation Council – January	Colorado	186
Rainwater Basin Joint Venture – February	Nebraska	122
Audubon’s Nebraska Crane Festival – March	Nebraska	134
World O’ Water – September	Nebraska	N/A
Husker Harvest Days – September	Nebraska	1,400
South Platte Forum – October	Colorado	172
Kearney Children’s Museum – October	Nebraska	N/A
NE Water Resources Association/NE State Irrigators Association Conference – November	Nebraska	100

2018 Sponsorships	State
Nebraska Environthon – April	Nebraska
Kearney Outdoor Expo	Nebraska

Staff Public Presentations

Audience	2017	2018
Irrigators	1	1
Professional Associations	4	2
Natural Resource Districts	1	3
Academic	2	2
Water Conference/Symposium	5	3
Environmental Groups	4	3
General Public	5	2
TOTAL	22	16

One of the key benefits provided by the Program is a streamlined Section 7 Consultation process. During the first increment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have provided 196 streamlined Section 7 consultations through calendar year 2018.

Streamlined Section 7 Consultations by USFWS

	Colorado	Wyoming	Nebraska	Federal	Total by Year
2007	11	6	1	0	17
2008	14	4	6	1	24
2009	18	4	2	3	24
2010	14	4	1	2	19
2011	15	1	3	6	19
2012	21	1	1	5	23
2013	14	2	2	5	18
2014	9	0	0	3	9
2015	8	0	0	3	8
2016	17	1	1	2	19
2017	6	1	1	2	8
2018	4	3	1	4	8
Total by Entity	151	27	19	*	196**

*Federal numbers are not additive; they are already included in the state totals.

**One project in 2007 occurred in both Colorado and Wyoming. It is included in both state totals but should not be included twice in the overall count. Therefore, by adding Colorado (151), Wyoming (27), and Nebraska (19), the total is one more (197) than the actual total through 2018 (196).



PHOTO CREDIT: ERIC BAKKE

IN MEMORIAM
Jerry F. Kenny, Ph.D., P.E.

August 16, 1955–January 19, 2018

Rivers were always a large part of Jerry’s life. He grew up on the family farm in Red Cloud, Nebraska along the banks of the Republican River. He said this gave him an appreciation of the many habitats along a river and the changes in the flows of the river. It sparked his interest in civil engineering, focusing on water. His entire career was in the area of water resources with an emphasis in the area of water supply acquisition, development, and management. In his over forty-year career, he worked on projects on the Republican, Platte, Colorado, Arkansas and Rio Grande rivers. When the position of Executive Director of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program was advertised in 2007, he viewed it as an opportunity to return home and stated that it “literally seems like the very role I have been training for over my entire career”. The ten years he spent on the Program were the happiest of his professional career and he often joked that he almost felt guilty being paid for having such a great job. Headwaters Corporation, his contributions to the Program, and his passion for water and rivers are his legacy. He is deeply missed.

*No man ever steps in the same river twice,
for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.*

HERACLITUS

*The care of rivers
is not a matter of rivers, but of
the human heart.*

TANAKA SHOZO




PHOTO CREDIT: BRAD WELLEMA



A topographic map of Colorado, showing the state's terrain in shades of brown and tan. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the map, containing the text "STATE REPORT COLORADO". The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The map shows the state's boundaries and major river networks. The background of the entire page is a larger, more detailed topographic map of the same region, with the state of Colorado highlighted in a light green color.

STATE REPORT
COLORADO



For the past decade, Colorado has seen booming economic growth along the Front Range. In 2018, the Bureau of Economic Analysis reported that Colorado's economy is growing faster than almost any other state in the nation. This growth continues to be supported by water in the South Platte Basin. The Program provides a responsible way of supporting Colorado's productive economy, while promoting a strong environment. For almost 13 years, the program has allowed water use and development to continue, while providing benefits for threatened and endangered species in the Central Platte River Basin in Nebraska.

During the 1990s, virtually all projects in Colorado with depletive effects to the Platte River basin undergoing Endangered Species Act Section 7 consultation received unfavorable biological opinions that delayed project permitting and implementation. Both new and continued water depletions were cited as contributing factors in jeopardizing the existence of the federally listed target species and their associated habitats. Since that time, the creation of this Program has provided remarkable benefits to Colorado. Water development on the South Platte and North Platte Basins in Colorado now occurs through a programmatic approach to Endangered Species Act compliance, which allows for streamlined Section 7 consultations for Program participants. In fact, Colorado sees the most benefits from this approach – 148 out of the 196 total Program-affiliated consultations have taken place in Colorado. This has decreased the regulatory burden for a wide-range of projects in Colorado, from large municipal water supply and storage projects to small agricultural water diversions. The Program provides Endangered Species Act compliance for existing and future water projects and fully complies with state water law, existing decrees and the South Platte Interstate River Compact. This Program has successfully provided these benefits for the past 13 years without litigation.

Colorado and its water users are key partners of this cost-shared program and have contributed significantly through their financial resources and technical, legal, and policy leadership. Through 2019, the State of Colorado will have paid \$24 million (based on 2005 inflation rates) and South Platte water users will have paid more than \$13 million for the Program. Colorado, its water users, and the public view the Program to be well worth the cost in comparison to the untold costs that would incur without this Program, including:

- Needing to undergo uncertain, individual Section 7 consultations.
- Potentially being required to replace past and future depletions on a one-to-one basis, which would likely add additional pressure to dry-up agriculture.
- Facing delays in the planning and permitting process.

Colorado continues to comply with its depletion plan and meet its water contribution through retiming of water through operation of recharge ponds at the Tamarack State Wildlife Area. Water is pumped from the South Platte River to recharge ponds in times of surplus (typically in December and January) so that it can benefit the associated habitat reach in times of deficit when the species need it the most (February through June).

2017–2018 marks a time where with Colorado's collaboration, the Program has momentum to achieve its milestones. This is energized by stakeholder collaboration of working and learning together towards achieving common milestones. As population and climate variability increases in Colorado, likely leading to even less predictable precipitation and water supplies in the future, the reliance on collaboration, flexibility, and adaptive management in this Program is more important than ever before.



The State of Colorado's participation in the Program is led by former Colorado Agriculture Commissioner Don Ament (front, center) and by key Colorado water user representatives from Northern Water (Alan Berryman, far left) and Denver Water (Kevin Urie, far right). Former Executive Director, Dr. Jerry Kenny is in the back, center.



The Colorado Team provides technical, legal, and policy leadership for the Program. Pictured from left to right: Commissioner Don Ament representing the State of Colorado, Jason Marks with Denver Water, Deb Freeman representing Colorado water users, Jojo La with the Colorado Water Conservation Board, Carlee Brown formerly with the Colorado Water Conservation Board, and Alan Berryman with Northern Water.

Colorado meets its “Tamarack 1” water contribution by maintaining facilities capable of retiming an average of 10,000 acre-feet of water annually at the state line, to address existing depletions as of 1997. The retiming is accomplished through groundwater recharge at the Tamarack State Wildlife Area. Water is pumped from the South Platte to recharge ponds in times of surplus (December and January) so that it will eventually reach the habitat in times of deficit (February through June). Additionally, Colorado has an obligation to retime water to cover post-1997 uses per Colorado’s Plan for Future Depletions (reflecting population increases). This category of retiming is often referred to as the “Tamarack II” obligation. Colorado is currently retiming roughly 2,000 acre-feet of water from periods of net accretion (generally July through April) to times of net depletion (May and June).



The Program provides Endangered Species Act compliance for existing and new water-related activities in the South Platte and North Platte River Basins.



Pictured left are key Colorado leaders who helped negotiate the original Cooperative Agreement. From left to right: Deb Freeman representing Colorado water users, Kevin Urie formerly with Denver Water, Alan Berryman with Northern Water, and Commissioner Don Ament representing the State of Colorado.

The image features a topographic map of Nebraska, with a central inset providing a detailed view of the terrain. The map uses a color gradient from light tan to dark brown to represent elevation, with blue lines indicating river networks. The central inset is framed by a white border and contains the text "STATE REPORT NEBRASKA" in white, bold, sans-serif font. The background of the entire image is a grayscale topographic map of the state.

STATE REPORT
NEBRASKA

First Increment Benefits

Nebraska entered into the Program for a variety of reasons, but chief among them is that the Program provides programmatic Endangered Species Act compliance to Nebraska activities that would otherwise be subject to costly individual consultations with USFWS. Moreover, Nebraska's participation in the Program assists those entities subject to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) permitting to avoid likely additional mitigation for their continued hydropower and irrigation operations, as well as protection of Nebraska water users' access to water stored in the series of large federal reservoirs in Wyoming and Lake McConaughy. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources has closely coordinated with many of these key stakeholders throughout the course of the first increment and has had ongoing dialogue with these groups regarding their preference for continuing the Program under the extension principles established by the Governance Committee. Nebraska stakeholder input has indicated positive support for pursuing a Program extension and the associated activities. Furthermore, the extension of Program activities will continue to allow for Nebraska activities with a federal nexus to use the streamlined programmatic consultation process.

Integration of the Program with Water Planning in Nebraska's Upper Platte River Basin

Many of the Program's water related components were integrated into significant statutory modifications that were implemented by Nebraska in 2004. Under these state statutes (LB962, 2004), Nebraska is required to implement the integrated management of groundwater and surface water through integrated management plans (IMPs). IMP efforts occur voluntarily throughout the state, but are required in certain regions of Nebraska, including the Upper Platte River Basin. IMPs offer a proactive approach toward the management of the state's hydrologically connected groundwater and surface water, providing for the economic viability, social and environmental health, safety, and welfare of the river basin. As the first 10-year planning increment (2009-2019) ends, Nebraska has been working to update the IMPs for the second 10-year increment (2019-2029). Concurrently, the state has also been working to update the Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan (or Plan) for the second 10-year increment. The updated Plan and IMPs will help to fulfill Nebraska's commitment to the Program through various water related activities. The Plan and IMPs will go into effect in the fall of 2019.

Nebraska's Contributions to the First Increment

Multiple Upper Platte River Basin NRDs continue to work in support of the Program and fulfilling Nebraska's water obligations as does the State. Programs such as retirements of agricultural water use, diversions and recharge of excess streamflow, streamflow augmentation, water exchanges, and regulations illustrate the variety of tools that Nebraska's NRD's use to support Program compliance. Nebraska has also established an account to manage the state financial contributions toward Program water action plan projects (originally J2 Reservoir) that are beneficial to the State of Nebraska, the NRDs and the Program.

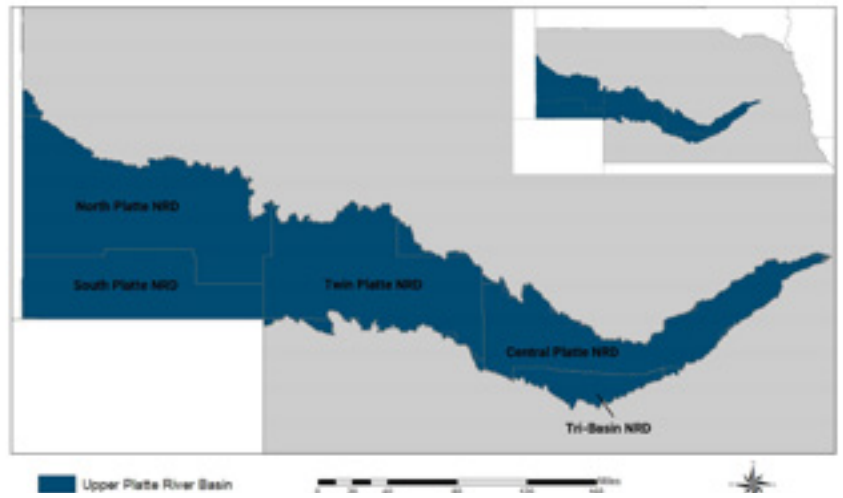
Beyond simply fulfilling its defined obligations to the Program, Nebraska has provided additional support to the Program in a variety of ways. This support includes: 1) Development of groundwater modeling and surface water operations models that support the Program water project scoring; 2) Implementation of water projects that support the Program's water related goals; 3) Participation and support for the various subcommittees that support the Program Governance Committee; 4) Collaboration with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to develop a successful land access program; and 5) Support from a number of

local entities to assist with species monitoring and invasive species control. This sampling of support activities further illustrates the high regard that the Program has established with Nebraska water users through its good neighbor approach.

Nebraska's participation in the Program has been instrumental to creating a stable regulatory environment and providing increased predictability and certainty to our water users. Nebraska remains committed to the extension of the Program and is poised to support the continual achievement of its interstate commitments while working collaboratively through the Program's governance to adaptively manage the water supplies of this important river basin into the future.



Various groundwater recharge projects throughout Nebraska divert water into the Platte River during times of excess flows. Benefits of canal recharge projects include enhanced surface water and groundwater supplies due to groundwater recharge, enhanced flows to the Platte River through the diversion and retiming of excess flows, and enhanced flows due to the return of natural flow irrigation rights.



The five Upper Platte River Basin NRDs, pictured here, have been working to update integrated management plans and the Upper Platte River Basin-Wide Plan for the second 10-year planning increment, as required by Nebraska statutes. The integrated management planning process requires a partnership between the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Districts, and a representative stakeholder group. Pictured here, a stakeholder group meets to discuss background information and management actions supporting or related to the plan, progress made in the first 10-year increment, and potential revisions to the current goals and objectives of the plan. Plans will contain the necessary goals and objectives to ensure that Nebraska maintains compliance with, and implementation of the Program.



Lake McConaughy utilizes water that is set aside to supplement flows in the Platte River. Water is released from the reservoir as needed to provide beneficial instream flows for threatened and endangered species in Nebraska in support of the water retiming goals of the Program.

A topographic map of Wyoming, showing the state's terrain in shades of brown, tan, and green. The map features a network of rivers and streams, and several small red dots indicating specific locations. A white rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the map, containing the text "STATE REPORT WYOMING".

STATE REPORT
WYOMING

With the conclusion of the 2017-2018 biennium and as the Program nears the end of the first increment, State of Wyoming support for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program remains strong. While the four species of concern remain listed on the threatened or endangered species list, the Central Platte River habitat is more secure than when the program started in 2007.

Great progress has been made in accomplishing the First Increment goals. Specifically:

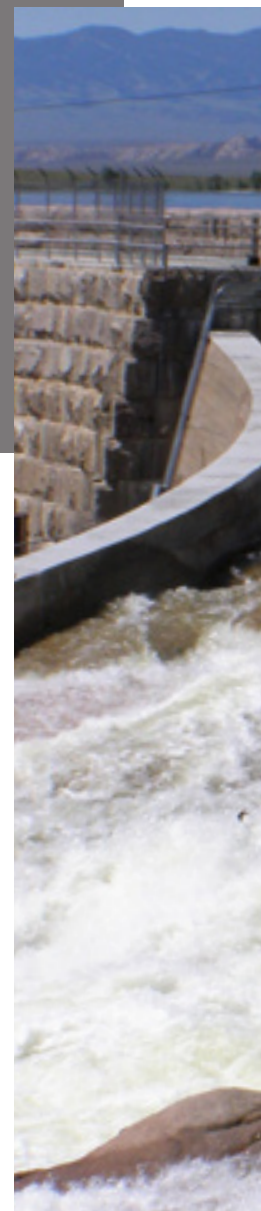
1. Over 12,000 acres of habitat lands have been acquired by PRRIP and are currently being managed to benefit the four target species.
2. Approximately 110,000 AF per year of secure water supplies have been acquired/developed by PRRIP and are being used to supplement flows in the Central Platte River. Additionally, acquired water is being used to complete needed research to benefit the four species.
3. Adaptive management research is improving knowledge of how best to recover the target species.
4. Governance, management and financial systems are in place and functioning well to benefit the target species.
5. A successful public access program has been launched on PRRIP lands when compatible with endangered species use.

Continued support for the program by the State of Wyoming during the biennium was evidenced by the passage of the Omnibus Water Bill – Planning by the 2018 Wyoming State Legislature which contained a \$3.1 million appropriation to fund Wyoming’s share of a 13-year extension of the program. Understanding that PRRIP serves as the reasonable and prudent alternative under the Endangered Species Act for water related activities (depletions) that occurred prior to 1997 (the date of the initiation of the Cooperative Agreement which led to the PRRIP) and post 1997 has led to this support. Existing water related activities covered by the PRRIP include irrigation, municipal, industrial and other water uses. Examples include:

1. Water use in the municipalities of Casper, Cheyenne, Douglas, Rawlins, Saratoga, Sinclair and Torrington.
2. Direct flow diversions for agricultural use in the basin.
3. Storage water use from the federal reservoirs in Wyoming.
4. Agricultural water supplies on lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and BLM.
5. Construction of the Pathfinder Modification Project.
6. Transfers of water rights approved by the Wyoming Board of Control or temporary water use agreements approved by the State Engineer.
7. Existing water uses covered by the existing water related baselines defined in Wyoming’s Depletions Plan.

Wyoming’s water contribution to the PRRIP on behalf of its water users is an average of 25,000 AF per year from the Environmental Account in the Pathfinder Modification Project. The PRRIP may seek additional water supplies in Wyoming through agreements with willing participants and has secured a 4,800 AF per year contract from the Pathfinder Modification Municipal Account, and under the extension, the ability exists to increase that amount to another 4,800 AF per year.

By keeping the PRRIP in place, Wyoming and all water users in the Platte River Basins in Wyoming are in compliance with the ESA regarding the four target species. If the program were to lapse, all water related activities within the Platte River Basin in Wyoming lose ESA coverage under the program and are subject to individual Section 7 consultations with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Both former Governor Matt Mead and current Governor Mark Gordon have endorsed extension of the First Increment, with Governor Gordon noting that....”The extension of the program represents the reasonable and prudent alternative for ESA compliance while at the same time protecting current water users and allowing development of new water uses.”





Pathfinder Reservoir on Wyoming's North Platte River system as it spills on June 23rd, 2010. Pathfinder Dam is part of the North Platte River Project and was constructed between 1903-1909 at a height of 214 feet and a crest length of 432 feet. The reservoir's capacity is 1,016,000 acre ft. Wyoming's water contribution to the PRRIP on behalf of its water users is an average of 25,000 AF per year from the Environmental Account in the Pathfinder Modification Project. An additional 4,800 AF per year has been acquired by the Program from the Pathfinder Modification Municipal Account.

Headwaters Corporation

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**Serving the threatened and
endangered species of the Platte
River Basin as well as the people
who live here.**



**PLATTE RIVER
RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM**

platteriverprogram.org