Society of Wetland Scientists – Rocky Mountain Chapter

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SOUTH PLATTE WATER RELATED ACTIVITIES PROGRAM, INC. (SPWRAP)

PRRIP & SPWRAP -
What are they and why should a wetland scientist care?
Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP)
Introducing the Platte River Target Species

Whooping Crane

Piping Plover

Interior Least Tern

Pallid Sturgeon
Endangered Species Act (ESA) – Section 7

- Federal authorizing agencies must avoid jeopardy to listed species & adverse modification to critical habitat
  - 404 permits (including nationwide permits) - USACOE
  - Special Use Authorizations - USFS & BLM
  - Federal funding under agricultural assistance programs/Federal Highway Administration
  - Bureau of Reclamation/COE water facilities

Mitigation without the Program

- Requires offset of existing “historic” & new water depletions
Key Program Understandings

- Provides benefit to target species
- Provides ESA compliance and greater regulatory certainty to water users
- Costs split 50/50 between States and Federal Government
- Governance by collaboration
- Implementation by hired independent Executive Director & staff
Program Components

Adaptive Management

Land

Water
Adaptive Management Plan

- Improve tern & plover production in the central Platte River
- Improve survival of whooping cranes during migration
- Avoid adverse impact from Program actions on pallid sturgeon populations in lower Platte River
- Independent scientific review is an integral part of implementing adaptive management under the Plan

“…a systematic approach to using robust science to make resource management decisions and to reduce uncertainty over time via system monitoring & research”
Land Plan

Acquisition, protection, and restoration of 10,000 acres of habitat for the three bird species
Off-Channel Sand & Water Habitat
On-Channel Habitat
Water Plan

- Reduce deficits to USFWS Target Flows by 130,000 – 150,000 AF/year
  - USFWS Target Flows initially identified a deficit of 417,000 AF
- Provide flows for adaptive management processes & testing of priority hypothesis in the Adaptive Management Plan
Addressing Existing Water Depletions

- 3 Initial Water Projects:
  - Tamarack I (CO),
  - Pathfinder Modification (WY), and
  - Lake McConaughy Environmental Account (NE)
  - Credited 80,000 AFY

- Develop new water conservation/supply projects (Program’s Water Action Plan)
  - Additional 50,000 to 70,000 AFY
PRRIP Initial Three State Water Projects: 80,000 AFY Towards First Increment Water Objective
Addressing New Water Depletions

Offsets new water related activities causing depletions (post 1997)

3 States and Federal Depletions Plans

- Tamarack II in Colorado (Colorado’s Future Depletions Plan)
  - Retimes water in CO based on population growth
  - Generally, 1,800 AF of recharge required for each 100,000 increase in population.
- Colorado agreed to provide up to 350 AF for Federal depletions
Who is SPWRAP?

What is SPWRAP’s Purpose & Role?
Who is SPWRAP?

- Colorado 501(c)(3) Non-profit Corporation
  - Incorporated April 1, 2005
  - Self-assessed membership based organization

- Formed by Colorado Water Users
  - Board of Directors (9)
    - 6 Municipal Directors
    - 1 Agricultural Director
    - 1 Industrial Director
    - 1 Water Conservancy District Director
SPWRAP’s Purpose

- Partner with the State of Colorado
  - to deliver Colorado’s commitments under PRRIP and to ensure compliance
- Represent Colorado water users interests in PRRIP process
- Water User contact point & Colorado clearinghouse for ESA streamlined consultations under the Program
- Provide voluntary means for individual water users to participate in PRRIP
**SPWRAP’s Role**

To assist with Colorado’s commitments to PRRIP

- Provide a backstop for the State’s $24 million cash obligation (in 2005 dollars)

- Development & Operation of Tamarack Plan
  - SPWRAP pays for capital and O&M costs

- Representation on Program Governance Committee and other technical advisory committees
Colorado’s Tamarack Plan

- Tamarack I – Existing Depletions Plan
  - Groundwater management
  - Covers all “existing” water activities prior to 1997
  - Capacity to retime up to 10,000 ac-ft. in lower S. Platte River

- Tamarack II – Future Depletions Plan
  - Retimes additional water to offset Colorado’s post-1997 depletions based on population growth/model

- 16 recharge wells developed
- Multiple recharge basins
  - 3 additional basins planned
Benefits of SPWRAP
Programmatic Approach to Address ESA

- Avoids stand-alone mitigation for depletions
  - Historically, one-for-one offset at State line

- Reduced Costs
  - Contribute $$ instead of giving up water

- Provides streamlined ESA consultation
  - Over 110 projects have benefited since 2007

- Representation of interest in Program
Programmatic Approach to Address ESA (cont.)

- Provides regulatory compliance & certainty
- Focuses state water mitigation through a single project
- Provides a united Colorado strategy
Questions?

www.platteriverprogram.org

www.spwrap.org
Why is the Program Needed by Colorado?

- Jeopardy biological opinions affected water projects since late 1970’s
  - Federal Permit Authorizations for proposed Grayrocks, Narrows, Two Forks Projects (late 1970’s and 1980’s)
  - Renewals of USFS Special Use Authorizations for Existing Front Range agricultural and municipal water facilities (1990’s)
  - Existing depletions as small as 0.64 annual AF had been found to cause jeopardy
What the Program Does (for Colorado Water Users)

- Protects Colorado’s water rights administration
- Avoids re-initiation of post-1997 consultations
- Avoids the potential for “take” of listed species under Section 9 of ESA

- Provides Regulatory Certainty
  - streamlined Section 7 consultation