

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## Scoping Report for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension, Environmental Assessment



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Great Plains Region



December 2017

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

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The Department of the Interior protects and manages the Nation's natural resources and cultural heritage; provides scientific and other information about those resources; and honors its trust responsibilities or special commitments to American Indians, Alaska Natives, and affiliated island communities.

The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation is to manage, develop, and protect water and related resources in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the interest of the American public.

Cover photos – Background (David Batts, EMPSi); Inset photos (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service)

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMP	adaptive management plan
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
Department	U.S. Department of the Interior
EA	environmental assessment
EIS	environmental impact statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FONSI	finding of no significant impact
IMRP	integrated monitoring and research plan
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
Program	Platte River Recovery Implementation Program
PRRIP	Platte River Recovery Implementation Program
Reclamation	U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation
ROD	record of decision
Secretary	U.S. Secretary of the Interior
Service	U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Scoping Report

The purposes of this scoping report are to provide an overview of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program; PRRIP) Proposed First Increment Extension, to document the scoping process, and to discuss the findings from the process. The findings include an overview of identified issues that will be addressed in an environmental assessment (EA).

Scoping is a collaborative public involvement process implemented early in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) process. Its purposes are to determine the scope of issues to be addressed and to identify potentially significant issues related to the proposed action.

## 1.2 Project Overview

The U.S. Department of the Interior (Department), Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is preparing an EA to analyze the environmental impacts of extending the Program's First Increment by 13 years, through 2032. In addition, the EA serves as a biological assessment for Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (Service).

The First Increment of the Program began in 2007 and extends through 2019. Its long-term goal is to improve and maintain the associated habitats of target species (specific species listed for protection under the ESA). This includes the following:

- Improving and maintaining migrational habitat for whooping cranes (*Grus americana*) and reproductive habitat for interior least terns (*Sterna antillarum athalassos*) and piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus*)
- Reducing the likelihood of future listing of other species found in this area
- Testing the assumption that managing flow in the central Platte River also improves the pallid sturgeon's (*Scaphirhynchus albus*) lower Platte River habitat

### 1.2.1 Program Background

On July 1, 1997, the governors of Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming and the U.S. Secretary of Interior (the Secretary) signed the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Cooperative Agreement. It outlined a proposed basin-wide recovery implementation program for endangered species in the Central and Lower Platte Basins. Thereafter, a Governance Committee began formulating details of the Program to be evaluated by the Department under NEPA and the ESA. The committee consisted of representatives of the three basin states, Reclamation, the Service, water users from each of the three basin states, and environmental groups.

In 2006, Reclamation released a final programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) (Reclamation and Service 2006), and the Service issued a final biological opinion (Service 2006). The Secretary then signed the Record of Decision (ROD) on September 27, 2006, supporting the Program (Department 2006).

The Program became effective on January 1, 2007, after the governors of Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska and the Secretary signed the program agreement. In 2008, Congress authorized the Secretary, acting through the Commissioner of Reclamation in partnership with the States, other federal agencies, and other non-federal entities, to continue implementing the Program. Congress provided authorization of appropriations for it via Public Law 110-229.

The Program is being implemented incrementally, with the First Increment covering the 13 years, from 2007 through 2019. As during the cooperative agreement, the Program is led by a Governance Committee, consisting of representatives of the three basin states, Reclamation, the Service, water users from each of the three basin states, and environmental groups.

The Program established key standing advisory committees to assist the Governance Committee in implementing the Program. They are the Technical Advisory Committee, the Land Advisory Committee, the Water Advisory Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Independent Scientific Advisory Committee. In addition, an Adaptive Management Working Group has been formed to inform the Governance Committee on implementing the Program’s adaptive management plan (AMP).

The Program provides ESA compliance for water-related activities in the three states, while working to provide recovery benefits for the four endangered and threatened species. During the First Increment, ESA compliance is measured by the progress in achieving ten Program milestones that are related to the increment objectives. Milestones and current Program status are presented in **Table 1-1**, below.

**Table 1-1. Platte River Recovery Implementation Program ESA Compliance Milestones**

Milestone	Program Status (as of November 2017)
1. The Pathfinder Modification Project will be operational and physically and legally capable of providing water to the Program by no later than the end of Year 4 of the First Increment.	Achieved
2. Colorado will complete construction of the Tamarack I and commence full operations by the end of Year 4 of the First Increment.	Achieved
3. Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District and Nebraska Public Power District will implement an environmental account for storage reservoirs on the Platte system in Nebraska, as provided in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission licenses 1417 and 1835.	Achieved
4. The reconnaissance-level water action plan, as may be amended by the Governance Committee, will be implemented and capable of providing at least an average of 50,000 acre-feet per year of shortage reduction to target flows, or for other Program purposes, by no later than the end of the First Increment.	Not achievable by the end of 2019
5. The land plan, as may be amended by the Governance Committee, will be implemented to protect and, where appropriate, restore 10,000 acres of habitat by no later than the end of the First Increment.	Achieved



**Table 1-1. Platte River Recovery Implementation Program ESA Compliance Milestones**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Program Status (as of November 2017)</b>
6. The integrated monitoring and research plan (IMRP), as may be amended by the Governance Committee, will be implemented beginning Year 1 of the Program.	Achieved
7. The Wyoming depletions plan, as may be amended with the approval of the Governance Committee, will be operated during the First Increment of the Program.	Achieved
8. The Colorado depletions plan, as may be amended with the approval of the Governance Committee, will be operated during the First Increment of the Program.	Achieved
9. The Nebraska depletions plan, as may be amended with the approval of the December 7, 2005, Milestones Document 2 Governance Committee, will be operated during the First Increment of the Program.	Not achievable by end of 2019 <sup>1</sup>
10. The federal depletions plan, as may be amended with the approval of the Governance Committee, will be operated during the First Increment of the Program.	Achieved

<sup>1</sup> The State of Nebraska is responsible for achieving this milestone.

The First Increment land objective and associated milestone have been achieved. The Program currently protects more than 12,000 acres in the associated habitat reach. Due to the reliance on water projects being developed by the Governance Committee, the Nebraska Depletions Plan (Milestone #9), which is the responsibility of the State of Nebraska, is not achievable by 2019. All state water projects and the Colorado, Wyoming, and federal depletion plans are operational.

The Program currently provides approximately 90,000 acre-feet toward the First Increment objective of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet. Water projects in the planning or design phase are expected to provide an additional 40,000 acre-feet of water; however, they will not be operational before the end of the First Increment in 2019 and may require more funding than what is currently available during the First Increment. As such, Milestone 4 is not achievable by the end of 2019.

Implementing the AMP, including IMRP activities, is ongoing and has focused on testing the flow-sediment-mechanical and mechanical creation and maintenance management strategies. Accordingly, the Program's IMRP milestone has been achieved; however, the objective of examining Service target flows through the AMP has not yet been achieved. Design, implementation, and assessment of target flow-related management actions will not be possible before the end of 2019.

Section II.D of the 2006 Final Program Agreement provides for it to be extended or amended by the written agreement of all signatories (PRRIP 2006). This proposal presents a 13-year extension (2020–2032) of the First Increment. The extension would not change First Increment objectives, milestones, or the implementation framework. It would provide additional time to complete and operate Program water projects and to conduct the monitoring and research necessary to determine the best use of Program water to benefit the target species. This knowledge is necessary to provide a sound base on which to structure a second increment.

### **1.2.2 Proposed Federal Action**

The Department, working with the three states, water users, and environmental and conservation organizations, proposes to extend the First Increment of the basin-wide, Cooperative Recovery Implementation Program to meet its obligations under the ESA. The federal action described and evaluated in this programmatic EA is a 13-year extension to the First Increment of the Governance Committee Alternative, as described in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Final EIS of April 2006 (Reclamation and Service 2006) and ROD of September 2006 (Department 2006). The proposed First Increment extension activities are further described in the Addendum to the Final Platte River Recovery Implementation Program—First Increment Extension, as adopted by the Governance Committee on June 7, 2017 (PRRIP 2017).

### **1.2.3 Purpose of and Need for the Proposed Action**

Federal action is needed to complete the remaining milestones not achieved within the prescribed 13-year timeline of the Program's First Increment. Completion of the Program's First Increment is necessary in order to secure the defined benefits under that basin-wide approach for federally listed threatened and endangered species. This would provide continued compliance with the ESA for certain existing and future water-related projects and uses in the Platte River Basin, upstream of the confluence with the Loup River.

The purposes of this action are as follows:

- Continue implementing projects that provide additional water to reduce shortages to Service target flows
- Continue land management activities necessary to provide habitat for target species
- Continue integrated monitoring, research, and adaptive management to assess the progress of the Program and to inform future management decisions

Activities need to be consistent with and support meeting the Program's First Increment objectives as follows:

- Provide water capable of improving the occurrence of Platte River flows in the central Platte River's associated habitats. This would be relative to the present occurrence of Service species and annual pulse target flows (hereinafter referred to as reducing shortages to target flows) by an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year, as measured at Grand Island, Nebraska. Target flows would be examined through the AMP, and peer review and may be modified by the Service accordingly. These species and annual pulse target flows would continue to serve as an initial reference point for determining periods of excess and shortage in the operation of Program reregulation and water conservation/supply projects.
- Protect, restore where appropriate, and maintain at least 10,000 acres of habitat for the benefit of target species in the central Platte River area, between Lexington and Chapman, Nebraska, and continue progress toward the Program's long-term land objectives.



### 1.3 Description of the Area of Analysis

The area of analysis for the EA are the following areas in the Platte River Basin that might be affected by Program actions:

- The main stem, tributaries, and associated water projects of the North Platte River, in Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska
- The South Platte River in Colorado and Nebraska
- The Platte River in Nebraska (see **Figure 1-1**, Area of Analysis).

### 1.4 Overview of the Public Involvement Process

Public involvement is a vital part of the NEPA process. It provides the opportunity for those affected by project actions to take part in the decision-making process and facilitates full environmental disclosure. Guidance for implementing public involvement under NEPA is codified in 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Subpart 1506.6, ensuring that federal agencies make a diligent effort to involve the public in the process. Additional information on Reclamation's requirements for public involvement can be found in Reclamation's NEPA Handbook (Reclamation 2012).

Public involvement is being conducted throughout this EA process; however, the public has specific opportunities to comment during three phases, as follows:

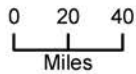
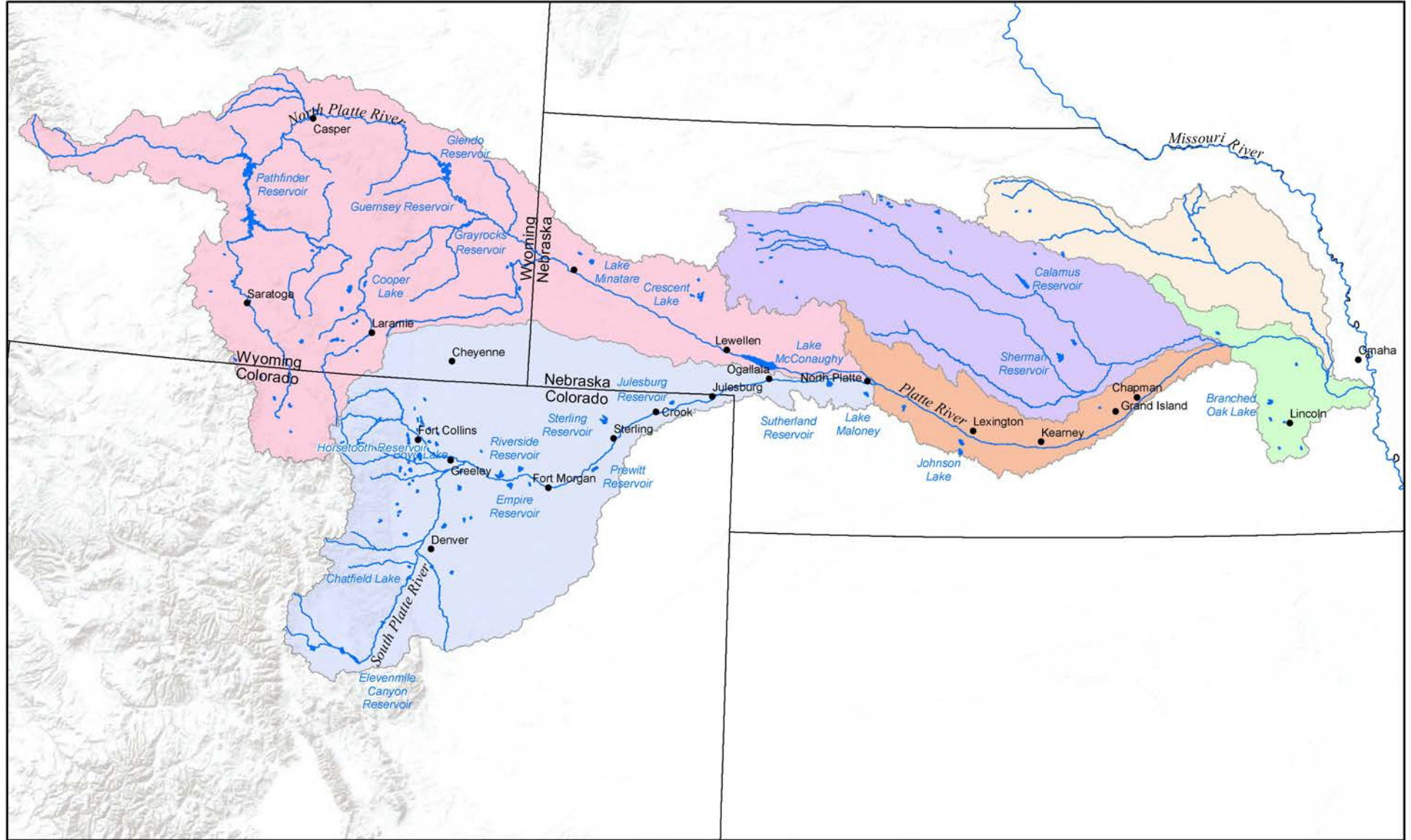
1. Public scoping before NEPA analysis begins, to determine the scope of issues and alternatives to be addressed in the EA—This occurred during the September to November 2017 scoping period and is summarized in this scoping report
2. Public review of and comment on the Draft EA/Draft Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI); anticipated in spring 2018
3. Final EA/FONSI will be made available to the public (anticipated in fall 2018)











This scoping report documents the results of the first phase of the public involvement process.

Scoping is an early and open process for determining the extent of issues to be addressed and identifying the significant issues related to a proposed action. Reclamation may use information collected during scoping to develop the alternatives to be addressed in a NEPA document. It is designed to be a public process that reaches beyond Reclamation to identify the concerns of high importance to the public. Scoping helps ensure that real problems are identified early and that they are properly studied, that issues of no concern do not consume time and effort, and that the proposed action and alternatives are balanced, thorough, and implementable.

This scoping report summarizes the scoping process and the comments received during the scoping period. It also describes the issues raised during scoping and includes a discussion of how the issues raised during scoping will be incorporated into the EA.

Proposed First Increment Extension, Environmental Assessment, Scoping Report



- |   |                      |   |           |
|---|----------------------|---|-----------|
|  | North Platte River   |  | City      |
|  | South Platte River   |  | River     |
|  | Central Platte River |  | Reservoir |
|  | Lower Platte River   |  | State     |
|  | Elkhorn River        |   |           |
|  | Loup River           |   |           |

Source: Reclamation GIS 2017  
 PlatteRiver\_areaofanalysis\_V01.pdf  
 October 19, 2017

No warranty is made by Reclamation as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the data herein. This product was compiled from the best available data and is presented as visual aide only and does not represent actual survey data.

**Figure 1-1  
 Area of Analysis**

## 1.5 Description of the Scoping Process

While not required for an EA, Reclamation is following a process similar to the public involvement requirements documented in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR, Subpart 1501.7 for scoping and 1506.6 for public involvement). Reclamation solicits comments from relevant tribes, agencies, and the public and organizes and analyzes all comments received to identify the issues that will be addressed during the planning and NEPA processes. These issues define the scope of analysis for the EA and are used to develop the project alternatives.

As part of the scoping process for the proposed First Increment Extension EA, Reclamation hosted public meetings to identify public concerns. It held four scoping meetings in and around the study area in Torrington, Wyoming; Loveland, Colorado; and Grand Island and Kearney, Nebraska. These meetings were advertised in a press release and newspaper advertisements. Meetings and advertisement materials are described in the sections below.

### 1.5.1 Project Website

Reclamation has developed a website to provide updated information on the EA process: [https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte\\_river/index.html](https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte_river/index.html). It provides background information, a description of the project, and information on public involvement. The website also allows visitors to submit a comment on the project.

### 1.5.2 Press Release

In September 2017, Reclamation distributed a press release titled “Bureau of Reclamation Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension, Environmental Assessment” to media outlets in and around the project area. The press release provided the dates and venues for the scoping meetings, briefly described the project, and explained the various methods for submitting comments. The press release is included in **Appendix A**, Scoping Materials.

### 1.5.3 Postcard and Mailing List

In September 2017, Reclamation mailed a postcard announcing the 45-day scoping period to over 200 individuals, businesses, agencies, and tribes. The postcard is included in **Appendix A**.

### 1.5.4 Newspaper Advertisements

Reclamation published an advertisement announcing the scoping meetings in five newspapers, as shown in **Table 1-2**, below. An example newspaper advertisement is included in **Appendix A**.

**Table 1-2. Newspaper Advertisements**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Publication Date (2017)</b>
<i>Grand Island Independent</i>	September 21
<i>Kearney Hub</i>	September 19
<i>Scottsbluff Star Herald</i>	September 19
<i>Loveland Reporter-Herald</i>	September 21
<i>Torrington Telegram</i>	September 22

### 1.5.5 Scoping Meetings

Reclamation hosted four scoping meetings to provide the public with opportunities to become involved, to learn about the project, to meet the Reclamation and other agency team members, and to offer comments. The meetings were advertised via press release, newspaper advertisements, and the project website. The locations of the scoping meetings are provided in **Table 1-3**, below.

**Table 1-3. Scoping Meetings**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Attendees</b>
Torrington, Wyoming	Goshen County Fair Grounds	October 4, 2017	10
Loveland, Colorado	The Ranch Events Complex	October 5, 2017	8
Grand Island, Nebraska	Hotel Grand	October 11, 2017	3
Kearney, Nebraska	Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Executive Director’s Office	October 12, 2017	4

Scoping meetings were held in an open house format to encourage participants to discuss concerns and questions with Reclamation and other agency representatives. Attendees signed in at the door and were encouraged to visit four informational stations with posters and handouts, to ask questions, and to make comments. A commenting station allowed attendees to submit written comments. All materials from scoping meetings can be found on the project website ([https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte\\_river/index.html](https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte_river/index.html)) and in **Appendix A**.

### 1.5.6 Collaborative Involvement Process

In August 2017, Reclamation sent letters to 10 federal cooperating agencies on the 2006 Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Final EIS, inviting them to be cooperating agencies on the EA. To date, the following agencies have accepted:

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation District—West
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
- U.S. Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District

Cooperating agencies will be engaged throughout the EA process, including during alternatives development. Reclamation and other federal, state, and local agencies, including the Governance Committee, attended a meeting in September 2017 to provide an overview of the proposed First Increment extension and any known issues.

## 2.0 Scoping Results

### 2.1 Method of Comment Collection and Analysis

Reclamation collected written comments about the EA and the issues that should be considered through public scoping meetings, letters, and emails. All comments were reviewed to identify specific issues or concerns. Each substantive comment was categorized based on the topic or topics it discussed. During the development of alternatives considered in the EA, Reclamation will take into consideration the issues brought forward in these comments.

### 2.2 Summary of Public Comments Received

Reclamation received five written comment submissions; four were from members of the public and one was from a state agency, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. Three of the commenters stated that the Program has been successful in restoring habitat for the target species and benefiting water users. These commenters asserted that the First Increment should be extended to allow these benefits to continue.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department comment similarly stated that the Proposed First Increment Extension could result in significant benefits in Wyoming, depending on how the states' share of the recovery water is delivered. A fifth commenter noted the planned Tri-Basin and Lower Republican Natural Resources Districts' proposal to divert Platte River flows to the Republican River (the Platte-Republican diversion project) and asked that the impacts of this proposal on Program target flows be discussed in the EA. **Appendix B**, Comments Submitted During Public Scoping, includes copies of the written scoping comment submissions.

### 2.3 Verbal Comments

During the scoping meetings, some attendees provided verbal comments. While these are not formally counted among the comments analyzed in this scoping report, they are summarized here to inform the issues carried into alternatives development for the EA. Verbal comments from attendees were related to the following issues:

- Concern about the cumulative impact of the Platte-Republican Diversion Project
- Concern that the proposed extension would eliminate or reduce hunting access for adjacent landowners
- Clarification of the target population number for whooping crane recovery and whether improvements have been seen in target species populations
- Whether the proposed extension would likely result in the same amount of target species improvement in the future

- Concern that an irrigation diversion was not being adequately regulated and that increasing flows in the Platte River could cause it to wash out

## **2.4 Issues Identified**

Based on the input received during external and internal scoping, the following issues were identified for consideration in the EA:

- How would the Proposed First Increment Extension interact with other projects in the area?
- How would the Proposed First Increment Extension impact recreational access?
- What are the impacts of the Proposed First Increment Extension on the objectives of the Program and target species?

## 3.0 References

- Department (U.S. Department of the Interior). 2006. Record of Decision, Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. Washington, DC. September 27, 2006.
- PRRIP (Platte River Recovery Implementation Program). 2006. Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Cooperative Agreement. October 24, 2006. Internet website: <https://www.platteriverprogram.org/PubsAndData/Pages/ProgramLibrary.aspx>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2017. Addendum to the Final Plate River Recovery Implementation Program, First Increment Extension. June 7, 2017. Internet website: <https://www.platteriverprogram.org/PubsAndData/Pages/ProgramLibrary.aspx>.
- Reclamation (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation). 2012. Reclamation's NEPA Handbook. February 2012. Internet website: <https://www.usbr.gov/nepa/>.
- Reclamation and Service (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation and U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service). 2006. Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Final Environmental Impact Statement. Denver, Colorado. April 2006.
- Service. 2006. Biological Opinion on the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program. Ecological Services, Nebraska Field Office, Grand Island, Nebraska. June 16, 2006.



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# Appendix A

## Scoping Materials

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# Appendix A Scoping Materials

The public scoping outreach included an informational postcard, a press release, a newspaper advertisement, and public meeting handouts and posters. The official comment period was 45 days (September 18 through November 2, 2017). This appendix includes the scoping materials listed below.

- Press release (4 pages)
- Postcard (2 pages)
- Newspaper advertisement (example from Loveland Reporter-Herald; 1 page)
- Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Overview handout (2 pages)
- Overview of Proposed First Increment Extension handout (2 pages)
- Overview of the Endangered Species Act handout (2 pages)
- NEPA Process and Schedule handout (1 page)
- Submitting Your Comments handout with comment form (2 pages)
- NEPA and ESA Processes poster (1 page)
- How to Submit Your Comments poster (1 page)
- Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Area poster (1 page)
- Platte River Recover Implementation Program Target Species poster (1 page)

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NEWS & MULTIMEDIA

# Bureau of Reclamation Announces Public Scoping Meetings for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension, Environmental Assessment

Media Contact: Brock Merrill, (307) 261-5649

For Release: September 18, 2017



Platte River

BILLINGS, Mont. -- The Bureau of Reclamation is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension. Reclamation, working with the states of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska, water users, and environmental and conservation organizations, proposes to extend the First Increment of the basin-wide, cooperative Recovery Implementation Program by 13 years. Reclamation is doing this to meet its obligations under the Endangered Species Act.

The purpose of this action is to continue implementing projects that provide additional water, in order to accomplish the following:

- Reduce flow shortages in the Platte River aimed at conforming with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service target flows
- Continue land management activities necessary to provide habitat for target threatened and endangered species
- Continue integrated monitoring, research, and adaptive management, in order to assess the progress of the program and inform future management decisions



Reclamation will hold four public scoping meetings during the 45-day scoping period to gather information from other agencies, interested parties, and the public on the scope of alternatives for the EA. The public is encouraged to attend the open house EA scoping meetings, to learn more about the proposal and to assist Reclamation in identifying issues.

The public scoping meetings on the EA are scheduled as follows (All meetings will be held 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.):

- October 4, 2017, at Goshen County Fair Grounds, 7078 Fairgrounds Road, Torrington, Wyoming
- October 5, 2017, at The Ranch Events Complex, 5280 Arena Circle, Loveland, Colorado (Located in the Larimer County Conference Center; park in Lot B)
- October 11, 2017, at Hotel Grand, 2503 S. Locust Street, Grand Island, Nebraska
- October 12, 2017, at Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Executive Director's Office, 4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6, Kearney, Nebraska

At each meeting, the public will have the opportunity to provide written input on resources to be evaluated, significant issues or concerns, and potential alternatives.

Written comments are due by close of business November 2, 2017. Members of the public may submit written comments at the public scoping meetings, via email to [platteriver@usbr.gov](mailto:platteriver@usbr.gov), or by mail to:

Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240

For additional information, please visit the project website at [www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte\\_river/index.html](http://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte_river/index.html).

###

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# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*



## **Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension, Environmental Assessment: Public Scoping Meetings**

The US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, is preparing an environmental assessment for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension. At this time, Reclamation is seeking input from the public during a 45-day scoping period, September 18 to November 2. Reclamation also invites the public to attend the following public scoping meetings, each of which will be from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.:

- **October 4, 2017** at Goshen County Fair Grounds, 7078 Fairgrounds Road, Torrington, Wyoming
- **October 5, 2017** at The Ranch Events Complex, 5280 Arena Circle, Loveland, CO (Located in the Larimer County Conference Center; park in Lot B)
- **October 11, 2017** at Hotel Grand, 2503 S Locust Street, Grand Island, Nebraska
- **October 12, 2017** at Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Executive Director's Office, 4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6, Kearney, Nebraska

For more project information, visit the project website: [https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte\\_river/index.html](https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte_river/index.html).

Please submit comments in writing to [platteriver@usbr.gov](mailto:platteriver@usbr.gov) or Bureau of Reclamation, Attention: Mr. Brock Merrill, P.O. Box 950, Torrington, WY 82240.



US Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
c/o EMPSi  
3775 Iris Ave, Suite 1A  
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## NATION &amp; WORLD

## UNITED NATIONS

# Iranian leader decries Trump remarks

## President of Iran says comments were 'ignorant, absurd'

BY JENNIFER PELTZ  
AND EDITH M. LEDERER  
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Iran's president warned Wednesday that his country will "respond decisively" to any violation of the agreement that reins in its nuclear program and called U.S. President Donald Trump's "ignorant, absurd and hateful rhetoric" about Iran unfit for the United Nations.

In remarks clearly directed at Trump's 8-month-old administration, Iranian leader Hassan Rouhani told the U.N. General Assembly: "It will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by rogue newcomers to the world of politics."

"The world will have lost a great opportunity, but such unfortunate behavior will never impede Iran's course of progress and advancement," Rouhani said.

His speech came a day after Trump, in his own address to the



Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, addresses the United Nations General Assembly at U.N. headquarters on Wednesday in New York City.

DREW ANGERER / Getty Images

assembly, called the U.N.-backed Iran nuclear deal "an embarrassment" to the United States.

And he hinted that his administration, which has accused Tehran of aiding terrorism in the Middle East, could soon declare Iran out of compliance with the deal. That could unravel it.

"I don't think you've heard the end of it, believe me," Trump said.

Rouhani retorted that "the ignorant, absurd and hateful rhetoric, filled with ridiculously baseless allegations, that was uttered before this august body yesterday" didn't benefit an organization established to promote peace and respect among nations.

In a later tweet, he made clear that the comments were directed at Trump.

The Iranian president said his country would not be the first to breach the nuclear agreement, "but it will respond decisively to its violation by any party."

Iran has accused the Trump administration of not living up to its requirements on sanctions relief under the nuclear deal, and Rouhani said America was harming itself.

"By violating its international commitments, the new U.S. administration only destroys its own credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it or accepting its word or promise," he said.

The Iranian leader also lambasted Israel, calling it a "rogue" nation.

Israel sees Iran as its most dangerous adversary, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Tuesday for scrapping or changing the 2015 nuclear deal. He said Iran had embarked on a "campaign of conquest across the Middle East."

Rouhani replied that it was "reprehensible that the rogue Zionist regime that threatens regional and global security with its nuclear arsenal ... has the audacity to preach to peaceful nations." Israel is believed to have hundreds of

nuclear weapons, though it has never confirmed or denied having an arsenal.

Rouhani repeatedly invoked moderation as Iran's goal and said its missiles — which have been strongly criticized by the Trump administration — "are solely defensive deterrents."

As he spoke, dozens of other nations began signing the first treaty to ban nuclear weapons, a pact spurned by nuclear powers.

The U.N. Security Council, meanwhile, approved a resolution supporting efforts to reform the world body's far-flung peacekeeping operations. U.S. Vice President Mike Pence joined the discussion on a Trump administration priority.

Forty-two states put their names on the nuclear weapons pact within an hour after a signing ceremony opened, and more were added afterward. Guyana, the Vatican and Thailand also have already ratified the treaty.

If 50 countries ratify it, the treaty would take effect for those that did so, requiring them not to develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons "under any circumstances."

## 'I have decided,' Trump says of Iran deal — before big talks

BY MATTHEW LEE  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — "I have decided," President Donald Trump declared Wednesday, announcing he'd reached a verdict on the Iran nuclear deal's future even as top U.S. and Iranian officials headed into their highest-level talks of his presidency. Iran's leader, meanwhile, lashed out at "ignorant, absurd and hateful rhetoric" in response to Trump's blistering attack at the U.N.

The jabbing between Trump and Iran's President Hassan Rouhani set the stage for a contentious meeting of the nuclear accord's parties. Trump has sent strong signals that he could walk away from the seven-nation agreement, which would potentially lead to new U.S. sanctions on Iran and its international trading partners. The Iranians, in turn, have threatened to respond to any U.S. pullout by restarting nuclear activities that could take them closer to bomb-making capability.

Asked about his stance on the nuclear pact Wednesday, Trump said he had made a decision. Pressed for details,

he replied coyly: "I'll let you know."

Shortly afterward, Vice President Mike Pence told the U.N. Security Council that Iran "continues to flout the spirit of the Iran deal, destabilizing the region and brazenly threatening the security of sovereign nations," a toned-down version of the diatribe delivered by Trump in a General Assembly speech to fellow world leaders Tuesday.

It wasn't clear if Trump had made a final decision to leave or stick with the Iran deal. On several other issues over his presidency, he has teased reporters with the idea that a major verdict might be imminent, only to delay announcements for weeks or months. Trump must next certify by Oct. 15 if Iran is complying with the deal, and officials have said Trump may use that occasion to declare Iran in violation.

In any event, the U.S.-Iranian exchanges augured poorly for Wednesday's gathering of diplomats including Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. A

year ago, such a get-together would have been considered routine as nations strove to implement an agreement that curtailed Iran's nuclear activity in exchange for an end to various oil, trade and financial restrictions on the country. In the current environment, it is anything but ordinary.

Addressing the General Assembly, Rouhani said his country won't be the first to violate the nuclear agreement, "but it will respond decisively to its violation by any party." In a dismissive jab at Trump he said, "It will be a great pity if this agreement were to be destroyed by rogue newcomers to the world of politics."

"By violating its international commitments, the new U.S. administration only destroys its own credibility and undermines international confidence in negotiating with it or accepting its word or promise," Rouhani said. That echoes criticism even some of America's allies have leveled at a time when the United States hopes to draw North Korea into a negotiation over its rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal.



HANDOUT / Getty Images

In this handout provided by the Palestinian Press Office (PPO), U.S. President Donald Trump meets with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday, in New York City.

## Trump: Mideast peace deal may be 'toughest deal of all'

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE  
AND JONATHAN LEMIRE  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that achieving peace between the Israelis and Palestinians may be the "toughest deal of all" that he's tried to negotiate, adding that his administration nonetheless is working hard for peace in the region.

He said there's a "pretty good shot" he can broker an agreement that has eluded several of his predecessors.

"We are looking seriously at peace and maybe ultimately peace for the whole of the Middle East and I think we have a pretty good shot, maybe the best shot ever," the president said as he opened a meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

"It's a complex subject, always been considered the toughest deal of all: peace between Israel and the Palestinians, the toughest of all," Trump continued. "I think we have a very, very good chance. I will certainly devote everything in my heart and within my soul to get a deal made."

Trump did not explain what his optimism was based on. Since taking office, the president has talked confidently about using the skills he sharpened as a real estate developer to help broker an agreement. But there are few tangible signs that progress toward a deal has been achieved.

*"I think we have a very, very good chance. I will certainly devote everything in my heart and within my soul to get a deal made."*

U.S. President Donald Trump

He has given the Mideast portfolio to his son-in-law Jared Kushner, now a White House adviser. Kushner and other officials, including the U.S. ambassador to Israel and Trump's deputy national security adviser, recently returned from a trip to the region.

Trump has spent this week powering through a series of one-on-one meetings with foreign counterparts in New York for the annual U.N. General Assembly session. He addressed the gathering for the first time Tuesday, but made only passing references to the Middle East when talking about terrorism. He offered no detail on prospects for a peace agreement.

And White House officials played down the prospects for a breakthrough on the Mideast issue heading into the New York meetings.

Abbas, meanwhile, expressed confidence that they are "on the verge" of a

deal, possibly before the end of the year.

"This meeting attests to the seriousness of your efforts to achieve the deal of the century during the year or in the coming months," Abbas said before Trump and Abbas retreated behind closed doors for talks.

Behind the scenes, the Palestinians, in particular, have grown restless with Trump's lack of specifics. Neither he nor his negotiators have sketched out the contours of what they think a final agreement should look like, or outlined any strategy designed to restart Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. And top Palestinian officials say Trump envoys recently relayed that they'll need another three or four months to devise a plan.

In the meantime, Trump's declarations about Mideast peace appear to have moved the Palestinians further away from their goal of an independent country alongside Israel. Trump hasn't explicitly supported an independent Palestine and has raised the possibility of looking beyond a two-state solution, the preferred outcome of Democratic and Republican presidents for decades.

Trump met in New York earlier this week with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Trump said at that meeting that a peace deal would be a "fantastic achievement" and that "we are giving it an absolute go."



### Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension, Environmental Assessment: Public Scoping Meetings

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, is preparing an environmental assessment for the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension. At this time, Reclamation is seeking input from the public during a 45-day public scoping period, from September 18 to November 2, 2017.

Reclamation invites the public to attend the following open house public scoping meetings. Each meeting will be held from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

- **October 4, 2017**, at Goshen County Fair Grounds, 7078 Fairgrounds Road, Torrington, Wyoming
- **October 5, 2017**, at The Ranch Events Complex, 5280 Arena Circle, Loveland, Colorado (Located in the Larimer County Conference Center; park in Lot B)
- **October 11, 2017**, at Hotel Grand, 2503 S. Locust Street, Grand Island, Nebraska
- **October 12, 2017**, at Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Executive Director's Office, 4111 4th Avenue, Suite 6, Kearney, Nebraska

Written comments are due by close of business November 2, 2017.

#### Submit written comments to:

Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Mr. Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240

Email: [platteriver@usbr.gov](mailto:platteriver@usbr.gov)

For more information, visit the project website:

[https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte\\_river/index.html](https://www.usbr.gov/gp/nepa/platte_river/index.html)



## Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Overview

## Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Proposed First Increment Extension Environmental Assessment

### Introduction

The Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) has three main elements, as follows:

1. **WATER**—Increasing stream flows in the central Platte River during relevant periods
2. **LAND**—Enhancing, restoring, and protecting habitat lands for the target bird species
3. **ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**—Accommodating certain new water-related activities

The Program began implementing these elements in 2007. Interests in land are acquired only from willing participants and are held by a land interest holding entity, allowing taxes to be paid. This avoids increasing local citizens' tax burden due to lands being removed from the tax roll. Program lands are managed under a "good neighbor" policy.

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

The Program established key standing advisory committees to assist the GC in implementing the Program. Those committees are the Technical Advisory Committee, the Land Advisory Committee, the Water Advisory Committee, the

Independent Scientific Advisory Committee, and the Finance Committee. In addition, an Adaptive Management Working Group helps inform the GC on implementing the Program's adaptive management plan.

### Project Background



In July 1997, governors of the Platte River's three basin states joined with the Secretary of the Interior to sign the Cooperative Agreement for Platte River Research and Other Efforts Relating to Endangered Species Habitat along the Central Platte River, Nebraska. The GC was formed as part of this agreement to develop a proposal for the Program to be evaluated by the Department of the Interior (Department) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The GC completed a final proposal for the Program that is documented in the 2006 Final Program Document. They intended for the Program to acquire and 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. In the fall of 2006, following completion of the NEPA and ESA processes and signing of the Record of Decision by the Secretary of the Interior, the Final Cooperative Agreement was signed by the States and the Department committing to participation in and implementation of the Program. Congressional authorization to continue the cooperative effort through the implementation of the Program and authorizing appropriations were provided in 2008 (P.L. 110-229). The Program is being implemented incrementally, with the First Increment covering the 13 years from 2007 through 2019.



## Program Goals

The overarching goal of the Program is to use land, water, and scientific monitoring and research, provided by the states and federal government, to secure defined benefits for the target species and their habitats in the central Platte River.

The Program provides 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 is working to reduce the likelihood of other species in the area listed under the ESA. Finally, it is mitigating the adverse effects of certain

## Achievements to Date

1. 90,000 AFY toward the Program's First Increment water objective have been achieved.
2. The First Increment land objective and associated milestone has been achieved. The Program currently protects over 12,000 acres in the Associated Habitat Reach through sponsorship agreements, purchases, leases, or perpetual easements.
3. The Program has implemented integrated multi-disciplinary monitoring and research, culminating in the Program becoming the first large-scale endangered species recovery program in the country to complete one full loop of the adaptive management cycle.
4. The Program has facilitated over 180 streamlined Section 7 consultations by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service since the Program began in 2007.

new water-related activities through approved depletion plans.

A primary focus of the Program is enhancing, restoring, and protecting habitat lands for the target species mentioned above.

## Program Extension

The signatories to the Program are proposing a 13-year extension of the first increment. The extension would not change First Increment objectives or the implementation framework.

This extension would provide additional time to complete and operate Program water projects and to conduct additional research necessary to better understand the volume of water necessary to achieve target species objectives.

## Program Costs and Cost Sharing

The total cost of the Program in terms of cash, water and land has been and will continue to be shared equally between the federal government and the states.





## Overview of Proposed First Increment Extension

## Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Proposed First Increment Extension Environmental Assessment

### Introduction

The U.S. Department of the Interior (Department), Bureau of Reclamation, Great Plains Region, is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) to analyze the environmental effects of the Proposed First Increment Extension. Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), working with the States of Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska, water users, and environmental and conservation organizations, proposes to extend the First Increment of the basin-wide, cooperative Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (Program) by 13 years. The Program provides Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliance for existing and new water related activities in the Platte River Basin.



### Purpose and Need

Federal action is needed to complete the remaining milestones not achieved within the prescribed 13-year timeline of the Program First Increment. Completion of the Program's First Increment is necessary to secure the defined benefits under that basin wide approach for federally listed threatened and endangered species,

thereby providing continued compliance with the ESA for certain existing and future water related projects and uses in the Platte River Basin upstream of the confluence with the Loup River.

The purpose of this action is to continue implementing projects to provide additional water to reduce shortages to Service target flows; continue land management activities necessary to provide habitat for target species; and continue integrated monitoring, research, and adaptive management to assess the progress of the Program and to inform future management decisions.

Activities need to be consistent with and support meeting the Program's First Increment objectives to:

- Provide water capable of improving the occurrence of Platte River flows in the central Platte River associated habitats relative to the present occurrence of Service species and annual pulse target flows (hereinafter referred to as "reducing shortages to target flows") by an average of 130,000 to 150,000 acre-feet per year as measured at Grand Island, Nebraska. Target flows would be examined through the Adaptive Management Plan and peer review and may be modified by the Service accordingly. These species and annual pulse target flows would continue to serve as an initial reference point for determining periods of excess and shortage in the operation of Program reregulation and water conservation/supply projects.
- Protect, restore where appropriate, and maintain at least 10,000 acres of habitat for the benefit of target species in the central Platte River area between Lexington and Chapman, Nebraska, and continue progress towards the Program's long-term land objectives.

## Proposed Federal Action

The Department, working with the three states, water users, and environmental/conservation organizations, propose to extend the First Increment of the basin wide, cooperative Recovery Implementation Program to meet its obligations under the ESA. The Federal action described and evaluated in this Programmatic EA is a 13-year extension to the First Increment of the Governance Committee Alternative as described in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS; April 2006) and Record of Decision (September 2006). The proposed first increment extension activities are further described in the “Addendum to the Final Platte River Recovery Implementation Program – First Increment Extension” as adopted by the Governance Committee on June 7, 2017. This programmatic EA evaluates and discloses the effects of this proposed 13-year extension and will support a determination as to whether there are significant effects warranting the preparation of an EIS.

## What happens if the Extension is not Implemented?

If the Proposed First Increment Extension is not implemented, the Program would end. Without a Program, each water project or activity in the Basin that requires federal approval, permitting, or funding would undergo separate ESA section 7 consultation, implementing separate mitigation measures.

Although it is not possible to foresee just what form ESA compliance without a Cooperative Program would be for those projects having a federal nexus, the following seems likely to occur:

- Owners and users of water projects would be individually responsible for offsetting current and future adverse effects on the target species and critical habitat using a combination of water, land, and financial measures.
- Any interim ESA compliance available during the Cooperative Agreement would be lost for those projects subject to ESA compliance. Consultation would have to be reinitiated.





## Overview of the Endangered Species Act

### Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Proposed First Increment Extension Environmental Assessment

### Introduction

The purposes of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are to provide a means for conserving the ecosystems that endangered and threatened species depend on and a program for conserving such species.

The ESA directs all federal agencies to participate in conserving these species. Specifically, Section 7 (a)(1) of the ESA charges federal agencies to aid in the conservation of listed species. Also, Section 7 (a)(2) requires the agencies to ensure that their activities are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitats.

### The Consultation Process

The Endangered Species Program of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) uses Section 7 tools in partnership with other Service programs and other federal agencies. Their goals are to collaborate on solving conservation challenges and to create opportunities, using Section 7 consultations, to recover the ecosystems of listed species. Consultations also provide ways to implement recovery tasks by addressing threats to listed species that may result from federal agency programs and activities.

The provision under Section 7 that is most often associated with the Service and other federal agencies is section 7(a)(2). It requires federal agencies to consult with the Service to ensure that actions they fund, authorize, permit, or otherwise carry out will not jeopardize the continued existence

of any listed species or adversely modify designated critical habitats.

### Starting the Informal Consultation Process

Before initiating an action, the federal agency or its non-federal permit applicant should coordinate with the Service as to the species that may be within their action area. If a listed species is present, the federal agency must determine whether the project may affect it. If so, consultation may be required.

This determination is made in a biological assessment that is submitted to the Service for review. If the action agency determines (and the Service agrees) that the project is not likely to adversely affect a listed species or designated critical habitat, and the Service concurs in writing, then the consultation is concluded.

### The Formal Consultation Process

If the federal agency determines that a project is likely to adversely affect a listed species or designated critical habitat, it begins formal consultation. It does this by providing information on the nature of the anticipated effects.

The analysis of whether or not the proposed action is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species or to adversely modify designated critical habitat is contained in a biological opinion. The ESA requires that consultation be completed within 135 days; with a draft biological opinion being issued within 90 days; the regulations allow an additional 45 days for the Service to finalize the biological



opinion, ending consultation. If a jeopardy or adverse modification determination is made, the biological opinion must identify any reasonable and prudent alternatives that could allow the project to move forward.

The Service must anticipate any incidental take that may result from the proposed project (“take” means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect any threatened or endangered species). Provided that such take would not jeopardize the continued existence of the listed species, it must authorize that take in an incidental take statement. This contains clear terms and conditions designed to reduce the impact of the anticipated take on the species involved.

The authorization of incidental take depends on the federal agency carrying out the terms and conditions. If the Service issues either a jeopardy opinion or an adverse modification of critical habitat opinion that

contains reasonable and prudent alternatives, it may also include an incidental take statement.

### Consultation for this Project

For this project, the draft environmental assessment will also serve as the biological assessment, which starts the consultation process with the Service. A primary focus of the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program is enhancing, restoring, and protecting habitat lands for the following listed threatened or endangered species:

- Whooping crane (endangered)
- Least tern (endangered)
- Piping plover (threatened)
- Pallid sturgeon (endangered)

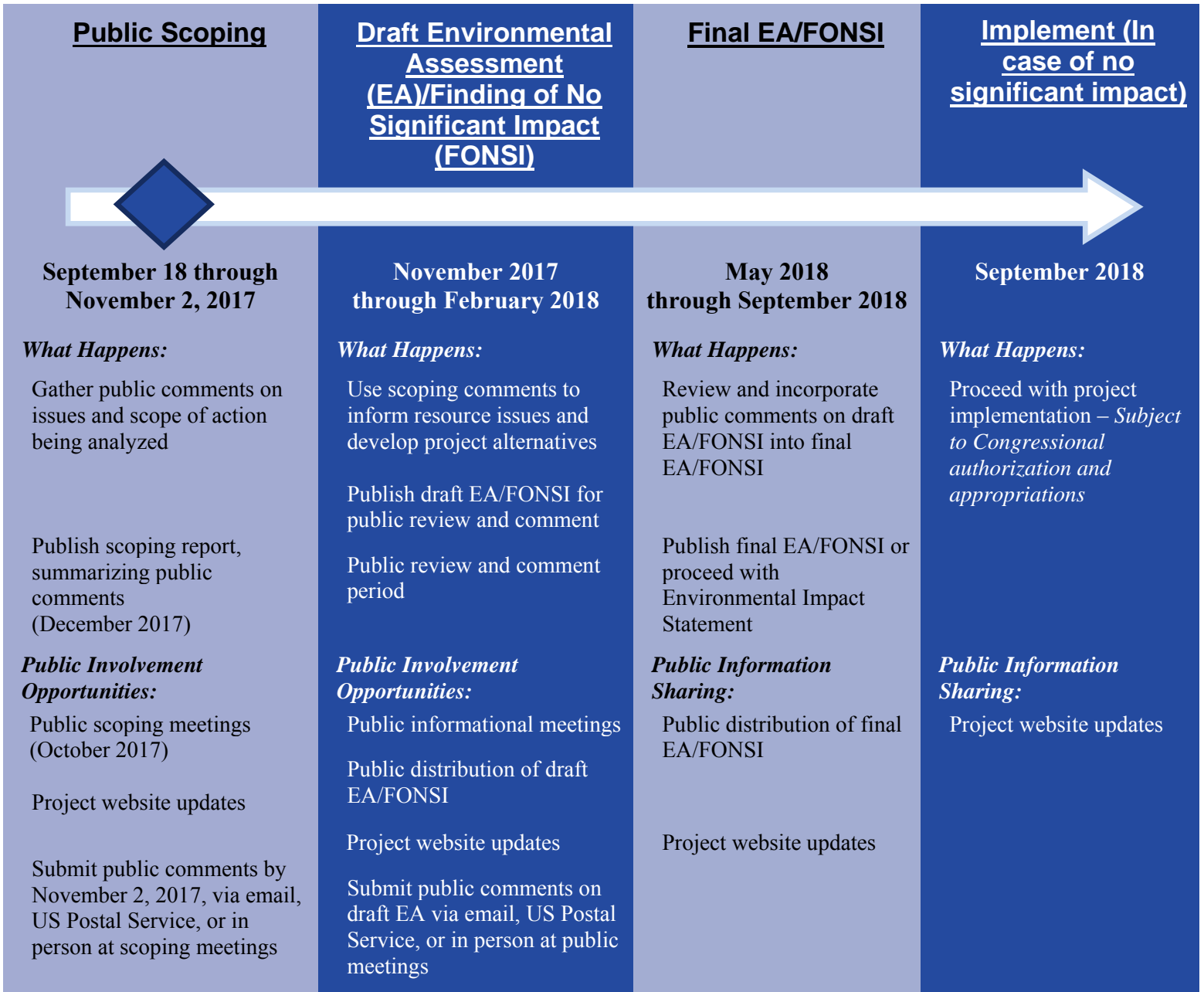
These species will be the focus of consultation between Reclamation and the Service for the Proposed First Increment Extension.





## NEPA Process and Schedule

Platte River Recovery Implementation Program  
Proposed First Increment Extension  
Environmental Assessment



## Submitting Your Comments

Platte River Recovery Implementation Program  
Proposed First Increment Extension  
Environmental Assessment

### What Is Scoping?

The scoping process is an opportunity for the public to identify topics to be covered in the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, Proposed First Increment Extension Environmental Assessment (EA) and to provide recommendations to Reclamation. Your input may help Reclamation identify the following:

- Relevant topics to be analyzed in the EA
- Potential alternatives to the Proposed First Increment Extension
- Potential mitigation measures for anticipated impacts of the Proposed First Increment Extension
- People or organizations who are interested in the EA process
- Data gaps and information needs
- New data or information

### Why Public Comments Are Important

Public comment periods offer the opportunity for you to be involved in the decision-making process and to offer your thoughts on alternative ways to accomplish the proposal. This is an opportunity for you to offer data that the agency can use in its analysis of the environmental effects of the proposed alternatives, as well as possible mitigation of potential harmful effects of such actions.

The National Environmental Policy Act "... is intended to help public officials make decisions that are based on the understanding of environmental consequences..." (40 Code of Federal Regulations, Subpart 1501[e]). To achieve this, the EA considers the effects of the proposed federal actions on economic, cultural, and natural resources in the project area. Citizens such as you often have valuable information about places and resources they consider important and the potential effects proposed federal actions may have on those places and resources.

### Making the Most of Your Comments

While every comment received will be considered, the most useful ones are those that provide specific, detailed information about the effects of the proposed project and issues that should be analyzed in the EA. For example, if a comment states that an action will have "significant environmental effects," further explanation of the relevant causes and environmental effects will help us refine and focus our alternatives and impact analysis. Comments that are solution oriented and provide specific examples will be the most helpful. Comments that contribute to developing alternatives that address the purpose and need for the action will also be appreciated. (Please note that commenting is not a form of "voting" on the Proposed First Increment Extension.)

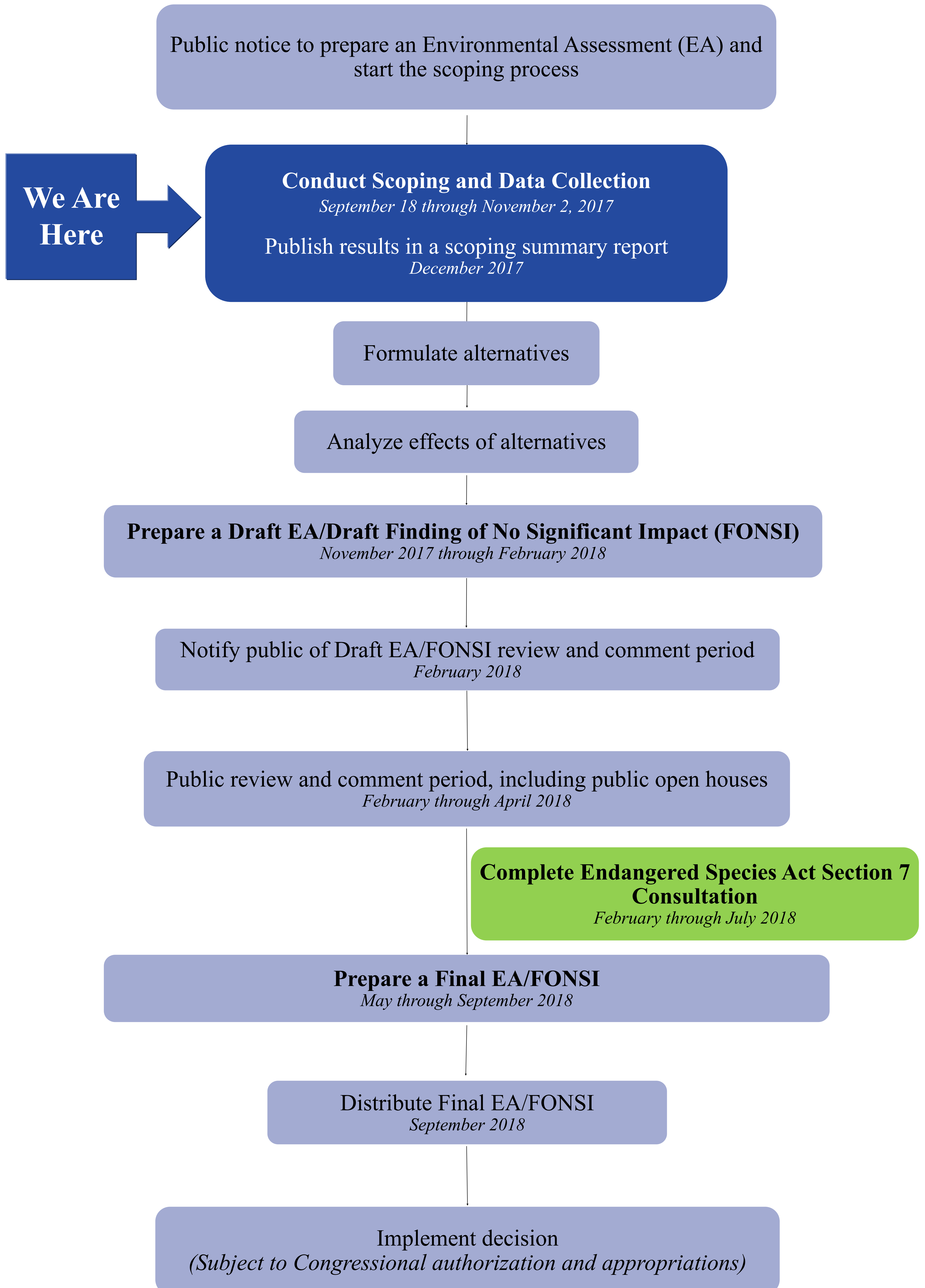
Example of a Helpful Comment	Example of an Unhelpful Comment
The analysis needs to consider the impacts of land acquisition on local communities and economies.	Stop taking our land!







## NEPA and ESA Processes





# How to Submit Your Comments

**U.S. Postal Service to:**  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Mr. Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240

**Email:** [platteriver@usbr.gov](mailto:platteriver@usbr.gov)

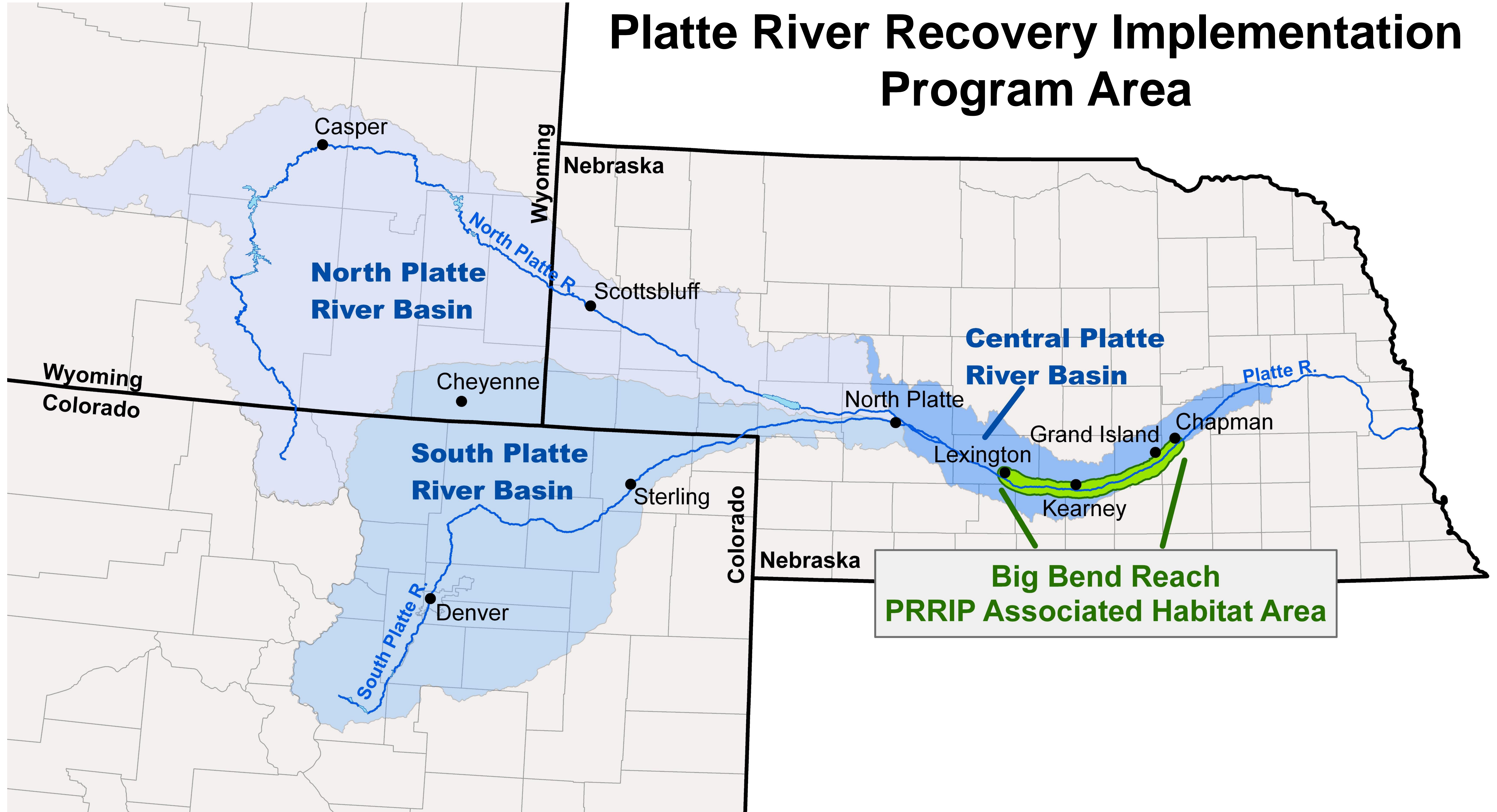
**In Person at Scoping Meeting**

Comments should be submitted by **November 2, 2017.**





## Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Area





## Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Target Species

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

### Piping Plover

1986 federally listed as an threatened species

PRRIP implemented habitat management, research and monitoring (including banding and telemetry) to assess habitat use, reproductive success, foraging habits, and population dynamics.



### Pallid Sturgeon

1990 federally listed as an endangered species

To date, PRRIP has investigated lower Platte water quality and the potential effects of Program water management on river stage in the lower Platte. Efforts are now shifting towards investigations of spawning in the lower Platte.

### Whooping Crane

1967 federally listed as an endangered species

PRRIP completed and peer reviewed monitoring and research to evaluate whooping crane habitat use and the best way for Program management actions to create and maintain highly favorable in-channel roosting habitat.



### Interior Least Tern

1985 federally listed as endangered species

PRRIP completed and peer reviewed investigations into Program management actions aimed at creating and maintaining tern and plover nesting habitat. This led the PRRIP to adjust management actions, completing one full loop of the adaptive management cycle.





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# Appendix B

## Comments Submitted During Public Scoping

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## **Appendix B    Comments Submitted During Public Scoping**

This appendix includes all written comments received during the public scoping period. Reclamation received five written comment submissions during the 45-day public scoping period (September 18 through November 2, 2017); three were submitted during the public meetings and two were submitted via email. Comments were received from the following individuals and organizations:

- Keith Tillotson (1 page)
- Rich Belt, South Platte Water-Related Activities Program (1 page)
- Larry Howard, City of Loveland Water and Power (1 page)
- Angi Bruce, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (1 page)
- Kent Crowder (1 page)

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**Public Scoping Comment Card**

PLEASE PRINT

Please submit your comments by mail or email to  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Mr. Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240  
Email: platteriver@usbr.gov

Date: 10/12/17 (Kearney, NE meeting)  
Name: Keith Tillotson  
Organization (if applicable):  
Email Address:  
Street Address:  
City/State/Zip: \_

Comments:

I'm aware of the Tri-Basin & Lower Republican NRD proposal to divert Platte River flows to the Republican River. If the diversions are approved by the DUR(?), how detrimental will this be to meeting the Program's target flows? I trust this will be addressed in the EA?

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



**Public Scoping Comment Card**

**PLEASE PRINT**

Please submit your comments by mail or email to

Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Mr. Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240

Email: [platteriver@usbr.gov](mailto:platteriver@usbr.gov)

Date: 10/5/17

(Lovelund Meenhey)

Name: RICH BERT

Organization (if applicable): SOUTH PLATTE WATER-RELATED

Email Address:

Street Address:

City/State/Zip:

Comments:

THE FIRST INCREMENT OF THE PROGRAM HAS BEEN VERY BENEFICIAL TO WATER USERS ALONG THE PLATTE AND HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES WITH THE SPECIES AND HABITAT IN THE CRITICAL REACH. EXTENDING THE FIRST INCREMENT WILL ALLOW FURTHER PROGRESS TO BE MADE WITH A WELL-UNDERSTOOD AND PREDICTABLE FRAMEWORK. I CAN'T HELP BUT THINK THIS WILL BE A GREAT BENEFIT TO ALL INVOLVED.  
THANK YOU!

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.



Public Scoping Comment Card  
PLEASE PRINT

(Loveland Meeting)

Please submit your comments by mail or email to  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Attention: Mr. Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240  
Email: platteriver@usbr.gov

Date: 10-5-2017  
Name: Larry Howard  
Organization (if applicable): City of Loveland Coaster & Power  
Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet tonight, to listen, learn, and comment. The existing program as it has been administered and applied for the previous initial thirteen year period has been very successful. Species are showing signs of recovery, and project proponents have an identifiable and predictable procedure for moving their projects forward. It will be in the best interest of the water users to extend the program into a second thirteen year period.

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.







## WYOMING GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT

GOVERNOR  
MATTHEW H. MEAD

DIRECTOR  
SCOTT TALBOTT

COMMISSIONERS  
KEITH CULVER – President  
MARK ANSELM – Vice President  
GAY LYNN BYRD  
PATRICK CRANK  
PETER J. DUBE  
DAVID RAEI  
MIKE SCHMID

---

October 30, 2017

WER 8687.03a  
US Bureau of Reclamation  
Platte River Recovery Implementation Program  
Proposed First Increment Extension  
Scoping  
Goshen County

Bureau of Reclamation  
Attn: Brock Merrill  
P.O. Box 950  
Torrington, WY 82240

Dear Mr. Merrill,

The staff of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department) has reviewed the proposed Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Proposed First Increment Extension located in Goshen County. We offer the following comments for your consideration. The proposed plan entails minor impacts in Wyoming but the potential may exist for significant benefits depending on how Wyoming's share of recovery water is delivered.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Tom Annear, Water Management Coordinator, at 307-777-4555.

Sincerely,

Angi Bruce  
Habitat Protection Supervisor

AB/rh/ml

cc: USFWS  
Tom Annear, WGFD  
Bobby Compton, WGFD  
Chris Wichmann, Wyoming Department of Agriculture, Cheyenne



Platte River, BOR GPR <sha-gpr-platteriver@usbr.gov>

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## Platte River Recovery Implementation Program - Extension of First Increment

1 message

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**Kent Crowder**

Thu, Nov 2, 2017 at 8:32 AM

To: platteriver@usbr.gov

Date: November 2, 2017  
Name: William Kent Crowder  
Organization: Self  
Email address:  
Street Address:  
City/State/Zip:

Comment: The First Increment Implementation should be continued with no change in the program because significant progress has been made to date.

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