

SUMMARY OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION TECHNICAL TEAM (CITT) MEETING

May 13, 2025

1:00pm-5:00pm

Mission Valley Power Conference Room
Flathead Indian Reservation-Pablo, MT

In Attendance (Quorum Established)

Brain Hogenson, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)
Maya Rao, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)
Daniel Lozar, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)-attended virtually
David Lake, Irrigator Representative
Nick Belcourt, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP)

Call to Order [00:00:00]

Chair Maya Rao called the meeting to order at 1:16 PM. A quorum was established.

Informational Updates [00:02:15]

CSKT Updates [00:02:16]

- The irrigation infrastructure program has awarded bids for phase 1-4 of the Jocko Pipeline Project. The project is set to begin this fall.
- The Crow Pump bid has closed and will be awarded soon.
- The Lower J project has been delayed for a year due to contractor availability issues.
- The monitoring measurement team is busy measuring high flows across the Reservation.
- Brian is on the team dealing with Eurasian watermilfoil in Pablo Reservoir. The current plan is to keep water levels low in Pablo Reservoir outside of irrigation season so treatment can occur.
- Dave and Nick mentioned that filling Pablo Reservoir less this spring has negatively impacted irrigation. Nick expressed concern about the potential of back-to-back years with less water in Pablo Reservoir. not being filled this spring is impacting the start of irrigation season for irrigators. Nick says that with Pablo not filling this spring and not filling this fall due to treatment, will create difficulties for FIIP operations and irrigators due to lack of water storage and carry-over water.
- David expressed concern regarding the accuracy at the north Pablo drop gage. Brian said to contact ISO first and then have ditch rider call him when there is a concern regarding gages and he will have hydrographer measure ditch. Everyone acknowledged that FIIP is running on a small crew.

DNRC Updates [00:14:30]

- Maya discussed 180-day registrations being transferred to the Flathead Water Management Board.
- Five stock water grant agreements have been executed. Stock water training will take place on May 23rd at Mission West Community Development in the morning and afternoon.

BIA Updates [00:16:30]

- Dan has been supporting FIIP operations and working through challenges regarding the Falls Creek Diversion. He is also working through the HDR comments for the Placid Diversion and plans for unit one of the Flathead Pumping Plant.

FIIP Updates [00:19:30]

- Nick discussed how FIIP is filling reservoirs and has been instructed by the biological opinion (BiOp) committee, comprised of CSKT and FWS, to begin flushing flows for 20 days on the Jocko River. Flushing flows will begin soon on Mission Creek and Post Creek. Flushing flows limit FIIP's ability to deliver water and fill reservoirs.
- On May 6th the water elevation in Flathead River reached a level where the Flathead Pumping Plant could begin operations. Pumps are running well.
- FIIP recently attended an irrigator meeting in the Hot Springs area. Water storage is very low in this area with water delivery quota estimates at 0.17. During the meeting, irrigators decided to start using water for irrigation on May 12. Irrigator complaints are that O&M rates keep going up and less water is being delivered along with lack of maintenance.
- Moiese Valley is the only area getting full water delivery. The Pablo and Valley View area will begin receiving water the week of May 19th. Dixon Bench and Mission H began water delivery this week. Jocko is not getting any water due to flushing flows.
- Maya clarified that flushing flows are not part of the Compact. Flushing flows were last implemented in 2022 on the Jocko River. Flushing flows are implemented every 2-3 years based on the BiOp committee decision.
- There is a major issue with the new Falls Creek diversion. The diversion should be able to divert 400 cfs but can only divert 200 cfs without risk of overtopping the bank. On Wednesday, a crew will try and create a temporary repair to see if they can push more water.
- Eric Bruguier has stepped down as FIIP project manager; Shane Hendrickson will serve as acting project manager.
- FIIP was able to hire three employees through CSKT's emergency hiring program. Skye Cooley's position was also cancelled this week. FIIP currently has 30 employees.

Irrigator Updates [00:34:40]

- David Lake provided irrigator updates. Flushing flows, the lack of flows into Pablo Reservoir, and a receding snowpack is worrisome for irrigators.

Approve Agenda [00:36:30]

CITT members were given an opportunity to review the draft agenda for the meeting. David made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Second by Brian. Approved unanimously.

Water Management Coordination [00:37:38]

- Brian presented the water supply outlook for May.
- The Flathead Basin SWE is 83% of the median as of May 12. Moss Peak has begun to melt out (16%) but peak streamflow has not occurred. Overall, the total volume of snowpack in the mountains looks like 2023 currently. The North Fork Jocko gage seems to have an error in the data so currently unsure of SWE. Snow from snowmelt from Post Creek above McDonald is projected to be 25749 AF.
- The observed April flows plus the May and July NRCS forecast across all gages are falling within the normal range.
- Three-month outlooks indicate leaning above average temperatures and below average precipitation.
- The team discussed drought issues in Camas/Hot Springs related to balancing the need for carry-over water against using water in the fall.
- Nick expresses concern about FIIP's ability to successfully implement the Compact with staffing shortages and limited hiring ability.

Meeting break until 3:19 pm

- The team discussed the May water year categorization.
- Questions came up about current water availability in the Hot Springs Area and how it compares to historic water availability. Brian will research and report on this topic at a future meeting.
- Dan made the motion to maintain the April categorization as normal in the Jocko, Mission, and Little Bitterroot geographic area for May 2025. Brian seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Incremental Implementation of MEFs [02:37:00]

- Maya discussed the 2025 Incremental MEF Memo. The memo states that MEFs with no existing interim instream flows that do not have measurement capabilities currently or water conveyance structures will not have incremental instream flows in 2025.
- The memo also states that MEFs with no existing interim instream flows that have both measurement capabilities and water conveyance structures could have incremental instream flows added in Water Year 2025 only if CITT adds them in the June meeting.
- CITT members addressed a few typographical errors in the memo, which were fixed during the meeting.
- Brian moved to approve the 2025 Incremental MEF Memo, as amended. Second by Dave. The motion carried unanimously.

Discuss Next Steps and Schedule [02:47:30]

Next meeting will be June 11, 2025, at Mission Wealth Community Development Partners. Maya will be unable to attend the Flathead Irrigation District meeting on May 28, 2025.

Public comment [02:50:00]

The CITT received no public comment.

End Meeting [03:02:20]

Motion to end the meeting by Dan, second by Dave. Motion carries unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:29 pm.