

SUMMARY OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION TECHNICAL TEAM (CITT) MEETING

March 11, 2026

1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Mission Valley Power Conference Room

Flathead Indian Reservation, Pablo, MT

In Attendance

Nick Belcourt, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP)

Daniel Lozar, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Brian Hogenson, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)

David Lake, Irrigator Representative

Maya Rao, MT Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC)

Call to Order [00:00:00]

Chair Brian Hogenson called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Five of the five CITT members were present, and a quorum was established.

Approve agenda [00:01:58]

Maya Rao requested an amendment to the agenda to make item #7 (Jocko Pipeline Project Seepage Loss Rate) be moved from an action item to a discussion item. Second by Dave. Four members voted in favor of this amendment and one abstained from the vote. Amendment approved.

Informational Updates [00:03:33]

FIIP Updates

- Crews are out working on maintenance in anticipation for the season.
- Crews made it to Falls Creek and evaluated the structure for readiness.
- Staff update: Very low staffing levels, looking to bring emergency hires through CSKT program.
- FIIP Biological Opinion committee has met to look at this year's actions for terms and conditions.
- FIIP just completed the A-123 program review.
- Will start plowing snow soon and are hoping to get through plowing in a week.
- Continuing to map gravity feed systems to better understand tract numbers in light of continued subdivision.

BIA Updates

- Dan continued conversation on A-123 program review and put that into context regarding some of the positive findings from that review.
- ITRC team will be coming back during the first week of May to work with staff on training and calibration efforts with some of the measurement devices that were put in last fall.
- Dan mentioned the CITT field trip in Mission South and efforts toward full RDA build-out.
- Finalizing statement of work for the power service contract with Mission Valley Power.

CSKT Updates

- Staffing update: Liz Dempsey introduced as the Information and Education Program Managers.
- CSKT sent three hydrologists to ITRC for canal measurement training.
- Consulted with National Weather Service the previous week to better understand the tools that NWS provides for near-term forecasting and storm event monitoring.
- Brian provided an update on the irrigation infrastructure projects:
 - Crow Pumping Plant scheduled for a pour the following day for the pump intake. Still slated for significant completion in October.
 - Pipeline conversion project construction continues in the Jocko, including the farm turnouts and metering. Slated for April completion.
 - NF Jocko construction scheduled to resume as soon as they can, will likely have to wait for the impending winter weather event.

Irrigator Updates

- Commodity producers facing dire situation with a depressed market and record high input costs.
- Concerned with the snowpack this year and about the FIIP staffing issues.

DNRC Updates

- Working with CSKT and FRWMB to continue to develop Water Policy and Procedures, along with the water rights database to accommodate those needs.
- Working on the operations model decision support tool and making progress on that.
- Enjoyed the field trip at Mission South locations to understand full RDA build-out.

Water Management Coordination (Shane Hendrickson, CSKT) [00:25:58]

- The NWS Mar-Apr-May seasonal outlook forecasts normal temperature and precipitation trends (2/19).
- The NWS Jun-Jul-Aug seasonal outlook forecasts slightly wet and warm conditions (2/19).
- SWE levels vs. overall precipitation were discussed in detail:
 - Continuation of near-Median values at high elevation sites (NF Jocko, Moss Peak) with more time left to build SWE, including a pending weather event (2-4 feet at elevation).
 - Low elevation sites display very low SWE values compared to the period of record Median.
- Reservoir carryover graphs compared WY25 to WY26. Pablo Reservoir and Upper Dry Fork in WY26 continue to outpace WY25.
- NRCS March Forecasts for April-July have been released and were presented by Shane. The seven local forecasts look near-median with the exception of Mill Creek (66% Median).
- Shane then moved on to a discussion about an informal forecast for St. Mary's inflows. The analysis looked at volumetric and percent total input into St. Mary's from Dry Lake Creek (~12,500 acre feet, 65% of the operational volume).
- Next was an evaluation of elevation-dependent snow stats for the year, in context with the SNOTEL sites that provide that information. This is used to establish which drainages have their catchment area above snowline in certain years, vs. those that have lower elevations catchments.

- These data were used to show where the headworks are in elevation in each drainage, which drives the ability to fill reservoirs from each geographical area.
- The core CITT then circled back to the larger discussion on water year determination, and the team tentatively categorized a normal year categorization for the Mission, Jocko, and Little Bitterroot geographical areas. Motion by Dave, second by Nick, with all five members voting to approve this tentative categorization.

CSKT Water Measurement Program Annual Report (Cody Goklish, CSKT) [01:32:27]

- Cody presented the annual report, which is finalized ahead of the WY26 irrigation season compared to previous years where it was released in August. This is due to the continuous records review process that is implemented to better keep record currency.
- The report is a summary of the 95 real-time gages across the reservation, produced annually, detailing hydrologic conditions, RDA reporting, and gaging data.
- The program developed within-season operating tools within webportal to help with usability.
- The CITT talked in detail about the meaning of the data and whether any changes could be made to increase the meaning of such an annual report.

On-farm Efficiency Specialist Position Recruitment [01:55:40] (Maya Rao)

- Maya reached out to Dan Lucas on the MSU-Extension recruitment. Dan indicated that salary is dependent on qualifications, although with our position being unique there may be some salary increase potential based on technical expertise requirement and independent funding source.
- Waiving the bachelor's degree requirement would be more challenging because of the hourly/salary guidelines of the MSU HR system, although Dan could do more research on this.
- Regarding remote work, Maya reported that the position description could be edited but we'd need to arrive at a consensus so that all needs could be met.
- Maya said that she could follow-up with Dan Lucas to continue working through these topics. Dave suggested moving through this intentionally so that we get it right.

Operations Model Discussion (Dan Lozar) [02:01:48]

- CITT continued working to develop the work plan and RFQ so that the details can be aligned for the work product being sought.
- The continued hope is to get a firm in within WY26 to interface with FIIP.
- Recent versions of the draft documents have begun referring to this product as a decision support tool (DST).

Jocko Canal to Pipeline Conversion Project Seepage Study (Brian Hogenson) [02:11:03]

- Brian reviewed the timeline for the Jocko K Canal Lateral seepage studies that CSKT conducted, with CITT review of workplans, in irrigation years 2021 and 2022. The context of the report was discussed, including recent timelines regarding attempts to move this forward in anticipation of completion of Phases 1-4 of the pipeline conversion project.
 - Although this item was amended as an action item in the agenda modification process during this meeting, Brian expressed that this is a main priority for CSKT and a responsibility of the CITT.

- Maya recognized that this topic is a responsibility of CITT per Appendix 3.5 (3)(j), and that her position is that more working sessions would be needed to establish a seepage rate.
- Nick added that the RDA technical working sessions have helped understand technical elements, so more of a focused meeting on the seepage rate would be a huge benefit.
- Dan re-iterated the importance of getting this step right with CITT.
- Dave expressed that he is working through the seepage loss rate to see what the impact to the irrigators will be.
- Brian continued to state that the CSKT feels they applied industry-standard approaches and applied a conservative approach to the study, and will commit to working with team members as much as possible in order to help understand the study.

Discuss Next Steps and Schedule [02:31:11]

- Keep eyes on forecasts for April forecast and move forward with categorization.
- CSKT will formally share the annual report and will post to CITT website.
- Maya will continue to work with Dan Lucas to move forward recruitment for on-farm position.
- RFQ and workplan for Operations Model will continue to be developed and finalized.
- CITT will commit to ongoing understanding of the technical aspects of the seepage study and look to officially finalize this topic.
- Next meeting set for April 15th due to scheduling issue with 4/8. All members agreed.

Public Comment [02:40:40]

- Casey Ryan, CSKT Division of Engineering and Water Resources Manager, mentioned his previous involvement in the seepage study work and expressed frustration with the lack of urgency on this topic as it moves through the CITT.

End Meeting [02:44:46]

- Motion to end the meeting by Maya. Second by Dan. Motion carries unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:05 p.m.