

## **SUMMARY OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION TECHNICAL TEAM (CITT) MEETING**

**Mission Valley Power  
Flathead Indian Reservation – Pablo, MT  
February 26, 2024, 1:00pm-5:00pm**

### **In Attendance** (Quorum Established)

Casey Ryan, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)

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

Daniel Lozar, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Eric Bruguier, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) (Joined meeting at approximately 1:26pm)

Paul Guenzler, Acting Irrigator Representative

### **Call to Order**

Chair Casey Ryan called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. Four CITT members present at 1:06pm. A quorum was established.

### **Approve Agenda**

Motion by Maya to amend agenda to reflect Paul Guenzler as the acting irrigator representative. Second by Dan. Approved by 4 of 4 members present. No more amendments to the agenda were proposed. Motion from Paul to approve the amended agenda. Seconded by Dan. Approved by 4 of 4 members present.

### **Informational Updates**

#### **a. CSKT Updates**

Casey presented updates on CSKT Irrigation Infrastructure Program projects on behalf of Mark Simpson, Irrigation Infrastructure Program Manager.

The North Fork of the Jocko Tabor Feeder Canal Diversion Structure is currently at 60% design.

The Falls Creek Diversion Structure was awarded to Dick Anderson Construction. CSKT is anticipating construction during summer/fall 2024 after Tabor Feeder Canal diversions have ended for the season (typically around July).

The Jocko K Canal Headworks Project is fundamentally complete. The CSKT Forestry Department was contracted for cleanup and restoration at the structure and they have completed all work. Seeding has been completed. Remaining tasks include installation of the automated screen cleaner, which is currently being manufactured, and reseeding, if necessary.

The Pablo 31A Canal Chute Replacement Project is scheduled for 2024. The goal is to deliver the project before the irrigation season, but work may be delayed until after irrigation deliveries are done for the season. Mark is working through the project timing with the contractor.

**b. DNRC Updates**

Maya Rao provided updates for the DNRC. DNRC and FIIP have conducted several field tours to understand the scale and number of people impacted in regards to stock water mitigation. There are personnel transitions happening right now at DNRC – Section Supervisor Arne Wick has moved on to pursue other opportunities; that position being advertised until March 11<sup>th</sup>. DNRC is currently working on their website to make it more user friendly for people that have questions about the water compact.

**c. BIA Updates**

Dan Lozar provided updates for the BIA. Dan recently returned from Cal Poly University where he attended the BIA National Irrigation Meeting. Time was spent discussing challenges and similarities between other Indian irrigation projects around the country. Dan expressed interest in initiating a discussion on developing a FIIP water measurement plan, aiming to enhance FIIP's water measurement abilities across the project. The work plan would help to establish the methodology, timing, and frequency of FIIP water measurement activities. Dan is also actively working with FIIP on general planning efforts for the upcoming water season.

**d. Irrigator Updates**

Paul Guenzler provided updates from the irrigators. There is a lot of concern about snow pack. There is also concern surrounding maintenance schedules for water delivery systems as there were some scheduled for last fall that were not finished. There is concern from the irrigators downstream of the Pablo 31A Canal Project regarding disruptions to irrigation season water deliveries.

Dan addressed the timing of the 31A Canal drop structure and expressed a mutual interest in not disrupting water deliveries this irrigation season. Casey noted that Mark is working to schedule construction activities strategically in order to avoid disruptions to water deliveries.

Dan highlighted the need to share GIS layers and overall data management needs. Some options were discussed.

**e. FIIP Updates**

Eric Bruguier provided updates from FIIP. FIIP is developing new forms to track water usage. FIIP is also trying to improve the call system. FIIP is planning a training to occur March 5-7 at the Red Lion in Polson. Staffing challenges continue to remain an ongoing issue; five positions closed during the past two weeks and Eric reports that all of them are frozen at the regional HR level. Eric is actively working to resolve that issue. FIIP is currently working with SKC to develop opportunities through the federal Pathways Program. FIIP is anticipating a drought year and is

planning for limited water availability. Eric noted security concerns regarding multiple non-FIIP staff who are now in possession of FIIP keys. There are concerns regarding how that will disrupt FIIP's ability to equally distribute quota water. Eric is working to resolve that issue.

### **Water Management Coordination**

#### **a. Review Reservoir Carryover**

Eric Bruguier stated that he has not discussed this topic with the FIIP hydrologist and had no update at this time but would email one out. Casey noted that last month FIIP had 3,000 acre-feet of water stored in Tabor Reservoir and 12,000 acre-feet of water stored in Pablo Reservoir.

#### **b. Update on Long Range Forecast Based on Climatic Indicators**

Brian Hogenson provided a presentation on long range forecasting based on climatic indicators. Appendix 3.5 recommends that the CITT tentatively categorize the water year type during the February meeting. NOAA's 8-14 day outlook issued on February 20<sup>th</sup> indicates an increased probability of slightly below average temperature with near-normal precipitation. NOAA's three-month outlook from March-April-May indicates an increased probability of slightly above average temperatures and slightly below average precipitation.

Starting March 1<sup>st</sup>, we will start to see volumetric water supply forecasts being issued from the NRCS. CSKT worked with the NRCS to incorporate Hellroaring Creek into NRCS's volumetric streamflow forecasts this water year. CSKT is working with the NRCS to develop forecasting procedures for all water year type locations identified in Appendix 3.7 in future years. DNRC is providing water supply forecasting for Post Creek.

The Flathead Basin is currently at 74% of median snow water equivalent. Snowpack is very low across Montana, and the Flathead Basin is actually the highest snowpack in the state compared to historical median levels across all basins. Snowpack in the Flathead Basin is unequally distributed, with northern SNOTEL sites near Canada showing near median snowpack values, and southern SNOTEL sites on or near the Reservation showing at or near historic low snowpack. The NRCS snow water equivalent projection in the Flathead Basin suggests that snowpack levels are unlikely to recover to a full snowpack before the end of winter; even the maximum projection (less than 10% probability of occurrence) is below median snowpack levels for most of the year. Brian noted that snowpack conditions have slightly improved since the January CITT meeting – the Flathead Basin was at 64% of median snowpack on 1/15/2024.

Discussion was held regarding to how to formalize forecasting materials and present them on the CITT website. There was group consensus to post this month's long range forecast as a draft technical document.

#### **c. Tentatively categorize water-year types**

Appendix 3.5 suggests that the CITT tentatively categorize a water year type at the February meeting. This is for information purposes only and has no effect on instream flow or river

diversion allowance schedules at this time. The snowpack data presented this month was very similar to last month's data. Many SNOTEL sites on or near the Reservation are at historically low levels and the three-month climate outlook does not favor dramatic improvement in snowpack. Based on these factors, the CITT reached consensus to tentatively categorize this as a dry year at this time for all geographic areas. Motion by Maya. Second by Eric. Approved by 5 of 5 members.

### **CSKT Jocko Valley Seepage Report**

#### **a. Presentation of Report Findings**

Brian Hogenson shared the results of a two-year CSKT seepage study in the northern Jocko Valley. Seepage measurement work plans were developed and finalized in 2021 and 2022 and shared with DNRC. This work was done in anticipation of the upcoming Jocko Pipelines Project. Brian provided an overview of the report including a summary of previous seepage studies and CSKT's findings during this study.

#### **b. Discussion**

CITT held technical discussion regarding the results of the study.

### **Incremental Implementation of MEFs and RDAs**

#### **a. Proposed Methodology for MEFs**

Casey provided some background on this topic; the Compact states that incremental implementation of Minimum Enforceable (MEFs) and Target Instream Flows (TIFs), Minimum Reservoir Pool Elevations, and River Diversion Allowances (RDAs) will occur as Operational Improvements are implemented. The Compact identifies this activity as a responsibility of the CITT. Casey provided a draft memo to the CITT with a proposal for determining a method of incrementally implementing MEFs based upon the language of the Compact.

#### **b. Discussion**

The CITT held technical discussion regarding the memo, status of Operational Improvements, and incremental implementation of MEFs. The CITT will draft a technical memo.

Discussion was also held regarding ongoing training and technical support for FIIP staff.

### **Stock Water Mitigation**

#### **a. Updates**

Maya provided updates on stock water mitigation efforts. The DNRC has committed \$4 million for stock water mitigation to replace FIIP stock water deliveries outside of the irrigation season. DNRC has been working with FIIP to get a sense of scale and number of water users that may be affected by the change in availability of stock water outside of the irrigation season. Maya discussed various considerations that are going into DNRC's planning efforts.

**b. Discussion**

Eric noted that FIIP has deviated from its internal stock water policy for multiple years. This has created challenges because it has resulted in an expectation of water from users who have been receiving off-season stock water deliveries that were inconsistent with FIIP's own stock water policy.

The Operational Improvement modeling, which was the negotiated basis to construct the FIIP instream flow and RDA values, operated FIIP diversions based on crop demands and held crop irrigation consumption constant while applying Operational Improvements, including reducing or eliminating off-season stock water delivery.

The CITT held technical discussion delivering stock water mitigation projects. Discussion included the geographic extent, financial guidelines, water user eligibility, administration of funding, and potential partnerships for project implementation. Project implementation strategies were discussed.

The CITT noted that the Ronan NRCS possesses the capability to partner with organized stock water entities to complete stock water delivery projects. However, the NRCS emphasized that some level of organization would be required by the group(s) of local stock producers, as NRCS does not have the staff capacity to engineer and administer separate projects for each individual landowner.

The CITT agreed on the importance of communication with potentially affected users. Communication strategies were discussed.

**On-Farm Efficiency**

**a. Updates and discussion**

Technical staff from the CSKT, the DNRC, FIIP, the BIA, and the irrigators followed up with Montana State University (MSU) and MSU Extension in January and heard a presentation on MSU's capacity for irrigation outreach that would benefit irrigators. The potential creation of an irrigation outreach specialist was discussed. There was consensus from the CITT to continue conversations with MSU Extension Office. Casey will reach out to MSU Extension Office to coordinate further conversation.

It was also noted that MSU Extension will be hosting an Ag Producer Summit at the KwaTaqNuk Resort on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

**Appendix 3.5 CITT Schedule**

Maya presented a draft version of an updated CITT annual meeting schedule similar to the one in Appendix 3.5. Maya will distribute the document for edits and comments.

**Discuss Next Steps and Schedule**

Next steps are covered in each agenda item. Dan will present on a proposed path forward for a FIIP Water Management Plan in a future CITT meeting. Casey will send out SharePoint links for the components of the MEF memo for discussion at the next meeting.

**Public Comment**

No public comments.

**Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 5:03pm

**Next Meeting**

The next CITT meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>.