

SUMMARY OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION TECHNICAL TEAM (CITT) MEETING

**Mission Valley Power
Flathead Indian Reservation – Pablo, MT
March 12, 2024, 1:00pm-5:00pm**

In Attendance (Quorum Established)

David Lake, Irrigator Representative

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)

Call to Order

Chair Casey Ryan called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. A quorum was established.

Approve February Meeting Summary

Listed as a voting item on the agenda so a vote was taken to approve February meeting summary.

Motion by Dave to approve the February meeting summary. Second by Dan. Approved by 5 of 5 team members.

Approve Agenda

Motion by Eric to approve the draft agenda for the March meeting. Second by Maya. Approved by 5 of 5 team members.

Informational Updates

a. Irrigator Updates

Dave thanked Paul Guenzler for being the Acting Irrigator Representative while Dave was unavailable.

b. CSKT Updates

Casey provided updates for the CSKT. CSKT has been working on Operational Improvements; those updates will be covered during the respective agenda items. Casey mentioned a SCADA webinar this Thursday, and also noted that MSU Extension office is putting on a CSKT Producer Summit at the KwaTaqNuk Resort on April 11th. That summit is available to everyone. Interested parties can contact Patrick Mangan with MSU Extension Office to register for the summit or to learn more about it.

c. DNRC Updates

Maya Rao provided updates for the DNRC. DNRC has been working on stock water mitigation efforts. The application period for the Compact Implementation Program Manager just closed and DNRC will be interviewing for that position soon. The DNRC is holding a Water Commissioner Training on April 11th in Hamilton. Interested parties can contact Matt Norberg with the DNRC for more information about the Water Commissioner Training.

d. BIA Updates

Dan Lozar provided updates for the BIA. The BIA has been actively working on the CITT projects that will be discussed today.

e. FIIP Updates

Eric Bruguier provided updates from FIIP. The FIIP Spring Training has been rescheduled to March 26-28. Presenters include the irrigation districts and the CSKT. Two water masters have been hired. A secretary has been hired. Two temporary ditch riders have accepted positions. One ditch rider position is still currently advertised. Maintenance staff are working on repairs in anticipation of the irrigation season. FIIP is working on updated contact information sheets that they will distribute to the irrigation districts. FIIP is working on developing internships with SKC, developing a ditch rider certification program, and hiring staff at FIIP using the Federal Pathways Program.

Water Management Coordination

a. Refine Projection of Water Supply

Brian Hogenson (CSKT) presented an updated water supply forecast for 2024. The short term (6-10 day) forecast shows increased probability of above average temperatures. The long-term (3 month) forecast shows increased probability of above average temperatures and below average precipitation. The Flathead Basin snow water equivalent (SWE) is at 78% of median. Two weeks ago the Flathead Basin was at 74%. The NRCS snow water equivalent projection in the Flathead Basin shows less than a 10% chance of the Flathead Basin reaching historic median SWE values by the end of April.

Brian reviewed the DNRC's March 1 water supply forecast for Post Creek. The DNRC forecast for Post Creek predicts a below normal volume of 19,300 acre-feet of water from snowmelt, or 83% of normal. If there is a normal amount of rain this year the total runoff is predicted to be 27,500 acre-feet, which is 5,700 acre-feet less than the historical average.

The NRCS volumetric streamflow forecasts for the Flathead Basin all favor below average runoff this year, including the five locations on the Reservation. Forecasts range from 93% of median for Hellroaring Creek to 64% of median for Mill Creek. The range of streamflow forecasts are large at this time, since we are still a month away from typical peak snowpack.

The 50% volumetric water supply forecasts for the locations in Appendix 3.7 show projected runoff values that are within the Normal Year range with regards to a Water Year Type. According to the NRCS, these results are likely due to wet antecedent soil moisture conditions at the beginning of the water year, as there was above average precipitation in October 2023. CITT members noted that there is a wide range of values at this time, and that it was important to consider the entire range of projections as we are still a month away from typical peak snowpack.

Discussion was held regarding the significance of water year type categorizations and how that categorization may impact water management, both now and in the future.

b. Tentatively categorize water-year types

Appendix 3.5 suggests that the CITT tentatively categorize a water year type at the March 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 showed below average values with a less than 10% chance of reaching historical peak SWE by the end of April. FIIP staff are reporting very low snowpack at their high-elevation locations. 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. The CITT reached consensus to post the draft water year type forecast presentation on the DNRC and CITT websites.

Incremental Implementation of MEFs and RDAs

Casey provided some brief background on the topic. In December the CITT reviewed Operational Improvement progress. In February a draft recommendation memo was submitted to the CITT that included a proposed methodology to calculate incrementally-implemented Minimum Enforceable Flows. CITT members have since contributed to the joint drafting of a recommendation memo to incrementally implement the Minimum Enforceable Flows as required by the Compact.

Clarification was provided that Interim Instream Flows have been in place since the 1980s. The Minimum Enforceable Flows (MEFs) are the new values that become effective following the schedule in Appendix 3.4. The CITT clarified that today we are talking about the incremental implementation of those MEFs as required by the Compact. Until the MEFs are fully enforceable, these incrementally-implemented MEFs will be called Incremental MEFs.

Clarification was provided that the Operational Improvements model that was used by all parties to the Compact to determine the Compact water rights allocations did not include or rely on Rehabilitation and Betterment activities, such as piping leaking ditches. Existing conveyance losses were perpetuated. The Compact water allocations were achieved through water management practices that improve the ability of the Project Operator to plan for and manage water storage and allocation between Instream Flows and FIIP Water Use Rights.

Discussion was held regarding the methodology to calculate the Incremental MEFs. The team expressed consensus to utilize the currently proposed methodology to calculate Incremental MEFs. Discussion was held regarding the completion of those Operational Improvements identified in Appendix 3.4. Discussion was held regarding whether or not to weight Operational Improvements. Several team members expressed reluctance to do so, noting that all Operational Improvements are important and that each one uniquely contributes to the success of Operational Improvements. Discussion was held regarding Adaptive Management. Discussion was held regarding the enforceability of Incremental MEFs. Compact Implementation Technical Team members agreed to confer with their respective legal teams on those legal questions.

It was recognized that Incremental MEFs are an important component of reducing the impact to irrigators and FIIP when MEFs become fully enforceable following the schedule in Appendix 3.4. The importance of communicating these changes to irrigators was highlighted.

The CITT agreed to provide any final feedback on the recommendation memo prior to voting on the memo at the next meeting.

Stock Water Mitigation

Maya presented a draft CITT recommendation memo for stock water mitigation. The DNRC has committed \$4 million for stock water mitigation to mitigate the loss of 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.

The CITT held discussion regarding administration of funds, stock water mitigation strategies, NRCS Targeted Implementation Plans, and the FIIP stock water policy.

CITT agreed to provide feedback on draft recommendations to further discussion at next meeting.

On-farm Efficiency

Last month the CITT reached consensus to continue conversations with MSU and the MSU Extension Office regarding on-farm efficiency and outreach to irrigators. MSU and MSU Extension Office is exploring the possibility of creating an irrigation efficiency specialist position. MSU Extension Office requested some information from the CITT.

Discuss Next Steps and Schedule

The CITT discussed next steps and the date of the next CITT meeting.

The CITT came to consensus to allow CITT team members to present updates at the Irrigation District meetings between now and the next CITT meeting.

Public Comment

The CITT received public comment.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 5:02pm

Next Meeting

The next CITT meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 10th at 1:00pm.