

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

May 15, 2024

1:00pm-5:00pm

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

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)
Nick Belcourt, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP)
David Lake, Irrigator Representative

Call to Order

Chair Maya Rao called the meeting to order at 1:03 PM. A quorum was established.

Approve Agenda

CITT members were given an opportunity to review the draft agenda for the meeting. Casey modified the agenda as Mark Simpson was not in attendance, therefore Casey provided updates regarding FIIP Facility Rehabilitation Projects (Item #3). Maya amended Item #4 as Sky was not in attendance therefore Item #4a is removed from the agenda. Motion to approve agenda with amendments by Dave. Second by Dan. Approved by 5 of 5 members.

Informational Updates

CSKT Updates

Casey provided updates from CSKT. The USGS-operated stream gage Mission Creek above Mission Reservoir had been disengaged (as of 4/23) as USGS was in the process of moving the gage to a new location downstream. They had to develop a new rating curve for the new location and it was back online as of 5/14/2024 and measured 177 CFS at Mission Creek (above Mission Reservoir).

The CSKT-operated stream gage Post Creek above McDonald Reservoir has also recently been moved upstream and is currently offline as new rating curve is developed. CSKT hydrographers took a flow measurement of 57 CFS on 5/9/2024 to provide information while the gage is offline at Post Creek above McDonald Reservoir.

CSKT staff has been working with FIIP to train their staff on the use of tools on the CSKT water data website recently. Update of On Farm Efficiency, information has been forwarded to CITT from MSU and will be discussed. Casey will not be available for next CITT meeting. The CSKT Tribal Council appointed Brian Hogenson as the Temporary Alternate Tribal Representative to the CITT starting next meeting.

DNRC Updates

Maya provided DNRC updates regarding collaboration with the FRWMB on the development of the boards water rights administration process. FRWMB continues to define policies and increase their staff. DNRC's Compact Implementation Program (CIP) has been working with regional offices to address CSKT

Compact implementation questions. CIP is also working to expand capacity to increase attention to other water compacts across the state.

Maya provided update regarding Mission Jocko wanting to discuss CITT irrigation representative at next Flathead Irrigation District (FID) meeting. Dave thought it would be helpful for someone from CITT to present what the role and duties are of CITT representative.

CITT expressed consensus to allow Maya and Casey to attend the next FID meeting to present information on the role of the CITT and the duties of CITT representatives.

BIA Updates

Dan discussed how he has spent time with FIIP to gain a better understanding of challenges within the Project. Dan continued discussion with FIIP on 2026 budget by going through and checking actuals for 2023 and how it informs 2024 and how it informs 2026 and how the 2024 WIIN Act budget allocation funds will be spent within the project. Two pieces of equipment have been identified, a front-end loader and an excavator, in addition to a water measurement project that will enhance operations in Valley View and below Pablo reservoir. These are locations where operational improvements may be made but will not conflict with other Rehab and Betterment projects that are forthcoming.

FIIP Updates

Nick provided updates from FIIP. The North Division is fully staffed with ISO ready to operate. Brenda is the new office administrator hire at FIIP. The application period for the lands clerk position just closed. There are currently two open FIIP positions posted on USA Jobs, including an engineering tech, and accounting tech position. Mission, Jocko, and Camas Divisions are fully staffed. Three people will be moved from maintenance to fill staff positions in the South Division. Maintenance crews are working on repairing livestock damage and ditch cleaning in the North Division to prepare for startup. Pablo A Canal is ready for startup. Camas is discharging out of the Little Bitterroot at 15 CFS. Tomorrow they will start letting water out of Hubbard Reservoir to Lower Dry Fork. FIIP is currently sending 19 CFS to Lower Dry Fork however. FIIP will increase flows out of Hubbard to increase water going to the Lower Dry Fork. FIIP is working on establishment of the biological opinion (BIOP) committee to help give FIIP guidance. BIOP is with Fish and Wildlife Service and is a separate agreement with FWP (separate from compact).

The Flathead Pumping Plant is operating well. On Monday, FIP will decide if they need to shut plant down on Monday based on input flows, runoff, and Pablo Reservoir levels.

Irrigator Updates

David Lake provided irrigator updates. He mentioned that recent rain has been very helpful, with irrigators in the Mission Area reporting up to 5 inches of rain in the April and May time period. Dave anticipates that irrigators will start calling for water soon.

Status of CSKT-Managed FIIP Facility Rehabilitation Projects

Casey presented on behalf of Mark Simpson, CSKT's Irrigation Infrastructure Program Manager. Casey directed people to the CSKT project website (www.csktwatercompact.com) for updates on current and completed projects. CSKT currently has 44 active contracts costing a total of \$51 million.

Project updates included:

- Jocko K Canal Headworks- Project is completed. The project included safety upgrades, improved irrigation operations, flood control improvements, environmental benefits, and improved fish passage.
- Falls Creek Diversion Replacement- Construction scheduled to start on July 1.

- 31A Canal Shoot Replacement- Construction scheduled to start after the end of the current irrigation season.
- Jocko Pipeline Project- Project will involve conversion of open unlined ditches to pressurized pipe network in the Jocko area north of the Jocko River. Phase 1 and 2 are scheduled to begin in the fall of 2025.
- Jocko Lower J Canal Diversion Structure- Construction scheduled to start in fall of 2025.
- The North Fork Jocko Diversion- This is a large channel-spanning structure on the North Fork of the Jocko River to divert water into the Tabor Feeder Canal. Currently in design phase; construction scheduled to start in fall of 2025.

Water Management Coordination

Refine Projection of Water Supply

Brian Hogenson presented an updated May water supply outlook to inform CITT's refinement of the 2024 water year projection. NOAA's 6-10 day (May 20-24) outlook indicated that temperatures likely below normal and precipitation leaning above normal.

The NRCS snow water equivalent (SWE) data showed a slight increase in snowpack since the May 9 CITT meeting. Brian noted that although SWE is still below the historic median, SWE levels are about the same as they were at this time in 2023. Brian noted that in 2024, there will be less snowpack-generated runoff compared to 2023 because peak SWE was lower in 2024. He also mentioned that 2001 and 1992 showed similar basin-wide patterns. Brian cautioned that future years are less likely to follow the median curve in the future as scientific literature indicates more variability in the future.

The Moss Peak station is trending upward after recent snowfall but SWE is still below the median. The North Fork Jocko SNOTEL site is also below median SWE, but there was an increase in SWE from the precipitation events from May 5-8.

The DNRC's May 1 volumetric water supply forecast for Post Creek predicts below normal volume of water from snowmelt. If there is a normal amount of rain from May 1-July 31, the total runoff is predicted to be 22,458 acre-feet (AF) which is 10,834 AF less than normal.

The mid-May NRCS forecast model showed a 6-10% increase at the 50th percentile exceedance level since the start of the month. Brian converts April flows (daily discharges) to AF to quantify the volume of water that left the drainages in the month of April. April flows were added to the May-July forecast to obtain an April-July volumetric forecast which is comparable to the water year thresholds listed in Appendix 3.7. Brian noted that he made a small conversion error in the calculation of Mill Creek flows in early May and has since corrected the error.

The 50% exceedance level for all streams was at the dry end of the Normal Year category in April. Compared to April, the May 1 forecast showed a decreased predicted volume (at the 50% exceedance level) for all streams. The May 14 forecast showed an increase in predicted volume (at the 50% exceedance interval), compared to the May 1 forecast, but forecasted volumes still remain at the dry end of the Normal Year category. Brian noted that the recent precipitation was reflected in the increased predicted volume at the South Fork Jocko site.

Update Water Year Categorization

Maya stated that in the earlier May meeting CITT categorized Jocko Area as Dry, the Mission Area as Normal, and the Little Bitterroot Area as Dry. Casey mentioned that record low snowpack was predicted across the Flathead Basin in January, but there has been significant snow accumulation and precipitation this spring which have improved forecasted flows.

CITT discussed updating the water year categorization in the Jocko Area. It was noted that SWE at the North Fork Jocko site has increased since the early May meeting and the short-term forecast indicated lower than average temperatures and higher than average precipitation. Low reservoir levels in the Jocko Area and the importance for runoff to happen slowly so FIIP could maximize water capture were also discussed.

CITT members discussed the challenge of separating CITT's narrow definition of water year with other factors that affect FIIP operations. Nick asked if reservoir levels, and FIIP's preferred water management strategies could be factored in when deciding on water year categorization. Casey stated that the RDAs were developed from the HYDROSS water balance model (which was vetted by all Compact Parties) in order to meet historic crop water consumption. Casey cautioned that if CITT strayed from a categorization approached based on data, then there would be a risk that historic crop water consumption levels would not be met. Maya also clarified that CITT's water year type categorization must be based on hydrological and meteorological data, per Appendix 3.5. CITT members agreed on the value of continued discussion about relevant factors when deciding water year type.

Dave suggested a schematic that would illustrate how CITT's water year categorization for each area would affect FIIP's ability to move water through the Project. Nick stressed the importance of FIIP understanding how water year will change RDAs and MEFs and affect water management. Maya suggested that in future years CITT talk about the potential effect of CITT's water year categorization of FIIP operations. CITT members agreed that it was important to better understand the HYDROSS model and Maya agreed to invite Seth Makepeace to a future meeting.

Maya mentioned that Appendix 3.5 allows CITT to move the timing of instream flows (MEFs and TIFs) forwards or backwards by up to a month due to the timing of runoff. There was some confusion about the difference between instream flows named in the Compact and flushing flows. Nick and Casey clarified that flushing flows are required by US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of the Biological Opinion. Flushing flows apply during spring runoff and apply at 60% of full bank flow. The official term for flushing flows is the bank full discharge flow schedule as part of the Biological Opinion. The Biological Opinion (BiOp) for the operation of the FIIP is issued by the US Fish & Wildlife Service and is a completely separate agreement than the CSKT-MT Water Compact. The BiOp is outside of the scope of the CITT.

After discussion and review of the data, CITT members agreed that the current projections show the Jocko Area as being below average but within the Normal water year type category. Dan made a motion to categorize Jocko as Normal. Second by Casey. Motion approved by 5 out of 5 members.

Maya mentioned that the 30%, 50%, and 70% exceedance levels for flows in the Mission Area fall into the normal range. Dave made a motion to keep the categorization of Mission as Normal. Second by Dan. Motion approved by 5 out of 5 members.

Maya reminded CITT members that in the April and May meetings CITT classified the Little Bitterroot Area as Dry. In the last meeting, the 50% exceedance interval for Mill Creek was less than 1% above the threshold into the Normal Year category. Forecast has improved, but still at the dry end of a Normal Year. Casey noted that Mill Creek is the only gage that fell into the Dry category at the 70% exceedance level. Dave made a motion to categorize Little Bitterroot as Dry. Second by Casey. Motion approved by 5 out of 5 members.

Off-Season Stock Water Mitigation

Administrative Updates

Maya provided an update on administration options for off-season stock water mitigation funding. CITT members met with Samantha Kemp, a grant administration specialist at DNRC, to understand what the grant process would entail. Maya has continued to work with Samatha to identify key decision points in the creation of an off-season stock water grant program. Maya will send out a list of outstanding questions about grant program creation to CITT members.

Geographic Scope Updates

Heather provided updates on her continued efforts to identify individuals who currently receive off-season stock water from FIIP. She is working on a map that includes information about water delivery source, FIIP assessed acreage per parcel, and geographic location of stock production operations. The goal of this information gathering effort is to get a scope of potentially affected individuals to inform the grant creation process.

On-Farm Efficiency

Casey discussed CITT's ongoing interactions with the MSU Extension Office on the creation of an irrigation efficiency specialist position. MSU posed a list of questions to CITT members provided input on and exploring the idea of what that would look like. MSU gave CITT a list of questions. CITT provided input from questions. Casey summarized CITT members' responses to a list of questions posed by MSU about the position.

Dan asked if other pilot projects been considered. Maya and Heather discussed that DNRC is actively pursuing possible pilot project to further support on-farm efficiency.

Discuss Next Steps and Schedule

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

Public comment

The CITT received public comment.

End Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 2:58 pm.

Next Meeting

The next CITT meeting is scheduled for June 12, 2024.