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PLATTE RIVER RECOVERY IMPLEMENTATION  
PROGRAM

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# Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
**March 13, 2024**

## 2024 SPRING EA RELEASE

KEARNEY, NE: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in coordination with the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program (PRRIP or Program), plans to release Environmental Account (EA) water from Lake McConaughy starting on Thursday (March 14) and continuing for about 3 weeks. The goal is to increase vital central Platte River streamflows by about 700 cfs to help maintain suitable habitat for endangered whooping cranes during the spring migration period. The flow objective is to be achieved while remaining below the 6.0-foot National Weather Service flood stage at the North Platte River at North Platte gage. This is expected to be one of two high-priority EA releases currently planned for the 2024 calendar year, with a release to suppress vegetation germination also planned for June.

The Program is a cooperative basin-wide effort to assist in the recovery of threatened and endangered species in the Platte River including the whooping crane, piping plover, pallid sturgeon, and the now de-listed interior least tern. The EA water is dedicated to instream flow purposes, specifically providing benefits to the target species of the Program. The planned release will help to keep the river wide and shallow with bare stretches of sand. This provides a safe place for whooping cranes and other birds to roost at night, provides nesting habitat for least terns and piping plovers, and increases the size of riverine wetlands.

The USFWS Project Leader and acting EA Manager (Mark Porath), PRRIP Executive Director (Jason Farnsworth), and staff of the PRRIP Executive Director's Office (EDO), Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID) and Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) will coordinate closely and be prepared to delay, scale back, or terminate releases if required. Weather conditions can change rapidly, so the project partners will monitor weather and flow conditions to minimize the risk of exceeding flood stage at North Platte.

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The Program has liability insurance in place in the event of any associated damages related to the flow release. The Program is committed to restoration of the habitat for the target species in the central Platte River, while at the same time protecting human health and safety and preventing damage to associated land along the river.

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