

SUMMARY OF COMPACT IMPLEMENTATION TECHNICAL TEAM (CITT) MEETING

April 16, 2025

1:00pm-5:00pm

Remote Zoom Meeting

In Attendance (Quorum Established)

David Lake, Irrigator Representative

Daniel Lozar, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)

Brian Hogenson, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes (CSKT)

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

Nick Belcourt, Flathead Indian Irrigation Project (FIIP) **arrived after agenda was approved*

Call to Order [00:31:20]

Chair Maya Rao called the meeting to order at 1:31 PM. A quorum was established.

Approve Agenda [00:33:50]

CITT members were given an opportunity to review the draft agenda for the meeting. Dave made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Dan. Approved unanimously.

Informational Updates [00:34:53]

Irrigator Updates [00:35:04]

- Dave explained that some producers are facing low market prices and uncertainty in current economy.

CSKT Updates [00:36:27]

- Brian said Jocko Pipeline and Crow Pump Plant are out to bid and close next Wednesday.
- Gaging network is operating with full staff team of hydrographers; coordinating with FIIP.

DNRC Updates [00:38:37]

- Maya recounted that CITT members attended the Crown Managers Partnership Forum last week.
- DNRC is hosting an upcoming training for stock water grantees.
- 180-Day and Suspended Registration files will be transferred to FRWMB on April 28th.

BIA Updates [00:40:42]

- Dan thanked CSKT for calculating flows for North Crow and Agency Creeks.
- FIIP staff are working on building out their GIS database.
- The specification for Unit 1 and 3 of the Flathead Pumping Plant is almost complete.
- ITRC is installing flumes and will host a flume maintenance training for FIIP staff in June

Operations Model [00:45:08]

- Brian estimated \$300,000 to \$500,000 for a FIIP Operations Model, based on external but similar modeling efforts. Need to refine their scope and identify funding source. Brian thinks that the Water Measurement funding source would be most appropriate.

- Maya also reviewed funding availability and expenses so far. David asked for a ledger to ensure protection of all funds for their specific purpose, and Maya explained that accounting is almost updated.
- Dan asked about the possibility of a working group or committee, which Brian agreed would be helpful. The group agreed to return with draft Roles and Responsibilities for the working group in a future meeting.
- David asked about the purpose of and need for this project. Brian explained that the Compact calls out an Operations Model as a guide for efficiency improvement, so that other projects can be completed.

Water Management Coordination [01:09:25]

- Brian covered the water supply outlook. Flathead Basin is 96% of the median SWE. Local sites also hover at or above 100%, an improvement from last year's conditions. Three-month outlooks indicate normal projection, with slightly higher temperatures and slightly lower precipitation.
- Maya brought up the public memo on water year data from 2024. The group discussed the merits of a 2025 memo.
- Brian made a motion to categorize 2025 as a normal water year. Nick seconded the motion. After discussion, Brian amended the motion to categorize the Jocko, Mission, and Little Bitterroot geographic area as a normal water supply year for 2025. David seconded the amended motion. The motion carried unanimously.
- The group agreed to put a memo on the May meeting agenda.

Meeting break until 3:00pm.

FIIP Updates [01:53:30]

- Nick Belcourt discussed the Spring BiOp FIIP meeting. They agreed in that meeting to complete flushing flows as soon as 40% of full bank flows in several creeks, which will affect diversion.
- Staffing updates: 3 FIIP staff left this week. They are 7 staff short to maintain the water project and are waiting on the status of CSKT emergency hiring and BIA hires, which they hope to have staffed for irrigation season.
- They cannot start the pumping plant because the Flathead Lake level is too low. They expect to start the Flathead River pumping plant soon.
- Due to staffing shortages and required maintenance, Pump #2 will not be able to run this year.

Incremental Implementation of MEFs [2:04:30]

- Brian stated that for Gold and Cold Creeks, the goal is to keep a wetted stream below S Canal. The Gold Creek turnout has not been operated for 40 years and FIIP staff will have to check that gate's function.
- The group discussed the physical feasibility of allowing a small 1" opening in some of these gates to meet instream flow requirements, and what would happen during heavy rain events (e.g., leaves blocking the outlet). They also discussed the burden on FIIP of checking this turnout repeatedly during irrigation season. Nick mentioned that FIIP may struggle to implement new IMEFs this year and asked if an orifice plate or similar structure could be installed so that FIIP would not have to continually check the flow at these new locations. He stated that his concern would be about what happens if/when debris gets stuck in the diversion structures given FIIP's limited capacity.
- Brian stated that he wanted to move towards implementing additional incremental MEFs this year even if they were not enforceable. Maya raised the idea that this year could be a learning year for FIIP regarding the interim MEFs

- Brian emphasized that even if CITT does not implement incremental MEFs for additional sites this year, that the research done on the sites is valuable.
- CITT agreed to table discussion to wait for legal interpretation of Article IV, c.3.c., until next meeting.

On-Farm Efficiency [02:49:00]

- Maya summarized last meeting's progress. Explained that DNRC legal and DNRC H.R. had minor recommended edits to Task Order 13 Scope of Work. After reviewing the changes, David made a motion to approve the amended Task Order 13 Scope of Work. Dan seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Rotation of Chair per CITT Operating Rules [02:56:00]

- Maya summarized CITT rules regarding Chairperson and recommended delaying chair election to ease organizational pressure during current irrigation season.
- Dave made a motion to retain the current Chairperson (Maya). Nick seconded. 4 voted in favor, Maya abstained. The motion passed.
- Maya made a motion to rotate Chairperson in October, with a CITT vote in September. Dave seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps and Schedule [03:08:53]

Reminder about upcoming stock water grant training.

Public Comment [03:09:40]

No attendees provided public comment.

End Meeting [03:10:15]

Motion to end the meeting by Brian, seconded by Nick. Motion carries unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:18 pm.

Next Meeting

May 13th at 1 pm. Location to be determined.