



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 13th, 2004 * 9:30 AM

Held at the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
3125 Portia Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68501 * (402) 476-2729

1. **Call to Order.** Rodney Verhoeff, LPRCA Coordinator, called the meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) to order at 9:30 AM. Meeting was held at the Lower Platte South NRD Office conference room located at 3125 Portia Street in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Roll Call. An attendance sheet was distributed. Those present who signed in include:

***Alliance Members/Staff:** Ervin Bull, LPNNRD; Ted Bailey, LPNNRD; John Conley, P-MRNRD; Pat Rice, NDEQ; Mike Murren, LPNNRD; Gerry Bowen, P-MRNRD; John Bender, NDEQ; Sam Truax, NE Military Department; Clint Johannes, LPNNRD; Marlin Petermann, P-MNRD; John Miyoshi, LPNNRD; Tom Mountford, LPNNRD; Steve Gaul, NDNR; Frank Albrecht, NG&PC; Don Jacobson, LPSNRD; Glenn Johnson, LPSNRD; Paul Zillig, LPSNRD; Rodney Verhoeff, LPRCA (Staff).

***Guests:** Duncan Ross, Lincoln Planning Dept; James Nygren, Senator Chuck Hagel's Office; Dayle Williamson, Senator Ben Nelson's Office; Adam Olson, Rep. Bereuter's Office; Gene Siadek, MUD; Dale Verhoeff; Ted Schmidt; Mary Hanson, NPS; Patte Newman, Lincoln City Council; Sonia Kim, OPPD; Robert Harms, USFWS; Jeff Runge, USFWS; Dave Sands, NE Land Trust; Carl Roberts, Lyman-Richey; Dennis Grams, Olsson Associates; Renae Held, UNL; Chris Thody, UNL; Jeff Kohn, MUD; Larry Hutchinson, NGPC; Kevin Jameson, NE Dept of Roads; Jack Schmit, Willow Point; Randy Stahmer, HDR; Bob Hilske, NNRD; Nelson Carpenter, USACE; Scott Tricker, Landscapes Unlimited.

2. **Proof of Legal Notice Presented.** Proof of publication was presented. The legal notice was published in the Omaha World-Herald on December 30th, 2003. A news release on the meeting was sent to all area newspapers and radio stations; notifications were sent to those on the mailing and e-mailing lists.

3. **Approval of Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) Minutes from September 30th, 2003 Meeting.** No modifications were made to the September 30th, 2003 draft minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.

4. Water Quality Open 2004.

- a. **General Discussion** - Rodney noted the 2003 Water Quality Open was held at Quarry Oakes Golf Course on the Platte River. There were 144 players that made up 36 teams, so each hole had 2 teams on it. The main focus of the tournament is water quality education. Many displays, demonstrations and trivia were set up throughout the course. Each player was given a conservation booklet filled with tips. Another course is being considered for the Water Quality Open 2004.
- b. **Presentation on Arbor Links** - Scott Tricker of Landscapes Unlimited was present to talk about Arbor Links Golf Course and the possibility of holding our tourney there. This course is adjacent to the Lied Conference center in Nebraska City and is about 40 minutes from Lincoln or Omaha. When designing the course on the 350 acres of farmland the main goal was not about preservation, but restoration - - bringing back the natural habitat and qualities to the golf course. Approximately 80% of the course is dominated by native grassland. Another consideration was the discharges to holding ponds and filtration basins to minimize erosion and supply future irrigation needs, which would lessen the need to pump out of wells and the local water supply. Every single hole on the course shows a conservation practice, and players have an opportunity to read the construction notes and the overall impact of the design. For example, on the first hole, there is a line of trees that serves as a windbreak for erosion control. Scott stated that Arbor Links can provide a lot of values and educational messages consistent with the mission of the LPRCA. Just this year in Golf Digest, Arbor Links was rated one of the top ten public courses in the United States. A non-profit organization package price would be \$50 per player. It would include one round of golf, cart, range balls, \$5 in prizes, and burger and brat buffet. In August, this would be good for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. After some discussion, a motion was made to go with Arbor Links for 2004 and seconded. With a group consensus, it was decided to go with Arbor Links for 2004 Water Quality Open.

5. P.A.C.E. - Sand and Gravel Working Group. Carl Roberts of Lyman-Richey gave a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the working group P.A.C.E. (Planning, Aggregates, Community, and Environment) that started just over year ago. Aggregate mining companies, conservation groups, and government agencies are all part of P.A.C.E. This group is working to balance community interests, conservation, and industry. The area of interest for P.A.C.E. stretches from Elm Creek down to the mouth of the Platte River near Plattsmouth.

6. Lower Platte River Unsteady/Variable Flow Model Project. Nelson Carpenter of the COE discussed the proposal to model the Platte River from Columbus down to the mouth using a variable flow model. The COE is putting together the scope of work and presenting it to the entities located within the river basin to see if they wish to pursue it or not. There will be more detail on it at the Cumulative Impact Meeting in the afternoon.

7. LPRCA / UN-L Cooperative Extension Water quality Meetings – Spring/Summer 2004. Verhoeff explained that the meetings are scheduled to begin in April/May. He had a draft agenda in his last LPRCA quarterly newsletter and requested feedback for it. John Miyoshi stated that an NRD water update should be presented, especially around the Schuyler area.

8. Supplemental Funding / Non-Profit Status Options.

a. Nebraska Community Foundation Affiliation - Verhoeff discussed how the Alliance is a collaboration of multiple, nonprofit or government groups, but doesn't have its own non-profit status. There are some grants that require you to be a non-profit organization. Not having nonprofit status has proven to be a hindrance especially with the nature center project that we are working on cooperatively with UNL and NPS at the UNL Research facility near Ithaca. Verhoeff stated that it would be nice if we could get some of the grants in the name of the LPRCA, instead of looking for a sponsor in every case. Additionally, there may be some folks who would like to make a donation, and they may be more willing to donate if there was a tax break. One of the options is to affiliate with the Nebraska Community Foundation, where you would create a Lower Platte River Fund, but you would use their umbrella of non-profit status to accept grants and donations. It would not require the creation of a foundation, and you wouldn't have to do much bookwork or set-up. Also, it would require no additional staffing.

A handout was distributed showing the outline of fees and the affiliation process. After discussion, the group consensus was to move to the next step of this process. A member from LPNNRD, P-MRNRD and LPSNRD will accompany Verhoeff to meet with Jeff Yost to discuss a draft agreement and affiliation.

9. Infrastructure Studies/Projects.

a. Cass County – River Utilities Board – Verhoeff discussed the infrastructure study was conducted in the stretch from Ashland to Louisville along the Platte River. The study looked at water and wastewater supply needs and whether or not a regional system on the water supply side or a basin type of system on the wastewater side would be feasible. The final report did come out but has not yet been approved by the Lower Platte South NRD, which commissioned the study. Indications seem to show the concepts for regional or sub-basin systems are feasible. Another recommendation from the report is the creation of a river utilities board (LPRUB) to oversee and administer the water and wastewater systems. LPRUB would be comprised of one member from the LPSNRD, one from each of the communities in the area, and one from Cass County .

According to the study, there are six recommended phases to address water supply and wastewater. Phase I would address the most immediate need at this time, which is finding a water supply for Louisville and South Bend. Currently, Louisville is under an administrative order for copper corrosion problems in its current water supply. Most South Bend residents have individual wells, some of which can be susceptible to contamination. HDR is doing the preliminary engineering study for Phase I and also conducted the infrastructure study. This process has been going on for some time. It started out as an eighth month study then turned into a year-long process. There were a lot of public meetings and involving the community in looking at current and future land-use planning.

Randy Stahmer of HDR showed display boards of the study area. He stated that there is a need to do a preliminary engineering report to support the recommendations of the study, and to do a comprehensive analysis of alternatives. This analysis would include looking at the cost associated with each alternative and the technical merits of whether or not a water supply can be added to the region by hooking into existing water suppliers such as MUD, or the City of Lincoln, or connecting to community supplies from Ashland or Louisville. Phase II would address wastewater issues in the Fountain Creek sub-basin area near South Bend. There are some major issues with groundwater contamination and adequate wastewater systems in this area. Phase III is also focused on wastewater but targets the area going west towards Exit 426. The aim of the overall project is to look at a regional water supply for not only Louisville and South Bend, but also the 426 Exit area including Ashland.

The Phase I preliminary engineering report should be done in about week, and it will be available after it is approved by the Lower Platte South NRD Board. It will then go to the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services (NDOH&HS) for their review and approval. The next step will be to work on the wastewater issues in Phase II. The preliminary engineering report for this phase would also go to NDEQ and NDOH&HS for review and approval. Implementation is ultimately in the hands of the River Utilities Board (RUB).

Johnson noted that Ashland has chosen not to be part of the Utility Board at this time, so the participating partners are in the process of going back and revising the agreement for just the four members: South Bend, Louisville, the LPSNRD, and Cass County. The group hopes to have its first meeting in early February or soon thereafter. It'll be just an organizational meeting to begin the process.

- b. **Sarpy County** – Marlin Petermann noted that the entities involved in this project met in December to look at wastewater and water needs in the area along the Platte River, which primarily includes the southern half of Sarpy County. Sarpy County officials are putting together an Interlocal agreement between the participating entities including Bellevue, Papillion, Sarpy County, Gretna, and the PMRNRD.

10. River Obstruction Study – Verhoeff stated that the LPRCA previously looked at river obstructions including old bridge pilings, pillars and abutments from old roadways, concrete pilings, wooden pilings, and metal pilings. Safety issues are a concern for boating, swimming, wading etc, but scenic and natural qualities are also a consideration. The LPRCA has again started to look into this issue. Often, the obstructions can be under the water and aren't visible. Additionally, they can capture debris and lead to flooding. On the positive side, some of the old bridge pilings have created habitat. This spring there will be a reconnaissance trip to supplement and update the efforts conducted by the LPRCA about a year and half ago. Verhoeff showed some of the pictures of pilings on the river and the possibilities of removing them.

11. LPRCA Program and Project Updates.

- a. **LPRCA General Activities** – Verhoeff discussed the LPRCA quarterly report and the first edition of the newly named newsletter, called "Corridor Connections." This name better reflects the mission of the LPRCA, the partnerships, the people involved, and the on-going efforts find a working solution to resource management issues. The LPRCA's website at www.lowerplatte.org will have all of the newsletters, quarterly reports, and other important information available on it.
- b. **Lower Platte River Weed Management Area** – Verhoeff gave a brief summary on the Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) group. This group is a collaboration of county weed personal in the Lower Platte River Corridor, conservation interests, RC&D's and other people with an interest in making sure we can maintain the native species in the area and control some of the invasive species. The group has developed by-laws, a general management plan, and operating procedures. Recently, the LPWMA applied to the Environmental Trust Fund for funding to purchase ATV's to access some of the remote areas on the banks of the river. Unfortunately, it was not funded, so they will have to look at other funding sources. The group meets once a month and anyone is welcomed to attend. Their minutes are available on their website at www.lowerplattewma.org
- c. **205 Studies – Flood Control/Flood Reduction Projects** – Verhoeff reported several 205 studies are underway in the LPNDRD for the communities of North Bend, Schuyler, and Fremont.
- d. **Multimedia – Newsletter, Brochure, Video** – Verhoeff discussed the first edition of the new newsletter – Corridor Connections, which was recently mailed out to approximately 2000 people. All NRD directors (for the 3 NRDs) were mailed a copy. He handed out copies to meeting attendees for review. There will be a spring/summer edition coming out in late spring/early summer 2004. Submissions are welcomed. Verhoeff is finishing up the brochure script with hopes to have the new brochure completed by late spring 2004. Verhoeff mentioned that the LPRCA video has been distributed to all communities and counties in the Corridor as well as other interested parties. Overall, about 100 CD-ROM versions of the video and 35 VHS versions have been distributed. Originally, we contracted out to have videos replicated, but Verhoeff said he has access to a CD-burner and can do it in-house. He mentioned that he is available to give a presentation on the LPRCA to civic or other groups.
- e. **Feasibility Study Projects**
 - 1. **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek** – Marlin Petermann gave a brief update on this project. The levee alignment designs are being completed. The PMRNRD has taken the lead in the cabin raising/removal portion of the project. Negotiations continue on this aspect and should be completed this spring. Many of the conservation measures have been initiated and some completed - including island clearing, chute construction, etc. This project is still waiting for COE approval to go forward to OMB for funding.

2. **Lake Wanahoo/Sand Creek** – Federal funding has been the constraint for this project also. Highway 77 will run across the top of the Wahahoo dam, which will impound water over a 2 square mile area. The project is moving forward, but still needs OMB to release the federal funds.
- f. **Cumulative Impact Study** – Verhoeff noted this project is just getting underway but the PCA (project cooperative agreement) has been signed and the interlocal agreement between partners is in place. NG&PC and the COE are leading the way in the effort to look at all of the impacts of the things going on in the Corridor. The entire group met for the first time in early January. The group decided one the products of this study would be a Geographic Information System (GIS) with multiple data layers. This GIS would be similar to NRD Mapmaker internet mapping product that the LPRCA and LPNNRD had developed and would allow resource managers to make informed decisions with the best information available. A small subcommittee of the entire group will meet this afternoon to decide what layers to consider (see handout).
- g. **Lower Platte River Corridor Environmental Carrying Capacity Project**- Verhoeff reported this project is in the initial stages. It looks at the environmental carrying capacity of the corridor and will consider issues such as development, land use, and infrastructure. The LPRCA has been working with HDR to get this project going and hopefully by the next quarterly meeting, there will be more information to report on.

12. Upcoming Meetings/Events.

- a. **Nat'l Assoc. of Recreation Resource Planners Conference – May 16th to 20th, 2004 – Omaha** – The NARRP is looking for ideas and assistance with field trips, posters, and presentations. Issues should relate to recreational planning, watershed planning, and resources management. I offered them some suggestions including the Platte River Connection/Lied Bridge project, having an airboat tour, the river obstructions project, and public river access issues.
- b. **UNL Water Tour – Summer 2004** – This year, UNL is looking at the Lower Platte River area as their tour setting/location. They are looking to have an airboat tour, a tour of a sand pit area, and/or a tour of conservation reclamation efforts at a sand pit. The tour will be held sometime in June – maybe the 7th through the 9th. Within the next month or so, more information should be available.
- c. **Next LPRCA Meeting – April 2004** – It was decided to have the next meeting on April 27, 2004 starting at 9:30 a.m. at the LPSNRD conference room.
- d. **Others** – There was mention of LB 826 and its impact on refuges along the river. No additional items were brought up.

13. Other Items of Interest.

14. Adjourn. The January 13th, 2004 meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance adjourned at 12:10 p.m.