



# Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator

## Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, November 30th, 2004 \* 9:30 AM**

**Held at the Lower Platte North Natural Resources District  
511 Commercial Park Road \* Wahoo, Nebraska 68066 \* (402) 443-4675**

**1. Call to Order.** Rodney Verhoeff, LPRCA Coordinator, called the meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) to order at 9:45 AM. Meeting was held at the Lower Platte North NRD Office conference room located at 511 Commercial Park Road in Wahoo, Nebraska. **Roll Call.** An attendance sheet was distributed. LPRCA members in attendance included: Bob Heimann (LPNNRD), Glenn Johnson (LPSNRD), Marlin Petermann (PMRNRD), Gerry Bowen (PMRNRD), Ted Bailey (LPNNRD), Ervin Bull (LPNNRD), Tom Mountford (LPNNRD), Shaula Ross (LPSNRD), Ralph Pulte (H&HSS), Frank Albrecht (NG&PC), Craig Wacker (LPRCA), and Rodney Verhoeff (LPRCA). Other in attendance included: Tim Mettenberg (NEBCO), Lowell Daisley (Cass County EDC), Dennis Grams (Olsson Assoc), Dayle Williamson (Sen. Nelson), Jerry Obrist (Lincoln Water System), Nelson Carpenter (COE), Sonia Kim (OPPD), Jason Vogel (USGS), and Rick Wilson (USGS).

**2. Proof of Legal Notice Presented.** Proof of publication was presented. The legal notice was published in the Omaha World-Herald – the statewide newspaper on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Notifications were sent to those on the e-mailing lists.

**3. Approval of Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) Minutes from August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004 Meeting.** No modifications were made to the August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004 draft minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.

**4. LPRCA Member Retreat.** Verhoeff discussed the upcoming LPRCA retreat scheduled for Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005 at Camp Kitaki from 9:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. Following the retreat, there will be a short trip down to the Lied Bridge. The retreat will not be as in-depth as the S.W.O.T. process conducted a couple of years ago but will address team-building, strength finding, and the current and future direction of the LPRCA. Those wishing to attend are encouraged to call the LPSNRD at (402) 476-2729. Verhoeff asked that RSVP's be made by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

**5. Update on Nebraska Community Foundation Affiliation.** Verhoeff said he is just waiting on the final signed 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment to the LPRCA Interlocal Agreement, which outlines the establishment and administration of an affiliated fund with the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF). Once this is received, he can get the agreement with the NCF finalized. The LPSNRD will be the signatory on the NCF agreement since the LPRCA cannot sign contracts. The 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment is needed to then establish how the fund will be managed and to ensure that all LPRCA members can participate in administration of these funds through a Fund Advisory Committee.

**6. Funding/Financial Update.** Verhoeff has received contributions from about half of the LPRCA members for FY05. Discussions with those who haven't contributed yet indicate that nearly all will be contributing this year. Verhoeff stated that he will develop a draft FY06 budget prior to the next quarterly meeting. The Alliance will need to pass a draft version at that time in order to submit to the NRDs for their budget development processes.

### **7. Annual Airboat Tour**

- a. **Presentation on 2004 Event.** Verhoeff presented information on the 2004 Airboat Tour. Over 60 people attended the tour, which covered the area from South Bend down to the mouth of the Platte River near Plattsmouth. There have been many favorable comments on the tour. The tour did receive good press again this year.

- b. **Format, Date, Time for 2005 Event(s).** Discussion took place as to the format for next year. Verhoeff asked whether the current format with an open invitation to anyone is reaching the right audience. He mentioned that the purpose of the event is to get the local decision-makers and the resource managers on the river. One suggestion is to hold two smaller tours with about 10 boats apiece. One could target the local decision-makers (i.e. county and city officials, state and federal government officials, resources managers, etc.) and the other could be open to any interested party and include media. There have been many comments from past participants that they really enjoyed the tours and found them very enlightening. We do have some of the same people attending the tours and it would be nice to get new attendees who haven't gone before, particularly city and county officials. We need to have more individual contact with those we wish to attend - - through phone calls, correspondence, and especially personal visits. Ted Bailey said there is enough water further west and we could try a tour further upstream next time since many of the airboaters live that way. The tour needs to focus on education and showcase the many issues on the river. The consensus of the group was to continue having an annual airboat tour, but to break this next time into two separate tours - - one focusing on local decision-makers and the other open to a broader audience.

#### **8. Water Quality Open Golf Tournament.**

- a. **Presentation on 2004 Event** – Verhoeff showed a PowerPoint presentation on the 2004 Water Quality Open. This year, the tourney was moved to Arbor Links for a change of venue and due to construction at Quarry Oaks. Thirty-five teams and nearly 140 people participated this year. The weather again was beautiful and both active and passive educational materials were used to promote water conservation and quality. There was an opening presentation by the national agronomist for the golf design firm that designed Arbor Links, Landscapes Unlimited. Participants were encouraged to attend the presentation by giving them 2 strokes off their final team score if all team members attended. The result was a packed house for the presentation. Verhoeff also said there were trivia signs and demonstrations on many of the holes relating to water conservation and quality in addition to displays at the clubhouse. Quarry Oaks has now finished construction on expansion of the clubhouse, which can hold around 200 people.
- b. **Format, Date, Time for 2005 Event** – Verhoeff asked what the group would like to do for next year. He mentioned that the event is designed to bring together a diverse group of participants to promote conservation and water quality protection. He asked if the current format reached the right audience or whether we need to modify the format to bring in a new audience. There was considerable discussion and the consensus is that the Alliance has strengthened the educational component of the event in the past couple of years. We need to continue this trend. Verhoeff asked if the group would like to keep the current format where the event is open to anyone and invitations are sent out on a large scale. He offered an alternative that would include a conference in the morning and then the golfing in the afternoon. The “bribing” of players to attend educational presentations was encouraged again for next year. The group suggested that specific details be worked out at the upcoming LPRCA Member Retreat on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Consensus was to tentatively go with Quarry Oaks for the 2005 tournament since it is on the river and they have now expanded the clubhouse. Verhoeff was instructed to try and negotiate a price that is more comparable to what we paid for at Arbor Links (\$55/person). There was a suggestion to rotate the tourney around to different golf courses near and around the corridor. We need to make sure that the courses we visit utilize proper conservation and management practices.

**9. WRDA Amendment 2004 Update.** The 3 NRDs have been working to get language into the federal Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) for 2004 to conduct regional watershed management projects for the entire corridor. The language asked for a \$45 million appropriation, which would be funneled through the Corps of Engineers (COE) as the federal sponsor. The COE has modified some of its organizational priorities and will focus on more of a “watershed” approach to programs and projects. The proposed WRDA amendment language matches well with this new direction and the NRDs received great support for such an amendment. Unfortunately, the language did not go through this year but will be back for discussion in 2005.

#### **10. LPRCA Program and Project Updates.**

- a. **LPRCA – General Activities** – Verhoeff has been busy lately planning for the retreat, preparing the next newsletter, sketching out website redesigns, organizing the LPRCA files, and attending a variety of partner meetings associated with our projects.

- b. **Lower Platte River Weed Management Area (LPWMA)** – The LPWMA has finished their new brochure and copies were distributed to all attendees. Lowell Daisley discussed the PTI grant the group received last year for \$54,000 and the new application submitted this year for an additional \$50,000. The group is working on many new outreach and educational projects including a PowerPoint presentation that they would like to give at the next LPRCA quarterly meeting. They will also be approaching the NRDs to solicit financial support for more consistent funding, particularly since there is so much more competition for grants. The LPWMA may be a topic for the airboat tour.
- c. **205 Studies – Flood Control/Flood Reduction Projects-** The initial assessment by the COE has been completed for all three studies. The COE funds these assessments up to \$100,000. South Fremont – This project has progressed most of the three projects. Congress has allocated \$252,000 for the current FY in the Conference Report. An interlocal agreement has been signed between interested parties including Fremont, Inglewood, and Dodge County. Schuyler – Schuyler would be next in line to move forward with future phases. Unfortunately, Congress did not allocate any funding in the Conference Report this FY for the project. There is still community support to proceed. North Bend - There is still some diverging opinions on the alignment of Highway 30. The project may not be feasible if the route is located south, but if it is routed north of N. Bend, the project may be feasible. The feasibility study conducted by the COE found the benefit/cost ratio too low and they have been looking at alternative options to make the project feasible. As with the Schuyler study, Congress did not allocate any funds in the Conference Report for this FY.
- d. **Multimedia – Newsletter, Website** – Verhoeff said the next edition of the *Corridor Connections* newsletter will be out this winter and contributions are welcomed. He also met with the LPSNRD and LPNNRD I&E staff to go over the LPRCA website and how it can be redone.
- e. **WRDA-Authorized COE Projects**
  - 1. **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek – Camp Ashland** – Nelson Carpenter with the COE updated the project. Construction should be completed within the next 18 months. The congressional omnibus bill allocates \$1,000,000 for the project this FY, although the request was for \$6.5 million. This funding will allow progress on the project but it may delay major construction. Island clearing and some chute development are currently going on. The total cost for the project is \$17 million. In regard to the buyout/raising of cabins, 6 of the cabins on the Sarpy side have been elevated. The last two are in the condemnation process to get easements to elevate, but negotiations are still active to buyout. On the Saunders side, 4 cabins have been bought out.
  - 2. **Sand Creek/Lake Wanahoo** – Mike Murren, Lake Wanahoo Coordinator, gave an update on the project. Congress allocated \$1,000,000 to the project for this FY out of the \$8,000,000 requested. It looks as though the project will be in the President's FY06 budget as opposed to being a congressional add as in past years. Clearing and grubbing where the roadway will go is currently underway. Since the last LPRCCA meeting, there has been a change in the roadway alignment. Due to COE requirements for increased flood control, the cost of the project to have the roadway on top of the principle dam increased by \$13 million. The COE and other partners sharpened their pencils and redesigned the project to bring costs down to earlier estimates. The result is a roadway that will be near the base of the dam on the downstream side with a spillway that will give (washout) in a 500-year flood and could wash away some of the road. However, the DOR was supportive since it reduced the need for at least one new bridge. There will probably be warning signs and flashing lights that activate in the event that such a storm occurs.
  - 3. **Antelope Valley** – This project is currently in ROW negotiations. The Y Street Bridge is now open. There is some rerouting of traffic by Devaney while additional roadwork is underway. The first phase of the channel portion of the project is completed NW of Devaney. The next phase is to replace the BNSF bridges south and west of Devaney. Congress allocated \$500,000 to the project this FY, which is a small percentage of what was asked for. However, it is enough to keep the project going. The next phase in the channel component is to complete the channel from Devaney to Vine Street and then to N Street. The Military Street Bridge is completed and Vine Street deck is poured. The P&Q Street bridge is currently in design. The Lincoln City Council approved the Community Redevelopment Plan for the project the night before the LPRCA meeting.
- f. **Cumulative Impact Study-** Verhoeff stated that the CIS group will meet at 1:00 p.m. today and everyone is welcome to attend. The group will be going over the final draft Scope of Work (SOW) and an

amendment to the original agreement to move forward with Phase II – Data Acquisition and Analysis. They will also be reviewing an addendum to the agreement to add new partners. Separate minutes will be available for this meeting.

- g. **Lower Platte River Corridor Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** – The LPSNRD has agreed to serve as a sponsor for this project since the LPRCA cannot sign agreements or contracts. Currently, the NRDs are reviewing a cooperative agreement that stipulates how the project will be managed and administered. Once this agreement is signed, we can get a general services agreement with our consultant, HDR, and begin the first phase of the project. This project goes hand-in-hand with other efforts including Sarpy County's update of their comprehensive plan, the 60-Mile Radius Study, and the I-80 Summit effort.

h. **Infrastructure Studies**

1. **Cass County – River Utilities Board (RUB)**- The preliminary engineering studies for Phase I & II of the project are completed. These studies followed the completion of a feasibility study that determined the project is feasible. The studies looked at the projected 25-year population projection and made design recommendation based upon that projected need. However, the project has been redesigned and scaled back to cut costs and comply with the stipulations attached with potential funding sources, which will not finance a system for projected need only current need. Also, customer cost for the original design of Phase I – Water Supply for the Louisville to South Bend area and Phase II – Wastewater for the Fountain Creek Sub basin would have been too high. The current design is still expandable to meet future needs. Phase I cost is estimated to be \$3.8 million, and Phase II is estimated to be \$1.8 million. The River Utilities Board (RUB) has met informally, but the interlocal agreement has not been signed by all parties to officially establish the group. There are a lot of things to do before starting construction including establishment of an IPA, ROW negotiations, customer agreement development, and state agency review. Construction may begin by mid-2006.
2. **Sarpy County** – HDR will be conducting the feasibility study for this project. Sarpy County is taking the lead in this project rather than the NRD, but the PMRNRD is a partner. This project is being conducted in conjunction with the update of the Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan. Marlin Petermann, Assistant Manager with the PMRNRD, handed out an article on a new development that was approved by Douglas County. This development will discharge wastewater effluent into the Elkhorn River near the confluence with the Platte River. The PMRNRD recommended to the county that they wait until there is an infrastructure plan completed first before giving the OK to the development. Douglas County felt that the package treatment plant planned meets NDEQ's requirements and they gave the go ahead.

Frank Albrecht with the NG&PC noted that there have already been some problems with discharges into the Platte River. He cited the incident where MUD was back-flushing screens for their water system and discharging to the Platte River (which is assumed to have met all NDEQ requirements). However, researchers who were sampling for the Pallid Sturgeon/Sturgeon Chub Study noticed there was a white foamy substance in the water that caused fish to totally vacate the area. The fish had been present prior to the discharge. The reason for fish leaving is unknown.

- i. **River Obstruction Study**- Bob Heimann with the LPNDRD called the UP Railroad regarding the concrete river obstructions that were removed using dynamite a few years ago. The residual pieces of concrete were supposed to be reduced to a small enough size that they would be covered with sand and sink in. However, some pieces are rather large and create a dangerous obstacle for airboaters. The UP standard is to remove the pieces to the mud line. However, the mud line has now receded and there are large chunks of concrete sticking out of the sand eliminating any clear channel for airboaters. Heimann and Verhoeff will be putting committee together to address this and other obstruction issues.

Senator Nelson's office approached the USGS to find out if there is any dredge available to clear debris accumulating at the railroad bridge near Highway 6. Apparently, some cleaning of the area has already occurred but it has filled in and accumulated again. It is difficult to clear from under the bridge using a crane off of the bridge. The USGS is looking into availability of equipment. It was suggested by Senator

Nelson's office to pursue surplus federal equipment that could be jointly owned by the NRDs for this type of project. In the case of the Lied Bridge (Rock Island RR), a causeway was built to do the work.

- j. **60-Mile Radius Committee** – This project is wrapping up after 3 years. There was a recent Flatwater Conference to present finding of the project including results of a residential opinion study and recommendations for future land use planning. The Joslyn Castle Institute for Sustainable Communities (JCI) has applied for another three-year grant for \$241,000 to implement the findings from the project. The 60-mile Radius steering committee suggests development of a multi-stakeholder group to guide the implementation process for land use planning in the 60-mile radius study area. The final steering committee meeting for the first three-year project will be held on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at the Joslyn Castle in Omaha.
- k. **Others**- No other updates were discussed.

**11. Upcoming Meetings/Events.**

- a. **LPRCA Member Retreat** – January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005, 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. – Camp Kitaki. Verhoeff reiterated the importance of this retreat to help guide the direction of the LPRCA and assess our progress. Please contact the LPRCA at (402) 476-2729 with an RSVP by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2004. Verhoeff said he hopes to get at least two staff and two directors from each NRD and at least one staff member from each agency.
- b. **NARD Annual Conference** – The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) will hold its annual Legislative Conference in Lincoln on January 25 and 26, 2005 at the Embassy Suites. Contact the NRDs for more information.
- c. **Next LPRCA Meeting** – Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005 will be the next LPRCA quarterly meeting located at the LPSNRD in Lincoln. There may be construction at the NRD, so Verhoeff will inform potential attendees of any venue changes. The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. and should conclude by noon.
- d. **Others** – None

**12. Other Items of Interest.** None.

**13. Adjourn.** The November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004 meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance adjourned at noon.