



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 1, 2005 * 9:30 AM

**Held at the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
3125 Portia Street * Lincoln, Nebraska 68501 * (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 South NRD Office conference room located at 3125 Portia Street in Lincoln, Nebraska. **Roll Call.** An attendance sheet was distributed and those in attendance signed in. A copy of this attendance sheet is available for inspection upon request.
- 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 February 23rd, 2005. Notifications were sent to those on the e-mailing lists, mailing list, and press releases sent to all area newspapers.
- 3. Approval of Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) Minutes from November 30th, 2004 Meeting.** No modifications were made to the November 30th, 2004 draft minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.
- 4. PRESENTATION – NAWQA Project in the LENRD** Stan Staab with the LENRD was unable to make the meeting so his presentation will be given at a later date.
- 5. PRESENTATION – Water Quality Monitoring in the LPR.** Ron Zelt with the Lincoln office of USGS gave a powerpoint on water quality monitoring in the LPR corridor at the request of Verhoeff. The LPRCA has been discussing the establishment of a dedicated water quality monitoring network in the corridor using USGS gaging stations. Mr. Zelt discussed setting up such a network and the equipment required. The USGS can get this equipment and data can be continuous read with near realtime data transmission. One of the greatest concerns in the LPR corridor according to Mr. Zelt is the influx of pesticides from the Elkhorn basin, where there is intensive agriculture. There are already several sites in and near the corridor, some of which have more existing equipment but may be able to be expanded – Shell Creek near Columbus, North Bend, Leshara, Elkhorn River near Waterloo, Venice, Lohanson Creek near Memphis, Ashland, and Louisville. Mr. Zelt discussed some rough costs for establishing a network including costs for weekly visits in the amount of \$10,000 and equipment costs. The LPRCA has been working hard to get an appropriation through the 2005 WRDA bill for a water quality network. The Cumulative Impact Study (CIS) group is also talking about a monitoring network for the LPR only the CIS is looking at hydrologic parameters rather than water quality. However, the two could go hand-in-hand.
- 6. Report on LPRCA Member Retreat.** Verhoeff handed out a summary of the LPRCA retreat held on January 21st, 2005 at Camp Kitaki. The group reviewed the outcomes of the retreat and discussed the major issues identified: (1) Increase involvement of local officials and public, (2) Continue the planning process periodically to assess progress and determine direction, (3) Continued to pursue broad range of funding, (4) Involvement in land-use planning, (5) Continue and step up outreach and education efforts, (6) Promote success stories and results, and (7) Proactive versus reactive. Verhoeff stated he has heard nothing but positive comments on the retreat and several comments that we need to do this frequently. Not only did the event allow for organizational planning and assessment, but it brought together members and partners in an informal manner and allowed for relaxed discussions. Verhoeff will be formulating ways to address the issues identified at the retreat.

7. Update on Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) Fund. Verhoeff handed out a copy of the final agreement to establish an affiliated "Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance Fund" with the NCF. The agreement is between the NCF and the LPSNRD on behalf of the LPRCA since the LPRCA itself cannot sign agreements. The NCF can offer additional assistance if we ever do want to pursue fundraising activities including development of a brochure and help with solicitation of donations.

8. Outreach & Education Project Ideas. Verhoeff discussed several ideas for outreach and education including: river kiosks, billboard, calendar/cards/pictures, water quality pamphlets and handouts, trinket handouts for conferences and meetings, and t-shirts/hats. He will be including these items in the FY06 budget request.

9. Annual Airboat Tours. The group agreed that two separate airboat tours this year may be a better way to target local officials and get them on the river. Verhoeff recommended that the first tour be open to local officials and staff primarily in the area where the tour will take place. The second tour could then be open as always to anyone wanting to attend. However, since there will only be 10-11 boats for each, there will need to be limits on numbers of participants from one entity. Smaller numbers will be more manageable and easier to find airboats. Verhoeff recommended we tour the upper reaches of the river from Fremont on up if flows allow. Ted Bailey with the LPNDRD said there has been adequate flows there for several years. The group chose July 15th for the first tour and July 29th for the second. Suggestions for topics included USGS water quality issues, conservation easements, and endangered species. Verhoeff mentioned that LB 962 might be another topic of discussion.

10. Water Quality Open Golf Tourney. Last quarterly meeting the group decided to go back to Quarry Oaks this year since the course is on the Platte River and they have expanded their conference room. Verhoeff mentioned that cost is a little greater than last year - \$65/player + cost of meal. He asked what a fair fee would be? Most felt that the \$65 amount was probably the limit and we will need to find donations to cover the cost of the meal again this year. Verhoeff worked a deal with the course that if we fill all spots (144 players/36 teams) that we will get 2 team costs (8 players x \$65) taken off the final price. There will be a program prior to the event starting at 10:00 a.m. The topic is yet to be determined. Golf will start at 12:30 this year instead of 1:00 so we can finish up sooner. The group checked calendars and September 1, 2005 looks like the best date. Alternative dates included August 24 and 31. Verhoeff will check on availability. Volunteers and ideas for hole displays are needed.

11. River Access Project Ideas. Verhoeff discussed the idea of getting people on the river and the lack of public access points. He has been talking with NG&PC about the idea and the idea of a primitive access point at Schilling WMA has been discussed. Further discussions are needed. The PMRNRD is putting in a couple of access points on the Elkhorn River near the confluence with the Platte River.

12. LPRCA Budget for FY06 Discussion. A copy of the first draft of the LPRCA FY06 budget was distributed. Verhoeff went through the items but mentioned that next month will be the final review and then the members will need to take action. In the meantime, he suggested everyone take the draft budget home and discuss with their boards and come back with suggestions for modification, if necessary. Last year the total budget was \$119,500, while this year the budget is proposed at 238,500, with most of the increase due to the start of the river obstruction project. There are a few new outreach items included in the budget including river kiosks.

13. LPRCA Program and Project Updates.

- a. **LPRCA – General Activities** – Verhoeff mentioned the retreat, the golf tourney, and the airboat tours as items he has been working on. Other recent activities include NACO (county officials) conference; meetings on the Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan revision; a MapMaker update meeting; a Platte River Issues meeting; presentation to the NE Agribusiness Club on the LPRCA; the NARD Legislative Conference; two grant writing and fundraising workshops; meeting w/ NG&PC on the River Obstruction project and funding opportunities; PS/SC Task Force meeting, and a PACE quarterly meeting.
- b. **Lower Platte River Weed Management Area (LPWMA)** – The LPWMA met several times since December. They are working on accounting for activities the past year to fulfill the PTI grant requirements. A public relations/outreach campaign is being launched and will include presentations, publications, and possibly a billboard display. The group is still working out details for aerial helicopter spraying this coming season.

- c. **205 Studies – Flood Control/Flood Reduction Projects** – John Miyoshi gave a brief summary of 205 study projects. The Fremont Study project agreement arrived at the LPNNRD office and will be executed next week. The other studies continue to move forward.
- d. **Multimedia – Newsletter, Website** – Newsletter is still in production, but it looks like we have enough information to fill the pages. The website redesign has been discussed and a preliminary design completed that will go to Troy Thompson with the LPNNRD for updating.
- e. **WRDA-Authorized COE Projects** –
 - 1. **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek – Camp Ashland** – Nelson Carpenter with the COE handed out an update on the W. Sarpy/Clear Ck. Project. By June 1, 60% of the design will be completed. For FY05, the Washington-level Omnibus Bill has \$1 million for completion of design and some construction. The handout included an updated timeline. Levees are scheduled to be completed by spring of 2008. **Sand Creek/Lake Wanahoo** – The LPNNRD and other partners are looking to do the Lake Wanahoo dam project locally to get started on the project since federal funding is not available. There are several other components of the project that are being held up due to the lack of federal funding released to the project. The NRD will formally submit their proposal to the COE soon.
 - 2. **Antelope Valley** – Phase I is completed for the channel redesign from Devaney to Salt Creek. Acquisition of ROW for the flood control component is 95% completed. The first three bridges are also completed. Release of federal funding from OMB has continued to be a problem for this project also and getting into the President's budget is very difficult. As a result, any money has come through Congressional adds.
- f. **Cumulative Impact Study** – The group is still tweaking the Scope of Work and should have it finalized soon. There is some discussion on adding the hydrologic study component to Phase II instead of Phase III. The group will meet again soon to finish up these issues. Since budget time is rolling around for the NRD's, Verhoeff recommended the group approach the NRDs soon if they will be requesting any funding for Phase II.
- g. **Lower Platte River Corridor Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** – In February, there was a kick-off meeting for this project at HDR in Omaha. Doug Bisson will be heading up the project for HDR. Verhoeff said he and his intern, Craig Wacker, have assembled most comprehensive plans for the counties and communities in the corridor that have one. Wacker handed out a summary of zoning plans in the corridor he had recently completed. We expect to have Phase I of the project completed by spring of 2005 and will need to scope out subsequent phases.
- h. **Infrastructure Studies**
 - 1. **Cass County – Louisville to Ashland Area** – The project continues to move forward. After reconfiguring the design to lower costs, the projected rates seem to be more in-line with rates in other areas. The LPSNRD is taking the lead in the project and will designate an Improvement Project Area (IPA) as allowed by statute. There are a lot of issues to still consider including hiring of a coordinator, ROW issues, and customer commitment. The LPSNRD passed a resolution to designate the infrastructure study as an official project and added the contingency that land-use planning needs to continue as a part of the process to ensure appropriate development in the appropriate locations.
 - 2. **Sarpy County** – Marlin Petermann with the PMRNRD handed out a copy of a preliminary map of Sarpy County's land use plan for five scenarios from the current concept to high-density build-out. This process of comprehensive plan redesign is happening concurrently with the Sarpy County Infrastructure project. Unlike the Cass County project, this project did not get any Congressional appropriations so the partners are footing the bill for the feasibility study. HDR is conducting this study also. Verhoeff mentioned he attended two meetings on the comp plan redesign and will keep everybody posted.
- i. **River Obstruction Study**- Verhoeff met with the NG&PC about funding for the project through the State Wildlife grant program and through the Boating Safety program. Neither seems to be a good fit according to NG&PC officials, but we could still go through the process and get a definitive decision in writing. Verhoeff is looking into other funding option including through the COE or having the NRD's use this as a pilot project for the Hwy 50 location to gauge cost and effort.

- j. **60-Mile Radius Committee** – Preliminarily, it looks like the JCI for Sustainable Communities will be getting the \$241,000 three-year NETF grant they applied for to continue to implement the 60-Mile Radius Study recommendations. The LPRCA will continue to be involved in the process.
- k. **Others** – Verhoeff had several other handouts in member's packets including: LB546 – Opportunity Zone Act and Commission; an article on a theme park possibly coming to the corridor area near Mahoney State Park; an article on Salt Cedar; an article about chemicals originating in wastewater effluent and finding their way into the Platte River in Colorado; and an article on sprawl.

11. Upcoming Meetings/Events.

- a. **UNL Water Law, Policy, and Science Conference** – April 7 & 8, UNL City Campus Union. For more info, go online at <http://snr.unl.edu/waterconference/oln>.
- b. **Next LPRCA Meeting** – May 24th, 2005 * 9:30 a.m. * PMRNRD at the Chalco Hills Rec Area in Omaha
NOTE – This was subsequently changed to May 27th, same time, same place.
- c. **Others** – None

12. Other Items of Interest. Dave Sands with the NE Land Trust (NLT) brought up LB 472, which gives tax credits for conservation easements in the Niobrara Valley but also puts a tax on irrigation. The NLT is recommending an amendment to include other watersheds with significant ecosystems such as the LPR and removing the tax.

13. Adjourn. The March 1, 2005 meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance adjourned at noon.