



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator

Meeting Minutes

Friday, May 27th, 2005 * 9:30 AM

Held at the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
8901 S. 154th Street * Omaha, Nebraska 68138 * (402) 444-6222

- 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 Papio-Missouri River NRD Office in the Natural Resources Center located at 8901 S. 154th Street in Omaha, 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 May 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 March 1st, 2005 Meeting.** No modifications were made to the March 1st draft minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.
- 4. Sarpy County Land Use Planning Issues.** Virginia Miller and Jarel Vinduska made their concerns known about the Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan revision process that is currently underway. Both either live in western Sarpy County or have agricultural land there. They expressed concerns about the way Sarpy County is designating areas as low density residential, when the areas were formerly agriculture. Their concern is with development of the area, the lack of water, and the potential for problems with wastewater disposal. Additionally, Virginia and Jarel have begun attending Sarpy County Planning Commission meetings and County Commissioner meetings to become involved in the process. Both have spearheaded the creation of a grassroots Sarpy County preservation group made up of concerned citizens in their area. Around 20 people recently attended a Sarpy County Commissioners meeting to protest the approval of a subdivision in southwestern Sarpy County. The subdivision did receive approval. Virginia showed the LPRCA a map with around 8 additional subdivisions approved for the area. Virginia and Jarel felt that even though the new comprehensive plan is not completed and approved, the commissioners used criteria from it rather than the existing plan to make decisions on several of these subdivisions. Steve Oltmans mentioned that the PMRNRD has been involved in a water supply/wastewater infrastructure feasibility study in Sarpy County to determine if and where water supply/wastewater infrastructure should go. Verhoeff also mentioned the Environmental Carrying Capacity Study that just kicked off to look at land use planning in the area. Several Alliance members stated they understood the concern, but zoning is a community and county issue and getting people to look at the big picture and work together can prove difficult. Both Virginia and Jarel said they would continue to be involved in the process.
- 5. PRESENTATION – Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) Group.** Bob Ellis, Superintendent of the Douglas County Weed Control Authority and current VP of the LPWMA, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the LPWMA and current activities. The LPWMA is comprised of 10 counties from Columbus to Plattsmouth, 3 NRDs, and numerous other governmental and non-governmental organizations. There are many invasive species/noxious weeds of concern in the LPR corridor, but three are of primary concern: (1) purple loosestrife, (2) phragmites (common reed), and (3) salt cedar. Currently, the LPWMA is looking at doing some helicopter spraying to access those infestations of noxious weeds on islands and along the river bank. The group just received word they have been approved for another PTI grant through the Fish & Wildlife Foundation in the amount of \$48,000 to carry out

their activities. The group has a speaker's bureau set up to give presentations to various groups. Anyone interested should contact Bob Ellis at (402) 444-4583.

6. PRESENTATION – Nebraska Land Trust. Dave Sands presented information and gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Nebraska Land Trust (NLT). The group formed just a couple of years ago to promote and facilitate the protection of the Lower Platte River and the Niobrara River using tools such as conservation easements. Land in Nebraska is 97% privately owned, so there is a need to have "tools" to encourage private landowners and provide incentives to protect land. The NLT has focused on conservation easements, primarily donated easements to carry out their mission. They are considering purchased easements, but funding for such projects is very hard to come by. Benefits of easements include: flexibility, maintain ownership, voluntary, can divide portions, can transfer, does not have to grant public access, and may qualify for tax deductions. Nebraska is behind in using land protection tools such as easement and we rank 43rd out of 50 states with lands protected by easements. Currently, the NLT has 1057 acres of land protected along the LPR and Nebraska as a whole has 3,914 acres for the entire state. The NLT just received word that they may be getting a Peter Kiewitt Foundation grant of \$25,000 for three years to carry out their activities. They also get some of their money from a stewardship fee they require when someone donates an easement. The NLT has asked the LPRCA to sit on the board. After some discussion, the LPRCA members agreed to have the LPRCA sit on the NLT board in an advisory role.

7. Schilling WMA Update. Frank Albrecht with the NG&PC updated the group on the status of Schilling WMA using a PowerPoint presentation. The NG&PC acquired the property from the Army and initially cleared vegetation for waterfowl hunting. For several years, a project to create a chute from the Platte side to the Missouri River side has been on the drawing board. This plan has been modified to fit in with current Missouri River initiatives to create more backwater habitat and now the project will create a chute starting on the Missouri River and side and coming back out on the same side. They hope to start in June and estimate an initial cost of \$2.1 million. This portion of the project is 100% COE funded. There is an additional backwater project on the southern portion of the site which is tied to MUD wellfield mitigation. Plans are to create 500 additional acres of backwater for habitat and migratory bird stopovers. The Flatwater Group is working with the NG&PC to design the project estimated to cost around \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 to complete. Frank said the Missouri generally runs 6 mph and they need slow it down to <2mph entering the chute so the chute does not silt in.

8. Recent Educational Activities. Verhoeff discussed several recent educational activities including working on cost estimates for kiosks, PSA's, billboards, and a fold-out map. He has some funding for these items built into the FY06 budget that the group will review later.

9. Annual Airboat Tours Update. Verhoeff said that there will be two tours this year – July 15th, 2005 from Fremont to Ashland for local officials and July 29th from Fremont to Schuyler for anyone interested. He is keeping each tour smaller with 10 to 11 boats to make it more manageable and provide more one-on-one attention to attendees. Topics are still in the works but Verhoeff has gotten verbal confirmation from DNR to talk about LB 962. He would also like to include the LPWMA, PACE, the NLT, T&E species, river level surges, and NRD project updates. He has a preliminary tour scheduled for June 19th to scope out the area.

10. Water Quality Open Golf Tourney. The tournament is scheduled for Thursday, September 1st, 2005 at Quarry Oaks. There will be a presentation starting at 10:00 a.m. and a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m. It will finish up at 5:30 p.m. at the clubhouse with a dinner buffet and awards ceremony. The cost will be \$65/player which includes all golf fees, cart use, range balls, the official T-shirt, and dinner. There will be a lunch available at the clubhouse but players will need to pay themselves. The actual cost to the LPRCA is \$65.00 + \$15.00 for the meal for a total of \$80 + T-shirt cost (around \$7.00). The cost of the awards, T-shirts, and meal will need to be made up for with donations. We've paid for the WQ Open in the past using only registration fees and donations. Verhoeff is looking for presenters, helpers, and demo personnel. Just let him know.

11. Community & County Presentations. Verhoeff said he is making the rounds of presentations to various counties and communities in the corridor. His goal is to hit every one (10 counties and 26 communities) during his tenure as coordinator. It may take several years to so. Most recently, he spoke to the community of Valley.

12. Monthly NRD Workday. Verhoeff is starting a new program where he will spend a day a month at each of the other two NRDs in the LPRCA (LPNNRD and PMNRD) when possible. He recently spent a day at the LPNNRD and attended their Executive Committee meeting.

13. LPRCA Organizational Items – Budget, Planning, Committees, Fundraising. Verhoeff discussed the draft budget for FY06 that was handed out last meeting. After a few clarifications, the group approved the budget via general consensus. Verhoeff pointed out that the budget approval is now contingent upon the NRDs accepting the request and incorporating into their respective budgets. Verhoeff also mentioned the planning retreat held this past January and how successful it was. He recommended we try to hold an annual or semi-annual planning retreat and then a more in-depth five year event. He also mentioned that from the retreat he took the idea to develop an organizational plan for the LPRCA. He also would like to formalize projects through a planning process and eventually a planning document. He has been looking into some software to help track projects. The next item for discussion was the formation of committees. Verhoeff stated he needs more input more frequently from the LPRCA members and needs assistance in giving direction for projects. He would like to form several committees to discuss LPRCA programs and projects PRIOR to quarterly meetings so we can make better informed and timelier decisions. He recommended the following committees but emphasized these are only suggestions: Outreach & Education; Programs & Projects; Budget & Fundraising; and an External Advisory Committee – to be made up of partners and stakeholders outside the membership. There was general agreement to put something together and bring back next meeting. Verhoeff briefly mentioned fundraising needs in the future and diversifying our funding base. It takes a lot of effort and many organizations devote one or more staff entirely to the issue. We don't have that luxury so will need help from LPRCA members and their staff.

14. LPRCA Program and Project Updates.

- a. **LPRCA – General Activities** – Verhoeff mentioned the upcoming airboat tours scheduled for July 15 and July 29. He is looking for topics. The golf tourney is scheduled for September 1 at Quarry Oaks this year.
- b. **Lower Platte River Weed Management Area (LPWMA)** – Discussed under an earlier agenda item.
- c. **205 Studies – Flood Control/Flood Reduction Projects** – The projects continue to creep forward. There is a meeting today in Fremont on the Fremont South Study. This study has \$125,000 COE money and \$125,000 local match to determine feasibility. The other two projects – the North Bend and Schuyler studies do not have funding to proceed.
- d. **Multimedia – Newsletter, Website** – Newsletter is out and distributed. Approximately 2,000 copies were sent out via the mail and handed out. The next edition will be in fall of 2005.
- e. **WRDA-Authorized COE Projects** – WRDA continues to move forward and includes language for LPR restoration efforts along with language relating to all three Feasibility Projects. The House and Senate have to conference and come up with one bill assuming both pass a version of WRDA.
 1. **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek – Camp Ashland** – Nelson Carpenter with the COE stated that Camp Ashland started construction on the floodwall and should complete the project by December of 2005. Some of the conservation measures are also going forward including the clearing of an island to create more habitat. Most of the cabins for the W. Sarpy project are either elevated, removed, or in negotiations. Chutes have been designed for Vencil's Island.
 2. **Sand Creek/Lake Wanahoo** – Continue to wait on word regarding funding so they can move forward. The design for the dam has changed so the local sponsors can move the project forward and not impede the road construction component and utilize pledged highway funds.
 3. **Antelope Valley** – Antelope Valley has same problems with getting federal funding. The first phase of the flood control channel is completed and the next phase is ready to move forward. Some of the community revitalization and road components are slowly moving forward and you can see the beginnings of the elevated roadway near the Devaney Center. Until significant federal funding is released, the project cannot move forward as anticipated. A series of tours are planned for the project in the next few months.
- f. **Cumulative Impact Study** – The group has the scope of work (SOW) nearly complete and now needs to focus on funding aspects. The partners are looking to add several new partners to original group. The COE has funds available through their Section 22 Program but it requires a 1:1 match. The Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund is one option for funding the local match portion.

- g. **Lower Platte River Corridor Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** – Letters will be sent out to all zoning jurisdictions (counties/cities) to get copies of their plans and then a matrix will be made to compare what is existing and what is needed in terms of land use planning tools. We are looking to work in conjunction with other parallel projects such as the 60-Mile Radius Committee Project and the Innovation Zone Commission effort.
- h. **Infrastructure Studies**
 - 1. **Cass County – Louisville to Ashland Area** – Todd Skoog was hired as the new coordinator of the project. He has begun to familiarize himself with the stakeholders and the project itself. Currently, several options for a water supply and wastewater system are being considered. HDR is working on land appraisal issues.
 - 2. **Sarpy County** – The project continues to move forward with Sarpy County taking the lead. This project is being conducted in conjunction with a revision of the Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan. Several members of the public have expressed concern over components of the proposed comprehensive plan and the encouragement of growth in rural areas once water and sewer are made available. The partners on the ws/ww project continue to work to get federal funding to complete the initial feasibility study through WRDA and other sources but the money is difficult to get.
- i. **River Obstruction Study**- The PMRNRD and LPSNRD have agreed to look into funding an initial pilot project for the Hwy 50 location. This location was determined to be the highest priority by the NE Airboaters Association and our partners. We've met with our consultant to get initial estimates for cost, time, and methodology. We anticipate using a causeway to reach the pilings which appear to be a combo of rebar, cement, and wooden pilings. A further in depth look will need to take place once the water levels drop. Gerry Bowen with the PMRNRD has agreed to work on getting our 404 permit from the COE to work in the river and remove the pilings. There may be some funding available through the NG&PC Boating Safety Program.
- j. **60-Mile Radius Committee** – It has been confirmed that the Joslyn Castle 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 for LPRCA members to take home and review.

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11. Upcoming Meetings/Events.

- a. **River Network – 2005 River Rally** – May 20-24, 2005, Keystone, CO. Verhoeff attended this rally and found it to be a great way to see what is happening throughout the country. It's amazing how many watershed groups there really are - - something like 2,000+ in the US alone. A detailed summary of the trip and photos are available in the LPRCA monthly and quarterly reports. They can be accessed online at www.lowerplatte.org
- b. **UNL Water Resources Tour** – June 29-30, 2005. Begins at Kearney and will tour the Sandhills and Pine Ridge areas of the state. The tour will focus on LB 962 and water conservation. Go to <http://watercenter.unl.edu/whatsnew/planning.htm> for more details.
- c. **Next LPRCA Meeting** – August 16th, 2005 * 9:00 a.m. * PMRNRD at the Chalco Hills Rec Area in Omaha. Per suggestion, business will be moved to top of agenda to accommodate those who cannot stay for entire meeting.
- d. **Others** – None

12. **Other Items of Interest.** No other items were brought up for discussion.

13. **Adjourn.** The May 27th, 2005 meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance adjourned at 12:15 p.m.