



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 28th, 2006 * 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 quarterly meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) to order at 9:35 AM. Meeting was held at the Lower Platte South NRD Office 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 21, 2006. 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 15th, 2005 Meeting. No modifications were made to the November 15th, 2005 draft minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.

NOTE – Skipped to Agenda Item #5

5. SPECIAL PRESENTATION – “LB-962 – The Science Behind the Designation” - NDNR. Representatives of NDNR gave a PowerPoint presentation on the recently-passed LB 962 – the Integrated Water Management legislation. Ann Bleed, acting NDNR director, started off by giving a general overview of this piece of legislation. Sustainability is a key concept behind LB 962 and NDNR wants to address issues now before they become large problems. The Lower Platte River Basin was not found to be over or fully-appropriated, meaning there is still room to appropriate surface water for a variety of uses. However, as a part of this process, NDNR identified the 10-50 line where surface and groundwater are hydrologically- connected. Each year, NDNR re-evaluates a basin and if found to be fully-appropriated, the NDNR and the NRD(s) in the basin must develop an integrated management plan. This is new territory particularly since it looks at surface water-groundwater connectivity, each of which is managed under separate doctrines. With surface water, NDNR has responsibility for management under the first in time-first in right doctrine. Groundwater is managed by NRD's and everyone shares equally in reducing usage when there is determined to be a shortage. A key point is that if there is adequate water for recharge, there will be adequate water for wells. There is a 25-year lag effect incorporated into basin determinations.

Jeff Schafer then talked on the technical aspects of making a basin determination. NDNR first looked at surface water use, which is dominated by irrigation rights. There was tremendous growth in irrigation in the mid-1970's. Next, they looked at groundwater use in the basin. In 1993, the law changed requiring more categories of wells to be registered. The hydrologically-connected area was identified using the 10-50 line – 10% depletion over 50 years. The methodology is known as the SDF or Jenkins methodology. USGS has used and reviewed the methodology. NDNR looked at water rights and reconstructed the water administration process incorporating the lag effect Ann Bleed described earlier. Using testing %'s of 85% and 65%, they found that the basin is not fully appropriated. They also did a test assuming future development at the current development level. A question was asked about what data would help make a better model and what problems NDNR encountered. Because the area has glacial sediments, it complicated the development of a model. W. Don Nelson with Senator Nelson's office asked what happens if the current ag climate changes particularly since most models are based upon existing ag uses.

NOTE – Returned to Agenda Item #4

4. Business Items.

- **Committees** – Verhoeff went through committee members of each committee and mentioned he is still soliciting members for the External Advisory Committee. He has not set a date for a meeting yet but hopes to hold the inaugural meeting this summer. He discussed projects and programs each committee is overseeing.
- **Proposed FY07 Budget** - Verhoeff handed out a draft FY07 LPRCA budget and went over each item. The group agreed via consensus to approve this draft budget as a working draft subject to changes as necessary. Verhoeff will bring the final budget to the next meeting for final approval.
- **2006 Lower Platte River Summit** – The first-ever LPR summit will be held on September 19th, 2006 at the Swanson Retreat Center located at Camp Carol Joy Holling. This event will be held from noon to 8 p.m. and consist of multiple half-hour concurrent sessions coupled with hands-on activities and displays. Verhoeff will visit the summit location to get an idea of the amount of space we will have to work with. The group decided to charge a fee ranging from \$25 to \$45 per person to cover most costs plus donations to cover the rest. The idea is to have between 75 and 100 participants. This will take some help from LPRCA members to market. Verhoeff said he will send out a preliminary “save-the-date” card to the mass mailing list soon. The theme of the summit is “Investing in the River of our State and the State of our River.” This a play on a theme we have used in the past and will bring some continuity as well as highlight the investment we need to have in the corridor to ensure sustainability.
- **Current Legislation** – Verhoeff handed out info on current legislation. LB 997 is a bill to change state tax provisions that would allow more benefits for donated easements for all income levels. Unfortunately, the bill is getting stripped down and thrown in with other legislation that may make it look unattractive. The LPRCA did submit written neutral testimony bestowing the idea of easements as a land protection tool. Dave Sands with the Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) said there was no opposing testimony on LB 997 at the committee hearing held recently.

6. LPRCA Program and Project Updates.

- **LPRCA – General Activities** – Verhoeff directed LPRCA members to his quarterly report and discussed programs, projects, and daily activities. Kent Holm with the Douglas County Environmental Health Dept mentioned that Douglas County has incorporated PACE into its comprehensive plan. Verhoeff mentioned he will be assisting the Groundwater Foundation with a “Pathogens” workshop sometime in May.
- **Lake Nebraska / Lake Linoma** – The group briefly discussed the now dead proposal to build a lake near Ashland. However, since it concerned the Lower Platte River, Verhoeff felt the group needed to formally discuss. There is still talk of private investors pursuing the idea.
- **River Obstruction Program** – Todd Skoog, LPSNRD WS/WW Coordinator and Tim Gokie with Olsson Assoc gave an update on the recently-completed Hwy 50 River Obstruction Removal Project. The \$380,000 project was very successful in removing nearly 400 pilings including concrete and wood. All that remains is to do a little restoration work when it gets warmer. The LPSNRD and P-MRNRD each contributed a little over \$88,000 each while the LPRCA gave \$15,000, and the NG&PC contributed \$190,000 via its Boater Safety Grant Program. We received a lot of positive comments and publicity on the project. The next area on the schedule would be Camp Ashland where the NE Military Department is looking into grant funding to cover the cost. Verhoeff hopes to meet with them soon to scope this project out. Verhoeff pointed out his poster display showing the progression of the project. He also mentioned the website established to follow the progression of the project.
- **Lower Platte River Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** – Greg MacLean with HDR talked about the completion of PHASE I of the study and a soon to be completed report. He discussed about other on-going efforts (60-Mile Radius Study and I-80 Commission Study) and the need to consider collaboration and possibly fast-tracking the study in order to be relevant, timely, and as a component of these other efforts. Verhoeff started a discussion of what time frame we should be on – small phases over five years OR completing the entire study in the next 2 years. He suggested that the study should be fast-tracked, but we could prioritize areas and do the entire analysis on high priority areas, leaving low priority areas for later when we get adequate funding.

- **Cumulative Impact Study** – Verhoeff and Frank Albrecht of the NG&PC gave an update on this project. PHASE II is well underway and all funding partners have paid up. The NETF grant submitted to conduct the USGS hydrologic study component was approved for \$115,000 and final award of the grant should happen by April. Once this is final, this component can begin. The CIS group is working on a workplan and contracting with CALMIT (UN-L) to do some QA/QC and land classification. The Corps submits a status report every two weeks which tracks progress and finances.
- **Airboat Tour 2006** – The group voted to hold one tour this year covering the reach from Hwy 50 to Hwy 64. The date chosen was July 14th since the UNL Water Resources Tour is scheduled for July 18th. Verhoeff will begin putting itinerary together.
- **Golf Tournament 2006** – The group reviewed course tournament offerings/deals from Iron Horse and Quarry Oaks Golf Courses that Verhoeff and Craig Wacker, LPRCA Intern, had solicited. There was some discussion on locations, difficulty of courses amenities, conservation practices, and course group deals. LPRCA members voted via consensus to go with Quarry Oaks for the next three years subject to the proposed working agreement submitted by NEBCO. Terms provide financial and marketing assistance. Verhoeff had checked dates and proposed August 22, 2006 as first choice. The group agreed.
- **WRDA-Authorized COE Projects** –
 - ✓ **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek – Camp Ashland** – W. Sarpy received \$1.5 million for FY06 through Congressional adds. This has been the case for the past four years. Construction should begin in a month - - rip rap near Elkhorn for the chutes. Levee construction remaining amounts to around \$400,000-\$500,000 but will begin once adequate funding is received. There is a request for \$7 million for FY9 07. Camp Ashland is completed except for some seeding. This was done entirely by the Military Dept.
 - ✓ **Sand Creek/Lake Wanahoo** – There is \$2.5 million in the budget via Congressional adds for FY06. Permission was granted by the Corps to construct the Lake Wanahoo structure to state specs and take out of federal part of project to get it started. NDOR is needing to build the Hwy 77 bypass and taking structure out of federal side will allow this to move forward and allow NDOR to utilize federal highway funds that are only available for a limited time. The road will once again be built on top of the dam. Building to state specs rather than Corps specs will save millions of dollars and allow the project to continue in a timely fashion.
 - ✓ **Antelope Valley** – Bid opening on PHASE II of the flood control channel tomorrow from the BNSF Bridge to the Y Street Bridge. Excavation already done as a part of the Big “T” intersection. There is \$2.215 million in FY06 federal budget and for the first time there is proposed \$7.5 million in the President's Budget for FY07. ROW work done for flood control portion and there is some property relocation work and demolition to complete yet.
 - ✓ **205 Studies** – Still progressing on the three studies. Some discussion yet on highway routes.
 - ✓ **WRDA 2005/2006** – WRDA is still moving through Congress albeit slowly. It is a day-to-day issue on whether it will or will not be passed this year. It appears to moving faster in the House side. Once both sides get a bill through, they will need to conference and get one combined bill to pass. The LPRCA is asking for \$12 million for LPR watershed restoration.
 - ✓ **WQ Monitoring Network** – Verhoeff has been discussing establishment of a WQ monitoring network on the LPR by upgrading existing stream gauging stations to do realtime/continuous WQ sampling, adding new locations for gauging stations, and coupling this with groundwater networks to get a complete picture. USGS is putting together a proposal for this network to determine cost and scope.
- **Infrastructure Studies – Cass County; Sarpy County** – The Cass County Project is progressing for PHASE II – Wastewater System for the Fountain Creek area. ROW appraisals are underway. Once this is complete, then rates can be determined. Hopes are to begin construction in the spring of 2007. The Sarpy County Feasibility Study is complete and a final report will be released soon. Re-design of the Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan is also complete. Verhoeff said he has had several calls from residents of western Sarpy County concerned with administration of this new plan and the issuance of permits for new subdivisions. Several landowners have formed a landowner advocacy group called – SAVE.
- **Others** – Douglas County is also finishing up revision of their plan. There are several meeting scheduled to discuss.

7. Upcoming and Recent Meetings/Events.

- **Next LPRCA Meeting – May/June 2006 [ACTION].** The next quarterly meeting of the LPRCA will be held on May 23rd, 2006 at the LPSNRD starting at 9:30 a.m.
- **LPRCA Summit.** Wednesday, September 19th, 2006. Swanson Retreat Center at Camp Carol Joy Holling. Noon to 8 p.m. Call LPRCA at (402) 476-2729 for more info.
- **Others – Refer to Agenda.**

8. Other Items of Interest – Public Comment. No other items were brought up for discussion.

9. Adjourn. The February 28th, 2006 meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance adjourned at 11:55 p.m.