



# Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

*Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator*

## **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, January 18th, 2007 \* 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, NE. **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. Notifications were sent to those on the e-mailing lists, mailing list, and press releases sent to area newspapers.
3. **Adoption of Agenda.** No changes were made to FINAL Agenda.
4. **Approval of Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) Minutes from the September 6th, 2006 Meeting.** No modifications were made to the September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2006 minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.
5. **Business Items.**
  - a. **Committee Reports**
    - i. **LPRCA Programs & Projects Committee Meeting.** Verhoeff mentioned that he would like to schedule a committee meeting in February to go over upcoming and current projects. He wants to hold meeting prior to a discussion on the budget.
    - ii. **LPRCA Budget & Fundraising Committee.** Verhoeff mentioned that the Budget & Fundraising Committee needs to meet once the Programs & Projects Committee meets to discuss the FY08 budget. He suggested sometime in March.
  - b. **LPRCA Summit** – The LPRCA Summit was a huge success and several LPRCA members commented on how well it went. Verhoeff has compiled a summary and results of a short survey he sent out. These were handed out and are available on-line. He pointed out that most attendees felt we need to do this at least every other year and perhaps focus on a specific topic. The group decided to hold the summit every 2 years and focus on a topical issue. Verhoeff will also look into co-sponsorship of the event. Ernie Niemi was one of the featured presenters at the event and ended the evening with a summary of the study he conducted for the NG&PC. This study looked at the value of natural resource amenity-driven economic growth in Nebraska. This study is available on-line at [www.ngpc.state.ne.us](http://www.ngpc.state.ne.us). Joel Sartore kicked off the summit with a great slide presentation illustrating many of his adventures. Verhoeff suggested putting a steering committee together comprised of LPRCA members and partners to discuss the next summit set for the fall of 2008.
  - c. **Strategic Planning Retreat** – The LPRCA retreat was held on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006 at Camp Kitaki near the Platte River. Verhoeff led the session that included a review/discussion of past, present, and future activities along with a history and progression of the LPRCA itself. The Alliance has never waived from its original mission or from its original role as a facilitator. Verhoeff pointed out that we are not the decision-makers, but rather the providers of good information, assistance, and guidance. Those in attendance felt we should stay the course and enlist the help of partners to assist us since the job of managing and protecting the Lower Platte River Corridor is bigger than what we can do alone. The group discussed the

top issues we are facing today including development pressure and water resources sustainability. Verhoeff handed out a short survey for members to fill out regarding the direction the LPRCA should be going. The results will be tallied at the next quarterly meeting. This strategic planning effort is part of a 6-year rotation where every two years, abbreviated planning efforts are held to review activities and then every six years, we will do an in-depth strategic planning effort. Verhoeff also mentioned he is working on a Comprehensive Long-Range Plan for the LPRCA to have ready for the 2008 in-depth effort.

- d. **LPRCA Intern Position** – The LPRCA and the LPSNRD will be sharing an intern position for the upcoming 9 mos to year. Currently, we are completing the hiring process and should have someone onboard by the end of January.
- e. **Budget / Fiscal Update** – Verhoeff handed out the first draft of the FY08 budget for the LPRCA. He asked members to review and get back to him with comments. There may need to be a Budget & Fundraising Committee meeting before the next quarterly meeting to review the draft budget. Also, the Projects & Programs Committee may need to meet to decide which projects we want to consider and what we estimate they will cost. The LPRCA will need to vote on the budget at the next meeting so the NRDs can review and plug into their budget processes.
- f. **Legislation** – LB 488 is the Conservation Easement Transferable Credit Bill for fully appropriated basins and environmentally-sensitive areas, which would include the Lower Platte River Corridor. There seems to be a lot of support for this idea.
- g. **LPR Basin Instream Flow Review** – Every 15 years state law requires a review of instream flow rights. The LPR and Niobrara Basins will be up for review soon. This review will be done cooperatively with NG&PC and other management agencies/partners. Because of the contentious nature of some of the habitat and species issues (i.e. pallid sturgeon), this process needs to be done cooperatively so all parties, some of which have different views and missions, can agree upon the assessment process and outcomes.
- h. **Eastern Nebraska Water Resources Assessment (ENWRA)** – Several NRDs, state entities, and federal agencies are collaborating on a project to map ground water in the glaciated areas of eastern Nebraska. The UNL Conservation & Survey Division will be drilling monitoring wells and taking cores for the project, while the USGS will be overseeing an aerial survey using ground penetrating radar to map the ground water. Partial funding for this project will come from LB962 set aside money.

## 6. SPECIAL PRESENTATION – “Lower Platte River Basin Determination” (Jesse Bradley, DNR)

Jesse Bradley with the NE Dept of Natural Resources gave a great presentation on the LB962 – Basin Appropriation Process and the future outlook for the Lower Platte Basin. This is a very complicated process using models and methodologies that take into account rainfall, crop water use, and existing appropriations to determine how much water is still available in the integrated water resources areas (ground and surface water hydrologically connected). This is an annual evaluation conducted by DNR. For the past two years, the LPR Basin has been found to NOT be fully appropriated. However, we are creeping closer to fully appropriated (no more water to allocate) each year. Once a basin is declared fully appropriated, then a five year planning process begins where DNR and the respective NRDs collaboratively develop an integrated management plan to manage and remediate the problem. More info can be found on DNR's website at [www.dnr.ne.gov/LB962/AnnualReport\\_2007/AnnualReport2007.pdf](http://www.dnr.ne.gov/LB962/AnnualReport_2007/AnnualReport2007.pdf).

## 7. LPRCA Program and Project Updates.

- a. **LPRCA – General Activities** – Verhoeff handed his quarterly report and an informational packet.
  - i. **Year-end Report** – Verhoeff handed out a year-end report detailing activities and project updates.
  - ii. **NE Innovation Zone Commission (NIZC)** – The NIZC rep was not able to attend but will try to make the next meeting. The NIZC is working on getting an appropriation to carry out development of a comprehensive regional economic development plan for the I-80 Corridor between Omaha and Lincoln. They are also looking to extend the life of the commission beyond June of this year.
  - iii. **Website Features** – The newly-revised website at [www.lowerplatte.org](http://www.lowerplatte.org) has several new features including a featured project section (Camp Ashland Riv Obs Removal Proj currently featured), a revised meeting section, and a members section that is still under construction. Future plans are to add all necessary meeting documents to the website so members can review ahead of time.
  - iv. **Newsletter** – The next newsletter will be out in late spring 2007. Verhoeff handed out a member and partner profile form to those in attendance. He asked those who are willing to submit a completed which will then be used for the newsletter in the featured members/partners section.

- b **River Obstruction Program**
  - i. **Camp Ashland Project – PHASE I** - The entire project was broken into two phases since bids came in higher than anticipated. PHASE I is completed and entailed removing the first three sets of concrete pilings (6 total). The cost was approximately \$230,000 with the NE Military Dept providing \$105,000, NG&PC \$61,000, the P-MRNRD \$28,000, the LPNDRD \$28,000, and the LPSNRD \$5,000, and the LPRCA picking up the rest.
  - ii. **Camp Ashland Project – PHASE I** - PHASE II will include removal of the remaining 3 sets of concrete pilings (6 total) and the option to remove eleven wooden pilings further upstream. Cost will determine how much of this gets done. PHASE II is anticipated to commence in the fall of 2007 and be completed by the end of 2007. We anticipate having the same partners and funding contributions.
- c **Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** - This project has been on hold for about 9 months as we worked to build a partnership with the NE Innovation Zone Commission (NIZC). We hoped to work with them to get necessary funding to carryout the remaining phases of the project. However, this process is slow and there is no current legislation with funding for this effort. Also, there has been some resistance from the NIZC because they fear bringing environmental elements into an economic development process may hinder the progress. I've argued this point as has the NRDs reps on the NIZC, that the two are inseparable and you MUST include environmental constraints and considerations in an economic analysis. The NIZC executive director will be in attendance at the next meeting.
- d **Cumulative Impact Study** – The CIS group will be meeting on 01-24-2007 following the NARD conference in Lincoln. Also, there is a meeting scheduled for Feb 7 with the GIS reps of the CIS group to look over progress to date and discuss QA/QC issues. This meeting will take place at the COE Omaha office.
- e **Mo-Pac Trail** – On the Papio side in Sarpy County, there was some work done on the trail last year in Springfield with approximately ½ mile left. A new trailhead was put in a couple of years ago at Hwy 50 with a bridge underpass and completed trail surface to Springfield. The area from Hwy 50 to the Lied Bridge is currently being designed and will be bid soon. On the LPSNRD side in Cass County, the consultant recommendation for a route from Wabash to the Lied Bridge had been received last year (8 miles). Prior to development of the recommendation, there were several public input meetings. The LPSNRD board has not acted on the recommendation at this time, but have appointed a committee to build local consensus on the route. Hopefully, there will be a route selected by this summer.
- f **Special Events - REPORTS**
  - i. **Airboat Tour 2007** – The 2007 LPRCA Airboat Tour is scheduled to cover the lower stretch from Hwy 50 to the mouth. Friday, July 20<sup>th</sup> was tentatively selected as the date. Verhoeff will check on this date. Frank Albrecht mentioned showcasing Schilling WMA with its new chute and backwater. Verhoeff also mentioned that we could combine the tour with a ground tour of Schilling using a hayrack. Verhoeff and Albrecht will work on the details. Verhoeff did mention that airboat operators were upset last year that they had to wait so much at stops and that we did not finish until 5:00. We will be working on alleviating these issues this year and possibly limiting the number of boats so the tour isn't so hard to control in terms of time. Other ideas brought up in lieu of the airboat tourney included: canoe tour, catfish tourney, and a bus tour. Consensus was to continue with the airboat tour this year.
  - ii. **Golf Tournament 2007** – The tentative date for the golf tourney is Thursday, September 6<sup>th</sup> at Quarry Oaks. If this date is unavailable, then Verhoeff will look at September 5<sup>th</sup> (Wednesday). Verhoeff mentioned that he would like to feature the "8 Reasons to Protect the Lower Platte River" by having each of the eight reasons featured at a separate hole for a total of 8 demos. He is also working on getting a speaker lined up.
- g **Kiosk Program Update** – Verhoeff and Albrecht met with the NG&PC people who are going to design the kiosk panels. They made some decisions on pictures for the panel and revised the bullets. The kiosks will feature the "8 Reasons" and will be placed in 8-10 locations throughout the Corridor. Verhoeff and Albrecht need to finish a tour of potential locations they started last fall.
- h **WRDA-Authorized COE Projects –**
  - i. **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek – Camp Ashland** – Several of the conservation measures continue to move forward. Flood control items cannot move forward until we receive the necessary \$7 million in funding from Congress. Crossings on the Sarpy County side have been surveyed and the Platte to Platte chute is complete on Vencils' Island.

- ii. **Sand Creek/Lake Wanahoo** – Contract for clearing and grubbing has been let for the 11 acre Wanahoo embankment area. Hopefully, a bid will be awarded and work will start next week. The NRD has finished road design plans with NDOR. The road across the Wanahoo structure will be 8' down from the top on the backside. The NE Natural Resources Commission has approved the project for NRDF funding and work can begin this summer.
  - iii. **Antelope Valley** – Bids were just opened for the next phase of the stream channel construction and hopefully work can begin in February. AV made it into the President's budget for FY07 in the amount of \$7.5 million.
  - iv. **205 Studies** – Fremont and Schuyler studies continue to move forward, but the North Bend study has been ended.
  - v. **WRDA 2006** – WRDA continues to move ahead with hopes that both houses will use last year's bill as a basis for the WRDA 2007 bill. Once each house passes a bill then they must conference and develop a joint bill. The LPR Watershed Restoration language is still in the bill drafts we've seen floating around. There seems to be a lot of speculation that both houses want to pass a bill this year.
  - i. **New & Inactive Programs/Projects** – *Update* (Rodney Verhoeff, LPRCA)
    - i. Water Quality Monitoring Network *NEW* – This project will be getting underway this spring with installation of two monitoring sensors (sondes) at Louisville and one on the Elkhorn at Waterloo. Next year, we will look into expansion of this network.
    - ii. Coffee Shop Meetings *NEW* – Verhoeff discussed holding coffee shop meetings in various communities throughout the Corridor to get public input on LPRCA efforts.
    - iii. Floodplain Mapping Public Awareness Meetings *INACTIVE* – Some floodplain meetings have already been held, but we are awaiting FEMA approval of floodplain maps to hold more public meetings.
    - iv. Water Museum *INACTIVE* – Verhoeff has not heard back on this idea since last fall.
- 8. Recent Conferences/Meetings/Events**
- a. JCI Planning Charette – Sept 14, 2006 \* SAC Museum near Ashland
  - b. LPRCA River Summit – Sept 19, 2006 \* Camp Carol Joy Holling
  - c. LPR NRDs DC Meetings with Congressional Delegation – Sept 22, 2006 \* Washington DC
  - d. NARD Annual Conference – Sept 25 & 26, 2006 \* Kearney
  - e. Coordinator European Vacation – Oct 5-20, 2006 \* Austria, Switzerland, France, Netherlands
  - f. PACE Meeting – Nov 1, 2006 \* JD's Place \* West Point, NE
  - g. Governor's I-80 Summit – Nov 16, 2006 \* Camp Ashland
  - h. NE Land Trust Board Meeting – Dec 1, 2006 \* LPNNRD \* Wahoo, NE
  - i. LPRCA Retreat – Dec 19, 2006 \* YMCA Camp Kitaki
  - j. Others
- 9. Upcoming and Recent Meetings/Events**
- a. Next LPRCA Meeting – May/June 2007 **[ACTION]**
  - b. NARD Legislative Conference– Jan 23 & 24, 2007 \* Embassy Suites in Lincoln
  - c. Pallid Sturgeon Task Force Meeting – Jan 24, 2007 (at NARD Conference) \* 1:30 -2:30 p.m. \* Embassy Suites in Lincoln.
  - d. Cumulative Impact Study (CIS) Meeting – Jan 24, 2007 following Pallid Sturgeon Task Force meeting (at NARD Conference) \* Approximately 2:45 p.m. \* Embassy Suites in Lincoln
  - e. LPR NRDs DC Meetings with Congressional Delegation – Feb 27, 2007 \* Washington DC
  - f. NARD Washington DC Conference – March 12-14, 2007 \* Washington DC
  - g. Earth Wellness Festival – March 21 & 22, 2007 \* SCC in Lincoln (84<sup>th</sup> & O)
  - h. UNL 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Water Law, Policy, and Sci Conference – March 26 & 27, 2007 \* Embassy Suites in Lincoln
  - i. Others
- 10. Other Items of Interest – Public Comment.** None.
- 11. Adjourn.** With nothing further, the meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm