



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 7th, 2008 * 9:30 a.m.

Location – Lower Platte North NRD

511 Commercial Park Road * Wahoo, NE (402) 443-4675

1. CALL TO ORDER. Rodney Verhoeff, LPRCA Coordinator, called the quarterly meeting of the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance (LPRCA) to order at 9:45 AM. Meeting was held at Lower Platte North NRD Office in Wahoo, 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. Approximately 21 people in attendance.

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 the FINAL Agenda and it was adopted as presented.

4. APPROVAL OF LOWER PLATTE RIVER CORRIDOR ALLIANCE (LPRCA) MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 30TH, 2007 MEETING. No modifications were made to the October 30th, 2007 minutes. Minutes were approved via general consensus.

5. BUSINESS ITEMS.

- a. **LPRCA Member Contributions for FY08 – Discussion.** Verhoeff stated that he has all but one of the LPRCA member's contributions for FY08. For state agencies, the amount has not changed for the past 8 years and remains at \$5,416.67. The original interlocal agreement states that the 3 NRDs will split the administrative costs for the LPRCA with the 6 state entities in a 50-50 split. Since there has been no increase from state entities for several years, this split has now changed to 54-46. Several state agency reps in attendance agreed that they should consider increasing contributions. The group suggested that \$7,000 was a fair amount to request, albeit they could not guarantee if their agencies would increase their contribution. Verhoeff reiterated that he would visit with any agency wishing to hear about the LPRCA and progress over the past year or to justify to that agency the importance of membership in the LPRCA.
- b. **LPRCA Strategic Planning Efforts – Discussion.** We are in year 6 of the 6-year strategic Planning Cycle where we hold an in-depth strategic planning session. We will plan to do this in December of this year (2008). Leading up to this effort, we have already begun assessing direction and priorities and held a Joint 3 NRD Meeting on Jan 22, 2008 at Mahoney SP. Part of this effort was to have attendees (primarily NRD Directors & senior staff) fill out a short survey on the LPRCA. We are currently working on a summary of this info. Verhoeff included a copy of this survey in member packets should anyone want to fill it out. We will also be doing something similar to a SWOT analysis later this year to review the LPRCA vision, mission, goals, objectives, programs, and projects. This will be open to all LPRCA members and interested parties.
- c. **Year-end Report** - Verhoeff reviewed 2007 activities and milestones with the group. He will have a written version later in the year.
- d. **NE Natural Legacy Plan Flagship Initiative** – Verhoeff mentioned that the LPSNRD had previously authorized a position for a Coordinating Biologist that would be funded through a partnership with NG&PC and their NE Natural Legacy Program. We would need to submit an application to the NE Natural Legacy Program partner group to receive the funding. He spoke with Scott Luedtke of the NG&PC recently and this year's funding was used for existing Flagship Initiatives, but additional funding may be available this upcoming FY for new initiatives and they certainly are still interested in working with the LPRCA. Verhoeff

suggested moving forward in putting together an application for this position using the Programs & Projects Committee. Everyone agreed. Committee members include: Marlin Petermann, Rich Tesar, Larry Vrtiska, Ted Bailey, Mike Murren, Ted Argintean, and Glenn Johnson. Verhoeff is also looking for an agency rep for this committee.

- e. **NETF Grant for LPR Corridor Land Use Assessment – Update.** Verhoeff mentioned that he had submitted a grant application to the NE Environmental Trust (NET) for Phases II & III of the Environmental Suitability Assessment (ESA) in the amount of \$100,000. The NET will announce preliminary recommendations today.
- f. **FY09 LPRCA Draft Budget/Programs & Projects -** Verhoeff handed out a spreadsheet of the drafted budget. As mentioned earlier, the members suggested that the state agencies raise their contribution to \$7,000 rather than \$5,416.67 and reduce NRD administrative requests by \$1,000. Also the 3 NRD's suggested that they bank \$15,000 for River Obstruction Removal Program for FY10. Verhoeff will make changes. Budget was approved with changes via consensus. Verhoeff also made a suggestion that the LPRCA rotate the 3 major outreach events (Airboat Tour, WQ Open, and LPR Summit) with two of the three occurring each year. The LPRCA is getting so busy that holding all of these events every year is difficult for only one staff member (plus intern). Members discussed the idea but did not make a recommendation. Verhoeff if one or more of the NRDs could provide a staff member to help assist him with coordination of the events. NRD reps said they would consider the possibility.

NOTE – Moved item 7c up to accommodate schedule of Matt Pillard with HDR.

6. SPECIAL DISCUSSION – “NOT FULLY APPROPRIATED” (Rodney Verhoeff, Coordinator) Verhoeff mentioned that unfortunately DNR was not able to be here to discuss so he will take a shot at it. On January 16th, 2008, DNR Director Ann Bleed officially declared the LPR Basin as “Not Fully Appropriated.” This comes on the heels of a public hearing held December 19th. Testimony at the hearing was approximately 12 to 1 in favor of keeping the preliminary designation of “Not Fully Appropriated.” As everyone is aware, the NG&PC has been working on a biological opinion, but this opinion was not submitted as part of the commission’s neutral testimony at the hearing. However, the NG&PC did discuss various studies and research they have conducted over the years including the Pallid Sturgeon Study and two additional studies that they have jointly conducted with UNL. Additionally, the NG&PC expressed interest in working cooperatively with all stakeholders to help manage the surface and ground water of the basin. DNR evaluates basins annually and once a “Fully Appropriated” status is determined then DNR and the respective NRD(s) work cooperatively to develop an Integrated Management Plan to manage the areas where surface and ground water are hydrologically connected. The members discussed how the LPR Basin is very close to designation as “Fully Appropriated” and most likely will be designated in the next couple of years.

7. LPRCA PROGRAM AND PROJECT UPDATES.

- a. **LPRCA – General Activities**
 - i. **Quarterly Report** – Verhoeff handed out his quarterly report detailing activities and project updates.
 - ii. **Info Packets / Articles** – Verhoeff handed out a packet of pertinent articles.
 - iii. **Website Updates** – The website continues to be updated and improved.
- b. **Water Quality Monitoring Network** - Verhoeff handed out a summary sheet for 2007 monitoring data at the Louisville gage. We finished up with the first year of monitoring and sampling in 2007 and will be working on season two starting in March/April 2008. We have developed a website just for this project at <http://ne.water.usgs.gov/lowerplatte/> . We will continue to build the network adding Salt Creek and Maple Creek to the network this year. In a related but separate project, I worked with the USGS to identify some way to add Shell Creek to the network yet this year even though it isn't scheduled to be added until 2009 or 2010. The USGS was able to free up some NAWQA money to put towards realtime monitoring and sampling of we could find local match money. After a presentation on this proposal by USGS, the LPNNRD agreed to contribute up to \$30,000 to add a sonde (monitor) on Shell Creek. Additionally, the LPRCA has worked with the USGS to expand upon the one sonde and add two additional through a USDA grant program. The USGS was unable to meet the first deadline for funding (where the LPRCA would serve as the applicant), but will be submitting an application in April 2008 with Kansas State serving as the applicant (requires an institution of higher education). Slowly but surely, we are building this WQ network to help us

assess what is happening in the basin. Also, with the passage of WRDA in 2007, we will have an additional funding source in the future.

NOTE – Item 7c moved up after item 5f

- c **Environmental Suitability Assessment – Phase II – Report** Verhoeff handed out a summary sheet on the project along with questions that have been asked in the needs assessment. Over the past several months, HDR reps and Verhoeff have met with all jurisdictions in the PHASE II area (Fremont to confluence) except for Saunders County, Fremont, and NEBCO. We should finish up with these in the next month or so. Matt Pillard with HDR gave a brief update on current activities. HDR has drafted a PHASE II Report, determined McHargian Analysis layers, and developed several GIS layers of environmental features. They hope to have a demo ready by mid-February. Along with HDR, Verhoeff will be making two presentations on the ESA project: one on Feb 20 for the NPZA/APA Conference in GI and the other on April 7-11 at the EPA regional “Wetlands & Watersheds” conference in KC. In May, he will be presenting at the River Management Society (RMS) Symposium in Portland, ME on the ESA and other LPRCA programs. Verhoeff has asked HDR to look at cost for future updates and maintenance of the system once it is up and running. They will also be looking at PHASE III costs and provide an estimate.
- d **River Obstruction Program - Camp Ashland Project – PHASE II – Discussion.** Verhoeff handed out photologs and a funding summary for the project. Everything is completed except for some seeding and minor cleanup for PHASE II of the Camp Ashland River Obstruction Removal Project. This project went very well with a few unplanned issues. Bids initially came in over the engineers estimates so we requested and received additional funding from the three NRDs and will be asking for more from the NG&PC Boating Safety Grant Program. We went with Valley Corp out of Valley and they were very quick, responsive, and thorough. The second unplanned issue encountered related to additional large concrete piling pieces buried next to the identified obstructions. We were required to remove them in order to take out the upright obstructions. This too called for additional funds that were requested and received from the 3 NRDs. Again, we will be asking for more funding from the NG&PC grant program. For the project, the following LPRCA members contributed the respective amounts listed: NE Military Dept - \$100,000, LPNNRD \$37,075.67, LPSNRD \$37,075.67, P-MRNRD \$37,075.67, and we will request from the NG&PC Boating Safety Grant Program \$111,227.01. We need to take a little time now to re-prioritize the remaining 10 sites and also look into future funding options such as our new WRDA authorization.
- e **Cumulative Impact Study – PHASE II Update** . Slowly but surely, the CIS partner group continues to work on PHASE II of the CIS. Verhoeff said that they have received, digitized, and rectified (lined up) all aerial photos for the 6 time steps (1850, 1938, 1950’s, 1970’s, 1993, and 2003). They are missing some aerial photos from the 1938 time period and have been unable to locate any other copies from any source (UN-K, UN-O, National Archives, FSA, NRDs). The group is approximately 75% complete with land classification for all layers, and the USGS Hydrologic component of the study (compiled historical gage data) is 99% complete. We are now in the process of drafting a Final PHASE II Report. Because of numerous delays at the COE level from deployments, we are now on our 2nd extension of the NETF grant we received. All but \$7,000+ of the \$115,000 NETF grant has been spent. The next step is to build the IMS component of the CIS project so info can be placed in a universally accessible location. The LPNNRD will lead this effort.
- f **Coffee Shop Meetings-** Verhoeff handed out a map showing potential locations for the coffee shop meetings. LPRCA staff are currently planning the coffee shop meeting program locations with the intention to have at least one per county and in most communities throughout the Corridor. The map shows 17 total locations including: Columbus, Bellwood, Schuyler, Linwood, North Bend, Morse Bluff, Cedar Bluffs, Fremont, Valley, Waterloo, Yutan, Gretna, Ashland, Louisville, Springfield, Cedar Creek, and Plattsmouth. Verhoeff asked for comments on locations for meetings. He stated that is quite an ambitious undertaking and we may need to split the schedule with some meeting this spring and some this fall/winter. Also, he asked for assistance from the LPRCA members, particularly the NRDs, to help serve as the host for the meetings. This may help us get better attendance and break through any resistance due to misperceptions about the LPRCA.
- g **Education & Outreach Projects /Events / Meetings**
 - i. **Airboat Tour – Discussion-**The Airboat Tour is scheduled for July 18, 2008. The upper stretch of the river from Fremont upstream is up on the rotation for touring this year. We had initially contacted

Bryson Airboat Tours about assisting us and Tim Bryson indicated he would be interested. However, he subsequently decided that he didn't want to create a jealousy issue with other airboaters and declined to organize the event. He also indicated that he couldn't price it out for us any cheaper than \$250 per boat. This is \$50 more than we have paid airboaters in the past and would put us over budget unless we increased the budget at least \$2,000. Tim did say he would assist in other capacities as in the past. Verhoeff and intern Vrana will work on these issues and report back next meeting.

- ii. **WQ Open Golf Tournament - Discussion** - This is year 3 of a 3-year agreement with NEBCO to hold the tournament at Quarry Oaks. They provide marketing support, a \$1,000 donation, and a team for the tournament. Verhoeff tentatively reserved Thursday, September 4th, 2008 as the event date. This corresponds to the same time frame as last year. Also, many of the other Thursday dates are already taken. Alternative dates include: Sept 3rd and there may be some Tuesdays and Mondays available. Other open dates available on Wed (Aug 20) or Thurs (Aug 14) in that same time frame unfortunately conflict with NRD board meetings. LPRCA members agreed to go with September 4th as the date. Verhoeff said his idea for this year's tourney is to feature the LPRCA members on the holes. Thus, each member would have a demo/booth/activity on a hole. This will give everyone a chance to be involved and promote your organization and provide a unique outreach & education opportunity for your organizations.
 - iii. **LPR Summit – Discussion** – The LPR Summit is held every other year and this is the year to have it again. Verhoeff has been assembling a steering committee and they will be meeting on February 12th, 2008 at the LPSNRD starting at 1 pm. The committee is still looking for a landowner and a private developer but current members include: W. Don Nelson (Publisher – *Prairie Fire* Newspaper), Mary Hanson (Rec Planner – NPS), Becky Pieper (NRCS), Mike Jess (Asst Dir – UNL Water Center / Senior Lecturer), Ron Zelt (USGS), and Rodney Verhoeff (Coordinator – LPRCA). The NRD Managers / Assistant Managers are also invited to participate and kept up to date. There have been some preliminary discussions already and are considering a couple of themes – Water Resources: Quality & Quantity OR Land Use and Sustainable Development. Verhoeff mentioned that he just found out that UNL and USGS are holding a 3-day Symposium on the Platte River on October 7-9, 2008. It will be a chance to discuss components of the 3-state cooperative agreement and look at both current and future activities. This is somewhat a revival of past Platte River Symposiums. Verhoeff asked both UNL and USGS if they felt it still was worth the effort for the LPRCA to hold a LPR Summit this year (rather than waiting for an off year) and they felt there was enough of a difference in format and content that it still warranted holding the summit this year. As in the past, we will plan to hold the summit in the fall – date to be determined - at the steering committee meeting. With the WQ Open in early Sept, we will need to hold the summit in late Sept, Oct, or Nov to allow time to plan and to recover from the golf tourney (it takes a lot of planning and effort). The group looked over potential conflicts and agreed that November probably looked like the best time. Verhoeff will report back to the group next meeting on the status.
- h **WRDA-Authorized COE Projects –**
- i. **W. Sarpy/Clear Creek – Camp Ashland** – Marlin Petermann updated the group on the status stating that the 60% final design will be completed in May. There are still several ROW issues particularly on the Saunders side, where the title search company is experiencing some difficulties in finding info. Tomorrow, there will be a final walk-through for the east chute with the COE and NE Military Department.
 - ii. **Sand Creek/Lake Wanahoo** – Construction on the upstream wetland (3rd mile north) is 40-50% complete. There will be a bid letting for the \$1,5 million breakwater levee in the next couple of weeks. In April, the main Wanahoo embankment project will be let. This will be an 18 month project. In FY12, the Wanahoo bypass will be constructed with \$3.5 million from NDOR including \$2.3 million this fiscal year. The intersection near the airport will be raised 7.5 feet.
 - iii. **Antelope Valley** – Phase II of the flood control portion is 75% complete. In April, bids for Phase III will be opened. This phase extends from S Street to J Street. This will finish all flood control components for the project and should take 16-18 months (end of 2009). The roadway will be completed in 2011. Once the flood control components are completed, floodplain maps will be revised and redevelopment can begin.
 - iv. **205 Studies** – No changes from last report. Fremont still working on roadway alignment.

v. **WRDA 2007** – Verhoeff handed out WRDA 2007 language and the handouts that we had been giving to our Congressional delegation. Verhoeff thanked everyone for all of the hard work in helping to get WRDA passed. It took 5 years to get authorization. Let's hope it doesn't take that long to get the funding.

j **New & Inactive Programs/Projects – Update.** Verhoeff mentioned that he has put the kiosk program on hold until we decide if we will keep the same 8 Reasons or modify them. He would like to continue to play our PSA's throughout the district and will be looking into radio markets that will play our PSA's at little to no cost. Currently, Verhoeff has the LPSNRD GIS intern working on development of several new data layers including: sand/gravel mining operations and ecotourism sites (per request from Alliance members and public). A couple of new program ideas to consider for the upcoming year:

- Fold-out map with major features and locations notes. For use by visitors to area and as quick reference. Graphic-intensive and informative.
- Like to find local radio station (probably smaller market) willing to let the LPRCA have a 15-minute spot possibility with call-in opportunities.
- Routine newspaper column in area newspapers to update public on LPRCA and LPR issues.
- Public Opinion Study – Repeat of 1998 study – 10 years later.
- Platte River Clean-up.
- Coffee Shop Meetings – 17 potential.
- Seminar or lecture series on LID / Green Infrastructure / Conservation Development – Cooperatively with other organizations.
- High school or middle school curriculum / summer camp on LPR.

8. RECENT CONFERENCES/MEETINGS/EVENTS. Verhoeff discussed each of the following activities:

- a. **NE/IA Metroplex Conference-** Nov 15th, 2007-Quarry Oaks- "Envisioning Nebraska: Building Resource Efficient Communities."
- b. **UNL Community & Regional Planning Class Presentation on the LPRCA** – Dec 6th, 2007 - UNL
- c. **MapMaker Partner Meeting** – Dec 12th, 2007- LPNDRD
- d. **NE Land Trust Board Meeting** – Dec 14th, 2007- LPSNRD
- e. **NDNR Hearing on Lower Platte River Basin Status** – Dec 19th, 2007 – State Capitol
- f. **UNL Honors Water Class Presentation** – Dec 22nd, 2007 - UNL
- g. **Joint 3 NRD Strategic Planning Meeting-** Dec 22nd, 2007- Mahoney State Park
- h. **UNL Honors Water Class Tour of LPR Basin** – Dec 29th, 2007 – LPR Basin
- i. **NARD Legislative Conference** – February 5th & 6th, 2008 Lincoln Embassy Suites
- j. **Others.** No other items were discussed.

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS

- a. **Next LPRCA Meeting** – The group decided to hold the next LPRCA quarterly meeting at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission –Lincoln, NE on April 29th, 2008 starting at 9:30 am. Details will be sent out.
- b. **2008 LPR Summit Steering Committee Meeting-** Feb 12th, 2008- 1 to 3 pm - LPSNRD
- c. **NPZA/APA (presentation on ESA Project)** – Feb 20th, 2008 – 1 pm- GI Holiday Inn
- d. **CIS Partner Meeting** – Feb 21st, 2008 * 10:00 am * LPSNRD in Lincoln
- e. **Earth Wellness Festival** – Mar 19th & 20th, 2008 – SCC in Lincoln
- f. **Wetland & Watershed Conference (presentation) –April 7th – 11th, 2008- Kansas City, MO**
- g. **River Management Society Biennial Conference (presentation) – May 11th-15th, 2008 – Portland, ME**
- h. **Others**

10. Other Items of Interest – Public Comment. Marlin Petermann updated the group on the status of the Ice Jam Agreement. The collaborative group had to find a pilot who could perform demolition (Out of OK) and a new company to provide a helicopter for the effort (out of IA). Unfortunately, there are no local people or companies who have the proper credentials or insurance to do so. There may be an increase in funding from the partners to cover increases in insurance and costs to hire the new company.

11. Adjourn. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.