



Lower Platte River  
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

LEAD. ORGANIZE. INSPIRE. The voice of the Lower Platte.

**QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, October 20th, 2011 9:30 a.m.**

**Papio-Missouri River NRD**

**8901 S 154<sup>th</sup> St**

**Omaha, NE 68138**

1. **CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTIONS:** The meeting was called to order at 9:39am by Meghan Sittler. Introductions were made at this time.
2. **PROOF OF LEGAL NOTICE/PUBLICATION:** Meeting notice was published October 10th, 2011 in the *Omaha World Herald*.
3. **ADOPTION OF AGENDA:** The agenda was approved by consensus.
4. **APPROVAL OF LPRCA MINUTES FROM APRIL 20TH, 2011 MEETING:** The minutes were approved by consensus.
5. **ENVIRONMENTAL SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT & LAND SUITABILITY ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATION:** Matt Pillard of HDR gave a demonstration on how to use the Land Suitability Analysis tool, that is currently available via MapMaker on the Lower Platte North NRD website. He showed what the basic ArcGIS tools located at the top of map do, such as zoom-in, zoom-out, pan, view full extent, etc. He also noted that all cities and counties are bookmarked in a drop-down window, and if you have a specific township and range, you can enter in the figures and the tool will display a map of that area. Once you have a certain location in mind, the column on the left of the screen contains layers that you can view by selecting their box. Each layer has an information icon associated with it so the viewer can learn special characteristics of that feature. Viewers are able to overlay layers and most layers provide a link to an LPRCA project relating to that specific layer. Viewers can add characteristics of their point of interest to a Results page which creates a map the viewer can then print. Matt's team has added and continues to add links dealing with projects such as the ESA report and *Environmental Carrying Capacity Within the Lower Platte River Watershed*.

The purpose is to give users data, provide informative links and notify them of who to contact with their concerns, all while keeping the MapMaker tool simple and not bog down personal computers. Updates to the tool may include: pulling aerial images from the LPNNRD sources, adding a link with the LiDAR information/aerial images when they are available, re-naming the website address because it is currently composed of numbers, adding a legend that prints on the maps viewers create, and provide set scales (ex. 1in.= 1 mi.) in a drop down menu bar. The next step is to work on the predictive model and gather folks to determine percent change scenarios, for example, buffering a stream at 100ft instead of 200ft. Pat O'Brien mentioned adding data from the NRCS. Marlin Petermann noted how this is a great tool and it's nice to see progress on the product so far. Matt asked meeting participants to play with the ESA/LSA tool and provide comments and suggestions to him or Meghan Sittler. The tool can be found at: <http://nrdmapmaker.org/lpresa/>

6. **WATER QUALITY MONITORING NETWORK SEASON RECAP AND NEXT STEPS:** Dave Rus of USGS, provided a season recap of the Water Quality Monitoring Network and the project's intentions for the next step. The project is in its fourth year of monitoring five sites within the lower Platte River corridor. This season showed the second highest peak and resulted in high sediment transport. Even without direct influence from mountain snowmelt, the Elkhorn River flow was high due to the saturated groundwater. The project was recently awarded an

Environmental Trust Grant to apply toward the predictive model. Using 325 water samples from USGS and 300 samples from DEQ (providing the data is compatible), the goal is to provide the public with real-time predictive water quality characteristics, such as e-coli levels, that could be accessed via cell-phone.

7. **CUMULATIVE IMPACT STUDY PHASE III UPDATE:** Jeff Greenwald of USACE provided an update on Phase III of the Cumulative Impact Study. Last March the goal was to begin moving the sediment budget forward using sandbar monitoring information gathered by the USGS. However, issues with funding arose as well as complications brought on by the spring flooding, so the sediment budget had been put on hold. An external contractor will be hired to complete the sediment budget analysis. It is hoped that by March the sediment budget analysis will be 90% complete, and then mid to late-spring have the final product completed with the report finalized during summer.
8. **RIVER OBSTRUCTION REMOVAL AT TWO RIVERS PROJECT UPDATE:** Meghan Sittler provided a project update for the river obstruction removal at Two Rivers. A meeting had been scheduled, following the quarterly meeting, but it was postponed. Currently, alternatives for causeway designs are being discussed. Timing of the project is also being reevaluated. The cost of the new proposed alternative design is unknown at this point but can be expected to be higher than the previous estimate using only earthen causeways. John Miyoshi stated that the USFWS does want to come to an agreement, because they want the obstructions out as well.
9. **NEBRASKA LAND TRUST LOWER PLATTE RIVER UPDATE:** Jana Hafer provided an overview of the Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) and noted locations with the lower Platte region where they have easements. The Nebraska Land Trust is in its tenth year, has raised over \$4million for easement purchases, and has to date 484.2 acres in easements. They use GIS mapping tools to select prime areas where easements would be most beneficial. Such areas meet cultural and natural criteria, may be recognized as scenic landscapes that are prone to encroachment, have water quality value, native old growth forests, recreation opportunities, historical value, and biological diversity.

The lower Platte River region is the NLT's priority area for past, current, and upcoming projects. Successful easements have been purchased within the Schramm Bluffs, and recently the NLT has acquired six new sites of interest across the river from the Schramm Bluffs. Sarpy County is Nebraska's fastest growing county. The vision of the NLT is to preserve unique areas, such as the Schramm Bluffs, as growth occurs. They want to balance development with preservation, and focus on moving forward. Papio-Missouri NRD, Lower Platte South NRD, Sarpy County, and landowners have offered great support for the NLT. Jana Hafer said the ESA Mapmaker tool will be a great asset for the NLT as they continue to find land to preserve in the lower Platte region. Marlin Petermann complimented the NLT for the recent field day that toured the Patterson Farm easement located in the Schramm Bluffs.

10. **LOWER PLATTE RIVER WATER TRAIL UPDATE:** Meghan Sittler provided an update on the Platte River Water Trail (PRWT) project previously led by Tim Montgomery. He is no longer with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, so Michele Stryker of NGPC is currently over-seeing the project. There are five main goals for the PRWT project: revise the print materials, create a GIS trail map, create an interactive website for trip planning, improve the public access points, and increase signage for educational and on-trail purposes.

The purpose of the Platte River Water Trail program is to encourage people to get out in nature, and educate conservation practices and preservation of the Platte River. Registration for the LPRCA annual kayak tour has shown there is increasing local interest in water activities. Currently there are six public access points throughout the LPR, however a few are in poor condition and there need to be more access points to break, get drinking water, and use the restroom. Sitter said the Lower Platte South NRD was recently contacted by Ashland to partner to develop a new access point along Salt Creek.

Those working on the project have recently completed base-line mapping of four segments of the lower Platte River. Other progress has been made by documenting river-access points with GPS values and photos taken from the water. The four mapped segments of the Lower Platte River Water Trail need to be named. Sittler asked that anyone could offer name ideas, but the NGPC has the final name approval. Data from the base-line mapping, access-point documentation, and trail segment names, need to be sent to NGPC by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Sittler offered to send Alliance members an e-mail with aerial photo of the segments to be named. Additional information dealing with access points, clean-up duties, rest areas, etc., can be added to the map database at a later date. However, NGPC hopes to have the basic information posted online sometime in November. Marlin Petermann asked if river miles will be available for the public, Sittler said yes, they will be.

11. **WATER QUALITY OPEN RECAP:** Meghan Sittler provided a recap and Powerpoint photo presentation of this year's LPRCA Water Quality Open. With 144 golfers registered, this event hosted a wide variety of participants and attendance was one again full. Sittler mentioned the keynote presenters and said they did a great job describing the history and the process of re-licensing the Loup Power Plant. Sittler noted the LPRCA members and additional agencies that offered to be demonstrators at holes throughout the course. Sittler said it was good to see the golfers interacting with the demonstrations and mentioned that Quarry Oaks and Nebco are great businesses to work with.
12. **LOWER PLATTE RIVER WEED MANAGEMENT AREA UPDATE:** High flows in the Platte River this spring postponed spraying and clearing. Mary Bomberger-Brown saw the targeted areas in September and October. Spraying was completed from Plattsmouth to about Colfax. The Weed Management Area plans to spray in July but if the terns and plovers are in the area, spraying may need to be moved to an earlier date. The Tern and Plover Partnership is working to join the MOU with the three NRDs regarding the weed management area. The T&P Partnership wants to focus on drawing birds out of the mining areas and to the open, weed-free sandbars of the river.

A lawsuit was recently filed against the LPRCA and other local agencies because a landowner near Two Rivers claimed his land was sprayed during weed management practices. He is asking for \$15 million to replant willows or other trees that were killed, rid the beaver that infested his property, and provide bank stabilization. Glenn Johnson said that a few entities cannot legally be sued and several attorneys are looking into the case.

### 13. **WRDA AUTHORIZED PROJECT UPDATES**

- A. Antelope Valley:** Glenn Johnson said the roadway projects are finishing up and the bridges are being repaired. All construction will be done next spring. He is wrapping things up with the USACE, and they are \$40,000 away from the 50/50 cost share, now just have to determine how to split costs with the City of Lincoln.
- B. Sand Creek:** Mike Murren said the primary construction should be completed the end of the week. The construction had previously been delayed due to weather issues. Grass was recently planted at Lake Wanahoo. The recreational park is expected to open next spring, however operation and maintenance is still being discussed. Nice fall weather has allowed the upstream dam construction to progress. Currently, the third dam is being constructed. If the nice weather continues, five of the seven dam projects could be completed. These dams are all privately owned and range from 15 acres to 42 acres.
- C. FREMONT & SCHUYLER 205:** John Miyoshi said the Schuyler project is in the design phase. The Fremont project is at a stand-still due to Department of Roads' construction on Highway 30. The Highway 77 bridge south of Fremont should be complete by January. A temporary bridge was built instead of using a causeway. Work can only be done certain months of the year, so the crews are currently working non-stop.
- D. WESTERN SARPY CLEAR CREEK:** Marlin Petermann said four construction phases will be wrapping up by the end of the year. Three million dollars is still needed to complete the project and the current cap on the authority must be raised to allow funds to be spent. Marlin said the Watershed Authority tour of the Lower Platte and Sarpy project held in September for the Assistant Secretary of the Army was very beneficial. The Assistant Secretary enjoyed the airboat ride and she was thrilled to see a bald eagle dive into the river to get a fish near Two Rivers. Jeff Greenwald re-iterated that she enjoyed the relaxing Platte River scenery. Marlin thanked Mary Bomberger-Brown of the Tern and Plover Partnership because he used key information from her demonstration

at the Water Quality Open the previous day, to share with the Assistant Secretary of the Army during the airboat tour.

**E. LOWER PLATTE RIVER WATERSHED AUTHORITY:** Meghan Sittler commented on the lower Platte River tour that was held September 2<sup>nd</sup> for the Assistant Secretary of the Army. Meghan also mentioned that at the end of the fiscal year, USACE transferred unobligated money over to the Lower Platte River & Tributaries Authority to better position us for new funding in the next federal budget.

14. **OTHER BUSINESS:** Pat O'Brien provided a review and update on the proposed non-regulatory 319 grant. As mentioned at April's meeting, NDEQ would work with UNL CALMIT to collect remote-sensing data via plane. Instead of relying on grant funding, Pat O'Brien spoke with Elbert Taylor of NDEQ whom offered left-over funds that LPRCA would match. The original grant proposal asked for \$85,000 with 40% local match. The leftover funds available total \$140,000 so allowing the LPRCA to alter the plans and fly the entire lower Platte as well as South Bend and Ginger Cove. Pat said data collected from this project would be a great addition to the ESA MapMaker website. Pat and Meghan will continue working to finalize the project plan and contract.
15. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** Doug Samuelson, Lower Platte South board member and also employee of the Division of Tourism and Travel, heard from the rest area designer that the new I-80 rest area being constructed between Lincoln and Omaha will not have a visitor's center. The previous rest area, called the Platte River Rest Area, consisted of two buildings: one containing bathroom facilities and the other a visitor's center. Without a visitor's center, the LPRCA and other agencies will be losing a great opportunity to reach the public, not only for recreational purposes in the area, but natural resource education as well. Doug suggested that the LPRCA may want to contact the Department of Roads (DOR). John Miyoshi agreed and asked that Meghan Sittler send a formal letter representing the LPRCA to the DOR and Department of Environmental Development (DED) and then forward copies to the LPRCA representatives who will then send letters themselves. Doug said that if there is enough interest, there is funding available and room for the DOR to build a visitor center at the rest area.
16. **NEXT MEETING DATE:** By consensus the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, January 19th at 9:30am at the Lower Platte North NRD in Wahoo.
17. **ADJOURN:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:55am.

-Heidi Christensen, LPRCA Intern