



For the period of October 1st, 2003 through January 13th, 2004

From the Coordinator

This is the 4th quarterly report I've put out since coming on board. I hope you find it informative and helpful. In the next coming months the Alliance will be working on a variety of exciting projects including: a river obstruction study; development of a new brochure; a facelift for the website; continued progress on the cumulative impact study; summer river tours; and a host of others. One of the big projects that will be underway starting in about April is a series of 8 **Water Quality** meetings through out the Corridor. We are looking at alternating between daytime, evening, and Saturday meetings to reach a broader audience. The topics covered will range from basic water resources information to treatment of water quality problems. There will be a real focus on assessing water supply and wastewater risk and helping interpret that risk. I hope everyone can make it when the meetings come to your area. In this quarterly report is a draft agenda for the water quality meetings. I'll keep everyone posted on more details as they become available.

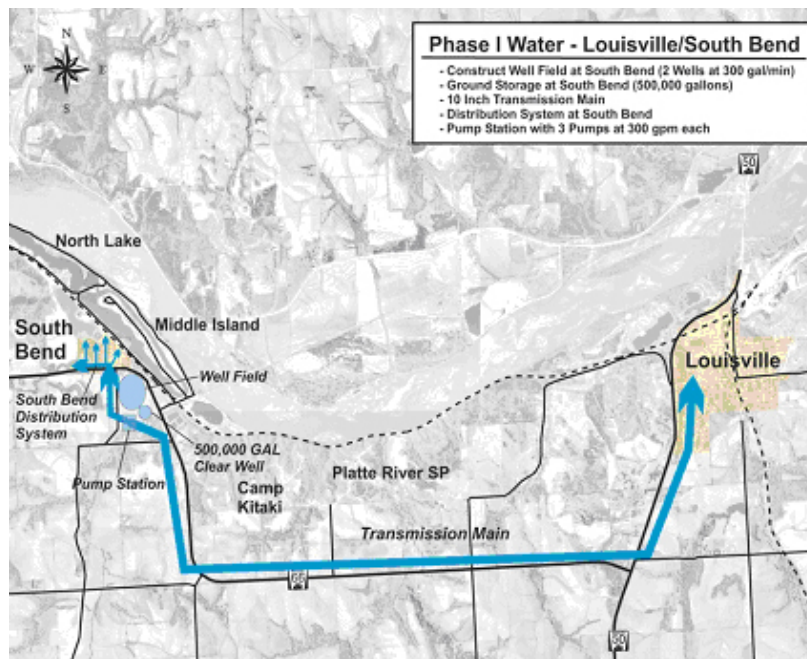


[Corridor Connections Newsletter](#)

Corridor Connections, the newly renamed newsletter of the Lower Platte River Corridor alliance (LPRCA) went out a couple of weeks ago. Formerly known as *The Starboard Way*, the newsletter was renamed to reflect the nature of the Alliance, which is making connections between people and the natural environment in the Lower Platte River Corridor. This edition - the Fall/Winter 2003 edition, was packed with a lot of great information and updates on Alliance activities and projects. We plan on having two of these newsletters each year - one for the Fall/Winter term and one for the Spring/Summer term. Hopefully, everyone got one in the mail. If not, each NRD in the Alliance was sent 100 additional copies. Please let me know of anyone who is not currently receiving the newsletter, but would like to receive it in the future. Don't forget, I'm always looking for contributions to the next edition of *Corridor Connections*.

[Ice Jam Cooperative Agreement Meeting](#) The annual ice agreement stakeholder meeting was held on Wednesday, December 17th at the PMRNRD to get things kicked off for the season. It was a very informative meeting covering topics such as ice condition reporting, electronic ice reporting, weather outlook, flood fighting, and dynamiting activities. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (NDNR) has a website where all of the ice reporting information is available. You can access it by going to "www.dnr.state.ne.us" then click on the "Floodplain & dam Safety" link. Next go to the "Floodplain Management" link and then scroll down to the "Nebraska Ice Reporting" section.

[Lower Platte River Utilities Board \(RUB\)](#) The interlocal cooperative agreement to set-up the structure of RUB is close to completion. We've now heard from all parties and only one - Ashland - has decided not to join the board at this time. As a result, the remaining parties (LPSNRD, Cass County, Louisville, and South Bend) will need to modify the interlocal agreement and get approval from each respective board. The first meeting of RUB should be sometime in late January or early February. The infrastructure project will entail multiple phases and address both water supply and wastewater. The first phase is to establish a wellfield near South Bend for a regional eater system and install distribution lines to South Bend and Louisville. Currently, HDR is conducting a preliminary engineering study for this first phase.



Preliminary Plans for Phase I – Wellfield at South Bend and Distribution Lines to South Bend and Louisville

Cumulative Impact Study A group of stakeholders with interests in the Lower Platte River Corridor met recently to discuss the proposed Cumulative Impact Study. This study is designed to look at the culmination of all activities - human and natural - to determine trends, impacts (positive and negative) and identify management needs in the Lower Platte River Corridor. The COE and the NG&PC have spearheaded the initial efforts to get the project started through a cooperative agreement, but all parties with an interest have been encouraged to participate. This first "kick-off" meeting of approximately 15 participants including NG&PC, COE, LPRCA, LPNNRD, NDOR, and a variety of others was very productive. The group came to the consensus that one product of the study would be a Geographic Information System (GIS) that would have multiple layers of information useful in identifying trends, changes, management needs, and benefits. A subsequent meeting of a smaller subgroup of these participants further refined the GIS product idea and came up with a "wish list" of information that could be incorporated into the GIS as layers. Following the LPRCA quarterly meeting today, the entire group will meet again to look at this wish list and discuss it with GIS personnel from the various stakeholder organizations. This meeting starts at 1:30 p.m. at the LPSNRD.

Water Quality/Resources Meetings Below is a draft agenda for these meetings which are scheduled for the spring and summer of 2004:

DRAFT AGENDA ITEM	WHO	TIME ALLOCATED
1. Introduction - Purpose of meetings; Brief introduction of the Lower Platte River Corridor; Short discussion of regional management/projects/studies - i.e. River Utilities Board, the LPRCA itself, and other cooperative regional approaches; Previous meetings such as Water Wellness meetings and projects/studies	LPRCA	15 minutes
2. Natural Systems - Water Resources Basics/Surface-Groundwater Basics Water Quality Basics and Contaminant Transport /Hydrogeology/Hydrology	USGS	20 minutes
3. Risk Assessment - Determining individual/community/regional risk for water quality contamination	UNL Coop Ext	15 minutes
4. Point and Nonpoint Contamination	NRCS	15 minutes
5. BMP's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Septic Systems - Drinking Water Wells/Systems - Water Treatment 	UNL Coop Ext UNL Coop Ext/LPRCA UNL Coop Ext	15 minutes 15 minutes 15 minutes
6. Wrap-up/Summary/Q&A Period	All	10 minutes
7. Open House - View Displays/ Ask Detailed Q's/ Visit With Presenters	All	30 minutes following
TOTAL		2 Hours and 30 minutes

River Obstructions Project Work has begun on reviewing previous information and reports on lower Platte River obstructions including bridge pilings. A couple of years ago, some work was done with the help of the Nebraska Airboaters Association to identify and map obstructions in the river. Last year, the LPRCA did a reconnaissance canoe trip down the river to GPS the locations and take photos of each obstruction. River obstructions can be problematic for a variety of reasons including: hazards to boaters, they can catch debris and divert channel flow resulting in flooding and/or bank erosion, and degradation of the natural and scenic qualities of the area. I hope to have a preliminary report this spring to present to the Alliance and its members along with recommendations and potential funding sources for removal. The LPNNRD along with the UP Railroad removed approximately 18 cement bridge pilings from an old railroad bridge back in 1997 and 1998. Dynamite was used and the process was recorded on video. It is quite an undertaking. The majority of obstructions we are looking at currently are wood, metal, and a few cement obstructions.



Obstructions Near Highway 50



Obstructions Near Highway 6



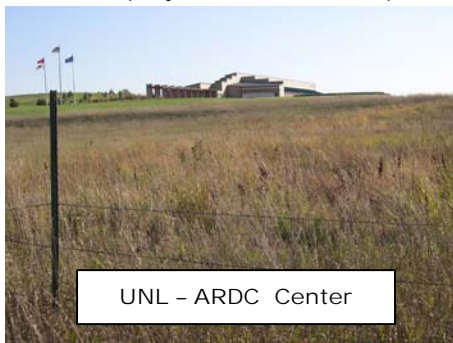
Obstructions Near Ashland



Obstructions Near Two River State Recreation Area

Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) The LPWMA just finished putting together a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Foundation "Pulling Together Initiative" or PTI grant to get some additional summer help and the necessary biological and chemical supplies for noxious weed control in the 10 corridor counties. The grant is a one-year grant renewable for up to three years. Each county took an inventory of needed chemicals, biological control, equipment, and summer help. This information was then submitted as a part of the grant to show the need for noxious weed control in the counties. Recall, that earlier this year the LPWMA submitted a grant to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF) for equipment, specifically ATVs and sprayers for 8 of the 10 corridor counties. I just heard that the NETF grant was not recommended for funding this year, so we'll need to look elsewhere for the required equipment. The group continues to meet monthly. Information on this group can be found at "www.lowerplattewma.org" including a recently developed GIS (Geographic Information System) of eradication efforts and purple loosestrife infestations.

[Lower Platte River Watershed Nature Center](#) On Wednesday, November 12th there was a meeting at the UNL Ag Research Development Center (ARDC) site near Ithica to bring together potential partners and stakeholders for the development of a nature center showcasing the lower Platte River Watershed. We were able to gauge interest in the nature center and to explain in greater detail what the project is all about. There was a small showing at the meeting, but the major stakeholders were in attendance and all showed overwhelming support for the project. The project will entail the development of a series of trails and interpretive panels along the trails highlighting the many natural features of the ARDC area. There will also be opportunities for hands-on learning and nature hikes through woodlands, wetlands, pastures, fields and feedlots highlighting the benefits of wetlands for stormwater and field runoff, native and planted woodlands and grasslands, wildlife management, and BMPs for agricultural practices. The group decided to have quarterly meetings with a smaller group made up of UNL, the NPS, and the LPRCA to serve as the steering committee. As various components of the project were initiated, then the appropriate stakeholder would be brought in to assist. The LPNNRD, the district where this project lies, has already discussed this project and shown support for the concept.



UNL - ARDC Center



Longview of proposed Nature Center area



One of many varied natural areas on the site

[Sand and Gravel Working Group – P.A.C.E.](#) On November 5th, 2003, P.A.C.E. (Planning- Aggregate - Community - Environment) met to discuss the next move for this cooperative group, which includes sand/gravel operators, conservation organizations, and governmental entities. The focus is to bring together these groups to design plans and protocol for reclamation of mining operations PRIOR to commencement of mining. In this manner, we can talk about how to preserve the natural qualities of the area and guide the operations to implement conservation measures. Currently, the group is working on developing a mission statement, goals, a logo, and an administrative history. The group meets every couple of months. The next meeting is scheduled for January 14th at 10:00 a.m. at the TNC facility near Wood River.

[60-Mile Radius Committee](#) This committee has been meeting on a monthly basis to discuss the findings of the recently completed public opinion survey designed to gauge the feelings of area residents on development issues. The Joslyn Castle Institute (JCI) was the organizing entity for this committee and they received a Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF) grant to conduct the study. The study focused on the area that is the intersection of a sixty-mile radius drawn around Omaha and Lincoln. In an effort to get more input on the vision of development for the sixty-mile radius area and to convey the results of the public opinion survey, JCI held a conference called the Flatwater Communities Conference on September 11, 2003. There were approximately 40 attendees including public planning officials, resource managers, and other special interest groups. The conference consisted of several presentations on the public opinion results, a panel discussion on planning and development in the sixty-mile radius area, and small group discussions of various planning aspects such as economics, environmental considerations public policy, and others. A final conference will be held in July or August of 2004 and a final report on the study should be ready by June of this year. The group meets every 2nd Thursday of the month and the next meeting will be on February 12th, 2004 at the Joslyn Castle.

[Instream Flow Rights – Central Platte NRD](#) In October, I attended a meeting facilitated by the Central Platte NRD (CPNRD) to start work on their renewal of instream flow rights on the Platte River from Chapman to Columbus. Every 15 years, DNR reviews Instream flow rights and in 2007, the CPNRD flow rights will be up for review. They currently have rights for 500 and 600 cfs in the stretch referenced above. The purpose of these instream flow rights is to support habitat for forage fish to maintain the least tern population and to support habitat for macro invertebrates to maintain the piping plover population. These rights are year-round. Currently, there is limited data and information on this stretch of the Platte River and in the years leading up to the 2007 review by DNR, the CPNRD is looking for any assistance from other entities including information, studies, financial support, in-kind, technical support, or even moral support. Although it is upstream from the lower Platte River corridor, it does affect us since we all live downstream and we do have a stake in the area near Columbus.