



From the Coordinator...

Monthly Report for the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the month of December 2004

Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

NEXT Quarterly Meeting

The next LPRCA quarterly meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 1st, 2005 starting at 9:30 a.m. at the LPSNRD in Lincoln. Contact the LPRCA at (402) 476-2729 with agenda items.

Platte River Issues Meeting A recent meeting on January 6th, 2005 focused on a variety of Lower Platte River Issues. Topics of discussion included W. Sarpy / Clear CK project status, BN railroad bridge debris issues at Hwy 6, Ice Jam Agreement update, FEMA floodplain efforts and expected dates of completion, Review of flood insurance issues for Union Dike area, Sarpy County Infrastructure Study and Comprehensive Plan update, and the LPRCA River Obstruction Project update. Attendees included the PMRNRD, Sarpy County, Senator Nelson's Office, USGS, and the COE.

Cumulative Impact Study (CIS) The CIS partner group is finishing up the scope of work for Phase I of the project and expects to work towards Phase II - Data Acquisition and evaluation by spring of this year.

NACO Conference I attended the annual Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) December 8 and 9. The conference has different sections for different interests. I chose to attend the Noxious Weed section because of our involvement with the Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA). Cooperative weed management groups like the LPWMA are being organized throughout the state and the nation. This is great for control of noxious weeds, but proving to be more difficult for getting grant funding with all of the competition. Salt cedar has now been added to the Nebraska Noxious Weed List. This invasive species can secrete salt into the soil to kill off native vegetation. Merlin Carlson, head of the Nebraska Dept of Ag, addressed the group on the current status and future of agriculture in the state. We appear to be moving from a commodity production mindset to a food production mindset. Biotechnology is really becoming a big issue in agriculture. More details of the conference are available in a detailed memo I put together. The memo is available upon request.

NeWRA Meeting I recently attended a roundtable of the Nebraska Water resources Association (NeWRA) in Lincoln. The featured speaker was congressman-elect Jeff Fortenberry. I took the opportunity to deliver a letter to Mr. Fortenberry asking to sit down and discuss LPRCA and NRD projects. We hope to meet with him soon.

MoPac Trail The LPSNRD is working on determination of a route for the MoPac trail to connect the existing trail at



Wabash to the Lied Bridge on the Lower Platte River near South Bend. Part of this process is a series of public meetings to show potential routes and receive public input. There are several possibilities for the route (see at right). Completion of this portion of the MoPac Trail is expected to be sometime in 2007. The PMRNRD has chosen a route on the other side of the river, chosen a contractor, and will begin construction this

year. Once completed, Lincoln and Omaha will be connected by the trail, which is a part of the American Discovery Trail.

Nebraska Land Trust The Nebraska Land Trust (NLT) is a new organization created to help preserve natural lands, rural/agricultural areas, and open space in Nebraska. The group is focusing on the Niobrara River and Lower Platte River areas. Already, the NLT has secured over 1000 acres of easement lands in the Lower Platte River area. I've attended the past two board meetings and really believe we can benefit by using the NLT as the mechanism to protect sensitive areas with easements.

Sarpy County Comprehensive Plan Update Sarpy County is in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plan. This plan contains among other things guidelines for development in the county. They are looking at current and future needs as well as determining which areas are appropriate for development along with the type of development. The LPRCA has been involved in several focus group meetings for the process.

Drinking Water Protection Program The Groundwater Foundation has been organizing and presenting community water resources protection and how to apply for funding. I attended one of these programs on December 14th in Wilber to get ideas for LPRCA programs.

Cooperative Weed Group The Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) group is finalizing details an upcoming project to conduct aerial helicopter spraying of noxious weeds throughout the Corridor. They will also be kicking off an aggressive outreach and education program. I was asked to serve on an outreach committee to accomplish this. The group will also be approaching NRDs and other partners to secure future funding. With the increased competition for weed management grants, the LPWMA is looking to find more stable and long-term sources of funding.

60-Mile Radius Committee The final meeting of the steering committee was held on December 16th at the Joslyn Castle in Omaha. The final report from this 3-year project is still in draft form, but should be available soon and contains recommendations for addressing growth and land use planning for the areas between Council Bluffs and Lincoln. Many of the documents from the 60-mile Radius Study are available by logging on to www.ecospheres.com. The sponsor of the project, the Joslyn castle Institute for Sustainable Communities is applying for another grant through the Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF) for an additional 3-year grant to implement recommendations in the final report.

Environmental Carrying Capacity Project We are ready to proceed with this project after getting an interlocal agreement between NRDs to designate the LPSNRD to serve as sponsor on behalf of the LPRCA. We will have a kick-off meeting in the near future with our consulting firm, HDR to begin the project. This project will determine the level at which human activities impact the resources of the Corridor to the point they are no longer sustainable. We will be looking at existing land use planning, future needs, and determining where development is and is not appropriate as a part of this project. There will be a very strong public involvement component including workshops and meetings.

Cooperative Ice Jam Group The annual Ice Jam Preparedness and Ice Jam Removal meeting was held on December 19th at the PMNRD near Omaha. Ice Jam Agreement cooperative partners and ice jam observers gathered to cover topics including weather outlook, floodfighting, ice condition reporting, and electronic ice reporting. Ice jam information can be found on DNR's website at "www.dnr.state.ne.us".

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE ADDED TO OUR MAILING OR E-MAILING LIST?

Please contact us at (402) 476-2729 or via e-mail at rverhoeff@lpsnrd.org to be added and let us know you wish to be added. If you are on the e-mail list, you will not receive paper copies except for our newsletter, which is sent out in printed form.

Upcoming Meetings and Activities

- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, Jan 13th, 2005 * 5:30 p.m. - LPNNRD Office - Wahoo*
- **PMNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, Jan 13th, 2005 * 8:00 p.m. - Nat Res Center @ Chalco Hills Rec Area - Omaha
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, Dec 19th, 2004 * 2:00 p.m. - LPSNRD Office - Lincoln @ 3125 Portia Street*
- **Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) Group Meeting** - Thu, Jan 20th, 2005 * 9:30 a.m. - LPNNRD Office - Wahoo
- **LPRCA Retreat** - Friday, January 21st, 2005 * 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. * Camp Kitaki - near South Bend
- **NARD Legislative Conference** - January 25th & 26th, 2005 * Embassy Suites * Lincoln
- **UNL ARDC Nature Trail Partner Annual Meeting** - February 18th, 2005 * 1:00 p.m. meeting/3:00 p.m. tour* UNL ARDC near Ithaca

***NOTE the winter meetings times are in effect for the next several months**