



## From the Coordinator...



Monthly Report from the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the period of JUNE 1 through JUNE 30, 2004

**Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator**

### Airboat Tour – Friday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004

It's that time of the year once again for the annual airboat tour. Seems like the last year has flown by quickly. We originally planned for about 20 airboats, but have had such a demand, that we are adding two additional boats to accommodate most people who would like to attend. We still have several on a waiting list so please let me know if you have signed up, but don't think you can attend. This year we will be touring the stretch from South Bend to the mouth near Plattsmouth. Stops this year will include the Lied Bridge, the Omaha Fish & Wildlife Club, Schilling WMA, Hanson Lakes, and MUD south wellfield. We will be covering topics ranging from Lewis and Clark to algae blooms to the new MUD wellfield. The tour will begin at 9:00 a.m. at eh NG&PC Hwy 50 landing and should conclude by 3:30 to 4:00 p.m. on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July.

Water Wellness Workshops/Meetings We have now concluded the 2004 Water Wellness meetings with a bang at our 8<sup>th</sup> and final meeting held in Schuyler on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2004. We had a smaller crowd of around seven attendees, but they were very interested in the topics and asked a lot of great questions. Several attendees also took stacks of materials to give out to other people. We've heard great reviews on the content and delivery of our program. Additionally, we have been invited to present at several other venues on the same subject. A huge thanks goes out to UNL Cooperative Extension and the NRCS for their help and support. The presenters are planning an evaluation meeting later this month to assess the program.

Website Up and Running The LPRCA website at [www.lowerplatte.org](http://www.lowerplatte.org) is back up and running after correcting a few glitches at our website host company.

Agro-Environmental Trail Project formerly Nature Trail Project The steering committee for this project recently completed and submitted a grant to EPA for a wetlands demonstration segment of the project. There are three primary objectives of the grant:

- 1) Administer educational programs for agricultural producers on Best Management Practices (BMPs) of wetland pastures.
- 2) Develop wetland ecology educational programs for youth
- 3) Demonstrate multiple uses for wetlands while maintaining the integrity of the natural resources.

A huge focus of this segment of the project will to show that agriculture and resources protection can co-exist and that natural systems such as wetlands can serve as a way to manage livestock wastes while providing a natural setting. In the grant, we asked for \$50,000+. Our application is just a "pre-application" and if we are accepted, we will be asked to submit a full grant application packet. We have been able to use existing resources and time to cover any match required for the grant.

Affiliation with the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) Last time, I mentioned that this was proceeding forward with the approval of all three NRD boards. We have run into a snag. Because of the nature of the LPRCA, we cannot sign any agreements including an agreement with the NCF to create a fund to utilize their nonprofit status to accept grants and donations. As a result, we are exploring other ideas such as having the LPSNRD serve as the party to the agreement with the NCF to create the "Lower Platte River Corridor Fund." We could then have an amendment in the interlocal to ensure all parties have input into how money in the fund would be used. This is only one option and we are the early stages of this process.

## Bit 'O' Trivia

Answer to last month's question

**What animal does not drink water?**  
a. snake b. camel c. koala bear d. bat

**Answer-- b. koala bear**  
*it gets its water from its food*

This month's question:

**What % of human blood is water?**  
a. 18% b. 55% c. 99% d. 83%

Answer in next month's report

**UNL Water Tour** Some of you may have attended this year's UNL Water tour on June 7-9, 2004, which focused on the Central and Lower Platte River areas. I thought it was a great tour although it was a smaller group than usual - about 45 people. However, it was more manageable to make stops and load/unload. I had the privilege to help plan this year's tour and several of our projects and interests were featured this time around. With a 6:00 a.m. departure from Lincoln on the 7th, the tour made its way to Kearney to pick up other tour participants. The first stop was at Jeffery Island near Overton to see what Central Public Power and Irrigation District is doing to restore the area and conduct bird census activities. Once we got the bus unstuck, we headed to a sandpit near Lexington, which is managed by NPPD and other partners for least tern and piping plover habitat. Next, we traveled to Rowe Sanctuary near Gibbon for a catered lunch and a presentation on the sanctuary and its activities. What a beautiful view of the river and a multitude of birds. The sanctuary building is also very nice and worth driving out to see with log pillars and a large viewing window (it was all privately financed). After lunch, we headed to the CPNRD for a presentation by USGS on recent drought events and groundwater level changes. We also had a great presentation by Gary Mader, Utilities Director for GI, on their problem with industrial solvents moving towards GI wells and what efforts they have taken to remediate the situation. Several GI wells have already been shut-off, particularly those in the heart of the city and many monitoring wells have been constructed to identify the extent of the contamination plumes. Grand Island gets most of its water from a series of wells on an island in the central Platte River south of the city. Following a quick tour of the impacted GI wells, we headed to Columbus for a stay at the New World Inn and dinner at a very nice restaurant - Duster's Brew Pub.



Day 2 began with a presentation I gave on the Alliance and upcoming stops in the Lower Platte River Corridor area. We next traveled to the Oak Ballroom in Schuyler for a presentation by the East-Central District Health Department on the changes in ethnic diversity of the community as a result of the influx of immigrants to fill employment opportunities for the nearby packing plants. Our presenter was great and explained how education and adjustments to a new culture is one of the greatest challenges for immigrants. Once they start to learn customs and break through the language barrier, the INS comes in and cleans house with those who are not here legally or who have expired permits and then the community must begin again with the educational process. Many of the immigrants come from areas that have no clean water and they aren't used to having clean water at the tap in their house. We then traveled to Fremont State Recreation Area for a presentation by Kyle Hoagland with UNL on algae issues and recent control research. One of the substances they use to control the algae is called alum, which binds to the phosphorus, the primary nutrient responsible for algae blooms, and settle to the bottom of the lakes. We also heard from the park superintendent at the lakes on recreation activities. Following a BBQ lunch, we headed to the LPNDRD/City of Fremont - Platte River Landing for two presentations: (1) Matt Joekel with UNL Conservation & Survey talked about geological exposures and the surrounding bluffs. There was a series of soil cores taken from the nearby bluffs on display to better understand the geology; (2) NDNR presented information on flooding and building site exposures. We then headed to the Joslyn Castle Institute (JCI) in Omaha for an ice cream social and a presentation by Cecil Steward on the 60-mile Radius Study and other land-use planning issues. If you haven't heard Cecil's talk, then you should make a point to do so. He discussed current development trends in the "Metroplex" - the area between Omaha and Lincoln. By 2025, Omaha will run out of land to develop if they continue to use current land use patterns. JCI did a survey of area residents and many don't like the concept behind acreage development, yet they would love to live on one. The day was capped off with a stay at the Double Tree Hotel in Omaha and dining at a place of our choice.

Day 3 - the final day - started off with a hotel clearing false fire alarm. Always excitement on the tours. We traveled to the PMRNRD for a presentation by Steve Oltmans on the NRD. After a mix up with locations, HDR arrived to discuss the

infrastructure project underway along the Platte River from Ashland to Louisville. We next headed to Schramm State Recreational Area for a presentation on the Pallid Sturgeon Study currently in its fifth year on the lower Platte River. Dr. Ed Peters gave an interesting presentation and indicated they have found several more pallid sturgeon in the area. He showcased some of their equipment including nets and tracking devices. Our next stop was at the recently opened Lyman-Richey sand and gravel mining operation near Linoma Beach. Carl Roberts talked about the mining operation and the recently formed group - P.A.C.E. We headed out to a reclaimed mine, which has been converted a wetland area and serves as nesting habitat for piping plover and least terns. This area known as Jansen's Pit was part of the W. Sarpy/Clear Creek project undertaken by the COE and the 3 NRDs, with the PMRNRD taking the lead. During lunch at the Linoma Beach Lobster Inn, we had our final presentation by Frank Kwapnioski with NPPD on the installation of large capacity wells for cooling at the Gerald Gentlemen Power Station. What a great tour and it included some different topics. But, I appreciated the opportunity to showcase our area and expose other people to issues we face here and how these are important to the entire state. So far, evaluations are very favorable for the tour.

**60-mile Radius Committee** This group is currently finishing up the final report for the project - "The Flatwater Metroplex - Final Report." Also, a final conference has been set to present the project information and recommendations for land use planning. The date for this conference entitled, "The Flatwater Communities Conference" is September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at the PKI campus (formerly Ak-Sar-Ben) in Omaha. Times and specifics will be available soon. Those who attended the UNL Water Tour and heard Cecil Steward talk, may want to attend this conference for more information on the topic of land use planning and trends.

**Cumulative Impact Study** The group met again on Tuesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004 to continue the discussion on the EPA grant we applied for and to finalize our scope - areas of focus and boundary. Minutes for the previous meetings are available if you are interested. At the June 29<sup>th</sup> meetings, the group decided that the questions this study will be looking to answer includes: What are the changes over time in... (1) Infrastructure, (2) Land Use, and (3) Water Issues/Hydrology...and how do each affect or are affected by: (1) the River, (2) the Floodplain, and (3) the Bluffs Corridor. This isn't to say the project won't address other areas, but this gives us a starting point and narrows the scope down. The group also determined the geographic boundary of the project: it will include the 100-meter floodplain or 5 miles (2.5 miles on each side from the center of the river), whichever is greater. Also, where the floodplain is very wide near the confluence of the Elkhorn River north of the Douglas County line, only the Platte River drainage would be included. Additionally, we would be looking at 1-meter resolution for any new aerial photos taken. The next meeting is scheduled for the same day as the next LPRCA meeting - Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup> starting at 1:30 p.m. at the PMRNRD office at Chalco Hills Recreation Area.

**2004 Water Quality Open** September 1<sup>st</sup> is the date for 2004 Water Quality Open golf tournament and educational program. This year we will be heading down to Arbor Links in Nebraska City for the event. The course is an Arnold Palmer designed course with 100 of its 300 acres planted to native grasses, mature trees, or maintained as open space. We will use the same format as past years with a scramble format, 4-person teams and a shotgun start. I would point out that this event has always been entirely funded through user fees and donations. The tourney will begin at 11:00 a.m. with a presentation by the national agronomist for the management group overseeing Arbor Links with play beginning at 1:00 p.m. Dinner will be served at 5:30 p.m. A more detailed description and schedule is available from the LPRCA office and will be on-line shortly. You don't have to be a golfer to participate - - the scramble format has teams take the best shot of the foursome and then everyone on the team hits from that point for each shot. Contact me for more information.

## **Upcoming NRD and Alliance Meetings:**

- **NEXT LPRCA QUARTERLY MEETING** - Tuesday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2004\* 9:30 a.m. \* PMRNRD Office near Omaha.
- **PMRNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004 \* 8:00 p.m. - PMRNRD Office - Omaha @ Chalco Hills Rec. Area
- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Monday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004 \* 7:00 p.m. - LPNNRD Office - Wahoo @ 511 Industrial Road
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2004 \* 7:00 p.m. - LPSNRD Office - Lincoln @ 3125 Portia Street