



The Coordinator's Corner

Quarterly Report from the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance * Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

For the period of March 2006 through May 2006

MARK YOUR CALENDARS & SAVE THE DATES

LPRCA AIRBOAT TOUR July 14th, 2006 * 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Touring Hwy 50 (Louisville) to Sokol Camp

Tour the Platte River from Hwy 50 near Louisville to Sokol Camp near Hwy 64. Topics/stops TBD. Tour limited to 40 total participants and 2 per organization. No cost, but registration will be required. Invitations will be sent and inquiries can be directed to the LPRCA.

WATER QUALITY OPEN GOLF TOURNEY August 22nd, 2006 * 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Quarry Oaks Golf Course near South Bend

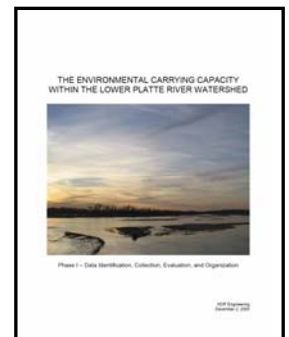
We're back again at Quarry Oaks where they employ a number of conservation practices. This event allows us to educate attendees on water resources issues while having a great time. Holes will feature displays and trivia. A burger and brat buffet along with awards ceremony follow the event. Format will be four-person scramble so you need not be a great golfer. Registration will be available soon! Check online. WE NEED DISPLAYS OF YOUR PROJECTS!

LPRCA SUMMIT Sept 19th, 2006 * Noon to 8 p.m.

Swanson Retreat Ctr -Camp Carol Joy Holling near Ashland

"Investing in the River of our State and the State of our River - The Lower Platte." That's the theme of this interactive summit featuring displays, presentations, and hands-on activities. Come learn how you can help protect the Lower Platte River. Contact me at (402) 476-2729 for more details and if you would like to be a part of the program. WE NEED PRESENTERS!

Environmental Carrying Capacity Project We recently met on this project to finalize details and discuss a timeline for future phases. We are considering fast-tracking the completion of this project to coincide with other complimentary studies soon to be underway including those by NE Innovation Zone Commission and the Joslyn Castle Institute. Currently, we are scheduled to complete the study over the next several years. The PHASE I Report is completed and available for review.



Cumulative Impact Study (CIS) The group met on April 5th, 2006 at the LPSNRD in Lincoln. The COE gave an update on activity and status of funding availability. We are still collecting data and getting it into the proper form to add to a GIS. The NETF grant for \$115,000 has now been officially approved for the CIS project. Additionally, we have completed a funding agreement with the USGS for a 40-60 costshare match on the Hydrologic Study component of the CIS project. The next CIS meeting is after the LPRCA quarterly meeting on May 23rd starting at 1:30 p.m. at the LPSNRD.



INFORMATIONAL TID BITS

Well, it is budget time around the NRDs and this time of the year gets hectic, not only from budget development but also from project planning activities. For the past year, we really accomplished many goals including finding additional funding, completing our first river obstruction removal project, completed PHASE I of the CIS project and began PHASE II, completed PHASE I Of the Environmental Carrying Capacity Study, planned our first ever LPRCA Summit, produced 4 public service announcements (PSA's), began development of river kiosks, published two editions of our newsletter "Corridor Connection," and a whole host of other milestones. We have many activities planned now and well into the future including continuation of our existing projects, remove obstructions at Camp Ashland, begin development of a surface water quality monitoring network, long-range planning, more kiosks, a variety of outreach projects, seminars, and of course holding the river summit. It has taken some time for the LPRCA to see many of its activities come to fruition, but things are starting to click and we certainly must give credit to the many great things accomplished by current LPRCA members and former Alliance staffers/interns.

LPRCA Newsletter - "Corridor Connections" The next edition (VOL 4, NO 1) of the LPRCA newsletter, "Corridor Connections" will be published in July 2006 and distributed to over 1,700 people. I am looking for contributions on projects, topical issues, and other items of interest including photos. Submissions must be made by June 23rd - 5 p.m.

Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) At the Alliance, we continue to look for new funding sources to conduct our projects, studies, and activities. One such source is WRDA. This federal legislation has helped us get 3 very important projects going in the past - Western Sarpy/Clear Creek, Antelope Valley, and Sand Creek. As Congress looks to pass a new version of WRDA, we work to get language included to help us do watershed restoration efforts. These efforts include existing projects such as the Environmental Carrying Capacity Project, the Cumulative Impact Study, and the River Obstructions AND proposed projects like the development of a basin-wide water quality monitoring network. We've been able to get some local funding for phases of many of these projects, but we need to find larger amounts to complete and certainly to develop a water quality monitoring network. Along with the 3 LPRCA NRDs, I traveled to DC to meet with our congressional delegation and their staff along with visits to many of our federal partners. Overall, it was a very successful trip and gained us some visibility. Our DC legal counsel, Bob Weaver, always does an excellent job of arranging these trips and the subsequent meetings. He also works tirelessly while we are back in Nebraska on our behalf to keep our information moving through the long and arduous congressional process or getting authorization and appropriations. We are requesting \$12 million to undertake the Lower Platte Watershed restoration efforts and began gathering information on developing a water quality monitoring network with the help of USGS. We were armed with two proposals from USGS on this network when we descended upon DC. This helped tremendously to explain the scope of what we are trying to do - - develop a comprehensive water quality network that looks at both groundwater and surface water.

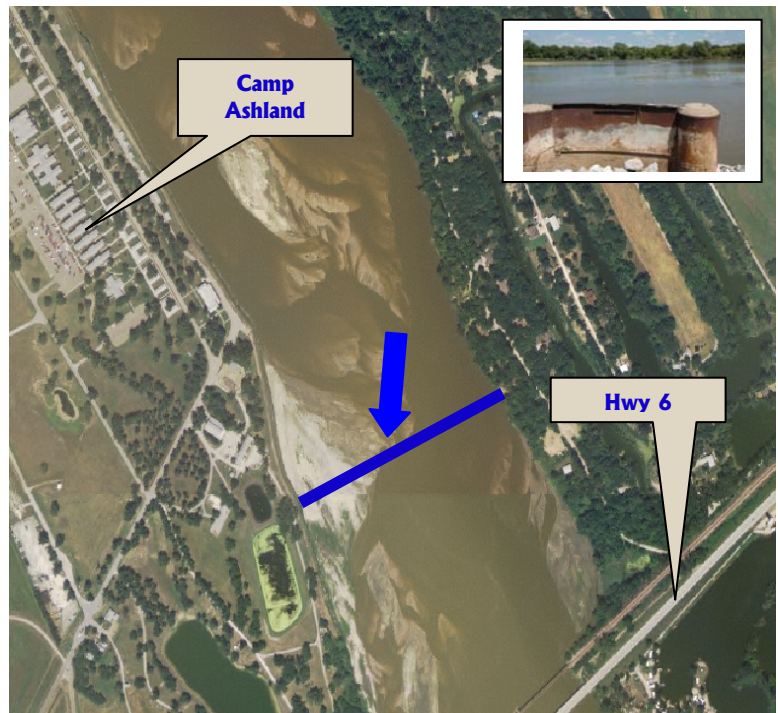
Nebraska I-80 Innovation Zone Commission (NIZC) The NIZC continues to meet the first Thursday of each month to consider economic development opportunities and ways to stimulate it in the I-80 corridor between Omaha and Lincoln. Most recently, the group took a tour of the I-80 Corridor stopping at several communities along the way. Additionally, the group established committees including an Environmental & Tourism Committee, which Marlin Petermann with the P-MRNRD and Marsha Babcock with the LPSNRD both sit on. The Joslyn Castle Institute for Sustainable Communities (JCI) will also be partnering with the I-80 Commission to do a concurrent set of charettes on September 18th regarding different growth scenarios in different locations within the "60-Mile Radius" area.

Kiosks We have reviewed a preliminary design and will now be incorporating photos of the "8 Reasons to Protect the Lower Platte River." Design of the frames will be completed by the LPSNRD including construction of a prototype. Plans are to have these in place in 8 locations throughout the Corridor by mid-summer.

Nebraska Land Trust The NLT met on Friday, May 19th at the P-MRNRD in Omaha. With a huge agenda, the biggest emphasis was placed on establishing the operational framework of the organization and complying with requirements for accreditation with the Land Trust Alliance, the foremost land trust association in the country that sets standards for others to follow. The NLT is working with several landowners in the Bluffs Region to explore land protection options. The next meeting is scheduled for September 8th.

Public Service Announcements (PSA's) How do you get the word out about the importance of an area like the Lower Platte River Corridor? Take it to the radio in the form of public service announcements or PSA's. These snippets of information can garner a great deal of attention in a short amount of time if done correctly. The Alliance has been working for the past 6 months on developing 4 PSA's to be aired in the Lincoln/Omaha and Columbus radio markets this spring. After working with our consultant, Snitily-Carr, on scripts, background music, and a voice talent, we are close to completion. We chose to focus on four of the "8 Reasons to Protect the Lower Platte River" rather than cram all eight into the four 30 second PSA's. The topics for this round include: Fishing, Land Use, Recreation, and Water Supply. Keep your ears tuned to KFOR and KJSK for these PSA's. We will also be looking to place them in the smaller markets soon throughout the Corridor.

River Obstruction Program - Camp Ashland We have been looking into using a sonic echo methodology to do a preliminary investigation on the obstructions at Camp Ashland. The device is attached to the obstruction, which allows determination of depth and material make-up for the obstruction. We've located a company out of Denver who can do this non-intrusive determination and while they are here, they will look at several other sites. Because of restrictions with our 404 permit issued by the Corps of Engineers (COE), we cannot poke around with a backhoe or any other similar equipment. This leaves few other options unless we wait until the permit allows us to poke around, which isn't until August. Making a preliminary determination will also allow for better planning and more precise removal bids. Partners for this project will include the LPRCA, the NE Military Department, and the NG&PC - Boater Safety Grant Program.



Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) Group - Conference The date, time, and place are set for this exciting conference on management of invasive plant species. "Threats to Nebraska Rivers - Invasive Plants Conference" will be held on August 22 & 23, 2006 at the Kearney Holiday Inn in Kearney, Nebraska. It starts at 8 a.m. on August 22 and covers a wide array of subjects from invasive species identification to management options to a field tour. Registration info should be available soon. Unfortunately, one day of the conference is on the same day as our WQ Open Golf Tournament so I will not be able to attend.

Pallid Sturgeon/Sturgeon Chub (PS/SC) Task Force The PS/SC Task Force met on May 16th at Schramm Park to receive the final study report from Dr. Peters, formerly with UNL. This report culminates a five-year research and data gathering effort looking at both the presence of pallid sturgeon and other species as well as what type of habitat they require and how to catch/track them. The task force is reviewing the report at this time and will submit any comments for inclusion in a "comments" section. Once the review is completed and the comments incorporated into the new section, the task force will vote on approving the report. NG&PC and the USF&WS will also be publishing a series of technical papers using the same research.

Airboat Tour with Senator Hagel's Staff Member On April 12th, I accompanied TJ Birkel, Legislative Assistant with Senator Chuck Hagel's office in D.C, on an airboat tour of the LPNDRD. A native Nebraskan, TJ took us up on the offer to tour the Lower Platte River via airboat if he ever came to town. John Miyoshi and Mike Murren with the LPNDRD set the tour up and it really gave us an opportunity to show what we are doing and demonstrate how valuable the Platte River really is. Below are a couple of photos from the trip:



NE/IA Metroplex Indicators Conference - On May 18th I gave a presentation on the environmental components of the flatwater metroplex region to this group to help supplement previous presentations on topics such as infrastructure, land use planning, and economic development. There was a tremendous amount of interest in the Lower Platte River. As mentioned above in the I-80 Commission section, there will be a series of charettes on September 18th, 2006 to look at various land use scenarios. Additionally, the Joslyn Castle Institute (JCI) is facilitating a new partnership between interested parties under a "1000 Friends" heading to help implement the growth strategies and ideas resulting from the indicators conference effort and assist with fundraising. There is currently one interested party which has offered to put up 1/3 of funds towards creation of such a group if two other partners would step up to the plate.

Conferences Recently, I attended the UNL Water Law, Policy, and Science Conference in Nebraska City on May 4th and 5th. The main theme of this conference was "adaptive management." There seemed to be a variety of definitions for this term but basically this is a way of managing activities/programs/projects in a way that allows a variety of approaches that can change as needed. It also hinges on a less top down approach - in other words you manage according to what is needed and tailor your approach to the specific situation rather than let strict regulation dictate all of the details. I would argue that the LPRCA in itself is an adaptive management strategy and the way we hope to manage issues is through adaptive management.

I also attended the River Management Society (RMS) Symposium in S. Sioux City from May 9th-12th. This is the first time this national association has held their biennial conference in Nebraska. Since this conference was paired with the annual Missouri River Natural Resources Conference, much of the info related to MO River issues. I prepared a detailed memo on this conference. Please refer to the memo for more details.

Upcoming Meetings:

- **"Pathogens in Drinking Water" Workshop** - May 25, 2006 * E. Nebraska 4-H Center * 21520 W. Hwy 31 * Gretna, NE * 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. - Sponsored by Groundwater Foundation w/ Assistance from LPRCA. **RSVP ASAP** to LPRCA at (402) 476-2729 or GW Foundation at 1-800-858-4844.
- **UNL Water Center/ Kearney Chamber of Commerce 2006 Water & Natural Resources Tour** - July 18-20, 2006 * Details to come * Tour Northeast Nebraska and the Missouri River Basin.
- **"Conservation Easements: A Legal, Financial, Governmental And Conservation Perspective"** - August 16, 2006 * Regency Lodge located at 909 South 107th Avenue * Omaha, NE * Contact Lorman Education Services to register at 1-866-352-9539.



9 DUCKLINGS HATCHED AT
LPSNRD OFFICE POND



The Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance - "Helping to Protect, Enhance, and Restore"