



Monthly Report for January 2009

Meghan Sittler, Coordinator

Programs / Projects / Activities

- **LPRCA Quarterly Meeting:** Approximately 45 people attended the most recent LPRCA Quarterly Meeting, which was held Tuesday, January 20 at the Lower Platte South NRD office. Jesse Bradley (Nebraska Department of Natural Resources) provided an overview of the recent preliminary determination by the NDNR that the Lower Platte River is “Fully Appropriated”. Dave Sands (Nebraska Land Trust) discussed their Schramm Bluffs Initiative as well as other planned efforts to potentially pursue conservation easements in the Lower Platte Region. The feature presentation was given by Matt Pillard (HDR) on the results of Phase II of the Environmental Suitability Analysis and the plans for and progress on Phase III. Other topics discussed at the meeting included the LPRCA participation in the UNL Environmental Studies Senior Seminar, the LPRCA Summit outcomes, and the next steps for the Water Quality Monitoring Network. Full minutes of the meeting are available through the LPRCA website. The next Quarterly Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 28 at 9:30 a.m. at the LPSNRD office.
- **Environmental Suitability Assessment (ESA):** Phase II of the ESA is now complete and the final report from HDR is available online through the LPRCA website. The ESA IMS portion is functional and is available through the Mapmaker site. The IMS will continue to be updated as new data sets are identified and added. I am currently working with Matt Pillard, HDR, to assemble a technical review committee for the project—particularly the Land Suitability Analysis component. I am waiting to receive the technical report from HDR for this portion of the project to review. Once I have received and reviewed the report, we will begin contacting individuals to serve on the review committee. It is our intention to assemble a very diverse committee with at least one representative from each of the LPRCA members as well as other agencies, organizations, and individuals.

Needs assessment meetings are underway for Phase III (Fremont to Columbus). During January, I and representatives from HDR, met with officials from Platte and Butler Counties, as well as the communities of Linwood, Rogers, David City, and Schuyler. We will be continuing to schedule and meet with other communities and counties throughout the Phase III area.
- **Cumulative Impact Study (CIS):** The final report for the CIS has been completed by the USACE and is available through the Alliance website and through the CIS IMS on the Mapmaker website. Additionally, the two reports from the hydrologic analysis are complete and available at the same locations. I submitted the final grant report for this project to the Nebraska Environmental Trust at the end of January. The project partners and any other interested parties will be holding a demonstration of the CIS IMS and review of the project overall on February 26 at 1:30 at the LPSNRD office. We will also discuss next steps for a potential Phase III of this project or a related effort.
- **Meetings with the Alliance Members & Project Partners:** In the on-going effort to continue to introduce myself and become more familiar with the multitude of efforts that each Alliance member and project partner has underway, I continued to meet with each of the Alliance members to discuss emerging issues as well as past successes and challenges. During January, I met with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, and the UNL Conservation and Survey Division. I also met with several representatives of the USGS and US Fish and Wildlife Service. A meeting with the Nebraska Department of the Military is set for February. I look forward to continuing to get more and more up to speed and interacting with all members and stakeholders of the Alliance in the upcoming days and weeks.
- **NARD Legislative Conference:** I participated in the NARD Legislative Conference held on January 27-28 in Lincoln. It was an amazing process to be a part of and I learned a great deal about both NRDs throughout the state as well as critical issues and opportunities that lay ahead.
- **UNL Environmental Studies Program:** I participated in a panel discussion for the UNL Environmental Studies Program Senior Seminar course. As an outcome of that participation, several students from the program will be

working with me to research an emerging issue in the Lower Platte River region and present the outcome of their research to the LPRCA through reports, publications, or web material. We have preliminarily discussed several potential issues but I am interested in hearing any and all ideas you may have.

- **Drought Ready Communities Program:** One of the programs I'm bringing with me from UNL is a "Drought Ready Communities" program. The goal of the program is to develop, and pilot, a community-driven drought awareness and planning program. The project is being piloted in 5-6 communities in Nebraska, Illinois, and Oklahoma. The kickoff meeting between the project partners (LPRCA, the National Drought Mitigation Center (UNL), University of Illinois/Illinois State Water Survey, University of Oklahoma) was held on January 6 at UNL. I am very excited about this program and the opportunity it presents to work with stakeholders throughout the region and to include drought and water shortages into the arena of on-going hazard mitigation planning efforts.