

Tackling Pollution in the Lower Platte River

Meghan Sittler, LPRCA Coordinator

The LPRCA has received a \$100,000 grant from the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality. The grant is part of the EPA's Section 319 program that focuses on planning and projects to reduce or eliminate nonpoint source pollution. The LPRCA will be using the grant award to develop a Watershed Management Plan for the Lower Platte River Corridor. The plan will help the LPRCA identify areas where projects and/or cost share and education programs may be the most effective in reducing contaminants found in the Lower Platte River, including e-coli. The development of the plan will begin in April 2013 and is anticipated to conclude in summer of 2014. The LPRCA will be seeking stakeholder input throughout the development of the plan, so we look forward to another opportunity to hear your concerns and ideas.



Upcoming LPRCA Events in 2013

April 23rd: LPRCA Quarterly Meeting

April 30th: Kayak Tour Registration Begins

May 21st: Kayak Tour

August 29th: Water Quality Open

Check www.lowerplatte.org for updates about upcoming events and meetings

For further information, contact:

Meghan Sittler, Coordinator
Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance
P.O. Box 83581
3125 Portia Street
Lincoln, NE 68501-3581
Telephone: 402.476.2729
www.lowerplatte.org

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LINCOLN, NE
PERMIT NO. 1556

Lower Platte River
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE
LEAD. ORGANIZE. INSPIRE.
The voice of the Lower Platte.
3125 Portia St
PO Box 83581
Lincoln, NE 68501-3581
p: 402.476.2729
f: 402.476.6454
www.lowerplatte.org



PLATTE RIVER Winter / Spring 2013 Update



Lower Platte River
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

LEAD. ORGANIZE. INSPIRE. The voice of the Lower Platte.

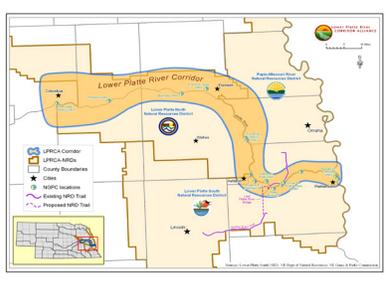


From the Coordinator

Even though for many of us winter may have taken awhile to give way to warmer temperatures and greener grass, spring has arrived and with it both excitement and uncertainty on what the rest of this year may bring. The threat of continued drought obviously weighs heavily but there is much to be hopeful and excited about. The LPRCA continues to focus on efforts to help us understand both the uncertainty and the constants. We also are continuing our focus to provide resources for our members and stakeholders that allow us to both appreciate the unique beauty of the Lower Platte as well as to meet the challenges that both human actions and nature may provide.

In this edition of the Platte River Update, we focus on partnerships working to help understand and manage threatened and endangered species on the Platte, as well as a unique initiative the University of Nebraska has started to provide community-led education regarding climate change. This spring, several new projects will begin to address water quality issues in the Lower Platte Corridor and provide expanded recreational opportunities. These are just some highlights of the important issues and efforts focused on continuing to protect and enhance the resources of the Lower Platte River that are included in this Winter/Spring addition of the Platte River Update.

Biannual Newsletter
of the Lower Platte
River Corridor Alliance



LPRCA MEMBERS

Lower Platte North NRD
Lower Platte South NRD
Pappio-Missouri River NRD
NE Dept of Natural Resources
NE Dept of Environmental Quality
NE Health & Human Services
NE Game & Parks Commission
NE Military Dept
University of Nebraska -
Conservation &
Survey Division,
UNL School of Natural Resources
Water Center

Meghan Sittler,
Coordinator

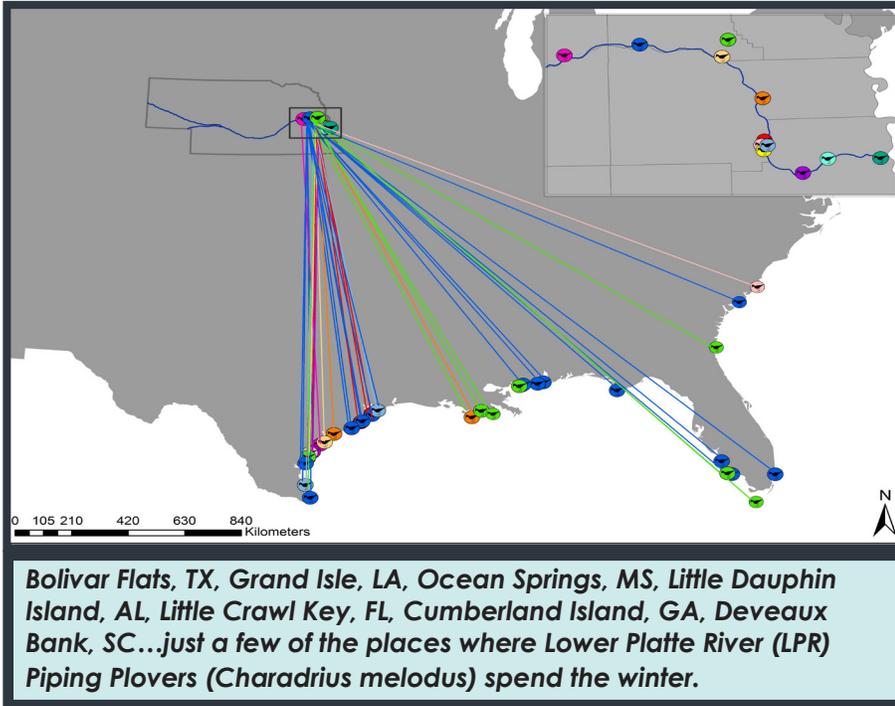
3125 Portia, P.O. Box 83581
Lincoln, NE 68501-3581
(402) 476-2729
Fax (402) 476-6454
msittler@lpsnrd.org

Layout, Design, and Editing by:
Meghan Sittler & Melissa Mosier

News Around the LPRCA

Lower Platte River Piping Plovers Get Out to See the World

Mary Bomberger Brown, Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership



LEFT: Distribution of Lower Platte River Piping Plovers on their wintering areas in 2008 – 2013. Each dot and line represents one plover and links the bird's summer location with its winter location. Map courtesy of Lauren R. Dinan, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

NEXT PAGE, BOTTOM: Color banded Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*), in winter plumage, spending the winter at Bunche Beach, near Fr. Myers, Florida. Photograph courtesy of Bob Pelkey (<http://swfloridabirder.blogspot.com>).

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, based at the University of Nebraska's School of Natural Resources, in cooperation with the Nongame Bird Program at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, started color banding Piping Plover adults and chicks at their nesting areas along the Lower Platte River in 2008. To date, 260 plovers have been color-banded, including 73 adults and 187 chicks. The original intention of the color banding program was to learn more about how plovers use their nesting areas in Nebraska. Do adults nest at the same places every year? Do chicks move to different areas in order to nest? Do some birds always nest on sandbars and others always at sand and gravel mines or lake shore housing developments? How long do LPR plovers live? This information is important but it is also important for us to understand how events that happen in the wintering areas, such as oil spills, hurricanes or droughts, might impact the plovers nesting along the Lower Platte River. Following color banded birds can help make the connections between these events more apparent to researchers.

With the assistance of a network of naturalists and wildlife enthusiasts from across the country, we've been able to assemble a reasonably complete map showing where our LPR plovers migrate to for the winter. The majority of our plovers head directly south and winter on the beaches of south Texas, but a number of them venture eastward to Louisiana, Florida and up the Atlantic Coast. No LPR plover has been spotted in the Bahamas yet, but it would not be surprising to receive a report from there in the future. LPR plovers wear a light blue flag and numbered metal band on their upper legs and green, black, yellow, red, gray or orange colored bands on their lower legs. Plovers from other parts of the range will have orange, black, forest green, mint green, yellow, or red flags on their upper legs and a variety of colored bands on their lower legs.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

News Around the LPRCA

'LPR Plovers'

← CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

One LPR plover sporting yellow, black, and gray bands with a light blue flag and numbered metal band has spent the past two winters on Bunche Beach near Ft. Myers, FL. The bird, which hatched at a lake shore housing development in Dodge County in June 2011, was seen on a Lower Platte River sandbar in late July and then, four months later (November), in south Florida—a very long way to fly when you are just a few weeks old. The bird is quite cooperative with observers and was reported to us 15 times during the winter of 2011 – 2012 and 12 times during the winter of 2012 – 2013. We do not know where this plover spent the summer of 2012—did it nest in North Dakota? Did it join the Great Lakes population? Or did it return to nest somewhere else in the Great Plains? Time and the cooperation of plover watchers across the country may help us find the answer.

Keep your eyes out for plovers wearing color bands and if you find one, please note where you observed the bird and the color band combination it was wearing. But remember - never ever disturb nesting Piping Plovers. By working together, we can better understand Piping Plovers and better protect and manage them and the habitats that they depend upon for nesting and wintering.



To learn more about the work of the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, visit:

<http://ternandplover.unl.edu>

2013 LPRCA Kayak Tour

Meghan Sittler, LPRCA Coordinator

The LPRCA is planning to hold our annual Lower Platte River Kayak Tour on Tuesday, May 21st. We hope that having the Tour earlier in the year will allow for flow conditions in the Platte to be more suitable for kayaking. Registration for the Kayak Tour will begin at 8 a.m. on April 30th.



Keep checking the LPRCA website for more information on how you can register for this free tour and for more details on what we hope will be another beautiful day on the Platte!

www.lowerplatte.org



LPRCA Project Updates

LPRCA Receives Preliminary NET Grants

Meghan Sittler, LPRCA Coordinator

The LPRCA has received approval from the Nebraska Environmental Trust for two important efforts. The first award will provide approximately 45% of the funds needed to remove old bridge pilings in the Platte River near Two Rivers State Recreation Area. The project is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2013 and will remove the dangerous standing and buried bridge piers in the east half of the river. Removing the pilings will increase safety for recreationists and boaters in the river as well as decreasing flood risk in the area, and importantly, restoring the natural characteristics of the river.

TOP, RIGHT: Both photos showing the targeted bridge pilings in the Platte River at Two Rivers State Recreation Area. Background photo taken during a low flow year and foreground photo taken during a moderate flow year. Photos courtesy of LPRCA.



ABOVE: Photo taken near Schramm Park while conducting field work for the sandbar dynamics study. Photo courtesy of USGS.

The second award provides funding for the continuation and expansion of a USGS-led study of sandbar dynamics in the Lower Platte River. The project has been funded on portions of the Lower Platte over the past two years by the Lower Platte South NRD. The Trust award will allow for 3 additional years of study of sandbar dynamics throughout the entire Lower Platte River. The goal of the project is to determine where and under what flow conditions sandbars are formed that can provide suitable habitat for the threatened piping plover and endangered interior least tern. This is a very unique research study and one that can be used to target habitat restoration efforts, as well as assist in the identification of locations and potential impacts of new infrastructure.

We are very excited about carrying out both of these efforts with assistance from the Trust!

News Around the LPRCA

Construction on Mopac Trail Connection Begins

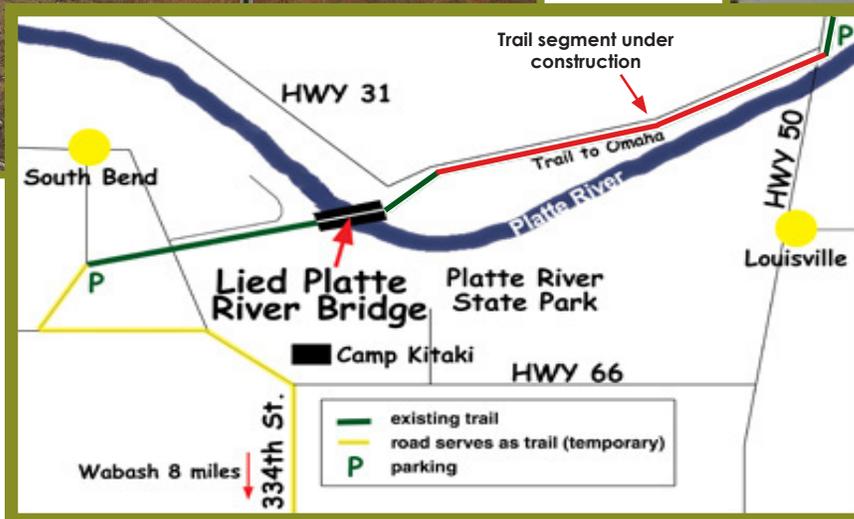
Gerry Bowen, Papio-Missouri River NRD

The construction of the portion of the Mopac Trail connecting the Lied Bridge with Nebraska Highway 50 will commence April 2nd, 2013. The 4.5 mile trail segment will connect to existing trails at both ends, making a finished trail between the Lied Bridge and Schramm Road in Sarpy County, a distance of approximately 11 miles. The trail is another link in the connection between Lincoln and Omaha. The project will cost \$2.7 million.

Elkhorn River Research Station Gets a New Partner

Alan Kolok, Nebraska Watershed Network

The Nebraska Watershed Network, in conjunction with the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance, is delighted to reveal architectural illustrations of the Platte River Research Station. The Station, located on the Lied Platte River Pedestrian Bridge just south of Schramm Park State Recreation Area and east of South Bend, will be used in research and outreach activities focusing on water quality within the Platte River. The Platte River Research Station joins the Elkhorn River Research Station as two highly visible mastheads for research and outreach within the region focusing on water issues. Construction is scheduled to begin this spring.



TOP, LEFT: The Mopac Trail will parallel Highway 31 on the south side of the roadway.

TOP, RIGHT: Depiction of the Platte River Research Station which will be located on the Lied Platte River Bridge. Picture courtesy of the Nebraska Watershed Network.

BOTTOM, RIGHT: Photo of the Lied Platte River Bridge near Platte River State Park. Photo courtesy of the Lower Platte South NRD.

MIDDLE, MAP: Location of the Lied Platte River Bridge, trail and parking near South Bend. Map courtesy of Lower Platte South NRD.



News Around the LPRCA

Climate Masters of Nebraska: Reducing Emissions & Building Community

Tonya Bernadt, National Drought Mitigation Center

Citizen volunteers taking the Climate Masters of Nebraska course early this year learned how they can work to reduce climate change. Besides the basics of climate change, class sessions focused on home energy, green building, renewables, transportation, water conservation and drought, consumption and waste, and yards and food, with field trips to the Bluff Road Landfill and to EcoStores Nebraska.

The goal of this project is to help the community become knowledgeable, make informed decisions, and take appropriate actions regarding climate change issues in order to help foster a resilient, sustainable environment. Specific measurable objectives to achieve this goal are: 1) Educate 50 volunteers from communities across southeast Nebraska regarding climate change through two Climate Masters programs. 2) Evaluate the overall program impact by measuring the level of increased awareness and reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by volunteers as a result of this program.

LEFT: Climate Masters talk with community members at the 2012 Lincoln Earth Day Event. Photo courtesy of the Climate Masters of Nebraska.

BELOW: "Farm Tour" - Climate Masters participants tour Robinette Farms in Martell, NE, a small scale, family owned farm. Photo courtesy of the Climate Masters of Nebraska.



Tonya Bernadt, the National Drought Mitigation Center's education and outreach specialist, is coordinating Climate Masters in cooperation with Natalie Umphlett, regional climatologist at the High Plains Regional Climate Center, and with Tapan Pathak, University of Nebraska-Lincoln climate extension educator. All three are based in UNL's School of Natural Resources. Climate Masters was made possible by a two year grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. Cleaner Greener Lincoln is the local partner. The first course was held in the spring of 2012 and 19 participants completed the course.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

News Around the LPRCA

'Climate Masters'

← CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Environmental stewardship is an integral part of the program. Community volunteers are required to make a voluntary commitment to make informed decisions and take actions to reduce their GHG emissions and report back to the organizers about their behavior changes. Through their time commitment and sharing of the knowledge that they have gained from the program, the Climate Masters volunteers are asked to influence community members to reduce their GHG emissions as well.

After completing the free course taught by a variety of experts from the Lincoln community, the volunteers provide 30 hours of climate education in community settings of their choosing. For example, after the first Climate Masters course in Lincoln last year, participants formed a local chapter of the Climate Citizens Lobby and did outreach at several educational events including Lincoln's Earth Day Event, Weatherfest, Vegfest, and Wildlife Encounters. One of the participant's also became involved in the Nebraska Product Stewardship Initiative.

Opportunities for this year's 30 volunteers include doing home consultations, waste assessments for businesses, facilitating discussions on choices related to sustainable living, planning and outreach for Lincoln's Earth Day event, and other creative activities.

The Climate Masters team hopes to receive additional funding to continue the course. Over the last two years the course has been very well received and is considered to be an important component of the effort to reduce the community's carbon footprint. The more Climate Masters courses held, the more people will learn about these valuable and simple ways to make our community cleaner for the future.

For more information about the Climate Masters of Nebraska, visit:

<http://climatemasters.unl.edu>

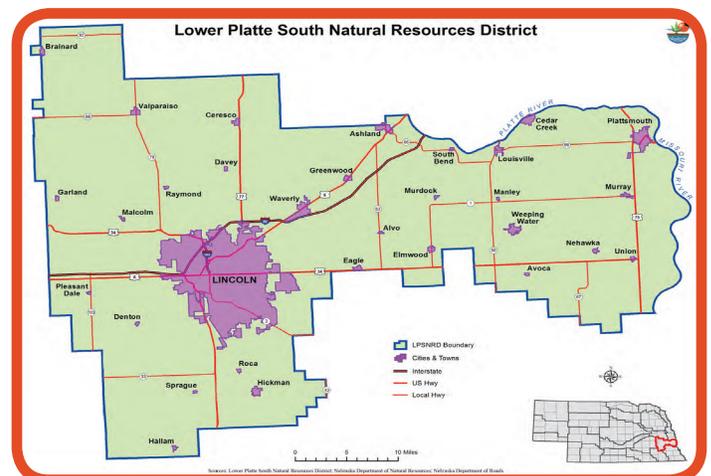
Lower Platte South Makes Progress on Voluntary IMP

Glenn Johnson, Lower Platte South NRD



The draft Goals and Objectives for the voluntary Integrated Management Plan for the Lower Platte South NRD are nearly completed and ready for the next round of reviews and public

input. These draft Goals and Objectives have been developed through an extensive, iterative process involving the NRD's Integrated Management Plan Subcommittee, the 20 member Stakeholder Advisory Committee, staff from the NE Department of Natural Resources and the LPSNRD, and public input through a Virtual Town Hall and other social media. The three Goal Areas include "Water Inventory," "Water Supply Management" and "Water Use Management." The next steps are to review these draft Goals and Objectives with our Agency Advisory Group for their input and then back to the Stakeholder Advisory Group, and then on to a Public Input Workshop and Open House. Meanwhile the IMP Subcommittee and the NRD/DNR staff will begin working on draft Action Steps and an outline for the initial Plan. The draft Integrated Management Plan is targeted for completion before the end of 2013.



For more information about the Integrated Management Plan, visit:

www.lpsnrd.org