



Lower Platte River  
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

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

### **LPRCA MEETING MINUTES**

**Friday, November 8, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.**

#### **Bi-Annual Meeting held at Lower Platte South NRD**

1. Welcome / Introductions: David Potter, Interim Coordinator, welcomed everyone and thanked the members for attending the meeting. Corridor Alliance member representatives in attendance included: Larry Vrtiska-National Guard, Amanda Grint-PMRNRD, Ian Ghanavati-PMRNRD, Jeff Fields-NG&P, Jim Swenson-NG&P, Shuhai Zheng-NeDNR, Ryan Chapman-LPNNRD, Brandon Beethe-LPNNRD, Katie Hickle-NDEE, Jessica Russell-NDEE, Tara Anderson-NDEE, Noah Hovorka-NDEE, Cydney Calhoun-NDEE, Dan Trotter-UNL, Dick Ehrman-LPSNRD, Mike Sousek-LPSNRD, and David Potter-LPSNRD. Others present included: Jennifer Swanson-NARD, Matt Moser-USGS, Dave Rus-USGS, Matt Pillard-HDR, and Gary Aldridge-LPSNRD Director. Invites were sent out to at least two individuals from each of the eight members/agencies of the Alliance, including the person that was authorized to sign any documents. An alternate was recommended to participate if one of the two individual reps could not attend. All eight Alliance members/agencies were represented at the meeting. The LPRCA meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. All those in attendance introduced themselves.
2. Agenda Review and Publication of Notice: A meeting notice was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on October 28, 2024. Potter reviewed the agenda.
3. Review of May 29, 2024, Meeting and Approval of meeting minutes: Minutes of the last meeting were distributed prior to the meeting, supplied at the meeting, and are posted on the LPRCA website. There were no additions, corrections, or objections. Minutes were approved by consensus. Minutes from the bi-annual meetings will continue to serve as the LPRCA newsletters/correspondence.
4. Current Membership, Dues, and Website: Potter identified the current Corridor Alliance membership consisting of eight agencies. Each of the eight agencies will be invoiced \$1,000 in December for dues and for their share in the streamgage agreements with USGS. The dues are deposited into the administrative fund and pay for the costs of ESRI, the website, and memberships. The LPRCA website has been updated with current meeting information and member representatives.
5. Financials/Budget Update: Potter discussed the current contract with esri and the licenses. It was determined that LPRCA could get by with two licenses instead of five. The new cost will be \$1,100 annually instead of \$2,750.
6. Current LPRCA and Related Activities/Projects
  - A. USGS streamgages/monitors - Leshara and three Long-Term Sites: Matt Moser provided an update on the current LPRCA-USGS streamgages. The agreements for the three long-term sites and Leshara will

expire in June 2025. The three long-term sites have been jointly funded by LPSNRD, PMRNRD and USGS. The Leshara gage is jointly funded by LPSNRD, LPNNRD, PMRNRD, LWS, and MUD, and also by USGS. The joint funding agreements with each agency are set to expire December 31, 2024. New agreements for another 3-year period will be considered by the participating agencies and by LPSNRD on behalf of the LPRCA. Moser updated the group on what data is being collected from the streamgages and when. Data from the gages at Leshara and the three long-term sites is usually collected April 1<sup>st</sup> through October 1<sup>st</sup>, and that monitoring has not been interrupted. The data collected dates back several years (Leshara since 2016 and three long-term sites since 2007). Moser discussed the flows, temperature, turbidity, etc. in the Platte River. He also announced that Casey Lee is the new USGS Director.

B. USGS Streamgage Trend Analysis Project Update: Moser provided an update on the two-year project. Potter stated NDEE provided a \$15K 319 grant and the other participating agencies entered into a joint funding agreement for a total of \$9,980 each. LPSNRD Board of Directors took formal action on the agreements at their June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting on behalf of LPRCA as per the interlocal agreement.

C. Update on current USGS cameras: The success of the Lower Platte River Camera project was discussed. These cameras have been funded by LPSNRD, LPNNRD, PMRNRD, Dodge County, City of Fremont, and USGS. The timelapse cameras located on various bridges over the Platte and Elkhorn Rivers continue to take photos every 15 minutes and help provide information on flows and ice jams. USGS coordinated the project and is conducting operations and maintenance. USGS will install another camera near Louisville on the Hwy 50 bridge before ice jam season and it will be funded by PMRNRD and LPSNRD.

D. LPRCA Water Quality Management Plan 5-Yr Update Status: The LPRCA WQMP was updated in house by PMRNRD, LPNNRD and LPSNRD and was approved by EPA on September 30, 2024. LPSNRD Board of Directors will consider approval of the WQMP Update on behalf of the LPRCA at their November board meeting. The 2024 Update can be found on the LPRCA website. The WQMP will need to be updated again in five years.

E. Water Quality Management Plan – 319 Targeted Project Updates: The only 319 project in the corridor being looked at is with PMRNRD. The Southern Sarpy/City of Springfield Water Quality Enhancement Project was approved by EPA in March 2023. The project is focused on a concentrated area around Springfield and does not involve any construction activities. Ghanavati stated that PMRNRD is working with NDEE to revise the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) to focus more on urban BMPs and less on agricultural BMPs due to the land transition in South Sarpy County. The PIP revision is taking too much time and will be cancelled. Chapman stated that there are currently no Section 319 projects under the LPRCA WQMP in LPNNRD.

## 7. Member Updates and Reports on Related Lower Platte River Corridor Activities and Projects

A. NeDNR Updates: Shuhai Zheng reported the Missouri River Study with USACE will be coming out in April or May 2025. The evaluation of the JEDI project (lake project near the Platte River) determined it would impact the Lincoln well field. Alternative sites identified include one in the Elkhorn River and one in Salt Creek through private-public partnership. The Nitrate Reduction Incentive Act to help producers reduce nitrogen use through practices and incentives will begin on January 15<sup>th</sup>. Zheng also mentioned the possible merger of NeDNR and NDEE.

B. Updates from UNL: Dan Trotter stated that UNL has partnered with LPSNRD and the City of Lincoln on the Deadmans Run project. UNL is still in the early stages of discussing the idea of a botanical garden/ tertiary wetlands/ urban watershed in the southeast corner of East Campus. This project is on hold and is based on the Deadmans Run project to some degree.

C. National Guard and Camp Ashland updates: Larry Vrtiska with the Guard provided an update on the activities and projects at Camp Ashland:

- Flood drill exercise and calling tree for notification
- Turner Lake culvert with USACE
- Project to handle pollinator habitat on the camp and training
- Alt-En clean-up is nearing end and clean up on military land
- Continued work with PMRNRD and USACE to allow training north of the camp

D. Game & Parks projects/updates – State Parks and Trails: Jeff Fields highlighted the Venture Parks project with four parks and 7-8 projects, including the interpretive canyon project. Celebrations will be held next year for completion. Construction is ongoing at Schramm State Recreation Area and river access for the canoe/kayak launch. There was a lot of wind damage to several of the parks. Two-River State Park got hit hard with Cottonwoods uprooted.

i. Lied-Platte River Bridge Tree Removal: Flooding caused debris buildup on the bridge and there was an incident with boaters. No injuries were reported but the 800 tons of debris needs to be removed. PMRNRD, LPSNRD, and Game & Parks partnered to complete the project. PMRNRD will go through the bidding process like was done in 2019. It should be bid out in November and completed in February 2025.

E. Papio-Missouri River NRD updates:

i. Hwy 34 Platte River Bridge Trail: The bridge trail is completed and open to use. The grand opening of the Platte River Bridge Trail was held on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The Bridge Trail project was Federally funded with 20% local match and PMRNRD, LPSNRD, Sarpy County, Cass County, Plattsmouth, Bellevue and others participating in the project. The trail portion is on the east side of the Hwy 34 bridge. The south terminus for this trail segment is Beach Road with possible plans to connect to Plattsmouth and, on the north, it's the levee.

ii. Platte River Railroad Obstruction: Amanda Grint updated the group on the existing Railroad obstruction issue in the Platte River. They reminded the group that back in 2019 the railroads constructed a causeway to make repairs from the flooding. The rock and soil, and now plant material, left in that location west of the Highway 34/75 bridge has caused an obstruction and the river to shift. PMRNRD, LPSNRD, Sarpy County and Cass County all have an interest in getting this corrected before major problems arise. PMRNRD worked with Nebraska Economic Development and received an award of CDBG disaster money up to \$7.1 million to do the work. The design engineering firm is Houston Engineering. PMRNRD received eight bids with Valley Corps being the lowest bid. All the material will come out and be placed in a borrow pit(s) on the north side of the river. The project should be completed in late spring 2025.

- F. Lower Platte South NRD updates:
- i. MoPac Connector: Mike Sousek stated that LPSNRD worked with JEO Consulting Group to conduct public meetings, examine alternative routes, analyze costs, and determine engineering needs for the trail connection. A route was selected and is planned to be approved by the Board on November 20<sup>th</sup> and an agreement with Cass County signed. Once approved, LPSNRD will look at selecting a consultant to do design and engineering. LPSNRD is utilizing the \$8.3 million granted to Nebraska Game and Parks by the Nebraska Legislature for the trail connection.
- G. Lower Platte North NRD updates: Ryan Chapman provided the following updates:
- Shell Creek Water Improvement Group continues to cost-share with producers to implement water quality BMPs related to E. Coli and atrazine surface water impairments and groundwater quality/quantity BMPs within Wellhead Protection areas.
  - Wolfe Jetty – just west of Schuyler that utilized JEDI funding is completed. Colfax county was the lead on that project.
  - Joint Water Management Advisory Board (Dodge County, LPNNRD, Fremont, North Bend, several diking and drainage districts)
    - North Bend Drainage Ditch – North Bend Drainage District plans to sign a contract with low bidder on November 11<sup>th</sup>. This project is still from the 2019 flood and uses FEMA funding to repair and improve the east bank.
    - North Bend Levee Elevation – City has secured easement from all remaining properties.
    - Rawhide Creek WFPO – plan is at the state awaiting NWMC submittal.
    - Dodge County Platte Township West Fremont – recently submitted a NOI to NEMA for funding to update and implement more stringent planning and zoning regulations in the floodplain.
    - Dodge County Elkhorn Township East Fremont – an NOI was submitted with plans to rescope the project into phases and focus on the middle portion due to feedback from FEMA on their last unsuccessful BRIC application that the monetary request was too large.
  - Skull and Bone Creek – NRCS WFPO program PIFR is finalized and going through NRCS
  - Wahoo Creek flood reduction dams – LPNNRD Board plans to sign the construction contract for the first three dams at the next board meeting on November 11<sup>th</sup>. The district will begin making offers for land rights on the final six structures beginning in December with construction anticipated to begin a year from now.
  - The district is beginning the process to repair Wanahoo from the May disaster utilizing FEMA assistance.
  - The Multi Hazard Mitigation Plan update is progressing and includes a drought mitigation plan that will focus on Community Public Water System assistance.

- Staffing: currently filling an assistant water manager position and have a SWP/NWQI position that closes on the 14<sup>th</sup>.
- The new office building is scheduled to be completed in May 2025. It will have a large conference room, and LPNNRD is more than happy to host public meetings in the future.

H. Updates from Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy: Tara Anderson and others from NDEE provided updates on various projects, activities, and staffing.

- Thad Finneran's last day was Sept 30<sup>th</sup>, and the interim Director is Kara Valentine. She is the Deputy Director for our monitoring, compliance, planning and aid sections.
- Last week NDEE learned that the Governor has asked NDEE and DNR to review the steps necessary to merge. Currently just a concept. This will take a legislative effort so the Depts. are reviewing what exactly will be necessary. It's in the very beginning stages of review and we have no other information.
- The NDEE / UNL liaison position is open on the UNL website (Katie Pekarek's old job) <https://employment.unl.edu/postings/94189>
- Cydney Calhoun is our new 401 coordinator.
- Sean Kruse has taken the Source Water Program Coordinator position. Invitation for proposals is released in Spring 2025 (March or potentially earlier)
- Basin Rotation completed at the end of Sept. Next May will begin in the Loup Basins and Middle Platte.
- Beach watch sampling also completed at the end of Sept. (56 beaches at 51 lakes). Interesting to note NDEE only had 16 health alerts this year compared to 26 last year. Some of the other R5 and R7 saw a similar trend.
- NDEE team has completed the nitrate study and are in final reviews. Hoping to be able to release soon.
- Received 319 award for 2024 from EPA – doing another request for NOI in January.
- 319 is working with EPA and Tetra Tech to develop a natural emergency response plan – to be able to use 319 funds in response to a natural disaster / after an emergency declaration. The plan will be part of the State Management Plan.
- Surface Water Monitoring Council will meet in April 2025 and they're always looking for presenters.

I. Other: No additional reports were given.

## 8. Future Projects/Studies:

A. Lower Platte River Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Comprehensive Study – update/status: This congressional study dates back several years. The three NRDs still have interest in the project however, there has been no activity with the potential study since a letter of intent and continued interest was sent to USACE on March 14, 2024. This project is estimated to be a three-million-dollar study with \$1.5 million local and \$1.5 million USACE.

B. Discussion of any other possible projects for LPRCA: Potter again thanked the agencies for attending the meeting and acknowledged the benefit of continuing the Alliance for any upcoming issues or additional projects. There was discussion of going back to doing more projects on the river, ie. bridge piling removal.

There was also discussion on having a full-time or part-time coordinator to help with the LPRCA meetings and projects and where such a person could be located.

9. Schedule/Plan Next Meeting: The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 2025. A doodle poll will likely be sent to the members to determine the best date to have a meeting.
10. Comments, Questions, General Discussion, Adjournment: With no further questions or comments, the meeting ended at approximately 12:15 p.m.

Submitted by: David Potter, Assistant General Manager LPSNRD and Interim LPRCA Coordinator