



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

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

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Monthly Report for June 2016

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Water Sustainability Fund Proposals

BMP Tool

In June I started work with Jennifer Swanson of NARD on a small project grant application to the Water Sustainability Fund. Jennifer and I have been working on this potential project since the development of the LPRCA Watershed Management plan. The proposed project would utilize our watershed management plan, LiDAR collected for the watersheds, and other water quality information to develop a GIS-based best management practice tool. The project builds upon similar successful work in Minnesota. The tool would allow NRDs, NRCS, NDEQ and others to evaluate where and what BMPs to place at a field level to achieve reductions of nutrient or other contaminant loadings. NARD is partnering with the LPRCA in the hopes that the tool that would be piloted in one or two of the LPR watersheds could be used as template to expand the tool across the state.

NEWBA Watershed Partnership Project

Throughout the past several months, I have been working with a group of individuals from across the state engaged in water management on a local or watershed level scale. The group has primarily been facilitated by board members of the Nebraska Water Balance Alliance (NEWBA). The group is working on expanding from the model of the Western Nebraska Irrigation Project initiated by the Nature Conservancy, Coca-Cola, local landowners, and NEWBA two years ago into additional and diverse landscapes across the state. The goal of that project is to utilize on-farm technology to achieve and monitor water savings, nutrient management/water quality and other key ecosystem or watershed parameters. Importantly that project facilitates field days and other “peer networks” to increase understanding of the technology and management as well as communicate the outcomes of the project. Additionally, private funds from, in that case, Coca Cola have been utilized to provide cost-share on the technology or conservation practices, monitoring equipment, and also funded the field days. The current effort would again expand that model into six additional landscapes/watersheds. I have been engaged with them regarding potential funds for the project work in the Lower Platte watershed. They have begun to receive some levels of commitment from commodity groups and private industry. They are also working on funding applications which I have been assisting with. The details are still being fleshed out but there will certainly be more to come on this effort.

Lower Platte River Recreation Planning & Education

Several meetings occurred during June regarding the Lower Platte River Recreation plan implementation and related issues. We held a stakeholder advisory group meeting at Mahoney State Park. The advisory group discussed some of the outcomes of the series of public meetings, additional or upcoming meetings such as targeted meetings with search and rescue officials and other user groups, potential access site development, initial details of a map (hard copy and online) that provide information about appropriate

use, private property concerns and other key informational or educational messages. Other topics discussed included way-finders or mile markers as well as the initial discussion of the development of a “Friends of the Platte” group to help connect communities and recreationists together, potentially raise funds, and ensure that educational messaging can be diffused even easier.

A second meeting in June was held between the three NRD managers/assistant managers, me and NGPC Parks and Planning and Programs Division Staff. NGPC staff went into some details from their Venture Parks initiative about plans for Platte River State Park, Schramm State Park and Louisville State Recreation Area with particular attention on the paddle and motorized boat access plans. Additionally we discussed increasing or ensuring there is adequate access for search and rescue personnel, potential partnerships with new access areas near Highway 79 and near Ashland. A major topic was also partnering to develop and deploy wayfinding signs and/or mile markers along the Elkhorn and Platte Rivers. The LPRCA will be coordinating with NGPC to get that effort moving in the next few months. We also intend to have targeted meetings with search and rescue personnel as well as several other requests for meetings or presentations with community groups.

I also spent a good portion of a day in late June with a landowner near Columbus who had attended two the informational public meetings earlier this year. He had invited me to come see his concerns primarily around ATV and vehicle use and access along the Lower Platte and Lower Loup. I will be meeting with some other individuals who have been working on this issue with him in mid-July.

Nebraska Land Trust Open House

I assisted the Nebraska Land Trust with an open house in June. The Open house targeted landowners in the Platte Valley. NLT is hoping to apply for a grant to pursue additional agricultural easements in the Lower Platte Valley. We will be assisting them with some additional outreach in the months to come.

Events

The Kayak Tour, was originally scheduled for June 7th, but due to high flows we postponed the tour until July 19th. The tour will feature presentations from the LPRCA, NGPC, the Lower Platte Weed Management Area, the Nebraska Watershed Network, the Nebraska Land Trust and USGS. We continue to watch river levels as the tour approaches but hope that we will be able to have a great and educational day out on the river.

The Water Quality Open is scheduled for Thursday, August 25th at Quarry Oaks Golf Course. Dr. Elizabeth VanWormer of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Natural Resources will provide the keynote presentation. Her presentation is titled, “We all live downstream: water quality and the health of people, animals and ecosystems. Dr. VanWormer is a veterinarian and wildlife epidemiologist who focuses on the interaction between humans, wildlife and domestic animals with regards to health and environmental stresses. The keynote presentation begins at 10 a.m. with the golf and educational displays on the course starting at noon. If you would like to attend the presentation but do not want to play golf, please let me know.

We also continued planning the Lower Platte River Summit scheduled for Tuesday, October 25th in Schuyler at the Oak Ballroom. Additionally we continue to discuss additional speakers for a panel discussion, tour stops and other potentially interactive aspects of the Summit. More details soon!

Upcoming Events:

LPRCA Kayak Tour, July 19, 2016. *The LPRCA Kayak Tour has been included as a “Find your Park” event as part of the National Park Service Centennial celebration.*

NARD Blue River Basin Tour: June 13-14

Quarterly Meeting: August 9th, 9:00 a.m. TBD

Water Quality Open: August 25th. Quarry Oaks Golf Course

Nebraska Water Center Symposium. October 20th. UNL Innovation Campus.

LPR Summit: October 25th, Oak Ballroom, Schuyler