



Lower Platte River
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

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

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Monthly Report for March 2012

Meghan Sittler, Coordinator

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The contract with Lukas Partners to conduct the public opinion survey was approved by LPSNRD in March. I worked with Lukas Partners during the latter part of March on survey revisions, focus group locations and invitees. The survey instrument should be finalized during the early part of April. Lukas Partners will then begin the telephone survey during the last week or so of April. The focus groups will also begin to be scheduled and conducted most likely during early May. There will be three focus groups of residents and stakeholders of the Lower Platte River Corridor and a fourth that will focus on public officials of the cities, counties and other entities within the Corridor. Water Quality and supply, recreation, development and general awareness of the LPRCA and its partners will be the primary focus for the survey. I look forward to the results and to using that information to help all of the LPRCA members and the LPRCA has a whole shape our message and programs going forward.

Thermal Imagery for Nonpoint Source Pollution Detection

As you all have undoubtedly noticed we had either a really extended “early fall” or a really early spring/summer and have had unusually warm weather for the greater part of the past 2-3 months. While that warm weather has been enjoyable for outdoor activities, it did cause some unexpected changes to the schedule for the flights of the lower Platte by CALMIT. CALMIT is currently in process of doing the initial tests for the flight that will cover the lower Platte River—50 feet onto the bank and 50 feet into the river—and will conduct the official flight most likely during the first week of April. The flight that will cover the three housing area will now be moved to most likely October or as soon as the soil temperatures fall back to well under 50 degrees F. The soil temperature needs to be cooler to detect any warm water discharge areas in the housing areas or areas off river. We will have the data from the flight of the river available in June and will provide NDEQ with an interim report at that time and then finish the flight effort and final report in the fall.

River Obstruction Removal

In March, Don Day (Olsson Associates), Gerry Bowen (P-MRNRD) and I met via conference call with the Corps of Engineers and USFWS to review a potential redesign option for the obstruction removal near Two River State Recreation Area. While we continue to be pleased that both USACE and USFWS remain at the table, we are still defining the parameters of the “permissible” design and the options remain quite costly. Olsson Associates is currently working to address some of the concerns or points of consideration raised on the call. We will plan to share the notes from the call and potential changes to the design with the NRDs and LPRCA members before deciding what the next step may be and what is feasible.

Events

It’s the time of year again, when much of my focus turns to planning the Kayak Tour, Water Quality Open and this year, the return of the LPRCA Summit. We’ll again plan to hold the Kayak Tour in July. This year we are considering expanding the tour to two separate floats on two days based on the large interest

we have had and continue to have in the Kayak Tour. I am currently discussing this option with NGPC and will discuss it with the LPRCA membership on April 19th at the Quarterly Meeting. We are still finalizing the date or dates with NGPC but will have the date(s) settled before the Quarterly meeting. Look for a save the date card soon after that!

In March, NEBCO agreed to continue their sponsorship and underwriting of the LPRCA Water Quality Open for three more years. The event will be held on Thursday, August 30th at Quarry Oaks, near South Bend. Quarry Oaks is obviously a top-notch facility and working with them and NEBCO has been a very successful partnership. I'm excited to continue our work together. Look for more details on registration and the day's events soon.

This year we are also planning the Lower Platte River Summit. I am planning to hold the event near Fremont and the date has tentatively been set for Thursday October 18th. I have assembled a steering committee to help me with the planning of the event. A huge thank you already goes out to John Schmitz (Fremont Parks & Rec), Matt Pillard (HDR), Jana Sittler Hafer (NE Land Trust), and Pat O'Brien (NDEQ/NARD) for agreeing to serve on the steering committee. We will be meeting in early April to fully kick off the planning of the event but things have already started fast and furious. I look forward to another great day focusing on the many efforts and issues within the Lower Platte River Corridor. Look for more details soon!

Washington DC

In March I spent what seemed like a good deal of the month in Washington DC. First at the annual NARD Washington DC Conference; this was once again a great opportunity to hear from the headquarters of many agencies and organizations on both funding and programmatic issues. Additionally, we were able to spend part of a day on a tour of historic sites and a battlefield in Fredricksburg, VA. The second trip was for meetings with the Nebraska Congressional Delegation and the Corps of Engineers. We also had a great "roundtable discussion" with the Corps of Engineers, EPA, USGS and NRCS on the Lower Platte River Watershed Restoration program. While funding remains tight and the legislative process remains "muddled" at best, the roundtable provided optimism on some new or expanded partnerships and perhaps avenues forward. So while both trips were very positive, I still have not seen the Cherry Blossoms as we missed them by about 1 day on either side.

Upcoming Events:

LPRCA Quarterly Meeting: April 19th, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at NDEQ's Van Dorn Facility, 2717 South 8th, Ste 4 (South side of Bldg), Lincoln, NE

River Management Society Symposium: April 23-27, 2012, Asheville, NC

LPRCA Coffee Shop meeting: May 2, 2012, Gretna

Water for Food Conference: May 30-June 1, Lincoln

NARD Basin Tour of the Lower Platte: June 11-12

LPRCA Kayak Tour: July, TBD

UNL Water Tour: July 17-20, Missouri River

LPRCA Water Quality Open: August 30, Quarry Oaks

LPRCA Summit: October 18, 2012