



From the Coordinator...

Monthly Report for the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the Month of March 2007

Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

A few words from the Coordinator: It's going on four years April 14th since I started in this position with the LPRCA and it has been both rewarding and challenging. I feel the LPRCA has made tremendous strides in providing information and facilitating cooperative ventures between stakeholders. A few highlights of the past four years include: development of the River Obstruction Removal Program (12 projects); delivery of the Water Wellness Awareness Program; continuation of our Airboat Tour and Water Quality Open Golf Tourney; and successfully holding the first ever LPRCA River Summit - - just to name a few. I want to thank all of you who have helped the LPRCA to achieve so many milestones. It truly takes cooperation to manage and protect a large and diverse area such as the Lower Platte River Corridor.

NEXT LPRCA MEETING

Tuesday, April 24th, 2007 * 9:30 am to noon * Valley, NE

The LPRCA will be holding a quarterly meeting on Tuesday, April 24th, 2007 at the City of Valley Office Building located at 203 N. Spruce Street. The meeting begins at 9:30 am and will be finished before noon. Our featured educational program will be the City of Valley talking about their wastewater and water systems. Other topics include: FY08 Budget, PHASE II of the Camp Ashland River Obstruction Removal Project, the Environmental Sustainability Assessment Project (formerly Environmentally Carrying Capacity Project), the NE Innovation Zone Commission, and updates on several other projects

FEATURED ACTIVITY

TMDL Presentation & Discussion

This past Friday, the LPRCA hosted a presentation and discussion on proposed Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for E. coli in the Lower Platte River Basin. Seven stream segments in the Lower Platte River Basin have been shown to have elevated levels of E. coli and associated harmful bacteria that can limit contact recreational activities (wading, swimming, etc). The federal Clean Water Act requires that NDEQ develop TMDLs for specific pollutants when criteria are met such as the case with limited contact recreational in the Lower Platte River Basin. Pat O'Brien with NDEQ gave a great presentation on the TMDL process and outlined remaining steps to develop the TMDLs. Communities, counties, or other entities wanting to review the draft TMDLs need to contact Pat or Dick Ehrman with the NARD and submit comments prior to July 1, 2007. There will be public meetings later this summer before the TMDLs are finalized. Pat O'Brien can be reached via e-mail at patrick.obrien@ndeq.ne.gov and Dick Ehrman can be reached at dehrman@nrdnet.org.

PROGRAMS / PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES - Updates

Water Quality Monitoring Network. The program should be kicking off this month (April) with installation of two sampling sondes (sensors) on the stream gage near Louisville and one on the Elkhorn River near Waterloo. Sampling will start soon thereafter and continue through September. Plans are to expand the program next year by moving upstream.

Projects for UN-L Honors Water Class. I mentioned last month that I've been assisting students from a UNL honors water class to develop projects related to Lower Platte River Corridor issues such as development, public awareness, and water quality. The students will hopefully gain some real world experience with pertinent issues and we will gain some valuable feedback and analysis of needs in the basin. To date, I've corresponded and/or met with 6 students developing project ideas.

PROGRAMS / PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES - Updates

Environmental Suitability Assessment (ESA) Project. This is the new name of the Environmental Carrying Capacity Study. As we began to scope out PHASE II of this project, we realized that "environmental carrying capacity" has a very specific meaning and did not reflect what we were really doing - - assessing environmentally constrained/sensitive areas. Thus, we renamed the study to better reflect that idea. The tasks and deliverable - a GIS and Reference Document - remain the same. We continue to work with the NE Innovation Zone Commission (NIZC) to develop a partnership to carry out this project, but are also continuing to move forward as we have not formalized this partnership nor identified additional funding to assist. Hopes are to fold our effort into the NIZC's effort to develop a regional economic development plan to ensure environmental issues are considered. We will also focus on the Fremont to Plattsmouth area for this phase and capture the upper "tail" in future phases.

NE Natural Legacy Plan. Representatives of the LPRCA met with NG&PC recently to discuss how we can cooperatively implement the NE Natural Legacy Plan (NNLP). This plan is a blueprint for assessing, managing, and protecting We've discussed housing a coordinating biologist to assist this effort and focus on habitat issues by assisting landowners and other willing partners. Funds for this position would come from NE State Wildlife Grant Program funds and a NE Environmental Trust Fund grant. No dollars would be required from the LPRCA, only in-kind contributions. This unique arrangement is still being discussed but there seems to be support by LPRCA members to move forward.

Earth Wellness Festival (EWF). In March, I helped with the LPSNRD's Earth Wellness Festival (EWF). This two-day educational program is geared to help 5th graders from the LPSNRD area learn about natural resources in a fun and interactive way. Along with Shaula Ross, LPSNRD GIS Specialist and former LPNNRD employee, I delivered the "Flatwater Plinko" game. Similar to the plinko game seen on *The Price is Right*, students roll a ball through a board of randomly-spaced pegs into baskets at the bottom, each with a different point value. Teams of students then try to answer river and water questions to earn those points. Here's an example of a question - - see if you know the answer: What is the longest river in the world: a) Amazon b) Congo c) Yangtze d) Nile e) Mississippi? ANSWER - Nile. The Amazon does however move the largest volume of water.

UNL Water Law, Science, and Policy Conference. March 26 & 27 were the dates of the annual UNL Water Law, Science, Science, and Policy Conference. One of the most interesting topics this year was the ethanol industry and the movement to produce this alternative fuel. There were many different sessions focusing on this topic and many pointed out that we really have not fully identified the direct and indirect impacts of increased ethanol production - both good and bad. Increased ethanol production certainly have a major beneficial impact on our dependence on foreign oil, but the demand for resources (water, land, nutrients) could offset that benefit. Additionally, one by-product of ethanol production is distiller's grains. These can be feed to cattle, so often, ethanol plants are located near feedlots. Although this is a great benefit, these grains also have concentrated amounts of nutrients and can build up in cattle manure. This could lead to more nutrients finding its way into the soil and groundwater when the manure is spread. As we produce more ethanol and subsequently more distillers' grains, we assumedly will feed more cattle, which will produce more manure. This will require more area to spread it on. Many of these anticipated results have not yet been realized and may never be, but many of the researchers at the conference were pointing out that we need to proceed with some caution, analysis, and planning so our ethanol solution does not become a problem in itself.

REMINDER - - Important Events Coming Up

WQ Open Golf Tourney. Wednesday, Sept 5th, 2007 * Quarry Oaks Golf Course * 10:00 am presentation by UNL Professor Roch Gaussoin on turfgrass, water conservation, and water quality issues related to golf courses and lawns * 12:30 tee-off * Cost will be \$65/person including all fees and a burger/brat buffet. This year, I want to feature the "8 Reasons to Protect the Lower Platte River" by having one demo for each reason on various tees.

Airboat Tour. Friday, July 20th, 2007 * 9:00 am start time * Touring the lower stretch from Hwy 50 to the confluence with the MO River. Besides several stops, we will take an extensive tour of Schilling WMA. Details will be posted on our website at www.lowerplatte.org.

Upcoming/Recent Meetings & Events

LPNNRD Board of Directors Meeting - Thursday, April 9th, 2007 * 7:00 p.m. * LPNNRD Office - 511 Commercial Road * Wahoo.

P-MRNRD Board of Directors Meeting - Thursday, April 12th, 2007 * 8:00 p.m. * Nat. Res. Center 8901 S. 154th St. * Omaha

LPSNRD Board of Directors Meeting - Wednesday April 18th, 2007 * 7:00 p.m. * 3125 Portia Street * Lincoln.

LPRCA Quarterly Meeting - April 24th, 2007 * 9:30 a.m. - noon * Valley City Office * 230 N Spruce * Valley **NOTE NEW LOCATION !**