



## From the Coordinator...

**\*Monthly Report for the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the Month of May 2005\***

**Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator**

### **LPRCA Quarterly Meeting**

May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2005 was the date for the last LPRCA quarterly meeting, which was held at the PMRNRD near Omaha. With a full agenda, the LPRCA tackled several important issues including approval of the FY06 budget, several presentations ranging from invasive species to land protection, concerns from the public on development in Sarpy County, upcoming airboat tours and the WQ Open, fundraising ideas, and establishment of committees. This was all in addition to updates on several projects just getting underway - Environmental Carrying Capacity Project, Cumulative Impact Study, and the River Obstruction Removal Project. Minutes will be available shortly on our website at [www.lowerplatte.org](http://www.lowerplatte.org).

**Airboat Tours** Two tours scheduled this year:

- (1) **July 15<sup>th</sup>** - - *For Local Officials*. We will be touring the portion of the river from Fremont to Ashland. Details are still being worked out but topics tentatively include municipal well fields, W. Sarpy/Clear Creek project, pallid sturgeon study, LB 962 - Integrated Surface/Groundwater law, and others as determined.
- (2) **July 29<sup>th</sup>** - - *Open to Everyone*. This tour will be similar in format to past tours and will cover the Fremont to Schuyler area of the Platte River. Again details are still being worked out, but potential topics include river obstructions, geology/bluffs, LB 962, FEMA floodplain maps, Dept of Roads projects, and others as determined. We will be limiting this tour to a maximum of two people per organization since we will only have around 35 seats.

**Cumulative Impact Study (CIS)** Hopefully, we will finalize the scope of work at an upcoming June 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting at the LPSNRD office. Presently, we are looking into a 1950's time step and considering the USGS Hydrology Study proposal. We have also been doing some research into the 1880's transect data and whether or not it is sufficient for our purposes.

**River Obstruction Project** Met recently with our consultant and hope to work out a service agreement with intentions to begin bidding late this fall and commencing the project this coming winter. We received some positive publicity recently in the Lincoln Journal-Star newspaper with an article and editorial. I also received a phone call from the Nebraska Airboaters Association thanking us for moving forward on the project.

**Environmental Carrying Capacity Project** We are currently working on a letter to send to stakeholders regarding this project and soliciting their help in getting information. We are still working for a June 30<sup>th</sup> deadline for completion of Phase I - info gathering and map development.

**Land Use Planning Issues** There seems to be a lot of activity recently in the area of land use planning and development. LB 546 was signed by the Governor and establishes the **Eastern Nebraska Innovation Zone Commission** to look into economic development between Lincoln and Omaha. This advisory board can facilitate the establishment of "innovation zones" to encourage economic development in a targeted area. The **60-Mile Radius Study** received another three years of funding to implement land use planning suggestions that were developed in the first three-year portion of the study. This study also focuses on the Omaha to Lincoln area. **Sarpy County is amending their comprehensive plan** and next Tuesday will be amending their current zoning rules and regulations allowing for smaller acreage developments in the "Bluffs Region" of southwestern Sarpy County. The comprehensive plan process is being conducted in conjunction with an infrastructure feasibility study spearheaded by Sarpy County as well as other partners including the PMRNRD. I have had some concerned citizens in Sarpy County contact the LPRCA and ask for assistance in protecting the agricultural lands, green spaces, and bluffs of the region from hastened development. Word is that **Douglas County** will also be amending their comprehensive plan soon. We can't forget our very own Environmental Carrying Capacity Study just underway.

### **Next LPRCA Quarterly Meeting**

**Tuesday, August 16th, 2005  
9:30 a.m. \* PMRNRD**

**Agenda will be available on-line  
at [www.lowerplatte.org](http://www.lowerplatte.org)**

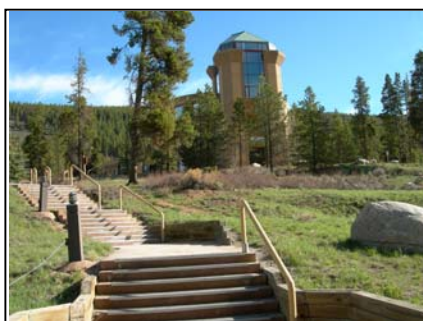
**Highway 92 Bridge Construction** If you haven't been out east of Wahoo lately, you may not be aware of the latest construction to replace the Hwy 92 bridge. Looking at the construction, the new bridge appears to be elevated and north of the existing bridge.

**LB 546 - Opportunity Zone Act** LB 546 - the Opportunity Zone Act was signed by the Governor into law on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005. This bill creates an "Innovation Zone Commission" to explore and stimulate economic development between Omaha and Lincoln. It also sets up the authority to establish "opportunity zones" for those areas targeted for economic development. The commission serves in an advisory capacity and two of the nineteen members are NRDs from the corridor - the LPSNRD and the PMRNRD. The bill takes effect three calendar months after this legislative session ended and will sunset at the end of 2010.

**River Rally 2005** I recently attended the 2005 River Network's River Rally in Keystone Colorado from May 20 - 24, 2005. Yes, what an awful location for a conference with the backdrop of snowcapped mountains, fresh mountain air, beautiful streams, abundant wildlife, and 70 degree weather. This is the second time I have attended this rally and again it was full of interesting presentations, fundraising seminars, topical issues (some controversial), camaraderie, and a genuine opportunity for me as a river manager to mingle and exchange ideas and stories with others in my field. On Sunday of the conference, we had the opportunity to take a field trip and see firsthand some watershed restoration projects.



Keystone Resort - My view every morning

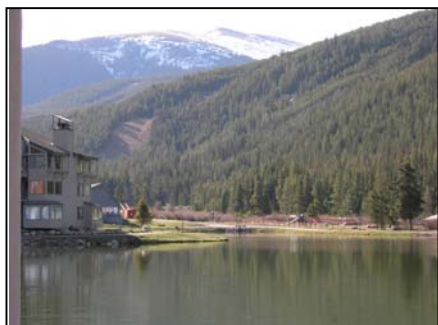


Conference Center



Keystone Ski Slopes in Background

I chose a variety of sessions to attend rather than sticking to just one track as I did last year when I was certified in watershed assessment by the Center for Watershed Protection. I attended the following sessions: SATURDAY - Creating Less Stupid Growth, Hybrid & Quasi-Governmental Watershed Groups, and Grant-writing for the Small Shop; SUNDAY - Funders Forum Panel, Field Trip to see several restoration projects on the Blue River; MONDAY - How to Ask for a Major Gift and Preventing the Impacts of New Development. I departed 5:15 a.m. on Tuesday. Although the area was so beautiful, I was happy to return to a lower altitude since Keystone is at 9,000 feet above sea level. Several speakers and many participants were literally breathless from the thinner air. After a few days, I was finally getting used to it and then it was time to return.



View of Mountains Near Keystone



Restored Section of Blue River  
Through Former Mining Area



Discussing Water Clean-up at Former Wellington  
Mine - Site of largest gold nugget found in US

## Upcoming/Recent Meetings and Activities

- **PMRNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, June 10th, 2005 \* 8:00 p.m. - PMRNRD Office at the Nat Res Center -Chalco Hills Rec Area - Omaha
- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Monday, June 13th, 2005 \* 7:00 p.m. - LPNNRD Office - 311 Commercial Park in Wahoo
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, June 22nd, 2005 \* 6:00 p.m. - LPSNRD Office - Lincoln @ 285 S. 68<sup>th</sup> Street Place, Suite 200 - - The former Gallup Bldg near Shopko.
- **LPRCA Quarterly Meeting** - Tues, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2005 \* 9:30 a.m. - PMRNRD Office at the Nat Res Center -Chalco Hills Rec Area - Omaha