



from the Coordinator...

Monthly Report from the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the period of APRIL 1 through APRIL 30, 2004

Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator

LPRCA Quarterly Meeting – Held on Tuesday, April 27th, 2004

The Alliance met on April 27th for the spring quarterly meeting. There was a good turnout and several important LPRCA financial and planning issues were discussed. Alliance members reviewed the proposed budget for FY05 and gave it a consensus approval as a guiding document. The overall proposed FY05 budget is \$150,500. Contributions requested from each of the 3 NRD's is \$29,000 (4.7% increase over FY04) and for each of the 6 state entities it is \$5,416.67 (no increase over FY04). The Alliance gave approval to affiliate with the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF) pending approval from the 3 NRD boards. This affiliation would allow the LPRCA to use the umbrella nonprofit status of the NCF and accept grants and donations. Projects included in the budget for FY06 include the airboat tour, Water Quality Open golf tourney, continuation of the Water Wellness meetings, continuation of the environmental carrying capacity study, creation of a GIS for the LPRCA, floodplain map informational meetings, and commencement of the river obstructions removal project. The next LPRCA meeting will be held at the PMRNRD in Omaha on Tuesday, August 17th, 2004 starting at 9:30 a.m.

Cumulative Impact Study Meeting The CIS group met following the LPRCA quarterly meeting on April 27th. One of the major topics to discuss was whether or not to apply for an EPA Regional Geographic Initiative grant. This 100% costshare grant has several specific areas that can be funded, but the area that matches the CIS efforts is the "sensitive ecosystem" area. UN-L is willing to take the lead at this time, since a pre-proposal needs to be in by May 25th, 2004 and they could write up the application by that deadline. The other CIS partners may not have time to approach their respective boards by that time. However, the CIS grants committee, who discussed this possibility prior to the meeting, wanted consensus from the group before giving UN-L the green light to proceed. The CIS group gave approval to continue and asked each CIS partner for a letter of support. It was stressed that this letter of support did not obligate any CIS partner to anything including money or time. If the pre-proposal is accepted by EPA then we would be invited to write up a full proposal. Last year, no one from our region even applied and after checking with the EPA, it sounded as though the data acquisition part of the CIS would fit well with the grant purpose. The GIS group also discussed what time steps to look at for the GIS. They settled on 1880's transect data, 1936 aerial photos (need to digitize), some time in the 1970's (depending upon photo/data availability), one from the 1990's and then either the 2003 color photos or have the river flown in 2004 or 2005. For the EPA grant, the group thought we would ask for around \$50,000 to \$100,000 to cover costs of data acquisition for the 1880's transects and the 2003 photos or a new flyover this year. CIS partners will be sent a suggested support letter they can use or change as desired.

Water Wellness Workshops/Meetings Although the first meeting was held this past Saturday, May 8th, I wanted to include a little bit in the April report. After a little delay getting the facility open, we finally got set-up and held the official kick-off "Water Wellness" meeting. We had a small turnout with mostly NRD personnel, and other agency folks. We picked the nicest day of the year to hold an indoor meeting - who knows what to expect for weather in Nebraska. However, one attendee was a reporter from the Papillion Times newspaper and he took quite a few notes. Hopefully, we will get some good coverage from it. With a small crowd, we were able to run through the program as a group for the first time and get some good suggestions from attendees. The next meeting is Wednesday, May 12th at Maria's Lighthouse Tavern in Cedar Creek starting at 6:30 p.m. They are rumored to have pretty good Mexican food. We can still use your help in promoting the meetings. If you know if anyone who might benefit from learning a little more about their septic system and private well, please invite them to a future meeting. I can also send an invitation if you send me contact information. Also, we did get word that we will be receiving a \$4,000 NDEQ 319-mini grant to help with this program.

National Association of Recreational Resource Planners (NARRP) Conference Coming up on May 16th-20th. As a reminder, I will be assisting the PMRNRD on several tours of area trails and a classroom presentation for the NARRP Conference to be held in Omaha. I am putting the finishing touches on a PowerPoint presentation and a poster on the Lied Bridge. Just to make sure I had firsthand knowledge of the fishing capabilities of the bridge, I took the opportunity to catch several small catfish off the bridge this weekend. Gerry Bowen of the PMRNRD and I will be taking a preliminary tour on Tuesday to prepare for the conference tours we will be leading.

Spring Sensation I participated in the LPNNRD's "Spring Sensation" on Wednesday, May 5th (Cinco de Mayo). This educational program is annually held at Czechland Lake near Prague and involves a variety of activities and games for kids to learn about the natural environment. This year, I once again helped with the "fishing" activity in which kids learn to tie fishing knots and look at different fishing lures. It was a great day with a great turnout.

Corridor Connections The spring /summer edition of "Corridor Connections" is in the works and I am looking for submissions related to LPRCA or partner activities and projects. Please feel free to contact me or e-mail ideas to rverhoeff@lpsnrd.org.

Airboat Tour It is official - - the date of the airboat tour this year is (drumroll, please).....**Friday, July 23rd** starting at 9:00 a.m. for check-in. Exact details are still in the works, but will be looking at the stretch from around Ashland to Plattsmouth. I AM LOOKING FOR TOUR STOP IDEAS. Please submit any ideas to me ASAP.

River Rally 2004 I will be attending the River Alliance's "River Rally 2004" in Wintergreen, Virginia from May 21 to May 25, 2004. This conference will focus heavily on building healthier watersheds through grassroots effort. Topics include: Watershed Protection, Assessing the Impacts of Growth, Conserving Natural Areas, Sourcewater Protection, Ecosystem Flow Prescriptions, Basics of Land Development, Changing Development Rules in Your Community, Assessing Watershed Health, and Looking at Behaviors of Watershed Residents. I'll have a detailed report when I return.

Brochure I have the second proof of the brochure and we are making a few changes to the text and layout. Hopefully, I will have a final proof for review soon and then we should have finished copies by the end of this month. The new brochure is dramatically different in layout and will certainly get attention sitting on a brochure rack.

Sand Creek PCA On April 22nd, the Project Cooperative Agreement (PCA) for the Sand Creek (Lake Wanahoo Project) was signed between the LPNNRD and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in a nice ceremony held at the NRD. With this signing, the project can continue to move forward and hopefully the federal Office of Budget and Management (OMB) will release some of the appropriated funds. The 3 NRDs and our legal counsel in D.C., Bob Weaver, have worked very hard through various correspondence and meetings with COE, OMB, and our Congressional Delegation to get the PCA's for all three feasibility study projects signed. See the LPNNRD's website at www.lpsnrd.org for a recent newspaper article on this PCA signing.

Upcoming NRD and Alliance Meetings:

- **NEXT LPRCA QUARTERLY MEETING** - Tuesday, August 17th, 2004* 9:30 a.m. * PMRNRD Office at Chalco Hills Rec. Area near Omaha.
- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Monday, May 10th, 2004 * 7:00 p.m. - Saunders County Fairgrounds in Wahoo
- **PMRNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, May 13th, 2004 * 8:00 p.m. - Omaha @ Chalco Hills Rec. Area
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, May 19th, 2004 * 7:00 p.m. - Lincoln @ 3125 Portia Street

Future Meetings - Meetings and Events in the Not-So-Distant Future:

- **60-Mile Radius Committee** - Thursday, May 13th, 2004 * 2:00 p.m. * Joslyn Castle Institute in Omaha
- **Water Wellness** - Helping Corridor residents understand their septic and water well systems
 - **Cedar Creek** - Maria's Lighthouse Tavern * Wednesday, May 12th, 2004 * 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.
 - **Near Papillion** - Papillion Gun Club * Tuesday, May 18th, 2004 * 6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
ACTIVITY REPORT within the P-MRNRD
APRIL 2004

CONSERVATION PLANNING/APPLICATION

- Burt County received 6 requests for HEL determinations and 5 new requests for certified wetland determinations during the month of April. One complaint of a possible wetland violation was reported and ASCS-569 requested. One conservation compliance plan was completed for a new sodbuster field and 2 conservation compliance plans were revised.
- In Burt County a wetland conversion determination was appealed to the FSA County Committee for Good Faith; this appeal resulted in the County Committee requesting further review by the NRCS State Conservationist.
- Blair field office has received 76 HEL/Wetland Determination/ASCS-569 requests for FY2004; 15 are completed.
- South Sioux City field office completed 3 HEL Determinations and 5 Conservation Compliance plans were revised.
- Dakota County completed 1 terrace job, 2 waterway projects and a 15-acre cropland to native grass pasture conversion project was seeded.
- Blair field office has completed the Washington County terrace conservation practices for spring 2004.
- Blair field office has received 24 applications for NRD cost-sharing to plant trees, 8 applications for Cropland Conversion/Pasture Renovation using native grasses and 17 requests to use the District grass drills for conservation seeding and CRP.
- Papio NRD staff, Terry Schumacher and John Zaugg, have completed the planting of 3,450 trees for 13 Washington County landowners.
- Darlene Hensley and Terry Schumacher, Blair NRD staff, distributed to 48 Washington County landowners 7,250 seedling trees/shrubs for hand planting.
- Omaha field office completed 1 cropland conversion.
- Status Review letters were sent to all FSA status review selections and appointments for review with producers are currently being made in Burt County. There are 9 status reviews to be completed.
- Burt County had 1 terrace job that was staked and built in P-MRNRD this spring (other terrace jobs were located in LENRD).
- Two applications for Cropland Conversion/Pasture Renovation using native grasses have been requested in Burt County.

EQIP

- Blair field office has received 9 applications for: ag waste systems, grade stabilization structures, pasture managements, cross-fencing and waterlines.
- Three Pigeon/Jones Watershed structures, 4 rotational grazing systems and 1 irrigation project were signed up for EQIP in Dakota County.
- Burt County has received 14 applications for EQIP funding. Ranking for applications must be completed by May 15.
- One livestock pipeline was surveyed and flagged for installation on a 2003 EQIP contract in Burt County.

WETLAND RESERVE PROGRAM (WRP)

- The WRP Team including Neil Jensen, Blair, looked at 4 potential WRP sites in Burt County. Cost estimates have been completed on 2 of the sites; follow-up with landowners and 2 more estimates for cost are currently being completed.

- Andy Bohnenkamp, Ralph Arauza, Les Smith and Chuck Leinen surveyed an existing WRP site in Burt County. From this survey a restoration design can be completed.

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM (CRP)

- In Dakota County, 1 CRP contract was revised to include burning mid contract, 5 continuous CRP contracts were completed with practices including grass filter strips, grass waterways and a wetland with buffers and 1 tree planting completed on a riparian buffer contract. Seven Pheasants Forever cost-share applications for food plots have been received, and a couple more are anticipated.
- Blair field office staff completed 1 CRP contract (revision for inter-seeding) and 8 contracts for continuous CRP (7 filter strips and 1 wetland restoration).
- Six continuous CRP filter strip contracts were completed in Thurston County.
- Nine CRP payment applications were reviewed and completed in Burt County for new seedings; 4 continuous CRP filter strips were flagged for seeding; 7 additional continuous CRP filter strips are pending; 1 CREP wetland restoration project with adjacent buffer strips totaling 9.6 acres was flagged for seeding.
- In Burt County 13 revisions were written to include mid contract management practices such as prescribed burning or light tillage with inter-seeding.
- Omaha field office conducted field visit to determine acres eligible for a grass filter strip.

PIGEON/JONES CREEK WATERSHED

- EQIP cost-share applications prepared for sites 4, 5 and 14.
- Site 3, a high hazard structure above the town of Hubbard, was completed except for seeding. Also, the survey was completed on site 9.

SILVER CREEK WATERSHED

- Tree clearing has been completed on structure 15 and has begun on structure 19. Dam construction on structure 15 is scheduled to begin the week of May 3. Lee Appleby has been monitoring activities on site and will continue to do construction inspection.
- Mitch Keebler and Lee Appleby met with Burt County Public Power District (BCPPD) representative to discuss options of backing water over or possibly relocating buried power line at proposed structure site 25. A decision from BCPPD is pending on this issue.

WATER QUALITY

- Douglas/Sarpy Counties approved 4 new applications; 13 applications pending.
- Washington County has 27 applications pending.
- Dakota County abandoned 2 wells; 3 applications pending.
- Burt County approved 1 new application; abandoned 1 well; 1 application pending.
- Thurston County has 5 applications pending.

CIVIL RIGHTS

- Ralph Arauza, State NRCS Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, assisted with the Career Fair at Northwest High School.
- Don Atkinson assisted with a civil rights compliance review in Spencer, NE.

INFORMATION/EDUCATION

- Neil Jensen, NRCS Blair, participated in the City of Blair Arbor Day Program at Steyer Park. Neil assisted with the planting of 3 species of Elms and distributed seedling trees donated by the NRD to South School Elementary students.
- Blair field office NRD donated 100 trees to Dana College for their Arbor Day celebration.
- Terry Schumacher, NRD Blair, attended the Earth Day Program and distributed seedling trees.
- The South Sioux City staff provided new items and photos with captions for the NRD Share Page published in the *Dakota County Star* for the month of April. The news items were: Dollars Available for Well Abandonment Program; Soil and Water Stewardship Week; Earth Team Volunteers are “Planting the Seeds of Tomorrow” and notice of a Lewis and Clark Scenic Byway meeting. Photos were included of terrace construction near Hubbard, an abandoned well closure project and Dick Leitschuck, Earth Team Volunteer.
- Kelly Fravel and Blaine Gaer distributed 1200 Spruce seedlings and native grass seed packets to fifth and sixth grade students in 16 schools located in Dakota and Thurston counties through the “Plant A Tree” program. This event is timed to coincide with Earth Day and Arbor Day observations. Trees were also distributed at the South Sioux City Arbor Day celebration.

WASHINGTON COUNTY RURAL WATER PROJECT

- Blair NRD staff, Terry Schumacher and Darlene Hensley, are continuing to contact landowners, answer questions and collect easements on the WCRWP.

DAKOTA COUNTY SERVICE CENTER

- The architect is refining the floor plan for the Natural Resource Center in Dakota City. NRCS and NRD staff met with the architects on April 12, to review a draft of the floor plan and suggest refinements.

TRAINING/MEETINGS

- Darlene Hensley, NRD Blair, and Linda Ellett, NRD Omaha, attended the NRCS Federal Women’s Seminar at Ithaca Nebraska.
- Don Atkinson, NRCS Walthill, attended a non-point source pollution planning session at the Omaha tribal headquarters.
- Jenny Sundberg, Neil Jensen, Vern Dean, Neil Stockfleth and Don Doty (NRCS staff) participated in pasture training presented by Dana Larsen, Rangeland Management Specialist, held in Dakota County on April 6.
- Kelly Fravel, NRD, took part in the South Sioux City Tree Board meeting on April 13.
- Neil Stockfleth, South Sioux City, met with Nebraska Game and Parks, Pheasants Forever and FSA officials to discuss CRP mid-contract management practices to be promoted in Dakota County on April 13.

TRIBAL ASSISTANCE

- Don Atkinson, Walthill, assisted Justin McCauley in checking out terraces on 2 allotments on the Winnebago reservation.
- Vern Dean, Dennis Cady and Don Atkinson, NRCS staff, staked 2 underground tile outlet systems on an allotment on the Omaha reservation.