



Monthly Report for October 2009

Meghan Sittler, Coordinator

Programs / Projects / Activities

- **Cumulative Impact Study (CIS):** The scoping work for the next phase of the CIS continued to be one of the priorities for the month of October. We continued to assemble and review multiple study plans and research papers detailing work being done on the lower Platte that can potentially assist us in developing a tool to assess how bank stabilization and levee improvement impact the geomorphology of the river. In addition to compiling ongoing or known research we continued to have discussions with individuals involved in the FERC relicensing of the Loup Power Canal, representatives of the Platte River Recovery Program on current studies of sediment transport, hydrology, and threatened and endangered species habitat related to those efforts.

We also have been beginning to make plans for the conceptual modeling workshop we plan to hold late this year or immediately after the first of the year. The modeling workshop will allow us to meet with a broad range of scientists and individuals working on the lower Platte, central Platte, and potentially some of the tributaries and/or the Missouri, to develop a conceptual model of the understanding of how the lower Platte functions. A conceptual model includes the identification of all system components, system drivers (i.e. climate), inputs (i.e. management structures) and outcomes. The identification and linking of these various components serves functions such as making sure all involved have a similar understanding of the basic functioning of the river system, identifying gaps or unknowns in how all of the components function together, or areas where more research is needed to identify how some components are impacting one another. We hope the workshop will help us identify what can be developed as an outcome of phase III as well as serving as a collection of relevant scientific information. Possible regulatory or procedural approaches may also be a focus of discussion at this workshop.

I have also continued to spend time working with the COE to account for all in-kind time and cash throughout all amendments and projects conducted under the existing Lower Platte River & Tributaries authority. I have been able to locate 4 years of record from some of the earliest work done under the authority and I will be continuing to work closely with the three NRDs and other project partners, as well as the COE over the up-coming months and am sure we will be able to compile all necessary data.

- **2009 Water Quality Open:** The weather cooperated for the rescheduled Water Quality Open—at least mostly. It was fairly cool and very windy but we had a full turn-out and I have heard nothing but positive remarks about the day. I had great assistance from many LPSNRD personnel on the day of and appreciate the members and partners of the LPRCA that provided demonstrations throughout the course. Additionally, I sincerely appreciate all the staff of Quarry Oaks as well as NEBCO for their continued support of the event. Here's to a dry, calm day for next year's event.
- **Environmental Suitability Assessment:** I worked with Matt Pillard from HDR on continuing to refine the plans for the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting. We are hoping to hold that meeting in late November. The purpose of the next meeting will be to assign weights to the various factors for the LSA model. After that meeting there will be some iteration with the committee but then we should be ready to finalize the IMS and launch the results.

I also worked with HDR to finalize the proposal for the scope of work for the outreach portion of the ESA. The outreach plan originally proposed, laid out a plan for a series of 5 workshops and the development of a brochure—both of which would have been solely focused on the ESA. In discussions with LPRCA members throughout the past months, the results of the needs assessment meetings, as well as with HDR and through consideration of the other efforts and projects underway, it was evident that an expanded outreach effort would be extremely beneficial to the ESA project as well as the LPRCA as a whole. The new proposal condenses the number of workshops to three while shifting their purpose to include presentation and discussion of LPRCA programs such as the CIS, Water Quality Monitoring Network, the River Obstruction Removal Project, Nebraska Land Trust partnership and others as we

identify them. We will also be developing consistent branding for the LPRCA, conducting small surveys that can be used as the pilot of the larger public opinion survey, and gaining opportunities to identify emerging issues, collect information, and identify potential partnerships or collaborations. I feel very strongly that this effort is an essential step to furthering the goals and mission of the LPRCA and compliments the outcomes of the LPRCA Strategic Planning Retreat.

- **LPRCA Quarterly Meeting:** The LPRCA Quarterly Meeting was held at P-MRNRD on October 27. Approximately 20 people attended. The CIS, ESA, Water Quality Monitoring Network, River Obstruction Removal, and the outcomes of the LPRCA Retreat were the primary items discussed—all of which were productive discussions. The next meeting will be at LPSNRD in Lincoln, on Thursday, January 21 at 9:30 a.m.
- **Drought Ready Communities:** We are nearing our community workshop in Nebraska City on November 5. The range of participants at the workshop include representatives from: Nemaha NRD, UNL Extension, Nebraska City water and utilities, NPPD, rural water districts, golf courses, agricultural lenders, navigation, and many others. We have been working to assemble the agenda for the workshop and refine the materials we will be presenting to the communities for their input and review. I look forward to that day and to the outcomes of this process as I hope it can be included in future LPRCA and NRD efforts dealing with hazard mitigation.
- **Nebraska Land Trust:** As part of the identification of Nebraska Land Trust’s Lower Platte River Conservation Workgroup, we spent half a day touring the four identified Conservation Focus Areas (CFA) along the lower Platte. It was a cold, rainy day so our time on the properties was limited. We are scheduling a return trip so that we can view the resources easier and continue to refine the criteria used in identifying priority properties.
- **Platte River Symposium:** I attended the Platte River Symposium in Kearney on October 15. I appreciated the update on the Platte River Recovery Program and the array of presentations included in the Symposium. The LPRCA was represented with poster presentations on the ESA and CIS.
- **Upcoming meetings/conferences/events:**
 - October 30—UNL Sustainability Forum
 - November 5—Drought Ready Communities Workshop—Nebraska City
 - November 23-24—NSIA/NWRA Conference, Kearney