

MEMORANDUM

TO THE BOARD:

SUBJECT: General's Manager Report

DATE: October 6, 2003

FROM: Steve Oltmans, General Manager

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- A. **INFORMATION/EDUCATION REPORT**: A copy of the I&E Report detailing Information and Education activities of the District for the month of September, 2003, is attached for your review.
- B. **MISCELLANEOUS/PERSONNEL ITEMS**:
1. On October 1, 2003, Bernie Taylor, NRC Receptionist, attended a seminar entitled, "The Receptionist's Guide to Front Desk Security." I have attached a memo detailing some of the highlights of the seminar.
 2. Thank you letter from Jim O'Laughlin to the GM for speaking at a recent Cosmopolitan Club meeting. Mr. O'Laughlin is a former P-MRNRD Director.
- C. **REPORT ON PURCHASES – CONSTRUCTION SERVICES, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, PERSONAL PROPERTY**: Pursuant to Board direction, attached is a report indicating construction services, professional services and personal property purchases for the month of September, 2003. Please review this report and contact me if you have any questions.
- D. **CURRENT AND ON-GOING PROJECTS – P-MRNRD LEGAL COUNSEL**: Attached is a copy of the current and on-going projects for District Legal Counsel, Paul Peters, as of September 15, 2003. I would ask each Director to review this listing. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.
- E. **PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP MEETING MINUTES**: Attached is a copy of the September 18, 2003, Papillion Creek Watershed Partnership meeting minutes. Issues discussed at the meeting were: watershed study action items; preparation for NPDES Phase II permits; stormwater utility legislation and funding. Please review these minutes. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

- F. **REPORT ON FY 2002-2003 DISTRIBUTION OF NNRD FUNDS:** Attached is a chart showing the distribution of Nebraska Natural Resources Department FY 2002-2003 funds by NRDs. Below is the breakout for the P-MRNRD:

Natural Resources Water Quality Fund	\$55,859.54
Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Fund	\$163,893.47
Water Well Decommissioning Fund	\$10,184.51
Natural Resources Development Fund	\$1,045,416.56
Small Watershed Flood Control Fund	\$42,962.00
TOTAL	\$1,318,316.08

- G. **PAUL MULLEN NAMED MAPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:** Attached is a new release from the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency announcing that Paul Mullen has been named Executive Director of MAPA. The appointment is effective October 1, 2003. The District has worked closely with Mr. Mullen on several projects including re-districting issues. The GM looks forward to working with Mr. Mullen on future projects.

H. **NEWS CLIPS:**

- ➔ September 8, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Omahans don't worry about waistline sprawl.
- ➔ September 8, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Fighting for a more natural river flow. American Rivers conservation force.
- ➔ September 13, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Ideas for Omaha riverfront now await panel's decision. A committee will study the three plans, aiming to recommend one to Mayor Fahey within 30 days.
- ➔ September 16, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Runoff hurting state's lakes. Agricultural chemicals, urban development cause pollution, sedimentation.
- ➔ September 18, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – For the pallid. Make the right decision for the future by preserving Missouri River habitat.
- ➔ September 24, 2003, Bellevue Leader Article – River trail to honor Lewis and Clark
- ➔ September 24, 2003, Bellevue Leader Article – Funding sought for amphitheater.
- ➔ September 25, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Papio Trail cracks cause consternation.
- ➔ September 26, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Nebraska pheasant-hunt comeback is goal of Osborne's weekend tour.
- ➔ September 29, 2003, Lincoln Journal Star Article – NRCS plans to upgrade low-risk dam. Improvements on the Hedgefield Dam near Hickman will increase its capacity for flood storage.
- ➔ October 1, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – The missing pieces. The riverfront needs a bike route along the Missouri. Also, ideally, a public park.
- ➔ October 1, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial Cartoon – Build the Eppley Trail
- ➔ October 3, 2003, Omaha World Herald Editorial – Testing the waters. Exploring technologies for reducing arsenic in water is a good idea for communities.
- ➔ October 5, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – Overseers won't open Boyer Chute to canoes. Federal officials say the placid water can be deceptively dangerous.
- ➔ October 6, 2003, Omaha World Herald Article – More creatures are wild about metro area.

September 2003

Information & Education Report

Information

- Annual Report completed and published in Omaha W-H Newspaper
- Completed pre-press work on Watershed Fish Cutout for distribution within Walnut Creek Watershed.
- Updated web site pages
- Completed Grants Program Recommendation
- Prepared for and attended NARD Annual Meeting in Kearney.
- Prepared for Summit Lake Conservation Field Day
- Began work on Fall SPECTRUM

Education

- Held Volunteer Picnic at Walnut Creek
- Started bi-monthly presentations to Millard South Environmental Science Class
- Coordinated and Attended LEP planning meeting
- Presented ecology lesson and nature hike to Brownie Troop
- Held a Wellness Committee Meeting to brainstorm ideas to get staff more involved in wellness.
- Up-dated *Volunteers Wanted* (United Way publication) information
- Sent out press release on October 3 Chalco Hills Environmental Education Program
- Submitted Ben & Jerry's Environmental Education Grant
- Set up NRD Education booth for Heron Haven open house
- Planned fall NRD in-class and Chalco Hills programs
- Coordinated years activities with NRD adopt-a-school partner (Benson West Elementary)
- Sent letter out to all LEP facilitators encouraging them to facilitate workshops this fall.
- Started working on Newman's Own Organic Environmental Education Grant
- Up-dated LRIP cover

TO: Pat Teer

FROM: Bernadet Taylor
October 2, 2003

RE: October 1, 2003 Seminar
"The Receptionist's Guide to Front Desk Security"

Although I was somewhat disappointed in the presenter's approach to the content, the seminar was quite educational when she remained focused and followed the outline of the handout. I came away from the day with the following relevant information.

1. Causes of workplace violence and its proliferation:
 - a. identifying/profiling a potentially violent employee/person
 - b. rising amount of people facing violence on the job
 - 1,000 murdered
 - 2,000,000 attacked
 - 6,000,000 threatened
 - 16,000,000 harassed
 - c. handling and management of challenging situations or persons
 - bomb threats
 - telephone threats
 - fire safety
 - mail safety and identification of suspicious material
 - d. using personal intuition in sensing a potential problem
 - assertive behavior for both personal and corporate safety

The presenter did advise that companies include the following security devices if not already in place:

1. A delivery tracking sheet – for identifying source of suspicious material
2. A visitors tracking system – should there be a need for evacuation
3. A telephone bomb threat checklist

4. An emergency action plan, including regular fire drills
5. Establishing a back up person/person's for front desk safety and security*

*Jerry Herbster and I have a plan should I need him up front, but I have no back up to him should he be unavailable to me in a difficult situation.

I would be happy to work with the Safety Committee on any of these suggestions, and I have samples of the tracking sheets and checklists should you want to initiate any of these. Thanks for allowing me to participate in this seminar. I did acquire some valuable advice both personally and for my working environment.

Bernie



September 19, 2003

Steven G. Oltmans
Papio-Missouri River
Natural Resources District
General Manager
8901 S. 154th Street
Omaha, NE 68138-3621

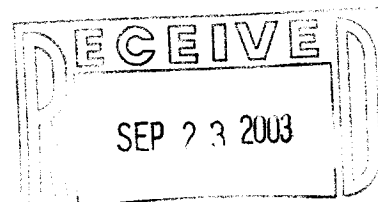
Dear Steve,

Thanks again for your presentation at the Cosmopolitan Club meeting. We appreciate all you do for the waterways and bike trails in our area. You and your employees do an excellent service for our area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jim", with a large "C" written above it.

James W. O'Laughlin
Vice President – Investments
Financial Consultant

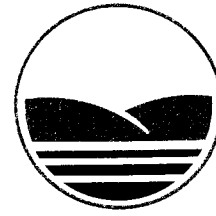


September, 2003

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Updated: September 15, 2003

PAPIO-MISSOURI RIVER
NATURAL
RESOURCES
DISTRICT



8901 S. 154TH ST.
OMAHA, NE 68138-3621
(402) 444-6222
FAX (402) 895-6543

**Current and On-Going Projects
P-MRNRD Legal Counsel**

★ = Top Priority

F = Future Work – No Assignment

N = New Assignment

O = Others Handling

W = Work in Progress

P = PFP's Portion Completed

- **Big Papio Channel Project - West Center Road to West Dodge Road (Woodward):**
 - Subordination Paperwork for Happy Hollow (W)
- **Little Papio:** (Cleveland)
- **Big Papio:** (Cleveland)
- **West Branch** (Cleveland):
 - Land Exchange with Sarpy Co. (96th St.) (W)
 - Land Exchange with Bellino (96th St.) (W)
- **Western Sarpy Dike** (Sklenar, Cleveland):
 - Closing with Bundy's (potentially modify ROW/offer) (F)
 - Complete easements – three dikes and one drainage ditch (F)
 - Amended drainage ditch easements on Hickey (First National and Bundy Properties) (W)
 - Preview Corps draft scope of services for appraisals(W)
 - ★ Review cabin floodproofing appraisal contract w/V.S. (W)
 - ★ Jansen ROW Certification (W)
- **Floodway Purchase Program** (Woodward):
 - Prepare draft Interlocal Agreement for Flood Mitigation Planning and Mapping Assistance Program (P)
 - Floodway Property Purchase Agreements as needed (F)
- **Trail Projects** (Bowen):
 - Bennington Trail Interlocal Agreement (N)

- **Missouri River Corridor Project** (Becic):
 - ★ California Bend – Final settlement with tenant (Wright's) (W)
 - ★ Lower Decatur Bend – Appraisal Review, prepare ROW purchase agreement documents (W)
 - ★ Review/comment on LDB habitat easement letter to the COE (P)
- **USDA P.L. 566 Projects, Silver Creek and Pigeon/Jones Watershed** (Puls/Cleveland):
 - Papio Site S-30 – development agreements (F)
 - Silver Creek Site Easements– as needed (W)
 - Release of Site S-7 Easement (W)
- **Papio Watershed Dam Sites:**
 - Dam Site 19 agreement (Petermann) (W)
 - Candlewood Easements (Chris Curzon) (O)
 - Dam Site 13 Agreement (Petermann) (F)
- **Papio Creek Watershed Partnership (Stormwater)** (Woodward):
 - Storm water Utility Legislation (P)
 - Partnership Interlocal Agreement (P)
- **Rural Water Projects:** (Sklenar)
 - ★ Water Purchase Agreement for WCRW Country Estates Mobile Home Park (W)
- **Other:**

PAPILLION CREEK WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP



Meeting on Comprehensive Stormwater Management
September 18, 2003 – 10 A.M. to Noon
Natural Resources Center, 8901 S. 154th Street, Omaha, NE
Lower Level Conference Room

MEETING MINUTES

Attendants

The following were in attendance: Kent Holm (Douglas Co.), Robert Hayes (Boys Town), Denny Hilfiker (Bellevue), Joe Soucie (La Vista), Mike Kemp (Offutt AFB), Stan Smith (Offutt AFB), Nina Cudahy (Omaha), Karen Klein (Omaha), Marty Grate (Omaha), Bob Sink (Omaha), Don Doty (NRCS), Donna Luckner (NDEQ), Michael Crisco (NDEQ), Ron Asch (NDEQ), Mike Mallory (NDEQ), Steve Tonn (Douglas\Sarpy County Extension), Lyle Christensen (HDR), Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD), and Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD).

Purpose

A Partnership meeting was held on the above date in order to discuss topics stated in the attached agenda. The meeting began at approximately 10:05 AM.

1. Introductions

- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) opened the meeting and everyone introduced himself or herself. An agenda and sign-up sheet were distributed.

2. Watershed Study Action Items

- Lyle Christensen (HDR) informed the group that recent field reconnaissance of the proposed dam sites in the basin had been conducted with staff from HDR and the NRD. He noted that the feasibility of a majority of the proposed sites investigated is better than previously anticipated. The upcoming effort concerning the production of a schedule and costs for Phase II Partnership activities was also discussed.
- Paul Woodward (P-MNRD) explained that the Inter-Local Agreement Subcommittee at its meeting on August 28, 2003 considered the idea of performing a needs assessment which was the first component of a complete stormwater fee system study that had been proposed and was rejected by the NRD Board of Directors. The subcommittee believed that this information would be valuable to communities in establishing their stormwater budgets and to the Partnership for determining entity contributions estimates for the new Inter-Local Agreement that is being prepared. It was decided at that meeting to pursue scoping services

PARTNERS:

Cities of Bellevue, Bennington, Elkhorn, Girls and Boys Town, Gretna, LaVista, Omaha, Papillion, Ralston
Douglas and Sarpy Counties, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District

for a needs assessment in addition to HDR's current Stage II Contract. A draft of the proposed Amendment No. 1 was handed out and Lyle Christensen (HDR) described its development and contents. A worksheet was also handed out for assessing entity budgets concerning stormwater. Discussions concerning the need for interviews and the detail of the study followed. It was decided that the scope should be reduced to focus on preparing cost estimates for structural BMPs recommended by HDR, future Watershed Master Planning, and any additional anticipated regulatory compliance such as TMDLs. Lyle Christensen (HDR) agreed to redraft the scope and cost estimate which will then be considered by the NRD Board for approval. Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) suggested that members of the Partnership provide support for the study at the November 7, 2003 P-MRNRD Subcommittee Meeting.

- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) informed the group that Horizons, Inc. out of Rapids City, South Dakota had been retained by the four county GIS Consortium to produce high-resolution aerial photography and 2 foot contours within the Papillion Creek Watershed in Douglas and Sarpy County. This data will be used in the floodplain mapping effort along the West Papillion Creek and its tributaries. He also noted that an anticipated \$350,000 grant from FEMA will soon be available to fund the flood mapping project.

3. Preparation for NPDES Phase II Permits

- Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) distributed the proposed Inter-Local Agreement with revisions from the latest subcommittee meeting. It was noted that expenses for the Partnership would be added after results were available from HDR's study. However, it was suggested that others including legal counsels for each entity take this time to review the proposed language of the agreement by the next Partnership meeting.
- Those in attendance discussed the proposed draft General NPDES Phase II permit recently forwarded via email by NDEQ. Responses to questions raised concerning the draft permit included that semi-annual and annual reports will be required, semi-annual reports will most likely be a simple letter explaining if each entity is on target to meet the conditions of the permit, and that future urban areas in Douglas, Sarpy, or Washington County would be covered under this permit. NDEQ suggested that comments concerning the draft permit from the Partnership be prepared by the next meeting. It was decided that original NPDES Phase II Permit Subcommittee consisting of Kent Holm (Douglas Co), Robert Hayes (Boys Town), Denny Hilfiker (Bellevue), Joe Soucie (La Vista), Mark Wayne (Sarpy Co.), Nina Cudahy (Omaha), and Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) would meet on October 2, 2003 at 10 AM at this location to discuss responses to the draft permit.

4. Stormwater Utility Legislation (P-MRNRD)

- Copies of a contract between the URS Corporation and the City of Omaha to perform a Stormwater Fee Rationale Study were distributed. Bob Sink (Omaha) explained that the purpose of the study was to create public awareness for stormwater needs and involving focus groups to identify different funding options. Two educational public meeting are planned, but not scheduled at this time, with one in Douglas County and one in Sarpy

County. Sink asked Partnership members to help identify local leaders and stakeholders to invite to the meetings as soon as possible.

- Marlin Petermann (P-MRNRD) handed out information from the Inner-city Coalition (ICE) for the Environment September newsletter concerning a dinner and speakers on the topic of LB 32 to be held on Thursday, October 16, 2003 at Caniglia's Venice Inn at 6:00 PM.

5. Funding

- A letter from NDEQ was handed out explaining that the Partnership's recent project proposal for Section 604(b) pass-through funding had been rejected because it did not lead to development of Water Quality Standards or implementation and refinement of the State's continuous Planning Process. There was no discussion.
- An article from the front page of the Omaha World Herald was handed out concerning the impact of stormwater runoff on area and state lakes. Steve Tonn (Douglas\Sarpy County Extension) updated the group on his efforts to educate the public on the benefits of watershed management to our lakes and quality of life. He informed the group of future workshops planned on erosion control. Paul Woodward (P-MRNRD) will provide information on a workshop planned by the City of Omaha on November 7, 2003.

6. Other Items of Interest.

- Karen Klein (Omaha) reported that a draft study on the Land Use in the Cunningham Lake Watershed was available for review. Comments should be provided to Pat Slaven with Omaha Parks. She noted that future public meeting were being planned to begin the community-based watershed management planning. She also explained that work was being done to with Washington County to assess their future land use in the watershed. Don Doty (NRCS) added that they were using multiple programs to help reduce erosion from lands in the watershed including streambank erosion which may be playing a big role in the sedimentation problems of Cunningham Lake. Doty also informed the group on numerous other NRCS activities throughout the P-MRNRD.

7. Next Meeting

- The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 30, 2003 at 10 AM in the Lower Level Conference Room of the Natural Resources Center. Major agenda items will include the status of Stage II Watershed Study activities, reviews of the draft NPDES Phase II General Permit and Inter-Local Agreement, the Stormwater Utility Fee, and funding. The meeting of the General Permit Subcommittee will be held on Thursday, October 2, 2003 at 10 AM in the Lower Level Conference Room of the Natural Resources Center.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:50 AM.

FISCAL YEAR 2002-2003 DISTRIBUTIONS BY NRD

	NRWQF	NSWCF	WWDF	NRDF	SWFCF	RBWMF	MAWMF	TOTAL
UPPER BIG BLUE	90,525.19	109,271.24	16,838.39				5,765.15	222,399.97
LOWER BIG BLUE	43,566.75	111,539.35	6,789.67				1,447.56	163,343.33
UPPER ELKHORN	71,416.02	100,134.68	1,493.73					173,044.43
LOWER ELKHORN	121,517.32	318,002.84	12,085.62				415.05	452,020.83
LITTLE BLUE	77,332.66	113,160.87	21,998.54	199,572.85			3,273.55	415,338.47
UPPER LOUP	20,616.17	51,209.38	3,011.07					74,836.62
LOWER LOUP	143,876.24	190,289.89	16,299.83	22,808.90				373,274.86
LEWIS & CLARK	35,099.15	57,480.17	4,481.18	176,715.39				273,775.89
PAPIO MO RIVER								
NEMAHA	55,859.54	163,893.47	10,184.51	1,045,416.56	42,962.00			1,318,316.08
UPPER NIO-WHITE	51,026.37	145,481.36	14,122.52	433,370.18	69,099.00			713,099.43
MIDDLE NIOBRARA	63,210.29	110,196.70	2,444.28				12,598.77	188,450.04
LOWER NIOBRARA	39,462.44	122,327.28	-					161,789.72
NORTH PLATTE	41,790.63	67,604.21	-					109,394.84
SOUTH PLATTE	65,130.89	191,659.21	2,308.49				107,786.60	366,885.19
TWIN PLATTE	28,703.18	87,568.48	1,901.11					118,172.77
	59,132.24	82,712.25	-					141,844.49
CENTRAL PLATTE	117,027.26	110,332.81	19,146.88	643,670.22				890,177.17
LOWER PLATTE NO	60,868.39	169,875.65	5,068.77	180.56				237,183.66
LOWER PLATTE SO	44,124.91	126,885.13	5,160.15	202,301.12			1,190.29	378,471.31
UPPER REPUBLICAN	82,353.71	113,393.22	4,073.80					199,820.73
MIDDLE REPUBLICAN	75,434.92	98,791.44	4,221.97			243,486.15		421,934.48
LOWER REPUBLICAN	54,033.76	77,953.77	4,481.18			272,881.67		409,350.38
TRI - BASIN	57,891.97	62,055.44	8,419.20			13,356.70	836.56	142,559.87
TOTAL	1,500,000.00	2,781,818.84	164,530.89	2,724,035.78	112,061.00	529,724.52	133,313.53	7,945,484.56

NRWQF - Natural Resources Water Quality Fund
 NSWCF - Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Fund
 WWDF - Water Well Decommissioning Fund
 NRDF - Natural Resources Development Fund
 SWFCF - Small Watersheds Flood Control Fund
 RBWMF - Republican Basin Water Meter Fund
 MAWMF - Management Area Water Meter Fund

Douglas County, NE
 Bennington
 Boys Town
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 Omaha
 Omaha City Council
 Ralston
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 Sarpy County, NE
 Bellevue
 Gretna
 La Vista
 Papillion
 Springfield
 •
 Washington County, NE
 Arlington
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 Fort Calhoun
 Herman
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 Mills County, IA
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 Commission
 Golden Hills Resource
 Conservation & Development
 District
 Iowa Western Community
 College
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 Millard Public Schools
 Millard Suburban Fire District
 Omaha Airport Authority
 Omaha Housing Authority
 Omaha Planning Board
 Omaha Public Power District
 Papillion / La Vista Public
 Schools
 Papio - Missouri River
 Natural Resources District
 Pony Creek Drainage
 District
 Ralston Public Schools
 Valley Fire Protection
 District #5

METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING AGENCY

2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102-4328
 Phone: (402) 444-6866 Fax: (402) 342-0949
 Email: mapa@mapacog.org www.mapacog.org
 In the MAPA Region: 1-800-827-6866



SEP 29 2003

September 26, 2003

MAPA NEWS BULLETIN

For more information, contact:

Pat Jesse
 MAPA Information Specialist
 402-444-6866

Paul Mullen Named MAPA Executive Director

Paul Mullen has been named the new Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) by the MAPA Board of Directors. He will assume his position October 1.

Mullen, who has been with MAPA for over thirty years, has been MAPA Program Director since 1986. Before that he served as Transportation Planning Department Director. He has extensive experience in transportation, community, and economic development planning.

Mullen has worked with local, regional, state and national officials on numerous projects and in many different capacities during his thirty years at MAPA and is well known in the region and in the transportation and planning communities. As executive director, he will continue his involvement in transportation planning. He is also planning to increase MAPA's involvement in economic development by becoming designated an Economic Development District by the Economic Development Administration.

"Being named MAPA Executive Director is very exciting for me," Paul said, "because I'm a firm believer in regionalism. I'm looking forward to continuing MAPA's successful programs while adding new ones and finding more ways we can all work together and get more done cooperatively."

Mullen replaces Louis C. Violi who passed away in February of this year. Mullen is married and has four children.

Omahans don't worry about waistline sprawl

7-8-03

By Rick Ruggles
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Urban sprawl might lead to midsection expansion, according to a national study, but Omahans seem dubious about the notion.

Consider Troy Kloke, who works in a retail shop near 132nd Street and West Center Road.

Kloke, tall and trim, said he will move from 78th and Pacific Streets to a house on the edge of the metro area, near 190th and Q Streets, this fall.

"I doubt I'm going to change my eating habits or drive time," Kloke said. "I actually do try to watch, not my figure, but my weight."

The research, reported recently in the American Journal of Public Health and the Ameri-

can Journal of Health Promotion, said those who live in sprawling suburbs tend to be six pounds heavier than those who live in more concentrated areas.

"I guess I don't really believe in that," said Randy Figura, who was bicycling last week around Wehrspann Lake, near 144th Street and Giles Road. "As far as being overweight, that's just up to every individual as to whether they want to stay in shape."

Regardless of whether it's precisely six pounds, that report and one just issued by the American Planning Association stressed the need for community planning that encourages physical activity rather than the use of a car to reach every destination.

One of the reports also said

American communities generally have been laid out in such a way that bicyclers and walkers are more likely to be struck by cars than in European cities, which tend to encourage people to use their legs to get around.

Omaha is not much different in that respect. Metro-area residents said Omaha has some mean streets for bicyclists and runners.

"If you run in the city, if you ride a bicycle in the city, you'd better be on a trail system," said Bob Peters, who should know what he's talking about. He's not only a runner but the city's planning director as well.

Omaha to some degree fits the profile of a city that ought to

See *Sprawl*; Page 2



BILL BATSON/THE WORLD-HERALD

Rachel Doorenbos of Gretna pushes her daughter, Hannah, on a trail around Wehrspann Lake, near 144th Street and Giles Road.

Sprawl: Omahans don't think suburbs add weight

Continued from Page 1
have an expanding waistline. Explosive growth to the west has increased the time commuters spend in their cars. Many west Omaha subdivisions have been built so that shopping areas are not connected to residential areas by sidewalks, local planners say. Consequently, driving to the grocery store or strip mall is the norm.

But the Omaha area has sev-

eral large lakes — Zorinsky, Cunningham, Standing Bear and Wehrspann — with extensive and popular trail systems.

The City of Omaha also has developed a suburban parks plan that identifies spaces for parks in advance of development. That way, excellent park land is preserved and not consumed by housing.

Rachel Doorenbos of Gretna pushed little daughter Hannah's

stroller and rollerbladed on the Wehrspann Lake trail one recent afternoon. She enjoys the trail, she said, but she found her old neighborhood discouraging for walkers.

"No sidewalks," she said of the neighborhood near 108th Street and West Maple Road.

In Gretna, she said, she enjoys sidewalks and a pool about a block from her home.

Diana Vodnik, 61, said she

sees many people walking in the morning and evening in her Prairie Lane neighborhood near 120th Street and West Center Road.

She offered a suggestion for better fitness.

"I think what they need to do is have an adult playground in every neighborhood," Vodnik said as she worked out in the adult playground known as the YMCA.

Fighting for a more natural river flow

*American Rivers a
conservation force*

Leader is from Omaha

9-8-03
BY MATT KELLEY

WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

WASHINGTON — Growing up in Omaha, Rebecca Wodder was intimidated by the fast flows of the Missouri River.

That was more than three decades ago, long before she became president of American Rivers, the conservation group leading the legal fight to reduce late summer flows on the Missouri. Way back when, Wodder and her pals retreated to the placid Platte River to swim, build campfires and do things that teenagers do.

"I wouldn't have gone on the Missouri if my life depended on it," Wodder said recently from her Washington office. "It was dangerous."

These days, under Wodder's leadership, American Rivers has become a force in the effort to bring a more natural ebb and flow to the Missouri.



Wodder

The group won a significant court battle last month, forcing the river's manager — the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers — to drop river levels and expose breeding grounds for three endangered species.

The lower flows forced a short-term closure of Omaha's city-run marina and stranded a handful of barges.

For Wodder and American Rivers, the three days of lower flows marked an important, if symbolic, victory. It was a first step toward what they hope will be more permanent changes on the Missouri.

The changes could affect power generation, river recreation, agriculture and a river ecosystem that stretches across nearly half a continent.

Wodder says the lower late-summer flows are not just about endangered species. The result, she says, will be "a friendlier river" — one that supports barge traffic and power plants, but that also rises with the spring thaw and falls into lazy, late-summer flows more hospitable to boaters and fishermen as well as new-

See American Rivers: Page 2

Continued

American Rivers: Group won big court battle

Continued from Page 1
born shorebirds and fish.

"We think that's the future," Wodder said.

Critics and allies alike say American Rivers brings the media savvy, scientific expertise and legal muscle necessary to succeed in those goals.

"They're a tough opponent," said Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning, a leading critic of low summer flows. "They have money, so they're able to participate in the litigation."

But critics complain that the lower summer flows will make the river unnavigable for barges and drive up costs for power companies. The fight isn't about endangered wildlife, they say, but is an effort by upstream states to use the federal Endangered Species Act to hoard water for boating and fishing on reservoirs in South Dakota and North Dakota.

They point to American Rivers' collaboration with Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle, a South Dakota Democrat. Daschle's support has been cru-

cial to fighting Missouri lawmakers who want to block funding to implement a new management plan for a rising and falling river.

American Rivers' executive vice president, Ann Mills, joined the group in 1998 after serving as Daschle's chief of staff in Washington.

In South Dakota, advocates of a rising and falling river make no pretense about their common interest with American Rivers, or their desire to keep more water for late-summer fishing and boating. Anger is at high tide in the Dakotas, where many regard the corps as a tool of barge operators.

Now, they contend, American Rivers is giving voice to an alternative view, one that forces barges to share the river with recreators and wildlife.

"We have finally picked up an ally that helps us explain our position," said U.S. Rep. Bill Janklow, the former South Dakota governor.

Paul Johnston, a spokesman for the corps, said the agency

doesn't regard American Rivers as an adversary but rather one of many interests tugging at the corps. He pointed out that Congress has charged the corps with maintaining barge navigation on the Missouri.

American Rivers was founded in 1973. Its interest in the Missouri River began in earnest in 1994, when the group named the Big Muddy to its top 10 list of America's endangered rivers.

Less than a year later, Wodder took over as president, armed with degrees in biology and environmental studies and experience on Capitol Hill.

In Washington, Wodder and American Rivers joined with two high-profile voices — newscaster Charles Kuralt and late historian Stephen Ambrose — to help raise the Missouri's profile.

Wodder credits Kuralt with imagining the "Voyage of Recovery" campaign, which seeks to link American Rivers' efforts with Lewis and Clark's journey nearly 200 years ago.

The attention has paid off.

Membership dues and contri-

butions have more than doubled since Wodder took over in 1995, driving revenue to nearly \$5.8 million in 2002. Contributors come from all over the United States and include a handful of South Dakota businesses and individuals who also contribute to Daschle.

The revenue has helped American Rivers pursue a growing portfolio of projects.

The group operates with a staff of about 50. They focus much of their time on altering operations of roughly 2,000 hydropower dams that operate with federal permits. When permits come up for renewal, American Rivers argues for operating plans that coax rivers into more natural flows.

At other times, American Rivers works to tear down dams.

In 1999, its efforts helped close a hydropower dam on Maine's Kennebec River. In Idaho and Washington, American Rivers hopes to bring down four dams that block the migration of salmon and steelhead on the Snake River.

Ideas for Omaha riverfront now await panel's decision

■ A committee will study the three plans, aiming to recommend one to Mayor Fahey within 30 days.

9-13-03
By JEFFREY ROBB

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The developers have made their pitches, and now Omaha officials must decide which multimillion-dollar proposal will be the latest jewel on the Omaha riverfront.

City officials met Friday with the last of the three development teams as Broadmoor Development of Omaha outlined plans for a \$38 million complex with a 10-story tower for upscale apartments.

Previously, officials heard from the Omaha Riverfront Development Associates of Park City, Utah, and Noddle Development of Omaha.

Riverfront Development proposes a \$28.5 million project centered on condominiums and townhomes.

Noddle Development offers a plan costing up to \$24.7 million based around offices but that could incorporate condominiums.

"They're three very good proposals and complement the riverfront very nicely," said Jennifer Mahlendorf, an aide to Mayor Mike Fahey.

The winning proposal will earn the right to build a featured riverfront project on land between the Gallup campus and new pedestrian bridge.

Mahlendorf said the city's review committee will study proposals, aiming to recommend a choice to Fahey within 30 days. After a development agreement is drawn up, the City Council has to approve it.

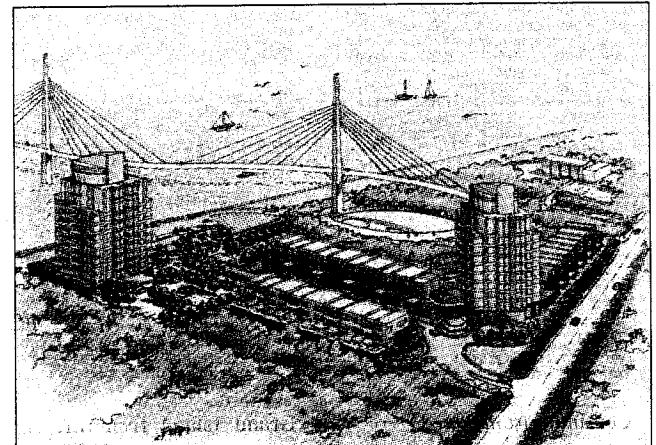
Each proposal, Mahlendorf said, offers a different atmosphere: Noddle with more office space, Broadmoor with apartments and Riverfront Development with condos. No particular focus is preferred at the moment, she said.

"It's got to fit right," she said, "and make it a livable commu-



BROADMOOR DEVELOPMENT

Broadmoor Development's \$38 million proposal would feature a 10-story upscale apartment tower. (Fellman, etc.)



OMAHA RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATES

Omaha Riverfront Development Associate's \$28.5 million project would center on condominiums and townhomes. (UTAH)



NODDLE DEVELOPMENT

Noddle Development's \$24.7 million plan would include offices and condominiums.



Dan Squires and Peter Piccolo stand Monday on the bank of Lincoln's Holmes Lake, which has been drained for dredging.

JEFF BUNDY/THE WORLD-HERALD

Runoff hurting state's lakes

Agricultural chemicals, urban development cause pollution, sedimentation



BILL BATSON/THE WORLD-HERALD

Steve Oltmans of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District checks a sediment pond in the Whitehall subdivision near 192nd and F Streets in the Zorinsky Lake watershed.

7-16-03
BY RICK RUGGLES

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Omaha area's big lakes are sucking in dirt and pollution, prompting official worries about their health and future.

Because the Big Four — Zorinsky, Cunningham, Wehrspann and Standing Bear — are in high-growth areas, sediment and pollution flow into them daily.

There's no threat to drinking water, and the lakes continue to fulfill one of their original missions, controlling flooding in the Papillion Creek watershed.

But the lakes' recreational role is increasingly jeopardized by development and agricultural runoff.

Consider these facts about the Big Four:

■ All four are listed as "impaired" by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

See Lakes: Page 2

Page 2

A complete list of the 30 Nebraska lakes being hurt by soil and pollution.

Lakes: Pollution, sediment impair water statewide

Continued from Page 1

That means they aren't fully supporting aquatic life or thriving aesthetically.

■ The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and the City of Omaha hope to renovate Cunningham Lake, including perhaps costly dredging.

■ State officials have issued fish-consumption warnings for Wehrspann, Standing Bear and Zorinsky.

The four metropolitan-area lakes, all built by the Corps of Engineers, are a tremendous resource, said Steve Tonn, metro lakes extension coordinator.

"The important thing," he said, "is we need to protect them."

The lakes are only four among 30 of Nebraska's 500 lakes on the state's impaired watch list. One other in the Omaha area is Carter Lake, which is partly in Nebraska. Some of the 500 haven't been studied, but the state gathers new information each year.

However, the Omaha lakes are distinctive because they are among the state's busiest, attracting 1.2 million visitors last year, up 46 percent since 1995.

In addition, most of the other lakes made the impaired list because of agricultural activity. In the Omaha area, urban development is the primary problem.

One evening last week, G.E. Thornton showed four young children how to fish at Cunningham Lake, near 96th and State Streets.

"Haven't even had a bite," Thornton growled. Fishing at Cunningham has "really gotten worse, I'd say in the last three to five years."

Still, the evening was beautiful. Leaves were beginning to turn on the trees near the lake. The temperature was 80.

Eastern Nebraska's soil is rich with nutrients such as phosphorus. When prairie and farmland are converted for urban development, soil is washed into tributaries that make their way to a lake.

Omaha metro area lakes

GLENN CUNNINGHAM LAKE

Near 96th and State Streets
Surrounded by more than 1,050 acres of parkland

STANDING BEAR LAKE

Near 132nd and Fort Streets
Surrounded by 396 acres of parkland

WEHRSPANN LAKE

Near 144th Street and Giles Road
Surrounded by 940-acre Chalco Hills Recreation Area

ZORINSKY LAKE

Near 156th Street and West Center Road
Surrounded by 768 acres of parkland

Source: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The sediment itself is a huge problem, gradually filling the lakes. Phosphorus from soil, fertilizers, pet and livestock waste and other sources also washes through the tributaries and into the reservoirs.

Phosphorus and nitrogen cause explosive growth of algae in lakes, which produces green scum. When the algae decomposes, bacteria use oxygen that otherwise fish could use.

Residents have contributed to the problem by cleaning paintbrushes in storm-sewer inlets, washing cars in driveways and through other activities that send soil and pollutants into storm drains.

That has led to the fish-consumption warnings. Because of mercury found in fish, the state recommends that people eat no more than 8 ounces per week of fish from those three lakes.

Pregnant women and small children probably shouldn't eat any, said Steve Walker, supervisor of the State Department of Environmental Quality's water-quality assessment.

"We're not trying to scare peo-

Nebraska's impaired lakes

"Impaired" refers to lakes that aren't adequately supporting beneficial uses such as aesthetics and aquatic life.

Big Indian Lake, Odell
Swan Creek Lake, Tobias
Willow Creek Reservoir, Pierce
Buckley Reservoir, Reynolds
Wagon Train Reservoir, Hickman
Holmes Lake, Lincoln
Stagecoach Lake, Hickman
Yankee Hill Lake, Denton
Bluestem Lake, Sprague
Wildwood Lake, Agnew
Conestoga Lake, Denton
Olive Creek Lake, Crete
Branched Oak Lake, Raymond
Pawnee Lake, Malcolm
Meadowlark Lake, Agnew
East Twin Lake, Pleasant Dale
West Twin Lake, Pleasant Dale
Czechland Lake, Prague
Wehrspann Lake, Omaha
Zorinsky Lake, Omaha
Carter Lake, Omaha
Standing Bear Lake, Omaha
Cunningham Lake, Omaha
Summit Lake, Tekamah
Kirkman's Cove Lake, Humboldt
Iron Horse Trail Lake, Dubois
Burchard Lake, Burchard
Valentine Mill Pond, Valentine
Lake Ogallala, Ogallala
Harlan County Reservoir, Alma

Source: Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality

ple away," Walker said. "It is a very low risk. That needs to be stressed."

The main problem is sediment, not pollution.

Steve Oltmans, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, said the district, the Corps of Engineers and other entities have taken steps to protect the lakes.

For instance, they put a \$2.7 million "wetland" in just south of Wehrspann Lake in 1999 to capture sediment before it gets to the lake.

Thirty-eight sediment ponds have been built by the district and federal government in the last 35 years, Oltmans said, to protect the Papio watershed's

lakes and rivers.

"The main thing we've got to do is keep the sediment out of the lakes," he said. "That's the main source of pollution."

Still more steps may be needed, as at Holmes Lake in southeast Lincoln.

That lake's sport fish, such as trout and bass, had dwindled, leaving less-appealing shad and carp.

Now about \$5 million is being spent to drain and dredge the lake. Dredging has just begun and will continue for a year.

Cunningham Lake needs similar attention.

"It's just not in very good shape right now," said Jeff Jackson, a fisheries supervisor with the Game and Parks Commission.

He said gizzard shad, carp and other fish have taken over the lake, which once was dominated by largemouth bass, bluegill and other game fish.

The City of Omaha and Game and Parks Commission can't afford the \$4 million to dredge the north end of the lake, put in wave-reduction technology and install a sediment-collection lake, Jackson said. They hope to obtain the money from the Corps of Engineers.

Local, state and federal governments increasingly have regulated developers' erosion-control efforts to curb sediment runoff from projects.

The City of Omaha requires erosion-control plans before issuing permits to grade property. Sediment basins, silt fences, straw bales, terracing and other strategies can prevent erosion from reaching lakes.

Norm Jackman, acting director of the Omaha Public Works Department, said eight environmental inspectors spend a small part of their time inspecting construction sites and development projects. The city generally receives good cooperation from developers, Jackman said.

OMAHA DAILY HERALD FOUNDED 1865
OMAHA DAILY WORLD FOUNDED BY GILBERT M. HITCHCOCK 1885
OMAHA WORLD-HERALD FIRST PUBLISHED JULY 15, 1889

Omaha World-Herald

JOHN GOTTSCHALK, *Publisher*
LARRY KING, *Executive Editor* CHARLES REINKEN, *Editorial Page Editor*
DEANNA J. SANDS, *Managing Editor*

For the pallid

Most Midlanders might never see a pallid sturgeon, one of the endangered species at the heart of the debate over the Army Corps of Engineers' management of the Missouri River. There are only a few of them around.

Estimates contained in a recent Billings (Mont.) Gazette series on the fish, which can grow to 80 pounds or more, indicate that only a couple hundred of the primitive-looking creatures still inhabit the Missouri River system, where they used to swim in large numbers. They are found nowhere else, though their smaller cousin, the shovel-nosed sturgeon, seems to be thriving.

The pallid, a flat fish that also has a shovel-shaped nose, has a back lined head-to-tail with bony plates called scutes. The species liked the Missouri system the way it used to be — muddy and turbid, full of sandbars and deep holes, with varying fast and slow currents.

It depended on spring floods to warm the chilly water to spawning temperature and to stimulate it to swim upstream to good breeding grounds. Human intervention has removed both cues — dams thrown across the Missouri both control spring flooding and block upstream migration.

As a consequence, the pallids that remain in the system rarely spawn. For the past 35 years, biologists searching the river system have not found any young, wild-bred hatchlings surviving to adulthood. In 2002, searchers netted two tiny pallids.

**Make the
right decision
for the future
by preserving
Missouri River
habitat.**

The fish have been raised in hatcheries and released since 1998, which could help the species bridge the gap to long-term survival if conditions on the river are changing so that becomes possible. But hatchery-raised fish leave unanswered questions — will they be able to survive in the wild? Will they reproduce when they reach spawning age? Where will their instincts tell them to spawn? It is not a real solution.

The adult pallids now in the river are aging; biologists estimate that the males outnumber the females by four to one. Even under ideal conditions, they don't reproduce every year, and at some point, the fish will grow too old to spawn at all. By 2016, one estimate indicates, every one will have died of old age.

The pallid does not live alone in the river. Improving habitat for it would also improve habitat for other species — endangered, threatened or not — that once flourished along the Missouri. Allowing the habitat to continue to degrade will drag other species down with it.

This primitive sturgeon, which evolved from a group of fish that lived with the dinosaurs during the Cretaceous Period 70 million years ago, is on the edge of disappearing. Every species is important in the great web of life. Throwing even one of them away can ripple through the ecosystem in ways that can't be predicted.

The hand of man can kill. But the hand of man can also preserve and protect. It is hugely important to make the right decision — for the pallid and for the future.

River trail to honor Lewis and Clark

By WENDY TOWNLEY
Leader staff writer

9-24-03

Early last year, a handful of Bellevue's civic leaders gathered to discuss how Sarpy County would celebrate the 200th anniversary of Lewis and Clark's exploration across America.

Representatives from the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Sarpy County Historical Society, Fontenelle Nature Association and Bellevue Public Schools, to name a few, met to begin planning 2003's events.

The first working group of 25 people later shrank to the event's executive committee of 13.

The executive committee was asked to develop projects and ideas based on the Lewis and Clark bicentennial and their travel ties to Nebraska.

"In those earlier meetings, the ideas weren't broad enough," said State Sen. Paul Hartnett, one of the founding members of the Lewis and Clark project.

So it was back to the drawing board until earlier this year, when Hartnett and those involved raised \$8,000 to pay The Big Muddy Workshop, an Omaha-based planning firm, to evaluate what Sarpy County and Bellevue could accomplish to honor Lewis and Clark.

Big Muddy's plan, which was discussed last month at a Bellevue City Council meeting, calls for the construction of the Sarpy County Lewis and Clark Interactive Trail.

Working with the Papio-Missouri River Nature Resources District, Hartnett and other Bellevue representatives developed a trail designed to tell the stories of Lewis and Clark's travels.

Kim Francis, tourism coordinator for the Sarpy County Visitors Committee, would like to see a children's art wall along the trail, which Hartnett said would ideally run along the Missouri River in Haworth Park.

The art would be from students across the country and would be displayed along the trail route. It could be preserved as ceramic tiles or in another form.

If the wall uses ceramic tiles, the cost would be between \$60 and \$70 per tile, said Bill Stadtwald, Hartnett's aid in Lincoln.

"From a tourism standpoint, we are confident that an attraction such as this would add to and enhance the many efforts that are under way to highlight the importance of Lewis and Clark in our community's history," Francis said.

"But the value of the project would extend beyond the direct benefits of attracting tourists. The message to children is that what they have to say about history is important, too."

The trail would also include six signposts indicating historical data about the location and Lewis and Clark. The total cost of the signposts, according to Big Muddy, would be \$24,300.

"(Haworth Park) is the perfect location 12 months from now, once the (Kramer) power plant is gone," Stadtwald said. "At Haworth Park, you can get right down on the river."

Stadtwald said the project's price, which is still being determined, would be paid for by donations and other fund-raising efforts.

Hartnett didn't rule out the possibility of tax dollars funding a portion of the project.

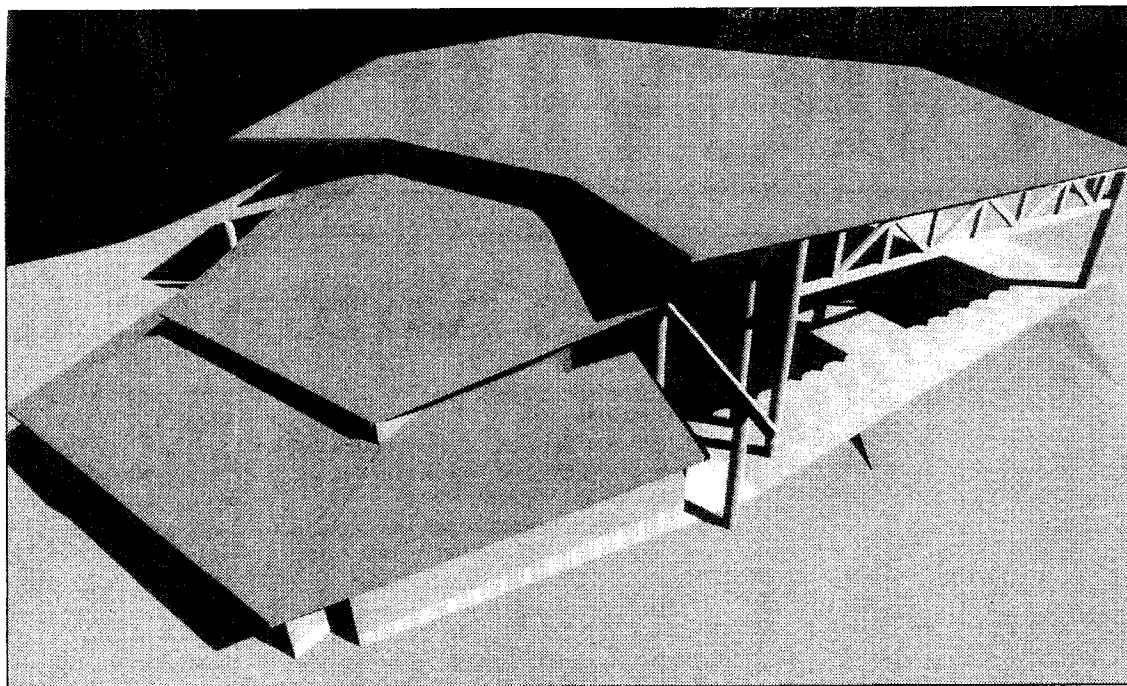
"Until the funds are raised, you're not going to see anyone digging holes," Stadtwald said.

Earlier this year, the City of Omaha honored the explorers with Lewis and Clark Landing, a concrete slab and gathering spot near the new convention center along the Missouri River.

Stadtwald said the idea of Sarpy County honoring Lewis and Clark was a must.

"We needed to find something to pull it together," Stadtwald said. "There was such a wide variety of possible things to do."

According to Big Muddy's report, the area near the Platte and Missouri rivers was important to Lewis and Clark because of its location on fur trading routes and proximity to several Indian villages.



A rough-draft artist's rendering of the Walnut Creek Amphitheater near 108th Street and Nebraska Highway 370 in Papillion.

Submitted rendering

Funding sought for amphitheater

By **JASON KEESE**
Leader staff writer

A Bellevue man is helping lead the charge to build a performing arts amphitheater near Papillion, a facility he and others say will benefit people from across Sarpy County and beyond.

Roger Givens of the Cosgriff fund-raising firm is in charge of raising money for the Walnut Creek Amphitheater, a project 13 years in the making. More than \$700,000 of the necessary \$1 million has been raised so far.

"We hope to have the fund raising completed by the end of 2003," Givens said, with site preparation beginning in the

spring and construction of the amphitheater beginning next fall.

The amphitheater will be located just south of the new Papillion-La Vista South High School, near 108th Street and Nebraska Highway 370 and on the western edge of the Walnut Creek Recreation Area. The amphitheater will boast an enclosed seating area for 600, with overflow seating available on the surrounding grass. The stage will be large enough to support a 100-piece symphony.

The open-air facility could probably host events – comfortably – April through October. The amphitheater could host concerts

by community, high school and military bands, not to mention performances by the Omaha symphony and opera groups, and dramatic performances by local theaters. Many of the concerts will be free, said Papillion's Ken Molzer, the project's coordinator.

"It's only being limited by the imagination," he said.

Molzer has nurtured this project since 1990, when he and others with the Papillion Area Concert Band decided the community needed an outdoor performing arts facility. At first they planned to build the amphitheater at Papillion's Halleck Park. Then land at Walnut Creek became

available, and the size, scope and cost of the project grew.

Molzer believes the amphitheater will draw people from as far as Lincoln and Iowa, thanks to its accessibility from Highway 370 and its uniqueness. The nearest similar facility is in Glenwood, Iowa, he said.

Included in the fund-raising campaign will be a \$250,000 endowment to pay for upkeep and a part-time caretaker for the facility. Those interested in making a tax-deductible donation can mail checks, payable to Papillion Area Concert Band: Papillion Area Concert Band, P.O. Box 460963, Papillion, NE 68046.

Papio Trail cracks cause consternation

9-25-03
BY RICK RUGGLES

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The newly completed \$1.2 million extension of the Big Papio Trail in west Omaha is cracking.

Fixing the problem may cost \$150,000, said Steve Oltmans, general manager of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, the lead agency on the trail project.

"It's just unbelievable," he said. "In all the miles we've done, we've never experienced this before."

Administrators are perplexed

by the premature fracturing of concrete panels along the four-mile stretch of the trail. The cracks run lengthwise along the trail. Normally, cracks develop widthwise across the concrete.

Oltmans said he suspects that the problem involves the fly ash used in the cement. Fly ash is a by-product of coal-fired electric generation plants. It has been mixed into cement on Nebraska Department of Roads projects for many years.

Fly ash generally lowers the cost of concrete. Mixing it with cement

is a way of recycling a material that otherwise would go to the landfill.

Oltmans said engineers who have looked at the cracks speculate that the fly ash dried too quickly in hot weather, shrank and pulled apart.

The project, which was finished about three months ago, extended the Big Papio Trail from Towl Park, near 90th Street and West Center Road, to Hefflinger Park, near 120th Street and West Maple Road.

See Trail: Page 2

Trail: Repairs may cost \$150,000

Continued from Page 1

Oltmans said building that part of the trail cost about \$1.2 million, \$500,000 of which was paid with federal money funneled through the state. He said the remaining \$700,000 came from the resources district and the City of Omaha.

The project included a new, \$330,000 bridge across Big Papillion Creek on the north edge of Towl Park.

Using fly ash in the cement mix was called for in the Roads Department's specifications for the project, Oltmans said.

The cracking is especially bad on the trail between West Dodge Road and Pacific Street. Who will pay the cost of repairing the trail hasn't been decided. Oltmans said he hopes it can be determined without bringing in attorneys.

The major players in the project are the resources district, the Roads Department, the city, Hawkins Construction Co. and Kirkham Michael Consulting Engineers.

Jim Pearson, programs administrator with the Roads Department, said the Big Papio

Trail problem is the first he's aware of with that kind of lengthwise cracking.

Matt Krajewski, project engineer on the job, said the cost of repairing the trail hinges on how much needs to be fixed and how it will be repaired.

The cracks aren't wide enough to endanger bicyclists or runners yet and currently range in width from tiny to two inches. Oltmans said the freeze-thaw cycle of winter will cause the cracks to widen and could make the situation hazardous by next spring.

The cracks in the concrete of the Big Papio Trail aren't big enough to trip up exercisers. From left are Kimberly Ramsey (walking dog Keyo), Anna Huss and Deanna Polk.



LAURA INNS/THE WORLD-HERALD

Nebraska pheasant-hunt comeback is goal of Osborne's weekend tour

9-26-03
By PAUL HAMMEL

WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — A man best known for football is lending his support to another fall tradition in Nebraska: pheasant hunting.

Rep. Tom Osborne, the former Nebraska football coach, will make a series of appearances Saturday to highlight the economic importance of the ring-necked game bird.

Like the Nebraska football team, pheasants are seeking a comeback. Consider:

■ The number of in-state hunters has dropped 40 percent from 1994 to 2002, to about 57,000 last year.

■ Hunters took home 64 percent fewer pheasants last year than in 1994.

■ Nebraska used to be the third-best state for taking pheasants. In 2001, it skidded to fifth-best, behind South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas and North Dakota.

■ Spending by pheasant hunters in Nebraska, both residents and visitors, dropped 33 percent from 1996 to 2001. It was down to an estimated \$36 million in 2001.

Small towns, which used to see flocks of orange-clad visitors at motels, restaurants, sporting goods stores and private game farms, are feeling the pinch. Hunters, reacting to the drop in birds, are either staying home or hunting elsewhere.

"Years ago, we always sold out for weeks at a shot," said Terri Quattrocchi, owner of the Air-

Pheasant focus



Rep. Tom Osborne will tour central Nebraska on Saturday to support a revival in pheasant hunting. His stops:

Ord: A farm for a mentored hunt for youths.

Loup City: A public hunting area and habitat project.

Broken Bow: A barbecue with organizers of the One-Box Hunt.

port Motels in Ord, Neb. Hunters came from as far away as Alabama and Mississippi.

This year, the 51 units in her two motels are about a third full for the season opener on Nov. 1.

Osborne said the drop in spending is a major reason he is getting involved. He said he has noticed the big economic impact pheasant hunting has had in South Dakota, not only for local motels and cafes but also for farmers who plant habitat and host paid hunts.

"At one time, Nebraska was a pretty good hunting destination," Osborne said. "That has pretty well dwindled."

✕ Last year the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission began a "Focus on Pheasants" program to improve the habitat needed by pheasants with the help of a national hunters group, Pheasants

Forever, the state's Natural Resources Districts, the federal Farm Service Agency and private landowners.

One of the main focuses has been to encourage landowners to disc up old stands of Conservation Reserve Program grasses to rejuvenate their usefulness for pheasants.

Osborne worked for language in the last farm bill to let landowners disc those areas of land.

"We think that will help a lot," he said.

Saturday, the congressman is scheduled to visit a mentored hunt for youths at a farm north of Ord, then view a public hunting area and a habitat project near Loup City. A barbecue with organizers of the One-Box Hunt in Broken Bow will end the day.

The main goal of the tour is public awareness. Osborne said it will take groups of landowners in a cluster of counties to make their area a pheasant hunting destination again. His office has worked with officials in southwest Nebraska on such an initiative.

This is all good news for motel owners like Quattrocchi.

Around Ord, she said, there is an expectation that pheasant numbers will be up this year. In most areas of the state, the game commission expects the best hunting in four to six years.

"I hope we can do something," Quattrocchi said. "It's good business for this area at that time of the year."

NRCS plans to upgrade low-risk dam

Improvements on the Hedgefield Dam near Hickman will increase its capacity for flood storage.

BY ALGIS J. LAUKAITIS
Lincoln Journal Star

Improvements to increase the flood-storage capacity of Hedgefield Dam near Hickman should begin sometime next year, officials say.

The federal Natural Resources Conservation Service recently approved the rehabilitation of Hedgefield Dam, officially known as Upper Salt Watershed Dam 10-A.

The Lincoln-based Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, which owns and maintains the lake, has been working with the conservation service to rehabilitate Hedgefield Dam near Hickman and a similar structure called Upper Salt Watershed Dam 19-B near Cheney.

Both dams were built about 40 years ago as flood-control structures to hold back turbulent storm runoff.

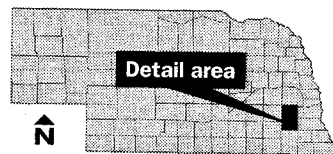
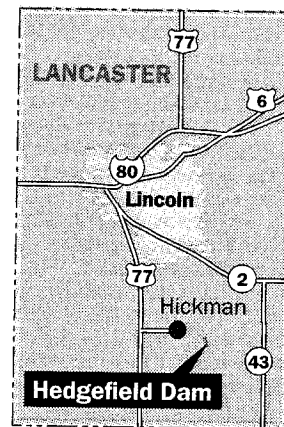
NRCS State Conservationist Steve Chick recently told the NRD board that downstream land development in the watershed since Hedgefield Dam was built is the reason for increasing the dam's ability to store storm runoff. The dam and its 44-acre lake are about three miles southeast of Hickman.

Planned improvements include replacing the existing metal conduit with a concrete one, raising the dam about four feet and creating spillways on both ends of the dam. Currently, there is a spillway on only one end.

Total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.1 million, according to Paul Zillig, assistant manager of the NRD.

Zillig said the work is needed because 40 years ago there were no houses in the watershed, which is located mostly in southern Lancaster County.

A lot of development has taken place since then and there is a need to protect those homes and invest-



KIM STOLZER/Lincoln Journal Star

ments, he said.

Hedgefield is the first dam in Nebraska to be approved for rehabilitation under a USDA program that targets dams that were originally built as low-risk dams.

The conservation service is now completing the design for the project.

Zillig said the Lower Platte South NRD still wants to rehabilitate Upper Salt Watershed Dam 19-B but it may take a while.

That dam also is owned and maintained by the NRD.

"Hopefully, we'll get the NRCS to take care of that one, too," he said.

Officials also have talked about improving the fishery in the lake behind Hedgefield Dam. Over the years, the lake has silted and the water is often turbid. Possible improvements would include deepening the lake and adding a boat ramp and jetties.

Mike Mascie, a spokesman for the NRD, said the board of directors has not taken any action on the fisheries issues but has not abandoned the idea.

He said any work would depend on available funds.

Reach Algis J. Laukaitis at 473-7243 or alaukaitis@journalstar.com.

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CHARLES REINKEN, *Editorial Page Editor*

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The missing pieces

Extending a bicycling-and-hiking trail along the Missouri River at Eppley Airfield is receiving strong backing from Omaha Mayor Mike

Fahey and former U.S. Sen. Bob Kerrey. Fahey's predecessor, Hal Daub, also has voiced support.

It seems to us almost self-evident that having the trail follow the riverbank, atop the flood-preventing levee, is the preferable course. It was a key part of the vision when Kerrey, Daub and other Nebraskans articulated the "back to the river" cause in the 1990s. And Daub captured a key point when he said in June that the proposed redirection of the trail — across hectic Abbott Drive, no less — would discourage people from using it.

If, in the end, the route doesn't allow travel along the river at Eppley, visiting business executives attending seminars at the new Gallup University campus one day could look north and see bikers trying to navigate the busy Abbott Drive thoroughfare — and wonder why on Earth Omaha chose such a route. Such a sight would convey a notable lack of vision. A river-friendly route would do the reverse.

Some have said that running the trail along the riverbank beside the airport would raise security concerns. We can't see how it would diminish safety. If, heaven forbid, a terrorist wanted to launch a shoulder-mounted missile at a plane as it was taking off or landing, all he would have to do is park and fire from one of many currently accessible spots close to the airport.

The riverfront needs a bike route along the Missouri. Also, ideally, a public park.

The Omaha Airport Authority, although skeptical, has said it is willing to consider the trail matter again. Good. It should.

The trail issue also points to a larger matter: the lack of public green space, thus far, on the Omaha side. Again, this is not what proponents of the original "back to the river" campaign envisioned.

This isn't to denigrate any of the current riverfront projects and the contribution they are making; all are welcome and worthy. But it seems peculiar that, as Omaha has finally begun to lift the curtain on its new-and-improved riverfront, the scenario set forth thus far includes not one inch of a true public park.

That's in contrast to the situation in Council Bluffs, which has unveiled plans for parks and natural spaces on the Iowa side of the planned river-spanning pedestrian bridge. And a few miles up the river, Sioux City, Iowa, has long done a fine job in placing public spaces, including a sizable playground area, along its section of the Missouri.

Omaha has much to be proud of in regard to its riverfront revival. The combination of new facilities and the pedestrian bridge that is on the way will open up exciting opportunities. Yet the vision, to this point, seems not quite complete.

Having a river-hugging trail would provide an important missing piece. And a public park somewhere along the way — even if it must be deferred a few years because of the region's current economic slowdown — would be icing on this delicious civic cake.



10-2-03

Testing the waters

In a perfect world, we'd eliminate all risks of cancer, car accidents and weather-related deaths. And the cost of those solutions would be no barrier.

No one, of course, lives in that world. For 75 Nebraska communities, lowering the levels of arsenic in drinking water is one such dilemma between costs and risk. The National Academy of Sciences, generally a well-respected agency, has twice found the nation's long-existing standard of 50 parts of arsenic per billion parts of water inadequate. That level poses a 1-in-100 risk of cancers such as those of the bladder or lungs and of heart problems or diabetes complications.

The Environmental Protection Agency initially recommended cutting the standard to five parts per billion, but after reviews of cost-benefit information it settled on 10 parts per billion.

For many Nebraska communities, that's still an enormously expensive proposition — perhaps as much as \$120 million statewide. Particularly

Exploring technologies for reducing arsenic in water is a good idea for communities.

in small towns, with fewer customers to share costs, the burden is astronomical. One town projects a cost of \$13,500 per water hookup.

Yet the state's method of attacking the science seems a shaky strategy — and one that's been ill-fated politically and judicially.

The EPA itself has recommended that the state seek extensions of the 2006 deadline allowed for small communities and wait for cheaper technologies to develop. Such a strategy, if the technologies pan out, will offer the best of both worlds.

So it's good to see the Nebraska towns of Lyman and Stromsburg competing to be demonstration sites for that research. Up to 20 of the 32 communities in the running will be selected, the EPA says. If chosen, they will provide local contacts with firsthand knowledge for their colleagues across the state.

This looks like a positive development in the arsenic showdown — and one worth celebrating if the Nebraska communities are selected.

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Overseers won't open Boyer Chute to canoes

■ Federal officials say the placid water can be deceptively dangerous.

10-5-03
By NANCY GAARDER

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Canoeing isn't going to be permitted through Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge during the foreseeable future, a federal official said.

Craig Manson, assistant secretary for fish and wildlife and parks in the Department of the Interior, said the agency isn't going to change its policy of banning boats on the side channel of the Missouri River.

"There's not a great likelihood it's going to happen anytime soon," said Manson, who directly oversees the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which manages the refuge just north of Omaha.

Some local canoeists have lobbied for a change in policy, arguing that the two-mile chute is one of the prettier sections of the river.

The government has spent \$6 million buying and restoring land along this bend in the river. A short bridge across the chute catches logs and other debris, creating treacherous conditions

on what is otherwise a placid stretch of water.

Refuge manager Bryan Schultz said he has decided not to open the chute to canoeing because he is worried that people will be lulled into thinking the water is safe.

"I'm concerned about Mom and Pop dropping their kids off at the top and expecting that their kids will come out at the end," he said. "They're going to expect that it will be a safe place to travel."

Dan Geier, a local canoeist, said the government could permit canoeing while keeping people safe. For one thing, people could disembark above the bridge, carry their boats around it and put in downstream. Or canoeing could be allowed downstream of the bridge.

The chute, he said, is like a road. An incautious person could be hurt in either place.

"No parent is going to drop their kids off with signs all over the place saying it's dangerous," Geier said. "It's mind-boggling that you could spend that much money and not be able to canoe down it."

Manson said refuge policy must be reviewed periodically, and such a review will provide people a more formal opportunity to seek changes. That review of Boyer Chute, Schultz said, is seven to 10 years away.

More creatures are wild about metro area

By JOSEPH MORTON
AND JOE DEJKA

WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITERS
10-6-03

We are not alone.

Omahans were surprised last week when a wild mountain lion wandered into their midst and caused some mid-day excitement before it was captured.

No one expects mountain lions to be a common sight around town any time soon, but Omaha's wildlife seems to be

getting wilder and woollier.

Run-ins with foxes, beavers, hawks and deer are fairly common in Omaha, Sarpy County and Council Bluffs. Residents don't encounter coyotes and bobcats quite as often, but they are out there. Even a porcupine recently became roadkill in Sarpy County.

Metro-area encounters between man and beast have sent fur and featherers flying.

A young doe wandered through the Eppley Airfield terminal doors early

one morning in May. Workers tackled the deer and released it outdoors.

A wild turkey crashed through the living room window of a retired couple in the Florence area and smashed into an antique clock last year.

Regional experts cite a variety of reasons for recent increases in wildlife encounters in the area.

Improved water quality in the major creeks running through the region is a factor, said Marlin Petermann, assistant director of the Papio-Missouri

River Natural Resources District.

Those creeks help smaller wildlife such as mice and muskrats thrive, which in turn attracts hungry predators.

"I don't think we're going to commonly see coyotes wandering down or buffalo roaming, but there's a whole food chain issue," Petermann said.

He said growing numbers of beavers in the area plug up waterways and inlets. After workers pull the con-

See *Wildlife*: Page 2

Wildlife: Many reasons cited for latest encounters

Continued from Page 1

structions apart, the persistent builders often are back at work within hours to construct an even better dam.

More garter snakes live in Omaha than immediately outside it, according to University of Nebraska Extension Educator Dennis Ferraro.

No poisonous snakes live in the metro area, but the garter snakes show how animals adapt, he said.

"There are higher populations in older parts of the city because there's rock and cement they can lay under and heat up," he said. "There's more insects. There's hardly any predation, they don't have coyotes digging them up and eating them."

Oddly, being "outside the

wandered across great distances before stopping here.

"If you have nothing but row crops with no habitat and very little food, you're going to travel through that until you get to an area where there's a river and woods and some deer for food," he said.

Mace Hack, who heads the Nebraska Game and Park Commission's wildlife research section, believes the lion's appearance in Omaha is "an anomaly" that won't be repeated any time soon.

People are more likely to see a bobcat than a mountain lion, he said. Bobcats are elusive and nocturnal, he said, and they pose little threat to humans.

The bobcats' numbers are on the rise, however, reflected by a

sharp increase in trapping since the mid-1990s, he said. Hunters and trappers harvested 1,460 Nebraska bobcats in the 2002-03 season.

Carl Priebe, a wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said some species such as foxes and deer also seem to be more prevalent because they've learned how to live alongside humans.

However, not all two-legged creatures have been so quick to master those lessons, he said.

Residents leave garbage or pet food outside, then complain after a fox spies the quick dinner and makes a mess.

"Sometimes they've gotten more comfortable with us than we have with them," Priebe said. "They've adjusted better than we have."