



Lower Platte River  
CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

## From the Coordinator...

Monthly Report from the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance for the period of

*Rodney L. Verhoeff, Coordinator*

### Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance Quarterly Meeting

The LPRCA met for a quarterly meeting on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003. The meeting was held at the LPNNRD office in Wahoo. We've been rotating meetings around to each of the NRDs each quarter. The next one is scheduled for January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004 at the LPSNRD starting at 9:30 a.m. This past meeting had a great line-up including a report from the Sand and Gravel Working Group now called PACE (Planning, Aggregates, Community, and Environment); A presentation from Chad Smith of American Rivers on the designation of the Platte River as one of the most endangered rivers in America; an update on the upcoming LPRCA/UN-L Cooperative Extension water quality/resources meetings slated for later this year; information on a new project to create a nature center at the ARDC near Ithica; and a whole host of updates on current LPRCA and partner projects. Minutes should be available in a couple of weeks. Many of these are explained further below, so read on...

Lower Platte River Utilities Board (RUB) The River Utilities Board or RUB cooperative agreement is still under review by several parties to the agreement. Everyone is eagerly awaiting the final report from HDR, which contains results from a recent pumping test near a potential wellfield site (near South Bend). There are six phases proposed by HDR in their yet to be released report: Phase I - Water system for the Louisville/South Bend area; Phase II - Wastewater treatment system for the Fountain Creek area near South Bend; Phase III - Wastewater treatment system for the Pawnee Creek area near the I-80/Platte River interchange (Horseshoe Lake); Phase IV - Wastewater treatment system for the Camp Joy Holling area; Phase V - Water supply system to the South Bend to Exit 426 area; and Phase VI - Water supply system from Exit 426 to Ashland. All of these are merely suggestions and are independent phases that can be constructed in any order depending upon the needs and the action of the yet to be formed RUB. Currently, HDR is preparing to do a preliminary study on the engineering of Phase I of the project, which is the development of a wellfield near South Bend and associated storage facilities, pumping facilities, and a pipeline to transmit water to Louisville. This study is being initiated by the LPSNRD.

Corridor Planning Recall, that a portion of the Alliance budget is to address planning issues in the corridor. During July, we began the process of looking into planning issues for the corridor in a meeting with HDR, who presented a proposal for addressing planning, assisting local decision-makers, and assessing future needs for infrastructure.

Sand and Gravel Working Group The Sand and Gravel Working Group has now chosen a name - - PACE which stands for Planning, Aggregates, Community, and Environment. Carl Roberts of Lyman-Richey and a member of PACE, gave a presentation on the group at the recent LPRCA quarterly meeting held in Wahoo. He will be back on the agenda in January to give an update. PACE will be meeting again on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Meetings are by invitation only and I feel very privileged that the LPRCA has been asked to become involved.

Lower Platte Weed Management Area (LPWMA) At the June 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, by-laws were approved for the group, which outline the operational framework for the group. In July, the group worked with the Nebraska Airboaters Association to control noxious weeds in hard to reach locations using airboats and to educate the operators in identifying noxious weeds along the Platte River. Recently, a grants committee was formed to put together a Nebraska Environmental Trust Fund (NETF) grant to acquire ATVs for 8 of the 10 county members. ATVs are necessary in order to reach some of the islands and remote locations where PLS infestations are found. The grants committee will also be working on a Pulling Together Initiative (PTI) grant through the US Fish and Wildlife Foundation to obtain operational funding. According to the county weed superintendents, there is more PLS along the Platte River than originally thought. In conjunction with the Lower Platte North NRD and using the MapMaker internet GIS system, infestations will be located on a map of the area and become available on-line for resource managers to use. There is a nice website available that explains the group and its activities. It can be accessed at [www.lowerplattewma.org](http://www.lowerplattewma.org).

**Flatriver Communities Conference** In an effort to get more input on the vision of development for the sixty-mile radius area and to convey the results of the public opinion survey, JCI held a conference called the Flatwater Communities Conference on September 11, 2003. There were approximately 40 attendees including public planning officials, resource managers, and other special interest groups. The conference consisted of several presentations on the public opinion results, a panel discussion on planning and development in the sixty-mile radius area, and small group discussions of various planning aspects such as economics, environmental considerations public policy, and others. There was a follow-up public forum recently in Omaha to discuss many of the same issues with the public.

**River Conference** - The Nebraska Wildlife Federation recently held their annual gathering on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at the Pioneers Park Nature Center in Lincoln. Presentations ranged from discussion on the Missouri river by American Rivers to Niobrara National Scenic River planning to conservation efforts on the central Platte River. The event culminated in an awards dinner.

**National Park Service/UN-L Platte River Watershed Project** - The National Park Service (NPS) and UNL are teaming up to develop an educational nature center at the Ag Research Development Center (ARDC) near Ithica and they would like to enlist the assistance of the LPRCA and the LPNNRD. The project entails the development of a series of trails and interpretive panels along the trails highlighting the many natural features of the ARDC area. This would include the opportunity for hands-on learning and nature hikes through woodlands, wetlands, pastures, fields and feedlots highlighting the benefits of wetlands for stormwater and field runoff, native and planted woodlands and grasslands, wildlife management, and BMPs for agricultural practices. Please see the attached memo sent to the LPNNRD for more details and photos.

**Interview with Former Indiana Professor on Networks** - I did a recent interview with Bob Agranoff, a former Indiana University professor on groups such as the Alliance and how we network with our members, partners, and other cooperative entities. Findings should be available in the near future.

**Water Quality/Resources Meetings** - Along with the UN-L Cooperative Extension, I've been working to develop our program for the upcoming Water Quality/Resources meetings. These meetings will be held throughout the corridor region and will be similar in nature to the Water Wellness meetings held a couple years ago. UN-L Extension has a variety of really good NebGuides and handouts designed to assist landowners, residents, and the general public in understanding water resources principles, water quality issues, and provides a wealth of information to properly design and site wells and septic systems. The USGS has also expressed an interest in participating. I will keep everyone updated on the project as it develops.

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### **Upcoming NRD and Alliance Meetings:**

- **NEXT LPRCA QUARTERLY MEETING** - Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2004\* 9:30 a.m. \* LPSNRD Meeting Room located in Lincoln. NOTE - Meeting back at the LPSNRD and new start time of 9:30 a.m.
- **PMRNRD Board Meeting** - Thursday, October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2003 \* 8 p.m. - Omaha @ Chalco Hills Rec. Area
- **LPNNRD Board Meeting** - Monday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003 \* 7:00 p.m. - Wahoo @ 511 Industrial Road
- **LPSNRD Board Meeting** - Wednesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2003 \* 7:00 p.m. - Lincoln @ 3125 Portia Street

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

- **JCI Meeting** - September 9, 2003 \* 2 p.m. - Omaha @ Joslyn Castle
  - **Lower Platte Weed Management Area** - October 22<sup>nd</sup> (alternate is 23<sup>rd</sup>) \* 9:30 a.m. to noon \* ARDC - Itica
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### **Monthly Activities:**

- ◆ **60-Mile Radius Club** - I continue to participate in the monthly steering committee meetings. The next one is scheduled for this Thursday, October 9, 2003 starting at 2:00 p.m. at the Joslyn Castle in Omaha. We should have some information and results from the recent Flatwater Communities Conference held recently for discussion.
- ◆ **Lower Platte Weed Management Area** - We held a meeting on September 25<sup>th</sup> and discussed a variety of issues including a long-range management plan and 2003 operating plan; reports on control effects; the recently submitted NETF grant application for ATV's and an upcoming grant application through the US fish & Wildlife Foundation - Pulling Together Initiative (PTI); site mapping of infestations; and public information efforts. The PTI grant is targeted for general operating expenses and the LPWMA has established a grants committee to work on the application. For this grant, the LPWMA is looking for contributions from its member entities and partners. Next meeting is scheduled for October 22<sup>nd</sup>.