



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

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LPRCA MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 31, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.

Bi-Annual Meeting held at LPSNRD

1. Welcome / Introductions: David Potter welcomed everyone and thanked the members for attending the meeting. Corridor Alliance member representatives participating included: Larry Vrtiska-National Guard, Amanda Grint-PMRNRD, Ian Ghanavati-PMRNRD, Eric Williams-PMRNRD, Jake Rodiek-NG&P, Jesse Bradley-NeDNR, Ryan Chapman-LPNNRD, Sean Elliott-LPNNRD, Drew ten Bensel-LPNNRD, Andy Kahle-NDEE, Brandon Beethe-NDEE, Tara Anderson-NDEE, Dane Pauley-NDEE, Dan Ross-NDEE, Ron Yoder-UNL, Paul Zillig-LPSNRD, Dick Ehrman-LPSNRD, Drew Ratkovec-LPSNRD, Mike Sousek-LPSNRD, and David Potter-LPSNRD. Others present included: Dustin Wilcox-NARD, Jennifer Swanson-NARD, Matt Moser-USGS, Brenda Densmore-USGS, Gary Aldridge-LPSNRD Director, Kevin Kruse-JEO, and Kat Shiffler-NPS. Invites were sent out to at least two individuals from each of the eight members/agencies of the Alliance, including the person that was authorized to sign any documents. An alternate was recommended to participate if the two individuals could not attend. All eight Alliance members/agencies were represented at the meeting. The LPRCA meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. All those in attendance introduced themselves.
2. Agenda Review and Publication of Notice: A meeting notice was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on May 18, 2023. Potter displayed the Alliance website on the screen and reviewed the agenda.
3. Review of November 9, 2022 Meeting and Approval of Minutes: Potter stated that the minutes of the last meeting were distributed prior to the meeting, copies were made available at the meeting, and they are on the LPRCA website. There were no additions, corrections or objections. Minutes were approved by consensus. Minutes from the bi-annual meetings will continue to serve as the LPRCA newsletters/correspondence.
4. Current Membership, Dues, Financials/Budget Update, and Website: Potter identified the current Corridor Alliance membership of eight agencies with recent changes including DHHS removed and LPNNRD back in as a voting member. Each of the eight agencies were invoiced \$1,000 for dues and for their share in the streamgage agreements with USGS in December. All eight agencies are paid in full for the year. The dues are deposited into the administrative fund and pay for the costs of ESRI, the website, and memberships. Potter reviewed the proposed FY2024 budget, and a copy was made available at the meeting to each member agency so they would know how much will be billed this coming November or December. The LPRCA website has been updated with current meeting information and member representatives.

5. Current LPRCA and Related Activities/Projects

A. Status of current USGS streamgages/monitors, reports from gages at Leshara and three Long-Term Sites: Matt Moser provided an update on the current Alliance-USGS streamgages. The agreements for the three long-term sites and Leshara will expire in June 2025. The three long-term sites have been jointly funded by LPSNRD, PMRNRD and USGS. The Leshara gage is jointly and equally funded by LPSNRD, LPNDRD, PMRNRD, LWS, and MUD, and also by USGS. The joint funding agreements with each agency were also renewed in April 2022 and are set to expire December 31, 2024.

B. Discussion of Trend Analysis proposal at one or more LPRCA streamgage sites: Matt Moser and Brenda Densmore with USGS discussed the data being collected from the streamgages and when that information is being collected. Data from the gages at Leshara and the three long-term sites is collected April 1st through October 1st and that monitoring has not been interrupted. The data collected dates back several years (Leshara since 2016 and three long-term sites since 2007). A Trend Analysis on one or more of the streamgages is possible. Moser and Densmore walked through the most recent proposal and scope and again identified the possible parameters of such analysis, including but not limited to nitrates and turbidity. LPSNRD and PMRNRD are interested and maybe LPNDRD. Potter reached out to MUD and Lincoln Water to see if they had any interest. LWS would be interested, and MUD is considering. Information was also sent to NDEE and NeDNR. It was decided to bring this item back to the next meeting (in October) for discussion and possible action. Information on the proposed Trend Analysis will also be sent to the National Guard.

C. Cameras and other USGS work in the Lower Platte Corridor: Moser highlighted the success of the Lower Platte River Camera project. Cameras have been funded by LPSNRD, LPNDRD, PMRNRD, Dodge County, City of Fremont, and USGS. The timelapse cameras located on various bridges over the Platte and Elkhorn Rivers take photos every 15 minutes and help provide information on flows and ice jams. PMRNRD has utilized the cameras during ice jam monitoring and found them very useful. USGS coordinated the project and is conducting operations and maintenance. More cameras in the Corridor are possible.

D. Water Quality Management Plan – 319 Targeted Project(s): The only 319 project in the corridor currently underway is with PMRNRD. Ghanavati stated that PMRNRD has worked with NDEE on Project Implementation Plans (PIPs) for Section 319 funding to EPA for work in multiple watersheds, including Buffalo Creek, Turtle Creek, Turkey Creek-Platte River, and Zwiebel Creek-Platte River. The Southern Sarpy/City of Springfield Water Quality Enhancement Project was approved by EPA in March 2023. The project is focused on a concentrated area around Springfield and will not involve any construction activities. Turkey Creek and Zwiebel Creek which extend south of the Platte River, is a watershed that was to involve LPSNRD in some capacity, however the revised and final PIP left out BMPs in Cass County.

6. Member Updates and Reports on Related Lower Platte River Corridor Activities and Projects

A. NeDNR Updates: Jesse Bradley, Assistant Director with NeDNR provided an update on the river and funded projects. The Platte River would likely be dry near Duncan at this point but water from the South Platte had been a huge contributor. Many ARPA dollars have been appropriated by the legislature through the agency to get projects done. The Perkins Canal project is anticipated to be at 10% design by this Fall. Regarding the “JEDI” Project, Bradley stated there is a 15-month study underway to determine possible

effects of the Lake on water supplies. Kickoff meetings with LWS and MUD have taken place. DNR is currently working with USACE and adjacent states on a \$10 million study updating hydrology in the Missouri River. There will be a stakeholder and outreach meeting in the 3rd week of July to help with site-specific studies.

B. National Guard and Camp Ashland: Larry Vrtiska with the Nebraska National Guard provided an update on the activities and projects at Camp Ashland. The flood repair project is nearly complete. The only thing left is some solar panel installation. Vrtiska also stated the Guard is still working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to figure out the drainage issue and culvert height with Turner Lake. This has been taking some time to get figured out. The guard camp is home to bald eagles and bats, as well as tern and plover, which creates challenges with Federal funded agencies and any project. The National Guard is looking to do some prairie restoration at the guard camp.



LPRCA meeting attendees

C. PMRNRD updates

i. Hwy 34 River Bridge Trail and other trail updates:

Williams provided an update on the status of the Platte River Bridge Trail project that is Federally funded with 20% local match and PMRNRD, LPSNRD, Sarpy County, Cass County, Plattsmouth, Bellevue and others participating in the project. The trail will be on the east side of the Hwy 34 bridge. The south terminus for this trail segment will be Beach Road with future plans to connect to Plattsmouth and, on the north, it will be the levee. NDOT is looking to go out for bid in September-October of 2023 with project construction starting in 2024 and taking approximately two years. Williams informed the group that the 2019 flood damage repairs to the Lied Bridge are now expected to be 100% funded. No local funds are needed. PMRNRD is also requesting a grant through the Transportation Alternative Program for a bridge across the Elkhorn River for trail connections to Waterloo and Valley.

ii. Platte River Railroad Obstruction: Grint updated the group on the Railroad obstruction issue in the Platte River. Back in 2019 the railroads constructed a causeway to make repairs from the flooding. The rock and soil, and now plant material, left in that location west of the Highway 34/75 bridge has caused an obstruction and the river to shift. PMRNRD, LPSNRD, Sarpy County and Cass County all have an interest in getting this corrected before major problems arise. There have been meetings with the railroads and removal of the obstruction has been discussed but nothing planned or determined yet. State Senators have been updated and meetings are ongoing. Hopefully something can be done before heavy rains and flooding come again.

D. Updates from UNL: Yoder briefly discussed the University's issues with the Alt-En situation near Mead. UNL suspected issues for some time because honeybee hives were collapsing. The University has been working on the tributary/stream in the southeast corner of East Campus and continues to work with LPSNRD, City of Lincoln, and USACE on the Deadmans Run project. A larger 38th street bridge on campus is being planned as part of the Deadmans Run Flood Reduction Project.

E. LPSNRD updates, including MoPac Connector: Paul Zillig discussed the status of the MoPac connector project, work with the MoPac Alliance, and the funds (\$8.3 million) provided by the Nebraska Legislature to Nebraska Game and Parks (NG&P) for the trail connection. The NRD has recently met with the local trail

group and with Cass County to discuss the next steps and possibility of using existing right-of-way. The NRD will examine alternative routes and hire a consultant to analyze cost and engineering needs. The NRD will also continue to work with NG&P on funding eligibility, the application process, and any local matching funds required.

F. Game & Parks projects/updates: Rodiek gave an update on the parks in the corridor, including Schram, Mahoney, Louisville, and Platte River State Parks. Construction is ongoing at Schram State Recreation Area on the treehouse educational classroom project, kayak launch, river trail, and construction began on the canyon ponds renovation project. There is also a lot of work going on at the Louisville State Recreation Area with lake renovations and fishing access improvements.

G. Lower Platte North NRD updates: Ryan Chapman reported on a few of Lower Platte North's projects, including proposed drinking water line to Cedar Bluffs, Rawhide Creek WPFO flood control project, cutoff ditch between North Bend and Rogers, the jetty west of Schuyler, and the Morse Bluff area project .

H. Updates from NDEE: Ross provided updates on various NDEE projects, activities, and staffing. The Department is looking to fill positions in Section 319 and Well-head Protection. NDEE's surface water monitoring is currently being done in the North Platte, South Platte and White Hat basins. Last year monitoring was in the Elkhorn Basin and the Upper Missouri River Tributaries. The Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network has re-launched this Spring. NDEE has received nearly 120 applications for the Reverse Osmosis Program and the application period will now remain open until funds are used.

- i. 404 Assumption Status: Pauley reported there are five people on staff, and they are currently working on regulations, working with US Fish and Wildlife and G&P, developing the statewide permit, and will be holding public stakeholder meetings in late July to discuss various topics including fees. The Department hopes to start permitting by the end of 2024.

I. Other:

- i. Possible tour of projects with PMRNRD and LPSNRD: Potter informed the group that LPSNRD staff is working with PMRNRD on a possible tour of the Lower Platte River Corridor sometime this summer. A preliminary map has been prepared identifying several projects in the Corridor from the National Guard Camp downstream to Plattsmouth. The two districts will continue to work out the details. Maybe a similar tour can be planned in the future to look at the upper reaches of the Corridor with Lower Platte North NRD.

7. Future Projects/Studies:

A. LPRCA Water Quality Management Plan 5-Yr Update: Potter stated the LPRCA Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) is due for its five-year update in 2024. The LPRCA WQMP was funded by the three NRDs and a Section 319 grant. Since priority areas will not change much and there hasn't been a lot of projects or required changes, NDEE has suggested an update could be simplified and accomplished through an addendum done in-house. LPSNRD recently met with LPNNRD, PMRNRD and NDEE to discuss the update process. PMRNRD will take the lead on the update. LPNNRD will assist in the technical sections and LPSNRD will administer the update. Brandon Beethe informed the group that a similar update was recently done for the Shell Creek Watershed WQMP. He explained that the update or addendum to the plan could simply include a summary of what has been done in the watersheds since the plan was adopted

and events that have changed things such as the 2019 floods, any updated graphs or figures, changes in priority areas or phase requirements, updated references to the latest Integrated Report, and other changes such as NDEQ to NDEE. The plan update was recommended to be accomplished in-house. Without any objections, it was approved by consensus for the three NRDs to update the LPRCA WQMP in-house.

B. LPNNRD Drainage Project with Dodge County and City of Fremont – Request for letter of support: Chapman with LPNNRD and Kruse with JEO presented the drainage project. Kruse went through the many benefits of the Dodge County Elkhorn Township Drainage Improvement Project and asked for a letter of support from LPRCA to aid in the grant application process. Such benefits would include flood risk reduction, improvements to water quality, surface water infiltration, and stabilizing Platte River tributary base flows. Without any objections, it was approved by consensus for the LPRCA to provide a letter of support for the project. Kruse and Chapman will be working with Potter to prepare the letter.

C. Lower Platte River Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Comprehensive Study – Update/Status: Zillig again briefly discussed the possible Restoration Comprehensive Study and its current status. This congressional study dates back several years. Since the last Alliance meeting, LPSNRD, LPNNRD and PMRNRD met with the USACE in March 2023. A letter of intent and continued interest was sent to USACE on March 10, 2023. An Appropriations request was sent to Senator Fischer’s office on March 17, 2023. This is estimated to be a three-million-dollar study with \$1.5 million local and \$1.5 million USACE. A meeting between the three NRDs is needed and will be scheduled this summer to discuss needs and priorities and to determine the next steps.

D. Discussion of any other possible projects for LPRCA: Potter again thanked the agencies for attending the meeting and identified the benefit of having the Alliance ready to go with any upcoming issues or additional projects. He asked the group to identify and consider any other projects for the LPRCA. None were suggested at this time.

8. Schedule Next Meeting: The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 2023. A doodle poll will be sent to the members to determine the best date to have a meeting.
9. Comments, Questions, General Discussion, Adjournment: Kat Shiffler with the National Park Service introduced herself again and identified her work with trail assistance and river access. With no further questions or comments, the meeting ended at approximately 12:15 p.m.

Submitted by: David Potter, Assistant General Manager LPSNRD and Interim LPRCA Coordinator