



Lower Platte River CORRIDOR ALLIANCE

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LPRCA MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, May 29, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.

Bi-Annual Meeting held at Nebraska National Guard Camp Ashland

1. Welcome / Introductions: David Potter and Larry Vrtiska welcomed everyone and thanked the members for attending the meeting at the National Guard Camp. Corridor Alliance member representatives in attendance included: Larry Vrtiska-National Guard, Amanda Grint-PMRNRD, Ian Ghanavati-PMRNRD, Eric Williams-PMRNRD, Jeff Fields-NG&P, Jesse Bradley-NeDNR, Tyler Martin-NeDNR, Ryan Chapman-LPNNRD, Sean Elliott-LPNNRD, Katie Hickle-NDEE, Jessica Russell-NDEE, Tara Anderson-NDEE, Noah Hovorka-NDEE, Alesia Zaruba-UNL, Dick Ehrman-LPSNRD, and David Potter-LPSNRD. Others present included: Dustin Wilcox-NARD, Jennifer Swanson-NARD, Matt Moser-USGS, Brenda Densmore-USGS, and Matt Pillard-HDR. 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 one of the two individual reps could not attend. All eight Alliance members/agencies were represented at the meeting. The LPRCA meeting was called to order at 10:00 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 17, 2024. Potter reviewed the agenda.
3. Review of November 29, 2023, Meeting and Approval of Minutes: Minutes of the last meeting were distributed prior to the meeting, presented on the screen at the meeting, and 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, and Website: Potter identified the current Corridor Alliance membership consisting of eight agencies. Each of the eight agencies was invoiced \$1,000 for dues and for their share in the streamgage agreements with USGS in December. The dues are deposited into the administrative fund and pay for the costs of ESRI, the website, and memberships. We are still waiting on one agency to submit their payment of dues but expect payment soon. 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 LPRCA-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. Moser updated the group on what 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 usually 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). This year started off warmer, so monitors were out in February. Reports showed higher turbidity as result of recent rains.

B. USGS Streamgage Trend Analysis Project: Matt Moser with USGS walked through proposed agreement and scope for the Trend Analysis and again identified the possible parameters of such analysis, including but not limited to nitrates and turbidity. Potter reported that seven of the member agencies are on board to help fund the project along with MUD and Lincoln Water. DEE would provide a \$15K 319 grant and the others would enter into a joint funding agreement for a total of \$9,980 each. The goal was to have ten participating agencies so the cost would be kept around \$10K each. LPRCA took action on the following three items. LPSNRD Board of Directors will then take formal action on behalf of LPRCA as the governing agency as per the interlocal agreement.

- i. USGS Agreement: The Joint Funding Agreement with USGS for Trend Analysis on Continuous Water Quality in the Lower Platte River and LPSNRD on behalf of the LPRCA was approved by consensus.
- ii. Section 319 Small Project Grant Agreement with NDEE: The Inter-governmental Agreement for Section 319 Grant with NDEE for Trend Analysis of Continuous Water Quality in the Lower Platte River and LPSNRD on behalf of the LPRCA was approved by consensus.
- iii. Joint Funding Agreement: The joint funding agreement for the USGS Streamgage Trend Analysis in the Lower Platte River between Lower Platte South NRD on behalf of the LPRCA and LPNDRD, PMRNRD, NeDNR, NG&P, UNL, MUD, and the City of Lincoln was approved by consensus.

C. Update on current USGS cameras and discussion of additional cameras: Amand Grint with PMRNRD and Moser discussed the success of the Lower Platte River Camera project. These 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 continue to take photos every 15 minutes and help provide information on flows and ice jams. USGS coordinated the project and is conducting operations and maintenance. USGS is working with PMRNRD to install another camera near Louisville before the ice season. LPSNRD is planning to provide assistance with this additional camera.

D. LPRCA Water Quality Management Plan 5-Yr Update: 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 were not changing much and there haven't been a lot of projects or

required changes, NDEE suggested an update could be simplified and accomplished through an addendum. LPSNRD, LPNRRD, and PMRNRD met with NDEE and a vote was taken at the LPRCA meeting last November to complete the project “in-house”. PMRNRD took the lead on the update. The 5-yr update was drafted and submitted to NDEE and EPA just prior to the May LPRCA meeting. The prepared WQMP Update was presented to the members and approved by consensus. LPSNRD Board of Directors will consider approval of the WQMP Update on behalf of the LPRCA once it’s approved by EPA.

E. Water Quality Management Plan – 319 Targeted Project Updates: The only 319 project in the corridor currently underway is with PMRNRD. 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 does not involve any construction activities. Ghanavati provided an update on their project. PMRNRD worked with NDEE to revise the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) to focus more on urban BMPs and less on agricultural BMPs due to the land transition in South Sarpy County. The PIP is currently at EPA for review.

6. Financials/Budget Update: Potter reviewed the proposed FY2025 budget and provided a copy to each member representative. The budget identifies the various projects and expenses and the breakdown for each member and other joint funding agencies for FY25.

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

A. NeDNR Updates: Jesse Bradley reported the Missouri River Study with USACE is moving along. The focus area is Nebraska and NW Missouri. The Scope of the study is changing and looking to get hydrology for whole basin. The JEDI project is in the process of getting the Lake construction evaluation completed and then turn towards the evaluation of the Lake on the Lincoln Well System by the end of the summer. Healthy Soils Coalition is getting a website and gaining momentum, and the Nitrogen Incentives Act is to help producers reduce nitrogen use through practices and incentives.

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 has been completed and he will guide a tour for the group after the meeting. He stated that the Guard Camp suffered some storm damage last week and that Wahoo Creek was on the rise so need to revisit flood plans. The East chute on the Platte River is now flowing again. The Guard has stream cameras at Shelton and want to get some at Camp Ashland. 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.

C. PMRNRD updates:

i. Hwy 34 Platte River Bridge Trail: Eric 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 portion is being constructed on the east side of the Hwy 34 bridge. The south terminus for this trail segment will be Beach Road with possible plans to connect to Plattsmouth and, on the north, it will be the levee. Construction is now expected to be completed in July 2024 with a ribbon cutting also planned in July.

ii. Platte River Railroad Obstruction: Amanda Grint and Eric Williams updated the group on the existing Railroad obstruction issue in the Platte River. They reminded the group that 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. PMRNRD has worked with Nebraska Economic Development and has received a conditional award of CDBG disaster money up to \$7.1 million to do the work. PMRNRD will be getting the necessary permits and working with engineers on design. They hope to have agreements in place soon and start removal this fall so it will be completed by next flood season.

D. Updates from UNL: Alesia Zaruba highlighted the University's work with LPSNRD and the City of Lincoln on the Deadmans Run project. UNL is also in the early stages of discussing the idea of a botanical garden/ tertiary wetlands/ urban watershed in the southeast corner of East Campus. This project is on hold and is based on the Deadmans Run project to some degree.

E. Lower Platte South NRD updates:

i. MoPac Connector: Potter stated LPSNRD hired JEO Consulting Group back in October to conduct public meetings, examine alternative routes, analyze costs, and determine engineering needs for the trail connection. Public workshops were held March-May. The district is hoping that a route will be determined in December 2024. More information on the trail connector will be provided at the next meeting in November. LPSNRD is utilizing the \$8.3 million granted to Nebraska Game and Parks by the Nebraska Legislature for the trail connection.

F. Game & Parks projects/updates: Jeff Fields Stated that recent storms have created some issues. Memphis SRA is closed with recent flooding. The lower campgrounds flooded and will open up at the end of the week. Construction is ongoing at Schramm State Recreation Area on the treehouse educational classroom project and the canoe/kayak launch. The canyon ponds renovation project should be done in July-August. There is also a lot of work going on at the Louisville State Recreation Area with lake renovations and fishing access improvements. Jeff gave updates on Mahoney and Platte River State Parks, including the newly constructed cabins. He also discussed the project this spring at Two-River State Park.

G. Lower Platte North NRD updates: Ryan Chapman reported on the NRCS WFPO process in Skull & Bone watersheds to reduce flooding; start of nine flood reduction structures being built in the Wahoo Creek Headwaters watershed this summer; tree removal on the Flood Reduction project on Wahoo Creek; hiring of a coordinator to focus on implementing e. coli and atrazine BMPs in selected HUCs of Wahoo Creek watershed and source water BMPs in SWP areas district wide; a BRIC application for the East Fremont Drainage Study; Wanahoo just completed repairs from 2019 flooding and now the spillway has blown out with recent storms along with trail and campground damage; District is half way through Fremont State Lakes BRIC study; and updates on North Bend drainage study.

H. Updates from NDEE: Tara Anderson provided updates on various NDEE projects, activities, and staffing. The 404 assumption work has paused and 404 staff were moved to other positions within DEE. 404 permitting will stay with USACE but will be reviewed by NDEE. Beach Watch started May 8th and will monitor 55 beaches across 50 different lakes until September 30th. The Department is now in the 2nd year of National River and Stream sampling and DEE is assisting EPA with sampling. Basin Rotation Monitoring started in early May in Republican, Little Blue, and Big Blue basins this summer. There will be a joint surface water and ground water monitoring council meeting in October. The Department is doing several

things with nitrate study. DEE has developed a risk communication-based outreach plan and also developed guidance and tools to assist private domestic well owners in evaluating their risk of nitrate in drinking water and provide solutions to mitigate nitrate-affected water. There were free nitrate test kits available to private well owners through March 1, 2024. There were 4,500 kits requested and DEE has received results for about 3,300 samples. The avg. nitrate concentration is 4.83 mg/L, the median nitrate concentration is 1.87 mg/L and 508 of these results are above 10 mg/L, which is about 15.4% of sample results. The reverse osmosis program has \$364K of \$1.2 million remaining and has a June 30th deadline. So far there are 364 applications. Anderson also reported that a video was published through WAVES on testing private wells for nitrate. The video will soon be on UNL water websites, YouTube, and other platforms. DEE Section 319 was awarded technical assistance funds from EPA to develop a 319-emergency management plan and will start seeking stakeholder input. Staffing updates included Thad Fineran as the new Interim Director, Shelley Schneider took another job and Reuel Anderson is now the Division Administrator for the state permits and engineering section, the new 401 Coordinator is starting next week, and Katie Pekarek has resigned and UNL will be hiring a new UNL-NDEE Liaison.

I. Other: No additional reports were given.

8. Future Projects/Studies:

A. Lower Platte River Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Comprehensive Study – Update/Status: Potter once again briefly discussed the possible Restoration Comprehensive Study and its current status. This congressional study dates back several years. The three NRDs continue to have interest in the project and there has been no activity with the potential study since a letter of intent and continued interest was sent to USACE on March 14, 2024. This project is estimated to be a three-million-dollar study with \$1.5 million local and \$1.5 million USACE.

B. Discussion of any other possible projects for LPRCA: Potter again thanked the agencies for attending the meeting and the National Guard for hosting it. He acknowledged the benefit of continuing the Alliance for any upcoming issues or additional projects. He asked the group to identify and consider any other projects for the LPRCA.

9. Schedule Next Meeting: The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 2024. A doodle poll will likely be sent to the members to determine the best date to have a meeting.

10. Comments, Questions, General Discussion, Adjournment: With no further questions or comments, the meeting ended at approximately 11:45 a.m. A driving tour of the National Guard Camp followed.

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