

Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force
Draft meeting minutes
Thursday, July 24, 2008
Franklin, Nebraska

1. Call to order – Chairman Charles Brooks called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Roll call was taken. Task Force members present:

Brian Dunnigan
Mike Clements
Mike Sarchet
Kent Aden
Mike Arps
Russ Shultz
Greg Ibach
Gloria Erickson

Rich Tesar
Dr. Scott Josiah
Senator Tom Carlson
Senator Tom Hansen
Mike Linder
Charles Brooks
Senator Cap Dierks

Task Force Members absent were:

Senator Deb Fischer
Ron Bishop
Neil Moseman
Senator John Harms

Senator Don Preister
Jim Miller
Dr. Gary Cunningham

Task Force members who sent alternates:

Kirk Nelson sent Frank Albrecht

Guests present included:

Merle Illian
John Thorburn
Val Phelps
Jordan Dux

Mark Goebel
Doug Hallum
Bob Bettger

NDA staff:

Mitch Coffin

2. Brooks announced that the meeting was being recorded.
3. Brooks noted the availability of a copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. He noted for the record that notice for today's meeting was published in the *Omaha World-Herald* on June 29 and in the *Kearney Hub* on June 30.
4. Brooks opened discussion on the minutes of the May 6, 2008, meeting. Linder made a motion to approve the minutes. Aden seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: In support of the motion: Dunnigan, Tesar, Clements, Dr. Josiah, Sarchet, Senator Carlson, Aden, Senator Hansen, Arps, Linder, Shultz, Brooks, Ibach, Senator Dierks, Erickson. Voting against the motion - none.

5. Old Business.

Sarchet thanked the Task Force members for hosting their meeting at the Invasive Species Summit and thanked those who were able to attend the summit. Those attending the summit commented on the excellent presentations and tour.

6. New Business.

Streambed Ownership Work Group – Russ Shultz reported that their group met on June 12, also on June 17, with Larry Dix, Executive Director, Nebraska Association of County Officials.

Proposed Plan of Action:

- a. Determine county current status of cadastral information on the Platte River streambed and any planned actions to make this information available.
- b. Outline what is needed to make cadastral information available on all streambeds in the state
- c. Outline legislation needed to provide a clear understanding of permanent boundaries in streambeds.

Survey Summary:

- a. Streambed maps are lacking (22 Platte River counties surveyed).
 - Six of 19 counties have up-to-date streambed cadastral maps.
 - Three of 16 counties have up-to-date accretion maps.
- b. Most taxing accretion, less than half taxing streambed.
 - Seventeen of 19 counties taxing accretion.
 - Eight of 19 counties taxing streambed.
- c. Able to provide five-year updates of streambed cadastral information.
 - Only 3 of 16 indicated they could provide updates.

Preliminary conclusions based on this survey are:

- a. Cadastral maps of the streambed are lacking.
 - Ownership in streambed is questionable.
 - Owner of record information is lacking for making landowner contacts on noxious weed notifications.
 - Seven of 22 counties have or are in the process of updating their cadastral information.

- b. More information is needed from weed management areas on how this is affecting their current activities.
- c. Examples are needed of how weed management areas are working with county officials in addressing streambed ownership.

Planned actions:

- a. Inform Platte River counties of the importance of streambed vegetation management.
 - The need for current streambed ownership.
 - The need for coordination between county officials and weed management areas.
 - Information and support package.
 - Breakout session at NACO conference.
- b. Further evaluate the need for legislative action.
- c. Develop recommendations for streambed management responsibilities.

Vegetation Management and Treatment Work Group – Kent Aden reported that the grazing study has not been done this spring due to high water flows in the study area. Year one is going to be funded through the High Plains Weed Management Association Environmental Trust Grant. Brooks and Aden will submit an application to the Environmental Trust for three years. First two years to complete the study and the third year for cleanup of study area. Clements reported that on the Lower Republican deep disking study, the double disking provided better results than the single disking. Aden provided aerial photos of the study areas. Study areas are located on public lands to ensure access to the properties.

Survey and Monitoring Work Group – Rich Tesar reported that the Lower Platte Weed Management Area is working on an extensive survey and monitoring project on the Platte River from Columbus to the confluence of the Missouri River. They are currently using a digital GPS camera to map purple loosestrife, phragmites, and saltcedar infestations. The three NRD's in this area have committed \$250,000 to fund helicopter treatment to 56 miles (Fremont to Missouri River). The Lower Platte Weed Management Area will also be asking each landowner to voluntarily pay \$100 per acre for treatment.

Education and Awareness Work Group – Mike Clements reported their discussion has been on the possible formation of a Nebraska Invasive Species Council. This Council could potentially incorporate many of the goals and objectives of the Task Force including Education and Awareness. This Council would be supported by a statewide coordinator and would include representation from the following agencies: National Park Service, Nature Conservancy, Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska Game and Parks, Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Weed Control Association, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USDA/APHIS/PPQ, NRCS, USGS, Nebraska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and NRDs. The following is a list of committees that could be

managed by the council: Coordination, Education, Funding, Policy, Technical, Early Detection and Riparian Vegetation Management.

Funding and Incentives Work Group – Mike Arps reported that this group has not met recently. Bob Bettger reported that Dan Larsen with NRCS in cooperation with the Invasive Species Sub-Committee is going to introduce a special initiative to the state technical committee to support funding for work in riparian areas. This special initiative would complement LB 701 work that has been completed. These funds could be used beyond the 100 foot buffer outlined in LB 701. If approved, landowner participation would be required. Landowners would also need to pay for some of the expenses. Weed Management Areas could help encourage landowner participation and work with their local NRCS office.

Task Force members discussed the possibility of the Task Force submitting an application to the Environmental Trust to fund year two and three of the Vegetation Management and Treatment Work Group study on the Platte River. Ibach proposed that NDA could submit an application on behalf of the Task Force. Work Groups will be responsible for providing information to NDA to be included in the grant application.

Goals, Objectives, and Reports – Senator Carlson provided the members with a summary that he prepared of possible water use by invasive plants. He indicated this is an estimate of the amount of water used during a 180-day growing period at different rates per day. Senator Carlson stressed that whatever is used by invasive plants could be utilized by plants that have a value in riparian areas. Doug Hallum, with Natural Resources, stated that even bare sand will evaporate water on a daily basis. Projects are saving water, and are making water available to native plants as well as improving the conveyance of water in the streambed.

Dr. Josiah stated that trees do use water. However, Russian olive does not belong in the lakebed or stream channel. Russian olive is a serious problem in riparian areas. Dr. Josiah stressed that if trees are controlled or removed, they will be replaced by something else that will use water.

Sarchet reported that Nebraska is working with Colorado and Wyoming to secure possible federal funding for invasive plant control on the North and South Platte Rivers. A meeting is in the process of being scheduled to discuss options.

Senator Carlson stated that he is pleased with the amount of control work that has been accomplished to date. He said the improved conveyance in the Lower Republican is proof that these efforts have been effective.

Task Force members discussed that there needs to be some way to utilize the biomass that is being created from these tree removal projects. This biomass can be used for heating and cooling but the boiler conversion is expensive.

Vegetation Water Use Work Group – Doug Hallum reported for Ron Bishop who was unable to attend. Doug has been working on the report originally started by Jason Alexander. He stated the report is ready to be presented to the Work Group and, hopefully, will be available at the next Task Force meeting.

7. Summary of Year One Grant Dollars – Ibach reported that in FY07-08, \$176,849.65 was not used mainly due to the fact that high water levels this spring prevented some channel clearing to not be completed. Aden asked what will happen to those dollars in year two. Ibach stated that these unused funds may be made available for a small special project or could be available to complete an existing project in year two.

8. Open Discussion

Shultz reported on a GPS camera purchased by NRDs in the Lower Platte. They are using them to document all infestations of purple loosestrife, saltcedar, and phragmites for their control project.

Senator Dierks reported that the Nebraska Leafy Spurge Working Task Force Conference will be July 29-30, in O'Neill, and he plans to attend.

Tesar offered to host the next Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force meeting at Sokol Camp located south of Valley, Nebraska. The meeting will be September 17, 2008, at 10:00 a.m. Tesar will make arrangements for a meeting site and possible river tour.

8. Brooks welcomed members of the Environmental Trust Board who will join the Task Force on the tour. Those in attendance introduced themselves to the Task Force.
9. Overview of Tour – Merle Illian, Twin Valley Weed Management Area, provided an overview of the Lower Republican Project. He provided handouts of before and after photos of the area that will be toured. Illian stated that channel clearing has improved the water flow from Harlan Reservoir to the Kansas border. He informed the members that 750 cubic feet per second (CFS) had been released without causing any lowland flooding. Two years ago, 400 CFS caused flooding and had to be backed off to 250 CFS. Illian stated that a combination of vegetation control, logjam removal and deep disking has drastically improved the conveyance of water in this section of the Republican.
10. Tour Republican River – Members adjourned to tour three stops on the Republican River. The stops include sprayed vegetation, logjam removal, and the deep disking site.