

**Riparian Vegetation management Task Force
Draft Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 6, 2009
Nebraska State Office Building
Lincoln, Nebraska**

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

Kent Aden	Mike Clements
Charles Brooks	Russ Shultz
Mike Arps	Dr Scott Josiah
Rich Tesar	Kirk Nelson
Senator Deb Fischer	Senator Don Preister
Senator Tom Carlson	Senator Cap Dierks
Senator John Harms	Senator Rom Hansen
Dr. Gary Cunningham	Mike Linder
Brian Dunnigan	Neil Moseman
Mike Sarchet	Gloria Erickson

Task Force members absent:

Greg Ibach	Jim Miller
Ron Bishop	

Guests present included:

Kim Robak	Ryan Rapp
Bob Bettger	Frank Albrecht
Doug Hallum	Senator Mark Christensen
Senator Ken Schilz	

NDA staff:

Rich Reiman	Denis Blank
Bobbie Kriz-Wickham	Mitch Coffin

2. Brooks announced 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*, *McCook Daily Gazette*, and *Kearney Hub*.
4. Brooks opened discussion on the minutes of the September 17, 2008, meeting. Brooks asked if there were any corrections or additions. There being no corrections or additions, Senator Hansen made a motion to approve the minutes. Senator Dierks seconded the motion.

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

5. Old Business:

There was no old business to discuss.

6. New Business:

Senator Carlson gave a PowerPoint presentation (handout provided to members) on water savings by removing invasive plants species in the streambed. He reminded the members of the Vegetation Management Goals and Objectives developed by the Task Force.

1:15 p.m. Senator Preister and Neil Moseman arrived.

Improve stream flow and riparian health in a manner that:

- Removes streambed vegetation to improve and maintain channel conveyance in fully and overappropriated river basins;
- Manage vegetation in riparian areas to improve and maintain ecosystem health; and
- Does not have negative effects on water quality for recreation, aquatic, and terrestrial life.

1:20 p.m. Senator Fischer arrived.

- Maintain riparian health through:
 1. Cooperative arrangements and education efforts that encourage voluntary landowner participation;
 2. Federal, state, and local government assistance and incentives; and
 3. Legislative action, as needed.
- Measure the effectiveness of actions taken through:
 1. Reporting of increased capacity of the streambed to handle flow;
 2. Reporting of acres treated and managed in 2007 and 2008; and
 3. Calculation of estimates of water saved by vegetation removal.

Senator Carlson discussed the positive results of streambed vegetation removal: flood control, hiking, carrying capacity, camping, endangered species, rafting, fishing, recreation, hunting, forest management, wildlife habitat, water savings, and wildlife viewing. He also outlined variable that influence scientific studies: acres, plant population, length of growing season, geography, availability of water, lab results verses field studies, and previous studies.

Senator Carlson referred to a "Phragmites Study UNK-2007" by Anne M. Cummings.

- Water use was laboratory measured at 195,000 gal/acre/growing season;
- Plant count was 68,000 phragmites plants per acre;
- 150 growing days; and
- Lysimeter measured.

“It is the opinion of the author that the lysimeter data on water use by phragmites grossly underestimates actual water use by stands in the field. Rate applied to stands in the field are substantial, but actual rates are most likely 2-3 times greater than those arrived at using these methods.”

Senator Carlson presented an estimate of Republican River streambed water savings with 2008 vegetation control.

- 1,200 acres of streambed treated from Harlan Dam to Kansas border.
- 1,750 acres of Harlan lakebed.
- Phragmites
 1,000 acres heavy infestation - 1,100,000 plants per acre;
 1,000 acres medium infestation - 250,000 plants per acre;
 180 growing days.
 - | <u>Water use per Plant per Day</u> | <u>Total Acre Feet</u> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| One Cup | 43,000 |
| Two Cups | 86,000 |
| One Quart | 172,000 |
- Cottonwood – Saltcedar
 2,000 acres (1500 plants per acre);
 180 growing days.
 - | <u>Water use per Plant per Day</u> | <u>Total Acre Feet</u> |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| One Gallon | 3,760 |
| Five Gallon | 18,800 |
| Ten Gallon | 37,600 |
- Acre Feet Saved
 - Low Estimate ----- 43,000 + 3,760 46,760
 - Medium Estimate ----- 86,000 + 18,800 104,800
 - High Estimate ----- 172,000 + 37,600 209,600

Josiah asked if any work is being done to utilize the piled trees and brush from the clearing projects. Senator Carlson advised that he is not aware of any activities taking place at this time. Senator Hansen asked if the energy office had a plan to use tree and brush piles. Moseman said it has been considered. Sarchet stressed there is a need for a portable pellet machine that could be used throughout the state.

Senator Fischer asked if the Department of Environmental Quality is monitoring the projects on the river. Linder reported that he is not aware of any special monitoring, but commented that it may be possible to do so in the future. Senator Fischer asked if Game and Parks had any concerns. Nelson reported they have not been aware of any ill effects from herbicide activities on the rivers. He also reported that Game and Parks uses many of the same herbicides on their own properties. Senator Preister believes that data needs to be collected to show that no harm is being caused by herbicide applications.

Clements expressed concern regarding the tributaries that feed the river systems. These tributaries are potential sources for reinfestation of invasive plants. He stated that additional fully appropriated areas may stress the \$2 million request.

Brooks commented that Lake McConaughy has shown an increase of water, but no one is mentioning the 2,000 acres of saltcedar that was treated in 2007. Senator Preister asked if deep disking could be done at Lake McConaughy. Aden reported that deep disking is being done in some areas. However, Aden stressed they need to be sure the saltcedar is dead, or re-sprouting will occur.

7. Work Group Reports.

Streambed Ownership – Schulz reported this group continues to address the needs of true ownership boundaries in riparian areas. He stressed the need for proactive response to new emerging weed issues. Nelson commented that the proposed Invasive Species Council may be of some assistance. Schulz stated that he has had discussions with the group. Clements thanked the streambed ownership work group and Schulz for all the work they have accomplished so far. Possible legislation on streambed ownership may need to be introduced in 2010.

Vegetation Management and Treatment – Aden reported that the first year has been funded by the High Plains Weed Management Association through the Nebraska Environmental Trust. The focus of the project is not only control, but also the need for restoration and follow-up. Ryan Rapp reported that three studies are taking place. These include herbicide, mowing, and disking. The grazing study was delayed because of high water flows in the Platte River. Three replications at each site are being used. Rapp reported he has only been able to make observations and is not prepared to provide recommendations at this time. It appears in year one that spring herbicide treatments are ineffective. Senator Preister asked if any water quality studies have been done in conjunction with any of the projects where herbicide is being broadcast. Linder reported that the Department of Environmental Quality continues to check water quality on the rivers, but has not focused on a project area. He indicated that this could be done on one project during next season without any additional cost.

Survey and Monitoring Work Group – Tesar reported this group is waiting to see if funding can be secured through the Task Force Environmental Trust application. He is working on a project on the lower Platte to grind treated vegetation and single and double disking of sandbars to improve the scouring during high water. Tesar stated that several sandpits in the lower Platte area have some phragmites infestations and they will be working to address these with landowners.

Education and Awareness Work Group – Clements reported they will be meeting at the conclusion of the Task Force meeting today.

Funding and Incentives Work Group – Arps reported this group is waiting the results of the Environmental Trust application and new legislation to be introduced by Senator Carlson. Bettger stated the EQIP Special Initiative proposed by NRCS is waiting for rules to be written. However, it appears there will be some funding available to landowners through EQIP. Steve Chick, State Conservationist, continues to support the special initiative. Schulz stressed that more landowners need to take advantage of EQIP funding. County weed control superintendents and weed management areas will be assisting with the promotion of these programs regarding riparian areas.

Vegetation Water Use Work Group – Doug Hallum presented an overview of the “Assessment of Resources Available to Quantify Non-beneficial Consumptive Water Use

by Riparian Vegetation in Nebraska.” Some invasive plants may consume more water than native plants. He reported that 11 water studies are currently underway in Nebraska. Hallum said that studies tend to be variable because there are so many variables when studies are conducted. Senator Christensen said he appreciates the report and realizes that numerous studies need to be conducted. Schulz said there is a need to present this type of information to landowners to help them to improve their property, regardless of its use. A copy of this report is available at:

http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/Publications_Studies/RipET_FINAL_1208.pdf .

8. Other Items.

Senator Dierks asked if bio-control agents were available for saltcedar, phragmites, and purple loosestrife. Brooks reported that Nebraska has releases of bio-control agents for saltcedar and purple loosestrife. He stated that the saltcedar agents were released in 2006, and it is still too early for any results. Of the three releases made, only one is still considered active. Bio-control agents for phragmites are currently not available, but research is being conducted.

Brooks expressed his appreciation to the Task Force members and NDA on the December 15, 2008, report.

Tesar stated that an individual has contacted him regarding the possibility of harvesting phragmites roots for a project. More information will be available in the future.

Brooks provided a copy of the LR 314 report regarding funding for the noxious weed program.

Senator Preister commented that there was no mention of grazing studies. Aden said the research project still continues to implement a grazing strategy into the study site. However, this is dependent on water flows in the spring. Senator Preister suggested that grazing needs to be mentioned in the final report.

9. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled to coincide with the hearing date for LB 98.

10. The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

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