

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force
Draft Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 9, 2009
Central Platte Natural Resource District
Grand Island, Nebraska**

1. Call to order – Chairman Charles Brooks called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. Roll call was taken. Task Force members present:

Dr. Gary Cunningham	Kent Aden
Ron Bishop	Greg Ibach
Charles Brooks	Mike Linder
Russ Shultz	Mike Arps
Rich Tesar	Dr, Scott Josiah
Mike Sarchet	Kirk Nelson
Gloria Erickson	Senator Tom Carlson
Senator Cap Dierks	

Task Force members absent:

Mike Clements	Jim Miller
Brian Dunnigan	Neil Moseman
Senator Deb Fischer	Senator John Harms
Senator Tom Hansen	

Guests:

Rich Walters	Merle Illian
John Thorburn	Senator Mark Christensen
Tim Smith	Dennis Beyer
Paul Beaver	Milt Moravek

NDA staff:

Rich Reiman	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 of today's meeting was published in the *Omaha World Herald*, *McCook Daily Gazette*, and the *Kearney Hub*.
4. Brooks opened discussion on the minutes of the January 6, 2009, meeting. Brooks asked if there were any corrections or additions. There being no corrections or additions, Senator Dierks made a motion to approve the minutes. Bishop seconded the motion.

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

5. Old Business:

There was no old business to discuss.

6. New Business:

Twin Valley Weed Management Area (WMA) Report – Merle Illian provided an overview of the work accomplished on the Eastern Republican Improvement Project for FY 08-09. Illian also outlined the activities that needed to be completed in the future. Members applauded the Twin Valley WMA on the progress that has been made, but stressed the need to maintain previously treated areas. Currently, Twin Valley WMA does not have any funding secured for FY 09-10.

Southwest Weed Management Area Report – Tim Smith reported that this project has focused on brush removal along the Republican River. Target species have been saltcedar, Russian olive, and eastern red cedar. Some small isolated patches of phragmites have been found and treated. Smith stated they received funding from Nebraska Environmental Trust (\$300,000.00) to continue this project for FY 09-10. He commented they are still researching a use for the large brush piles that are being created. Some of the first year brush piles have been burned. Smith said that several landowners have commented that the streams have been running water that had not been noticed for several years.

High Plains Weed Management Association - Dennis Beyer and Paul Beaver reported 123 miles of the North Platte River has been mapped using a helicopter. Several stands of phragmites have been identified and treated within the river channel. Their project is continuing with Nebraska Environmental Trust funds to remove invasive trees in riparian areas.

West Central and Platte Valley Weed Management Areas – Rich Walters reported that saltcedar was treated on Lake McConaughy in 2007. These projects focused on phragmites control in the channel of the Platte River from Hershey to Elm Creek during the 2008 season. Depending on funding, they plan to treat phragmites in the channel from Elm Creek to Columbus during the 2009 season. Nebraska Environmental Trust funds will be used to treat invasive plants in the channel from Kingsley Dam to Elm Creek in 2009. Rich reported that 94% of their funds in 2008 were used on the ground for treatment of invasive plant species. He projects, that in 2009, 95% of their funds will be used on the ground.

Legislative Report – Senator Carlson stressed the importance of continuing to improve the carrying capacity of the rivers while improving wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. He complimented the projects on the amount of work that has been accomplished in only two years. Positive impacts have taken place wherever work has been performed. He stated that \$10 million was spent to acquire 32,000 acre feet of water from landowners at a price of \$312 per acre foot. In the Republican basin, \$2.5 million has been sent to improve the channel, and he estimates this work has saved 68,000 acre feet of water.

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) – Brach Johnson, NCRS, reported that NDA had submitted a proposal to NRCS and State Conservationist,

Steve Chick, was scheduled to sign today. Landowner signup would begin on July 13, and close on July 24, for the first year. Through the CCPI, \$1.5 million per year would be available as cost share to landowners for three years. This proposal will compliment work in fully and over appropriated river basins, with priority given to areas that have received LB 701 funding. Task Force members thanked Senator Carlson and Steve Chick for their work to improve funding opportunities into these fragile riparian areas. Weed Management Areas (WMA) will greatly assist NRCS field offices in this project. They already have contact with riparian landowners, which should streamline the signup process, as well as help get the word out to producers.

Streambed Ownership Work Group – Russ Shultz provided an overview and handout of this group activity. He stressed the importance to define property boundaries on river systems, not only for taxing purposes, but to improve noxious weed enforcement. His work group will continue to work and develop recommendations for possible legislation in the future.

2009 LB 98 Grants – Greg Ibach reported that NDA received three applications for funding in 2009. He supplied the members with a summary of funding activities for FY 07-08 and FY 08-09. Ibach stated that the CCPI will provide an excellent tool for landowners to implement some conservation practices on their property. These CCPIs will also help to stretch the limited funds currently available through LB 98. He informed the members that no announcement would be made today regarding LB 98 funding for FY 09-10. Ibach said the announcement would be made by August 1, 2009.

Legislative Report – Both Senators Carlson and Dierks stated that this legislative session was extremely difficult due the nation's economy. While every effort was made to continue to fund LB 98 at the current level, funds were not available.

7. Work Group Reports

Goals, Objectives, and Reports – Senator Carlson had to leave the meeting for another appointment and no report was given.

Vegetation Management and Treatment – Kent Aden's group currently has no funding to continue their project. The work group is trying to secure some funds to continue this study. The local WMA will work to monitor the study site for the most effective control measures.

Survey and Monitoring – No report provided.

Education and Awareness – No report provided.

Funding and Incentives – Mike Arps stated it is good to have support from NRCS with the CCPI. This source of funds will greatly assist landowners.

Vegetation Water Use – Ron Bishop reported that Central Platte (Natural Resource District (NRD) is conducting an ET study of phragmites on the Central Platte River. They will share this information with the Task Force when it becomes available. Need to collect two – three years of data to have a good baseline.

8. Open Discussion

Gloria Erickson is pleased that Steve Chick with NRCS for the CCPI funding for landowners. This is a cooperative effort that will improve riparian areas.

Mike Sarchet reported that Twin Cities Development is looking into a biomass project, and they hope to develop a pilot program to produce mulch, soil additive, and wood pellets from trees and brush removed in riparian areas.

Scott Josiah reported that the college at Curtis is converting their heating system to burn wood. They plan to be on-line by this fall.

Members asked about the Republican River compact with Kansas. It was reported that the arbitrator ruled that Nebraska owes Kansas \$10,000.

9. Schedule Next Meeting

It was agreed to have the next meeting if the Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force on Monday, September 21, 2009, at the Kearney Holiday Inn. The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. and will be held in conjunction with the North American Weed Management Conference and Trade Show being hosted by Nebraska.

10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

RVMTFminutes_091109.doc