



Nebraska Resources

Newsletter

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Meetings Highlight Missouri River Challenges

By Steve Gaul and Brandi Flyr

Three recent Nebraska meetings helped highlight challenges Nebraska and other Missouri Basin states face in future Missouri River management. The Department organized a March 12 meeting at the Papio-Missouri River NRD offices in Omaha to receive input from Nebraska entities with an interest in the Missouri River. That was followed by a March 16 Nebraska City meeting of the Missouri River Association of States and Tribes (MoRAST), a regional interstate organization formed by the joint resolution of the governors of seven states and the Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition. Then from March 17 to 19, the Missouri River Natural Resource Committee held its annual conference/forum in Nebraska City. This year's theme was "A Climate for Change."

Nebraska Input Meeting

The March 12 Omaha input meeting for Nebraska State MoRAST representation helped highlight concerns of Nebraska interests with stakeholder presentations on power industry, public water supply, water quality issues, navigation, and flood control. The Department has organized several meetings to provide input to the Nebraska MoRAST representatives in the last two years. They have helped to develop a better mutual understanding of the needs of Nebraska river users, provide background for MoRAST meetings, and develop informed state perspectives for federally led efforts.



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Agency Numbers to Remember

Agency address:

Nebraska
Department of Natural Resources
301 Centennial Mall South
Fourth Floor
P.O. Box 94676
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4676

Agency phone number:

(402) 471-2363

Agency fax number:

(402) 471-2900

Agency homepage address:

<http://www.dnr.ne.gov>

Editor's Note:

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2009 Well Registrations

Water wells for various uses continued to be drilled across Nebraska in 2009. **Last year over 5,000 water wells were drilled** for purposes ranging from livestock watering to irrigation to municipal water use.

Current Nebraska law requires that **all water wells** be registered with the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. Exceptions to the law include test holes in existence for 10

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So what types of challenges were discussed in the meeting? The power industry presentation and discussion identified concerns with river flows needed to meet temperature requirements for equipment cooling, water availability for hydro-electric generation, use of the river for equipment transport, sedimentation, and ice jam issues. It also highlighted potential economic impacts if minimum flow needs are not met. Navigation issues discussed included the impacts of recent drought, reduced length of season, and low flows on the profitability of navigation. Public water supply issues discussed included water quality questions, ice jams, and the need for channel stability. Water quality challenges discussed

included both temperature and nutrient issues. There was some discussion of how flow needs for one use may also serve other uses.

The meeting did not focus on ecosystem restoration issues, as those topics received significant discussion in previous meetings. The March 12 meeting did include reports on the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan and meetings of the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee. Previous input meetings discussed how human activity has altered the river channel and flow regime, as well as the needs and potential avenues for ecosystem and species recovery.

More detailed notes on the input meetings, copies of the participant's presentation material, and other Missouri River material is on the Missouri River Activities portion of the Department's website at: <http://dnr.ne.gov/MissouriRiverActivities/>.

MoRAST and MRAPS

A significant topic at both MoRAST meetings and the state input meetings has been the new Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study (MRAPS). **This \$25 million study, led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will examine the original purposes of the legislation that created the system of dams and reservoirs on the Missouri River and its tributaries and suggest whether changes may be warranted.** The existing authorized purposes include flood control, navigation, irrigation, power, water supply, water quality control, recreation, and fish and wildlife. However, it has been over 65 years since passage of the Flood Control Act of 1944. MRAPS presents an opportunity for a comprehensive reexamination of the system purposes and related Missouri River management in light of current conditions and needs. The study will examine current project infrastructure and operations to identify options that may provide more multipurpose benefits. It will also facilitate basin-wide discussion of trade-offs and efficiencies, and evaluate river management options in respect to current basin values and priorities. The study began in October 2009 with a five year target for completion.



Refining questions and issues that could be addressed by MRAPS was not the only topic on the March 16 MoRAST meeting agenda, but it was arguably one of the most interesting. As with most states, a large number of Nebraska water users and important ecosystems are dependent upon the Missouri River. As of the March 16 MoRAST meeting, participating representatives had developed a draft of 117 potential questions and issues that MRAPS could address. The final MoRAST list will be only one source in a variety of inputs the Corps is likely to receive from states, tribes, local governments, individuals, and organizations.

The Missouri River Association of States and Tribes is charged with communication and resolving issues of concern to basin states and tribes, as well as facilitating management of natural resources in the basin. The Nebraska Department of Natural Resources and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission are the designated Nebraska representatives.

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Missouri River Natural Resource Committee Annual Forum

Each year the Missouri River Natural Resource Committee (MRNRC) holds an annual Biological Opinion (BiOp) and research forum. The purpose of the BiOp and forum is for various research and management agencies to share data, research, collaborate, and discuss management strategies within the Missouri River Basin. Anyone who is interested in current Missouri River management and concerns is welcome to attend the meeting. The forum included a wide variety of topics, including hydropower, water quality, water quantity, water use, endangered and threatened species, navigation, and dam operations. The meeting included both poster and oral presentations, with over 118 presentations. The meeting included representatives from Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, as well as Missouri River researchers from other states. Highlights of the meeting were presentations from several Corp officials commenting on current Missouri River dam operations and current environmental restoration projects.

Copies of the BiOp and forum program, abstracts, presentation powerpoints, as well as other information about the 2010 meeting are at: <http://www.mrnrc2010.com/>.



Corps Announces Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study Scoping Sessions

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has announced the schedule for 30 open-house style public scoping meetings for the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study (MRAPS). Eleven tribal focused meetings are also to be held. The meetings are an opportunity to provide formal comments, suggestions, and recommendations to the Corps. MRAPS will review the legislation that created the system of dams and reservoirs on the Missouri River and its major tributaries. Specifically, it will examine the current eight authorized purposes in view of current basin values and priorities to determine if changes to these purposes and existing federal water resource infrastructure may be warranted. The schedule for the **three Nebraska meetings** and three nearby meetings in adjacent states is as follows:

Tuesday, June 22, Council Bluffs, Iowa, 5 pm – 8 pm, Mid-America Center, One Arena Way

Wednesday, June 23, Nebraska City, 5 pm – 8 pm, Fraternal Order of Eagles, 600 1st Corso

Thursday, June 24, Lincoln, 5pm – 8 pm, Holiday Inn Hotel, Lincoln – Downtown, 141 N 9th St.

Thursday, July 29, Sioux City, Iowa, 5 pm – 8 pm, Stoney Creek Inn and Conference Center, 300 3rd St.

Friday, July 30, Yankton, South Dakota, 5 pm – 8 pm, Riverfront Event Center, 121, W 3rd St. (3rd and Walnut), (plus additional Tribal meeting in a nearby location TBA)

Wednesday, August 4, North Platte, 5 pm – 8 pm, Sandhills Convention Center at Quality Inn and Suites, 2101 South Jeffers

The Corps website on the study can be found at:
<http://www.mraps.org/>.