



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.



Missouri River Basin

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Agency Numbers to Remember

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Editor's Note:

A full color electronic version of this newsletter can be found on the Department's web site along with back issues at <http://www.dnr.ne.gov/dnrnews/newsarchive2.html>.

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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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Missouri River Challenges continued from p.1



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/>.



Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

participated in the **Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium** held at Hardin Hall on the East Campus of University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UN-L) on Saturday, March 27. The symposium began in Lincoln in 2000, and is a free public, family-friendly event, with valuable weather related information for all age groups. The symposium events are organized by the High Plains Regional Climate Center, UN-L's School of Natural Resources and the Lancaster County Office of Emergency Management. The Department's **Nebraska Rainfall**

Assessment and Information Network (NeRAIN) exhibit was one of 32 exhibits on display in Hardin Hall for the event.

NeRAIN is a network of approximately 900 volunteers across Nebraska that record precipitation amounts at their locations and input that information in a state-wide database housed and updated on a daily basis at DNR. Volunteers receive an official rain gauge and are trained on proper gauge placement, reading, and reporting methods. This information is available to the general public at NeRAIN's website. Nebraska's natural resources districts act as regional coordinators to solicit and train volunteers in the proper measurement of precipitation.

If you would like to become a volunteer in the NeRAIN program please visit NeRAIN's website listed below.

For additional information on the **Central Plains Severe Weather Symposium** go visit:

<http://snr.unl.edu/cpsws/>

For additional information on **NeRAIN** visit:

<http://dnrdata.dnr.ne.gov/NeRAIN/index.asp>



Republican River Conjunctive Management and Future Plans in the Basin

By Jason S. Kepler

In early March 2010, the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) initiated a series of meetings with the Republican River Basin Natural Resources Districts (NRDs), Irrigation Districts (IDs) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to **discuss development of a conjunctive management strategy for the Republican River Basin**. The first meeting was held March 18th at the Cambridge Community Building in Cambridge, NE. Attendees included representatives from DNR, Upper Republican NRD, Middle Republican NRD, Lower Republican NRD, Tri-Basin NRD, Nebraska Bostwick ID, Frenchman-Cambridge ID, Frenchman Valley ID, Pioneer ID, and BOR.

Each party gave a presentation about concerns for their organizations and discussion of future needs of the basin. DNR's presentation focused on the Conjunctive Management Program in the Platte River Basin, and how aspects of that could be implemented in the Republican River Basin. These presentations can be found at <http://dnrdata.dnr.ne.gov/download/RepublicanRiver/ConjunctiveManagement/>. Following the presentations, the group discussed future actions that need to be taken in the Republican River Basin. Out of this discussion, a smaller technical committee was formed to further address the future actions of the group as a whole. This technical group met via conference call on March 30th and decided to move forward with a four phase approach to Conjunctive Management. The phases include: **Phase I** Scenario Development, **Phase II** Tool Development, **Phase III** Scenario Analysis, and **Phase IV** Scenario Implementation.

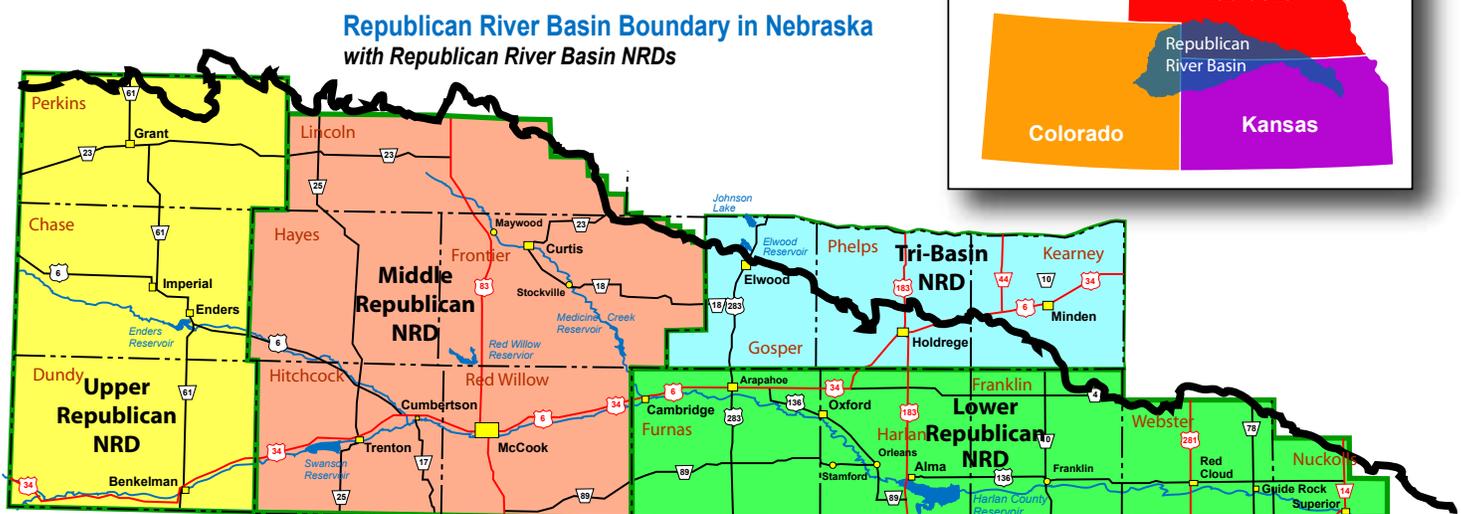
This approach will be presented to the entire group at the next meeting (date yet to be determined).

Additionally, DNR is working to finalize modifications to the existing Integrated Management Plans (IMPs). **These modifications will explicitly list the actions to be taken when the State is in danger of being out of compliance with the Republican River Compact.**

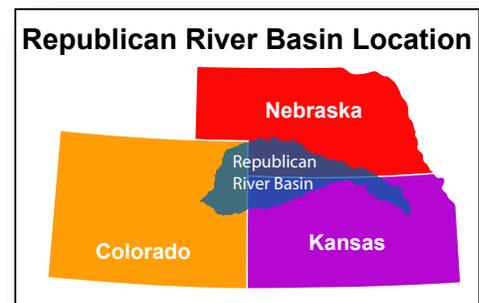
DNR has also started the initial phases of non-binding arbitration with Kansas and Colorado related to Colorado's Compact Compliance Pipeline and Nebraska's Crediting Issue. Nebraska and Kansas have both raised issues with the way Colorado has proposed to account for any augmentation water that is delivered to the North Fork of the Republican River. Nebraska would also like to address how any monetary payment made as a result of Compact non-compliance will be addressed in the Republican River Compact Administration Accounting Procedures. This arbitration trial is scheduled for July 12- July 14, 2010. The arbitrator, Martha Pagel, will give her recommendations on September 30, 2010.



Republican River 2003



Republican River Basin Boundary in Nebraska
with Republican River Basin NRDs



(map was not produced for the purpose of measurement)

Integrated Management Plan for Upper Big Blue NRD management area

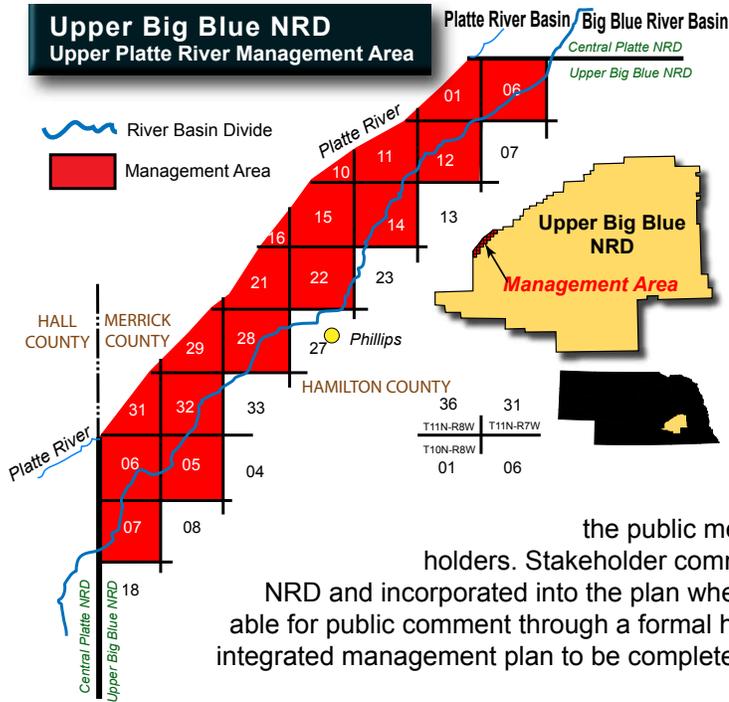
By Doug Hallum

The Department of Natural Resources is working in conjunction with the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District to develop an integrated management plan for a management area along the northwest boundary of the district (see map). The final determination designating this portion of the Upper Platte River Basin was made in April 2006. By statute, the NRD and DNR have up to five years to complete the planning process.

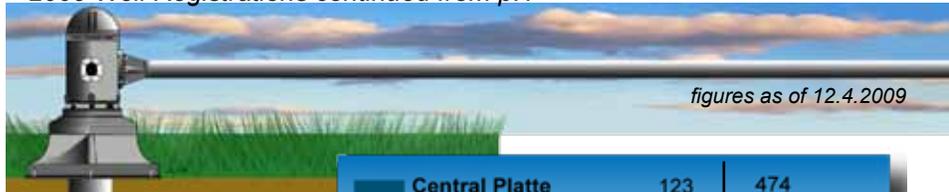
The DNR and NRD held a stakeholder meeting at the Phillips Community Center on March 24th. The meeting was well attended by DNR and NRD staff members, Upper Big Blue board members, and several producers who provided insightful comments and asked thoughtful questions. The DNR believes this dialog was very productive, and will provide a good foundation to move forward in the planning process with the NRD.

Currently, the DNR and NRD are compiling comments from

the public meeting and allowing time for follow-up comments from stakeholders. Stakeholder comments and concerns will then be weighed by the DNR and NRD and incorporated into the plan when appropriate. Then, a draft plan will be prepared and available for public comment through a formal hearing process this summer. This should allow for the joint integrated management plan to be completed well ahead of the April 2011 deadline.



2009 Well Registrations continued from p.1



figures as of 12.4.2009

The electronic address for searching DNR's well registration information is:

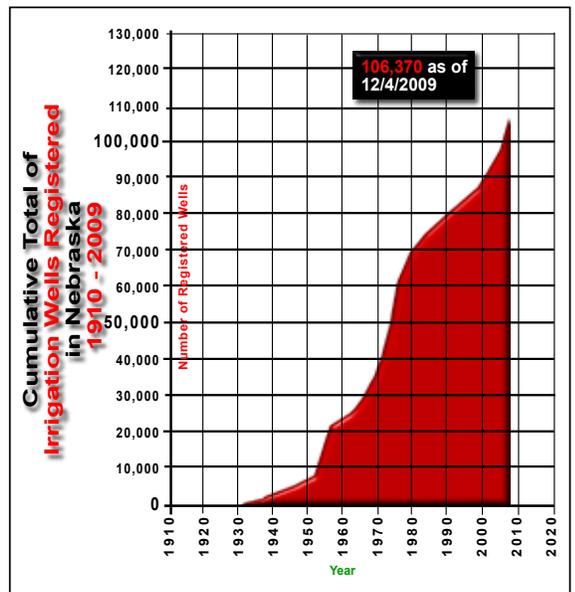
<http://dnrdata.dnr.ne.gov/wellssql/>

DNR Forms are available at:

<http://dnr.ne.gov/docs/wellforms.html>

days or less, dewatering wells with intended use of 90 days or less, and domestic and livestock wells **completed prior to September 9, 1993**. Water well contractors are responsible for filing the well registration for newly constructed water wells with DNR within 60 days of well completion. Well owners are responsible for registering existing wells that have not been previously registered with the State. Registration forms and information are available at DNR's offices or on our website. Failure to register water wells is a Class IV misdemeanor under Nebraska law.

Natural Resources Districts	2009 Registered Irrigation Wells Including Replacement Wells	2009 Total Registered Wells All Types
Central Platte	123	474
Lewis & Clark	81	134
Little Blue	59	175
Lower Big Blue	37	120
Lower Elkhorn	109	416
Lower Loup	48	437
Lower Niobrara	41	90
Lower Platte North	43	443
Lower Platte South	3	335
Lower Republican	21	67
Middle Niobrara	13	124
Middle Republican	8	74
Nemaha	17	122
North Platte	7	163
Papio-Missouri River	19	462
South Platte	4	45
Tri-Basin	39	90
Twin Platte	38	229
Upper Big Blue	91	277
Upper Elkhorn	52	173
Upper Loup	9	142
Upper Niobrara-White	17	457
Upper Republican	6	32
TOTALS	885	5081



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The *Nebraska Resources* is a quarterly publication of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed.



New Ground Water Well Registration Database

On June 1, 2010, DNR will launch a new ground water well registration database. The new database will facilitate the collection of more extensive well data and improved well location information. The next newsletter, Issue #36, will provide more details.

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Nebraska Department of Natural Resources....

....dedicated to the sustainable use and proper management of the State's natural resources.