

RIPARIAN VEGETATION MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE

MEETING MINUTES: September 19, 2018
Audubon Center @ Rowe Sanctuary, Gibbon NE

MEETING: Called to order by Chairman Brent Meyer @ 9:00 am

PRESENT: *Senator Lowe from District 37, Brent Meyer, Shuhai Zheng, Charles Brooks, Ryan Chapman, Rod Ely, Tala Awada, Matt Lukasiewicz, Rich Tesar, Mark Czaplewski, Mike Reed, Kevin Adams, Rod Imm, Tammy Zimmerman*; GUEST: *Brian Crabtree*

LAST MINUTES: March 2018; Mark Czaplewski approved/Rod Imm seconded;

PRESENTATION: Provided by Bill Taddicken, Rowe Sanctuary Director;

- Provided background information on the facility and site;
Main goal of the sanctuary: river conservation;
- Announced that Crystal Stoner is the new Audubon Director;
- A total of 2,850 acres (which includes conservation acres);
- Deals with invasives beyond phragmites, such as cottonwoods, willows, etc.;
- Provides summer camps for kids, rents open “blinds” for visitors during Crane Season,
- Do a lot of fundraising; although non-profit they pay taxes, one third of their budget comes in during Crane Season;
- “Fifty Year Vision” developed in 2015 – to include grassland and trail expansions;
- Climate change reports of concern;

SENATOR LOWE:

- Recommended that the most effective way to get your senators attention was to do it through their local constituents;
- Riparian vegetation interests need to approach their own senators directly with a visit, letter, email, etc.;

STATE FFA COLLABORATION:

- Suggested that the RVMTF ‘Education Committee’ contact the state FFA Director (within the NE Department of Education) to meet and discuss ways to educate the next generation;
- Asked that this be done before the next RVMTF Meeting in December;

WEBSITE OPTION:

- Tammy Zimmerman confirmed that the NE Department of Agriculture (NDA) is willing to provide space on their website to post Riparian success stories / details / photos / statistics / video clips etc. for viewing; Any format will work and can be modified if necessary;

- Can be a Website reference for all to use as a quick resource;
- Tammy will be contacting persons for info to be placed on the site;

RVMTF ANNUAL REPORT:

- Reviewed with no suggestions;
- Senator Lowe advised that senators are more apt to read these reports if they are a one page Cliff Notes version, with perhaps the website link for more detail;
- Again, requests from their constituency get quicker attention and best to contact them from January to June time frame;

NEED FOR EDUCATION AND OUTREACH:

- NDA offered to have their PIO interview and/or sit down with a RVMTF representative for web and NET videos to be made visible;
- Small 60 second video interviews of several Riparian entities recommended;
- A broad “factsheet” pamphlet for distribution would be ideal for handout by anyone to invoke interest in the cause;
- Who can collect data and compile to show how the money spent now is multiplied monetarily years later, when protecting and preserving waterways;
- Consider conducting a similar ‘Celebration’ activity (i.e. Shell Creek delisting) – to showcase a Riparian success moment - for legislative attendance and media coverage;
- Consider space at State Fair or Husker Harvest days by a riparian management entity (or the Task Force) for outreach;

BUDGET DISCUSSION:

- Discussion on funding concerns and the potential for further cuts;
- Senator Lowe recommended they approach the State Appropriations committee again;
- The Task Force generally agreed that the ‘State’ should be responsible for protecting and preserving the waters of Nebraska.
- Funding options more and more limited;
- Problem: several funding opportunities require a ‘match’ before being awarded. State funds were critical to obtain several matching sources. A concern.
- ‘Maintenance’ crossroad - all the work completed to advance water conveyance across the state can disappear in short order if not maintained;
- Begging legislators to consider what the cost to the state could be IF Riparian management work does not continue;

WORK GROUP UPDATES:

- a) Goals/Reports:
Received no response from task force on document distributed (4-13-18 draft);

- Czaplewski motioned to approve / Reed seconded;
This draft to be re-sent with the draft meeting minutes;
- b) Vegetation Management Treatment:
Kevin and John met;
Seeking research information from the University;
Kevin will email the group before next meeting;
- c) Survey and Monitoring: Rich Tesar / Mike Reed
Submitted previous draft report;
Rich spent two days on the Niobrara and Elkhorn and was impressed with improvements;
Noted the Lower Platte area has some inland phragmites showing up at new housing sites and in corn fields;
Rich traveled through several Eastern states and saw tremendous phragmites problems, including Iowa;
Mike reported that they've added tributaries to their work in the last two years;
Weed Management entities have become vegetative management control agents;
- d) Education and Awareness:
Add Mike Reed and Tammy Zimmerman to this committee;
Education to be targeted at state senators;
Work on factsheet/pamphlet emphasizing stream flow / invasive species (not just phragmites);
- e) Funding and Incentive:
Request monies from Game and Parks;
Approach others with a 'match funding' approach;
- f) Streambed Ownership:
Assessor tax dollars an issue, some owners getting taxed on both sides of the waterway;
- g) Vegetation Water Use: Zheng / Awada
Working toward developing a fact sheet;
Research data already available perhaps;
Provide invasives vs non-invasive qualitative data;
This committee could use more Task Force members;

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Brian Crabtree announced that he will be retiring the end of October;
- Potential other retirements: Rodney Imm and Don Kraus;

REQUESTS / ACTION STEPS:

- Task force members are moving on due to retirements; Current members asked to approach potential new candidates; Mitch asked to approach Game and Parks again for their 'new' representative;
- Request a face to face meeting with Director Wellman at next meeting in Lincoln, December 19th;

- Task Force requests more transparency on how grant money awards are determined; View the scoring mechanism; Possibly have a Task Force member involved with the final selections;
- Discuss possibility of Summer Tour 2019 again; Need funding source?

MEETING SCHEDULE ESTABLISHED:

- Quarterly;
- Third Wednesday in the months of: March, June, September, and December;
- March 20th
June 19th (potentially Scottsbluff)
September 18th (potentially Niobrara area)
December 19th (next one in Lincoln at NDA)

ADJOURNED: Reed motioned / Czaplewski seconded;

HANDOUTS MADE AVAILABLE:

- Platte River Recovery Implementation Program Biennial Report
- Platte River Recovery Implementation Program 2016 State of the Platte Report
- 2018 Fall Weed Watch Newspaper from 'PRIDE'
- Factsheets on Platte Valley Weed Management Area riparian work at river tour