

**Riparian Vegetation Management Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
October 5, 2017  
Sokol Camp  
Waterloo, Nebraska**

1. Call to order – Brent Meyer called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. He thanked Rich Tesar for hosting today’s meeting and furnishing lunch. Meyer welcomed all members and asked for introductions. Task Force members present:

Don Kraus  
Rich Tesar  
Dr. Shuhai Zheng  
Ryan Chapman  
Charles Brooks  
Matt Lukasiewicz  
Mike Sarchet

Brent Meyer  
Larry Heyen  
Kevin Adams  
Mark Czaplewski  
Dr. Tala Awada  
Mike Reed  
TJ Walker for Karie Decker

Task Force members absent:

Greg Ibach  
Gloria Erickson  
Arden Wohlers  
Rodney Ely

Roderick Imm  
John Erixson  
Patrick O’Brien

Guests:

Dane Pauley

NDA Staff:

Tammy Zimmerman

Mitch Coffin

2. Review and Approval of July 27, 2017 Minutes:

Reed moved to approve the minutes, Tesar second, motion carried.

3. Old Business:

Meyer asked if there was any old business to discuss. No old business.

#### 4. New Business:

##### a. Grant Award Update

Mitch presented information (handout attached) on the seven projects that requested funding for FY17/18. Members asked why more projects do not apply. Mitch stated that cash match seems to hold some back. However, he stressed that cash match is important and shows the Legislature that local and landowner funds need to help support projects.

Members discussed if some WMAs need to revitalize or promote new leadership within their Weed Management Area (WMA) to move it forward. Only a few WMAs have project coordinators and the rest rely on volunteerism to lead projects. Tesar reported on the Task Force presentation that was given by Mitch at the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts (NARD) conference on September 25, 2017. Tesar stated that he continues to encourage NRD Managers to assist projects financially. NRD Managers seem to be reluctant to raise taxes and maybe they just don't understand the problems and issues related to riparian areas.

Tesar said the Lower Platte WMA has been removing woody and unwanted vegetation from Sokol Island and return the river to a braided stream.

Brooks stated that when WMAs were first formed they relied heavily on Nebraska Environmental Trust (NET) for funding. Funding from the Legislature has been instrumental to continuing work provided they have financial partners. WMAs need to go back to their local NRD and show them what is been accomplished and what can be done.

Sarchet stated that old and new State Senators need to be updated and informed regarding riparian issues. Most likely many of them will not read the report submitted by the Task Force. Each Task force member should be speaking with their State Senator regarding improvement of riparian areas to conserve water and protect our natural resources.

#### 5. Work Group Discussion – Updates

##### a. Goals, Objectives, and Reports

Kraus presented a draft (handout attached) to the members. This group is currently working to finalize.

Members – Don Kraus, Mark Czaplewski, Pat O'Brien  
Others -

#### b. Vegetation Management and Treatment

This group has not met. Reed reported that tributaries and the Blue River have been surveyed. Flooding is always a concern when river and stream channels are choked with vegetation. Members would like to see a tour organized so members could visit sites and see firsthand of the challenges these projects are faced with.

Members – John Erixson, Tala Awada, Rich Tesar, Kevin Adams.  
Others – NRCS? TJ Walker

#### c. Survey and Monitoring

This group has not met. Members asked if WMAs could provide drone images to the Task Force. Is it possible to partner with a NRD that has a drone? What is the cost per mile to survey river systems? A good success story is that Harlan Reservoir released water in spring of 2007 and caused lowland flooding at 300 CFS. Today they are able to release 1200 CFS with no sign of flooding.

Members – Rich Tesar, Rod Ely, Forest Service, Game & Parks, Brent Meyer, Kevin Adams, Larry Heyden  
Others –Dave Tunink

#### Working Lunch-Group Exchange

#### d. Education and Awareness

This group has not met. All members agreed that one cannot do enough education and awareness. In the early years, projects received a lot of media attention but that has gradually faded over time. Part of the reason is that it's nothing new for the media and partly because WMAs are not keeping the media informed. It was suggested to draw assistance from well-established groups like, NARD, Game and Parks, UNL Extension, Facebook, Nebraska Invasive Species Council and the NDA website. Walker said he will check with his communications people and Nebraskaland Magazine. It was noted that Lincoln receives water from the Platte River as well as other cities.

Members – Ryan Chapman, Mike Sarchet, Rod Ely, Rod Imm, Brent Meyer  
Others – Bob Wilson UNL, Ericka Hill NARD

e. Funding and Incentive

Group has not met. Members discussed the need for a constant funding source. Relying on the Legislature is complicated as well as concerns during budget cuts and the ever changing revenues that the state collects. Senator Carlson envisioned a maintenance fund after the first two years but economic collapse halted that idea. Landowners need to be held accountable and can't expect public funds to control noxious weeds growing on land that they own and are responsible for.

Members – Mike Sarchet, Matt Lukasiewicz, Arden Wohlers  
Others –

f. Streambed Ownership

Meyer supplied a (handout attached) for all members. Lukasiewicz had met with a few counties and reported that there are different ways of defining land ownership as well as how land is taxed in each county. Example, Howard County defines ownership to the bank and landowner has rights to the water. Members agreed that this is a difficult task that may be met with resistance. This seems like a task for the Legislature if the public actually wants defined streambed ownership.

Members – Matt Lukasiewicz  
Others –

6. Dane Pauley, Department of Natural Resources provided a drone demonstration for the Task Force. He was able to take video of the river and it will be shown at a later date.

g. Vegetation Water Use

Zheng provided a handout to the group (handout attached). Awada stated she has data on phragmites and she can share it at the next meeting. She said the data is not always clear.

Members – Shuhai Zheng, Tala Awada  
Others –

Meyer stressed the importance that work groups need to schedule their own meetings to discuss what each work group would like to bring forward to the Task Force. Work groups are also encouraged to seek out additional members.

Meyer asked all members for next meeting to share with the group why they are here and what are their goals.

Next meeting, Tala Awada will host in January hopefully at Nebraska Innovation Campus.