



Missouri
River
Futures

Missouri River Futures
P.O. Box 46
102 E Elm St.
Hartington, NE 68739
402-254-6858 ext. 114

www.missouririverfutures.com

Quarterly Activities Report for Oct. - Dec. 2008

Submitted by Theresa M. Smydra - Coordinator

Events/trainings attended:

WREP planning meeting in West Point – Oct. 9
MNRR regulatory meeting, Omaha – Oct. 16
River festival planning meeting – Oct. 27
Cottonwood Mgt. Team Conf., Vermillion – Nov. 18-20
MRF Annual Full-Group meeting – Dec. 10

Events/trainings planned:

WREP Landowner meetings – January 20 & 21
MRF Landowners Workshop for 2009 - March 18
MRI Symposium – March 5

Full-Group meeting held at Ponca State Park:

Two things dominated my time this quarter, this meeting and WREP. Once again, this meeting was well attended, due mostly to the inclusion of time sensitive topics on the agenda. 53 people from various agencies came in and out of the meeting as their busy schedules allowed. This number represents an all time high for attendance to this interagency meeting. Many of these presentations can be found via links on the MRF website. Ponca State Park managed by Nebraska Game & Parks provided the coffee, meeting room and courteous technical support, which enabled the meeting to proceed smoothly. Cecelia's, a local café in Ponca, catered the meal which was delicious as usual.

Audit hits NRCS!

Just one week prior to the full-group meeting, I was called to assist for a full week with the full accounting of NRCS financial records. Many vacations were cancelled including use-or-lose through the end of Dec. This required the full dedication of the workforce state wide to accomplish this huge feat plus extended work hours but the staff buckled down and met the deadline.

WREP effort picking up momentum!!!!

What an opportunity our Rec River area! Shortly on the heels of the full group meeting, notification of the landowners along the area of WREP eligibility was the next To-Do item. In the mean time, MRF efforts & time were spent with district secretaries and FSA personnel in 4 counties helping to generate a long list of landowners with land potentially eligible along the Missouri River floodplain in Nebraska. Initial letters went out to nearly 400 addresses. Also, a news release was prepared and the WREP fact sheet updated

and distributed with the notification letter. The automatic eligibility of all floodplain lands within 1 mile of the high bank of the Missouri opens up easement opportunities not yet seen along the Rec. River! Response to this program is expected to be high and workload near to overloaded in the first quarter of 2009.

WRP in Nebraska:

WRP has been popular in Knox County and Jane Wilmes, Resource Conservationist out of the Bloomfield Service Center, has been handling many of the signed applications as they come in and is well versed in the program details. She, as well as the field offices in general, has an already heavy workload with the other farm bill programs, so I have been assisting with this since WRP (as does WREP) fits so well with the goals of Missouri River Futures and gives me an opportunity to learn more about the program.

Landowners:

As we work through the WRP and WREP applications, this provides me an excellent opportunity to work with landowners, offering them the best opportunity for assistance that is in the conservation toolboxes I distribute. In many cases, I addressed other concerns that they had which included cedar tree removal, grass plantings, and other easement opportunities with other entities. This was especially true for those owning land near the river but primarily in the bluffs where they wouldn't be eligible for WREP.

MNRR Promotional Activities

Planning for the first ever River Festival in the Rec. River stretch becomes well underway. Details to work out include: what age group to target, what types of river presentations to make, who to make those presentations, who to invite, where to have it. These topics plus others are all that needed to be decided yet for this festival. Missouri River Futures, being based out of Hartington, Nebraska, became the main voice for Nebraska's input during this planning process.

Missouri River Futures Recognition

With the WREP being the best tool in the "toolbox" currently with funding readily available unlike so many of the other programs, it was decided that Missouri River Futures (namely me!) head the effort and manage outreach efforts and reply to request for information. I also organized all associated meetings and teleconferences in an effort to streamline the approach and track applications as they came in.

New Farm Bill Programs

As more is decided through our national office on the new programs and the budgets distributed to implement them, an ongoing workload is created rolling these out. This often involves partners, many of who also serve on the steering committee for MRF which establishes a great working relationship. I look forward to further developing these in South Dakota. With WREP only authorized in on the Missouri River floodplain in Nebraska, the focus of my efforts will be in that state for nearly 6 months.