



**Missouri
River
Futures**

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Quarterly Activities Report for April - June 2009

Submitted by Theresa M. Smydra - Coordinator

Events/trainings organized/attended:

Cottonwood Community Habitat Model Workshop – March 30 thru April 2, Vermillion
NE NRCS Employee Mtg. – April 8, Hartington
Corps Interagency Meeting - Yankton
Missouri River Bank Stabilization Assoc. – April 14, Newcastle
Missouri River Festival – May 8, Yankton
Wetland Workshop – June 10-11, Hastings
MRF Steering Committee meeting – June 25, Vermillion

Events/trainings planned:

Conservation Buffers – July 21-23, Nebraska City
Endangered & Threatened Species Training – August 6, Hastings

Heavy WREP/WRP workload continues in Nebraska

I want to put a plug in for our wonderful partners and the local NRCS offices which constitute the team effort that is so necessary for these programs to be offered and submitted on a timely basis. If not for these folks, I believe some landowners would not have had their applications in by the funding deadline. I continue to work with several WRP applicants as the application process continues which entails answering questions, last minute changes, field visits and continued paperwork collection for application submission which ended mid-May. Nebraska NRCS extended the application deadline in light of the heavy response.

Other Landowner Assistance

Activities associated with assisting landowners has really picked up. I received a request via the MRF website for a riverfront cleanup on the 39-mile from a contentious landowner on a car body, tires and other items which I continue to work through. High flows are hampering efforts to ascertain extent needed for removal. I have also provided guidance on accretion ground and ownership entitlement for neighboring landowners. It is great to see them work through this amiably.

I'm beginning to see some of my efforts coming to fruition. Progress is being made on programs such as sloughing and conservation easements, fee title acquisitions, farm bill cost-share, and local technical assistance. I continue to work on possible Nebraska WREP applications for 2010, in some cases it's been a couple of years. In general the

easements are probably the hardest since these are a long term or perpetual transfer of management rights. I can really empathize with families having several members and trying to come up with a consensus while considering the wishes of future generations.

I have finally been able to see one large project come to a conclusion as the Corps was able to close on a property whose owners I had initially contacted in February of 2007. I organized the assembly of several pieces of information to produce a resource assessment tool from which decisions could be made based on various suitable uses for the property and then given to the landowners. While various options were presented, the USACE real estate was able to negotiate a purchase which will preserve the natural features of this Missouri River frontage.

Agency Assistance

Continue to assist agencies with program fulfillment efforts such as helping the cottonwood management team by providing a biography, criteria votes, and helping Russian olive inventories. Continue assisting with ESH on-going projects, listening to MSBSA members and relaying concerns, provide updates for pending multi-agency real estate actions, monitor erosion Ponca SP erosion issue at campground area (assisting where I can), help find NASQAN funding for Yankton station (unsuccessful), promote SD Forestry cottonwood program for 2010 planting season, help develop EWP fact sheet for economic incentive promotion,

Continue to learn more about each agency and how I can best work with them and help them achieve their goals while investigating opportunities for landowners.

MNRR Promotional Activities

The first area river festival took place in Yankton as planned and with good success. Although the weather was dreary, the students and festival workers had a great time. I was one of several group leaders and the presentations I seen were top-notch given by area professionals involved with various Missouri River projects.

The spring/summer 09 newsletter went out as scheduled during this quarter and can be viewed on the MRF website. I am always looking for interesting articles to include that involve the MNRR and will try to incorporate more from the landowners' perspectives. Nebraska History has just published an article on legislation on the MNRR and bank stabilization. While this is an understandably controversial issue, it is an interesting and educational read.

Missouri River Futures Recognition

I still get many questions about MRF and what we do and continue to provide summaries for other groups to incorporate into their newsletters. I plan on making a trip to South Dakota next quarter to do this very thing. The Spring RMS Journal article was forwarded to upper level NRCS officials to provide a better understanding of the MRF activities and why it is supported so willingly by its various contributors.