



**Missouri
River
Futures**

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Quarterly Activities Report for Oct. – Dec. 2009

Submitted by Theresa M. Smydra - Coordinator

Events/trainings organized/attended:

Tour with NRCS Regional Conservationist – Oct. 1, Lower Missouri
Conservation Day – Oct. 8, Niobrara SP
Brush Management Training – Oct. 15, Cedar/Knox County
USD River Class talk – Oct. 19, Vermillion
WRP Sub-Committee Telec. – Oct. 21
Healthy Forest Reserve Program Telec. – Oct. 21
WRP Biological Team Mtg. – Nov. 4, Hartington
MRF Full group Meeting – Nov. 19, Ponca State Park
Security training – Nov. 25, Web

Events/trainings planned:

MRNRC – March, Nebraska City
MR Watershed Educational Festival – May 7 or 8
Clean Boat Event – May 22

NRCS Regional Conservationist Visit

What an honor it was to meet Tom Christensen and tour the Missouri River with NE NRCS State Conservationist Steve Chick and others! It was evident to Tom that we had a passion for our work on the Missouri River as we likely overwhelmed him with the many activities and challenges we faced on the middle and lower Missouri River. Tom oversees NRCS operations in several states including Iowa and South Dakota so this was a great opportunity to share information on the MNRR with Tom and Steve.

BIG Land Purchase for USACE in Cedar County, Nebraska

Another milestone was reached when nearly 2400 acres and 5 miles of key river frontage was purchased by the Corps Nov. 16, 2009. This effort was initiated by Missouri River Futures back in 2005 by the previous coordinator Steve Grube. I carried on with this effort once I came on board which included conducting the final inspection. This purchase was important to the Corps as this property flanks the southern edge of one of their largest and most successful constructed sandbar projects. This is equally important to the general public in that this eventually will end up being restored to some semblance of its former beauty and provide a natural area that everyone can access and enjoy. Restoration will occur in stages likely taking years to complete. To smooth the transaction and ease fears,

I have suggested and will arrange individual meetings with the neighboring landowners and Corps personnel early in 2010.

Other Real Estate Actions

With two Corps land purchases on the MNRR in 2009 (one in SD, one in NE) others have approached the Corps for similar opportunities. Unfortunately there have been substantial funding cuts in the Recovery funding in various departments including real estate. Also, there are other properties in queue in other reaches of the Missouri that would come from the same source. Hopefully funding for easements (Sloughing and Rec River) will hold. The WREP easement process in Nebraska proceeds with surveys being certified up until the time we got heavy snows limiting our access. 20 more WRP/WREP applications are in, with only new one on the Missouri River located in Boyd County. I will be responsible for collecting the information on this one as I have been working with them for almost 3 years. We are exploring Farm and Ranchland Protection Program as a fit on a site in South Dakota. There may be more opportunities with this program in South Dakota but is typically not well funded in either state.

Landowner Assistance

Remember the comprehensive mailing list I started in the last report? This quarter I finished these up for all counties neighboring the MNRR. I put this to use right away by mailing out in 2 groups the survey forms for public input on the MRERP process asking what their vision was for the future of the Missouri River to be considered in the planning process. I also used this list to mail out notices for the WREP deadline which is Feb. 1 in Nebraska concentrating in the eligible floodplain areas. I plan to use this list for additional timely mailings as deemed prudent, including the newsletters, of which the winter version should be out early 2010.

I inspected another perspective location in Yankton for the 3rd annual workshop this spring and also considering a location on the 39 mile segment as well. Perhaps the workshop should alternate between the two segments every year for better accessibility to all landowners along the MNRR. Any ideas are welcome.

Work on implementing programs assistance to SD and NE continues with additional easement requests, cost-share opportunities and another clean-up assistance request due to illegal dumping. This is alarming as the landowners are ultimately responsible for activities occurring on their ground and along their bank line.

Agency Assistance

The 4th annual Missouri River Full-Group meeting was held Nov. 19, 2009 in its usual location at Ponca State Park. Many thanks to the crew at the park who do a top-notch job of setting things up for us. I thought I would have folks provide a series of updates on several programs on the MNRR to showcase our successes and plans for the future. More information on this meeting can be seen on the MRF website, but once again attendance was good with 51 participants from 7 federal, 4 state, 9 local, and 2 political entities.

MNRR Promotional Activities

Plans for the 2nd annual Missouri River Watershed Education Festival began this quarter and I assisted with the initial mailing that went to area schools. We have already received confirmation from 2 schools before the end of the year. The date for this event has been set for May 7, 2010. This is the day before the annual River Clean-up, both occurring in Yankton, South Dakota.