



FROM THE NORTH DAKOTA STATE WATER COMMISSION

KNOW YOUR Missouri River Organizations

The Missouri River is in the news on an almost daily basis. Often a confusing acronym or name is mentioned, and it is only those who deal with the issue on a regular basis that have any idea who that group is or what they do. This article will provide a summary of the major groups involved in Missouri River issues affecting North Dakota.

1. Friends of Lake Sakakawea (FOLS)

Website: www.lakesakakawea.com

Represents: The 15 member board represents the entire region around Lake Sakakawea, with representatives from the six counties adjoining Lake Sakakawea: (Mercer, Dunn, McKenzie, Williams, Mountrail, and McLean), one from the Three Affiliated Tribes, and two each from business, recreation, economic development, and cabin site interests. FOLS also has at-large, non-voting members.

Purpose: To provide leadership in developing a lake-wide vision and a unified voice for Lake Sakakawea.

2. Missouri River Association of States and Tribes (MoRAST)

Website: www.mo-rast.org

Represents: The Mni Sose Intertribal Water Rights Coalition, and the states of Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Kansas.

Purpose: MoRAST's primary area of interest is issues related to the authorized purposes of the Missouri River system through the operation of the mainstem reservoirs. MoRAST is also very interested in the surplus water issue (see the May 2013 Oxbow section of ND Water magazine).

3. Missouri River Joint Water Board

Website: www.mrjwb.weebly.com

Represents: The water resource districts of Burleigh, Dunn, Emmons, Mercer, Morton, Mountrail, Oliver, and Sioux counties in North Dakota.

Purpose: To jointly exercise their powers to provide a cooperative and

coordinated effort in addressing the management, conservation protection, development, and control of water resources in the Missouri River Basin.

4. Missouri River Natural Resource Committee (MRNRC)

Website: www.mrnrc.com

Represents: The seven state natural resource departments along the Missouri River (Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri).

Purpose: A state-based group focused on natural resource issues in order to promote the protection and improvement of the Missouri River System.

5. Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC)

Website: www.mrric.org

Represents: 28 stakeholder members who represent 16 non-governmental categories (hydropower,



agriculture, navigation, wildlife, etc). Eight states, 18 tribes, and 15 federal agencies have appointed representatives to the committee.

Purpose: MRRIC is an advisory committee to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). MRRIC is to provide consensus recommendations on activities related to the Missouri River Recovery Program (MRRP) for the recovery of the threatened Piping Plover and endangered Least Tern and Pallid Sturgeon.

6. Missouri River Stakeholder Group

Represents: A wide-ranging and diverse group of Missouri River stakeholders in North Dakota.

Purpose: Still in the early stages, the group is in the process of hiring a coordinator-jointly funded by the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District and Water Commission. The coordinator will work with the various stakeholders to identify issues important to them, to gauge stakeholder interest in the development of some type of formal group, and to plan a Missouri River

working conference for stakeholders to discuss issues and a potential path forward for a more formal group.

7. North Dakota Emergent Sandbar Habitat (ESH) Team

Website: <http://moriverrecovery.usace.army.mil/mrrp/f?p=136:132:0::NO::>

Represents: Local, state and federal entities responsible for water resource and wildlife related issues, the Water Commission, North Dakota Game and Fish Department, the Corps, and FWS.

Purpose: The creation and protection of ESH is part of the MRRP to avoid impacts to the endangered Least Tern and threatened Piping Plover. The FWS established sandbar acreage goals for the ESH program to be achieved by 2015. The acreage goal for the Garrison Reach is 50 acres of habitat per river mile. The Corps consults with and obtains recommendations from the ND ESH Team on protecting existing and creating new ESH.

8. Title VII Task Force

Represents: The federal departments of the Army, Agriculture, Energy, Interior, and the Trust. The Trust is composed of 16 members, 12 of whom are recommended by the Governor of North Dakota, to represent equally the interests of the public through local and state governments and interest groups and the other four members of the Trust represent each of the four tribes in North Dakota.

Purpose: To prepare and approve a plan for the use of the funds made available under Title VII to reduce siltation of the Missouri River in the State of North Dakota.

9. Upper Missouri Water Users Association

Represents: Governed by a board of directors representing a cross section of water interests in the four states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming) with membership of a wide variety of local, private, and public entities who are concerned about upper Missouri River water.

Purpose: Communication and education of projects, issues and programs in upper basin states.

10. Voices of Lake Oahe

Website: www.ndsportfishingcongress.org/voices_for_lake_oahe.htm

Represents: People interested in providing a unified voice for water issues related to Lake Oahe.

Purpose: To provide leadership in developing recreational, agricultural, economic and environmental opportunities for Lake Oahe.

Upper Sheyenne Joint Board Releases WATER PLAN UPDATE

At their October meeting, the Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource Board released their 2013 update of their water management plan. The original plan was produced in 2005, updated in 2008, and was scheduled for a complete update in 2013.

The Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource Board (USRJWRB) represents the residents of the counties of the watershed, from the basin's headwaters in McHenry and Sheridan counties, to Lake Ashtabula in Barnes County just north of Valley City.

The 2013 Upper Sheyenne Water Management Plan, like its predecessors, relies on local input from member counties to identify areas of concern or those needing action in four broad water-related areas: agriculture, economic development, recreation, and wildlife and fisheries. During the update process, multiple meetings were held to develop relevant objectives and goals, to review accomplishments related to the plan since its last update, and to identify specific goals to be accomplished prior to the next plan update. Identifying the specific goals that need to be accomplished

or initiated prior to the next plan provides a means for the USRJWRB to accurately measure their progress.

“It was timely and necessary to update the Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource Board’s Water Management Plan because of the changing needs of the basin and coordination of all the Sheyenne Rivers connections to the Red River system and the Sheyenne River’s relationship to the Devils Lake watershed and its’ joint board.” said Ben Varnson, chairman and manager of the USRJWRB.

“The board decided to update the plan, showing our commitment to improve

the watershed using information collected through the Water Quality Assessment project of the Sheyenne River, sponsored by the board and through input from local, state, and federal agencies. The board is further reviewing off-stream flood detention sites to assist flood damage reduction to lower reaches of the river and it citizens,” continued Varnson.

Some notable accomplishments related to the 2008 plan include gaining a seat for one of the state joint boards on the North Dakota Game and Fish Department’s Aquatic

Nuisance Species Task Force, the development of a basin-wide water quality monitoring program with the North Dakota Department of Health, and the restoration efforts of Warwick Dam in Eddy County. Actions to be accomplished prior to the next plan include encouragement and support for water retention through the Conservation Reserve Program, encouraging North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department to develop a canoeing and kayaking brochure for the Sheyenne River, and encouraging the state to develop minimum and maximum sizing standards for culverts along drains and ditches.

The Upper Sheyenne Joint Water Resource Board continues to support their goal of managing water for the benefit of basin citizens with this plan, and they look forward to continuing with these efforts in the future.

The updated plan can be viewed on the Water Commission website at <http://swc.nd.gov/4dlink9/4dcgi/GetContentPDF/PB-2347/USRBCW%20Management%20Plan.pdf>.



North Dakota State Water Commission
 Todd Sando, P.E., State Engineer
 900 East Boulevard Ave. • Bismarck, ND 58505
 (701) 328-2750 • <http://swc.nd.gov>

