

Minutes - Board of Directors Meeting
Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (FOMNRR)
Conference Call
March 19, 2020

Call to Order at 9:33 am.

Members Present: Shane Bertsch, Rich Burns, Tim Cowman, Bob Foley, Pat James, Terry Julesgard, Paul Lepisto, Dennis Menke, Don Nelson, Marshall Pritchard, and Dave Swanson. Rick Clark, Dan Peterson, and Dugan Smith attended representing the NPS-MNRR.

A. Reports/Updates

1. MNRR Superintendent Report - Rick Clark

- COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected NPS-MNRR programmed activities. The MNRR HQ/Visitor Contact Station office is still open for visitors, since NPS only receives about 5 per week or fewer at this time of year. Social distancing recommendations are being followed. Staff (5 PFT at present) are operating from their respective individual offices for the vast majority of the time during normal business hours. NPS-MNRR will comply with any state or locally issued edicts concerning sheltering in place, stay at home orders as may be imposed as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve.
- The James River Island acquisition is moving forward. Fiscal Year 2020 DOI (Land and Water Conservation Fund) funds for purchasing the island are available. Appraisal of the property and negotiation of fair market value for purchase are the next steps. The expectation is that by the end of 2020 that James River Island will be a part of the NPS domain and managed as part of MNRR
- The Goat Island Implementation and Management Plan goes into effect in 2020. Primitive campground sites will be developed at two locations on the island (with no more than 5 sites each), with one campground site being developed during the summer of 2020. For the 2021 hunting season, deer and turkey hunting will move to archery only. Shotguns will be allowed only for waterfowl hunting, with all hunting in compliance with state (NE & SD) regulations.
- Staffing Structure Changes: Lisa Yager and Milt Haar have transferred. Staffing structure and work forces have been reviewed and evaluated. NPS-MNRR intends to stand up a new Law Enforcement and Visitor and Resource Protection division, including two permanent full time law enforcement (commissioned) officer positions. Other positions that may be filled are contingent upon a projected operational base increase that is included in the President's Fiscal Year 2021 (10/1/2020 - 9/30-2021) budget.
- Meetings with the City of Yankton for development of a paddle/bike trail loop is underway. The MNRR is also partnering with SDGFP on this loop.
- The MNRR is working with the City of Yankton to accept a donation of their 36-acre parcel located west of the old Meridian Bridge. Acquiring the property will require a Congressionally approved boundary adjustment as approximately 2/3 of the property lies outside of the legislated boundary for the Park. Acquisition of the property will allow improved visitor access and connectivity to Green Island, as well as enable prospective future upgrades to the area, including a proposed comfort station and improved trail system.
- The MNRR is working with Nebraska Parks and Nebraska DOT on developing a Mormon Canal bridge access for a paddle/boat ramp on the Niobrara River near the Village of Niobrara, which has been significantly impacted since the aftermath of the March 2019 "Bomb Cyclone" storm event.

- The MNRR is working on a new standardized and improved alert/directional signage initiative for highways leading to boat ramps and river access areas. The South Dakota DOT is on board and the new signs are expected to be installed later this year. Progress is not quite as far along with Nebraska currently, but discussions are encouraging and moving forward.
- Dugan Smith reviewed COVID-19 adjustments made by the MNRR. These include the cancellation of the MRE Watershed School Day and Missouri River Clean-up events this year.

2. Finance/Membership - Bob Foley

- Financial Report: Total balance = \$13,251.72 (\$2,000 reserved for Frost Trail; \$3,041.43 reserved for MRE). This leaves \$8,210.29 in the unrestricted account.
- Membership Report: The membership renewal strategy relies on the newsletter. Personal memberships = 14 paid current (115 since inception); Business memberships = 6 paid current (41 since inception). Bob will work with Tim Cowman to provide an Email reminder for membership renewal.

3. Niobrara Area Access Initiative - Rich Burns

- The SE corner of Niobrara State Park is a potential access site for a boat ramp access to Mormon Canal on the Niobrara River. The MNRR is also working with Nebraska DOT on developing this access. Public Meetings in Niobrara will occur in the future. It was noted that FOMNRR members should be involved in these meetings.

4. North Alabama Bend Trail Site - Rich Burns read from a report by Tim Cowman

- A conceptual trail plan will be provided for review sometime this spring. FOMNRR will work with the USACE and SDGFP to tie the North Alabama Bend Trail system into the Frost Trail system. Signage will be part of the plan.

5. Center for Great Plains Studies Event - Don Nelson/Dan Peterson

- The presentation included a showing of the *River of Change* film followed by presentation on paddling. The program went well and is now ready to travel to other locations, so FOMNRR should look at promoting this outreach event at other venues.

6. Land Owner Committee (Pat James, Dennis Menke, Bob Foley) Update – Pat James

- The committee met on March 6 to finalize recommendations after two landowner meetings. See the attached handout for the detailed report.
- Recommendations of the committee include: (1) developing a link on the FOMNRR website to provide answers to a list of FAQ and allow Q&A between landowner's, FOMNRR and MNRR staff; (2) send postcards advertising the FOMNRR website to all landowners on the 39- and 59-mile reaches; and (3) update the landowner list to reflect current land ownership along the MNRR.

B. Old Business

1. MRE Support – We have a problem with low participation of FOMNRR members in these events.

- How can we facilitate volunteers from the FOMNRR for these events?
- Looking for volunteers for the Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival on June 13. Other MRE events canceled for this year.
- One idea: Provide volunteer sign-up (with listed responsibilities) on the web site. This would allow for public volunteering as well as participating from FOMNRR members.

- Spelling out the responsibilities and specific time commitments for volunteers is required. The FOMNRR will use the Web site, friends recruiting friends, and posters (directing people to the FOMNRR website) as strategies to facilitate volunteers.
- The FOMNRR will also target corporate sponsors to endorse the MRE activity and to help arrange for volunteers within their organization. This allows for advertising that the corporate sponsor is environmentally friendly.

2. FOMNRR Annual Meeting – The original plan was to align this meeting with the Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival. Do we want to move forward with this plan or move it to the fall? Discussion followed – The current plan is to move forward as planned but to revisit this at the next FOMNRR Board meeting.

C. New Business

1. FOMNRR Board Retreat Held February 15, 2020 - Dan Peterson led discussion.
 - Dan provided a brief review of networking with members of other NPS Friends groups at Friends Alliance Meeting in Fall 2019
 - One outcome of the Board Retreat was to pursue the development of an FOMNRR Strategic Plan to guide us forward to our next steps and organizational priorities. Dan reviewed several ideas discussed at the Board Retreat for possible strategies for next steps to move the FOMNRR forward.
 - The development of an Outreach and Awareness initiative was one strategy, as this was a primary theme of many discussions at the Board Retreat.
 - Do we want to develop a Strategic Plan and an Outreach and Awareness Initiative? If so, how do we want to go about this? Discussion followed.
 - Menke (Burns second) moved to bring someone in (potentially from the National Park Foundation) to help us with development of a Strategic Plan that would focus FOMNRR energy and activities in the future. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Future Grant Funding Discussion - Rich Burns gave brief review of discussion of funding avenues and the FOMNRR mission at the Board Retreat. Further discussion will be tabled until next meeting.
3. Future Board Meetings - Rich Burns opened a discussion regarding holding future meetings at locations where attendees have opportunities to learn further about the Missouri River and what resources the river has to offer throughout the MNRR. General consensus was that this would be a good idea, maybe on an every other or every third board meeting basis. This would allow focus on agenda topics associated with a particular meeting location. Some additional discussion on scheduling meetings, including conference calls, and focused agendas for some of these meetings followed. The consensus strategy was to move to six meetings per year (with longer agendas) that could move among sites, and then add up to three conference call meetings per year (with shorter, more focused, agendas).
4. Additional Participation (beyond the MRE) Activities – Tabled to May meeting.
5. Missouri River Paddler’s 2020 Rendezvous - Bob Foley gave an update of this event scheduled along the MNRR Water Trail from Randall Creek to Sioux City, July 12-19 (paddle dates 13-18). Overnight camping will be involved at several sites along the route.
 - Planning continues, although COVID-19 may disrupt this event (no decision has been made yet).
 - The planners are expecting about 70 people to participate on the paddle, including many influential people in the paddling community.

- There is an opportunity for MNRR participation if the Board agrees to support any of the scheduled venues (e.g., meals, programs, etc.). More information will follow as the event draws nearer.

Doodle Polls for a conference call in April and a face-to-face meeting in May will be forthcoming.

The meeting adjourned at 11:29 am.