

**Minutes - Board of Directors Meeting
Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (FOMNRR)
Conference Call
April 13, 2020**

Call to Order at 9:32 am.

Members Present: Rich Burns, Pat James, Tony Kellar, Paul Lepisto, Dennis Menke, Nick Mauro, Don Nelson, and Dave Swanson. Rick Clark and Dan Peterson attended representing the NPS-MNRR.

A. Reports/Updates

1. MNRR Superintendent Report - Rick Clark

- COVID-19 has significantly affected National Parks, with most units across the country having adjusted so that most visitor centers are closed. The Visitor Contact Station collocated at MNRR Headquarters in Yankton closed effective April 7, 2020 and most staff are currently teleworking from home. All public programs, including the annual Missouri River Clean-up event and educational festival have either been cancelled outright or postponed. Other summer activities offered to visitors will likely be scaled back appreciably and will be re-evaluated as the pandemic and associated agency guidance continues to evolve. MNRR properties are still open to the public, but MNRR staff are monitoring the situation closely and will likely follow the lead of relevant state agencies in deciding whether to keep properties open.
- Planning for summer programming is currently in a wait-and-see mode, with the MNRR operating under the assumption that hiring a temporary, seasonal workforce will still be allowed, while public programs offered scaled back in compliance with CDC guidance if allowed at all. Staffing seasonal hires for summer positions are proceeding for now, but the situation is being monitored closely in coordination with NPS human resources offices and other applicable agency directives.
- The Headquarters building is currently being remodeled, with new paint and carpet, as well as renovations for new staffing hires and the conference room.
- Staffing Structure at the MNRR will change with an expected increase in base funding effective Fiscal Year 2021 beginning October 1, 2020. Should the projected base increase be approved by Congress, this will result in the addition of two Park Ranger, Law Enforcement (LEO) positions at GS-11 and GS-9, as well as two temporary (6-month) LEO ranger hires for summer seasons. The intent is for these law enforcement positions to spend considerable time on the river carrying out their duties and enforcing the laws and regulations pertinent to the MNRR. The MNRR is waiting for formal congressional approval of the final 2021 federal budget before moving forward.
- The MNRR is working with Nebraska Game and Parks, Nebraska DOT, and USFWS on a mitigation plan related to the reconstruction and replacement of the Nebraska Highway 12 Mormon Canal bridge that was knocked out during the March 2019 "Bomb Cyclone" storm and flooding event. A new access for canoe and Kayaks, as well as for flat bottom boats is being planned on property owned by NEGP south of Niobrara State Park main entrance. Conceptual plans for the public access have been developed and all federal and state resource and regulatory agencies are onboard and partnering together to complete more detailed plans, which include paddle/flat-bottomed boat access to the Niobrara River, angler fishing area, interpretive signage and, an observational platform/overlook.

B. New Business

1. Criteria for Pursuing and Accepting Funding

- Rich Burns led a discussion of whether the FOMNRR Board wanted to define criteria for the groups/funding sources from which FOMNRR would accept funds.
- Don Nelson and Paul Lepisto provided an historical perspective of past discussions of the FOMNRR BOD relevant to this topic and noted that opposition of Tribal representation to acceptance of TransCanada funding was the genesis of this issue.
- Paul Lepisto noted that the By-Laws had been modified to allow acceptance of donations for FOMNRR activities, including the MRE events, while attempting to remain politically neutral on the issue. Funding from TransCanada for the MRE events has occurred for the past 2-3 years.
- Nick Mauro will bring the issue of accepting funding from TransCanada to the Ponca Tribal Board to solicit their input on the issue of funding sources for the FOMNRR.
- FOMNRR Board members were encouraged to bring up resolutions to FOMNRR By-Laws regarding criteria for acceptance of funding to the BOD for vote if so desired.
- A future agenda item for BOD meetings will be to re-examine the Mission statement of the FOMNRR to perhaps better highlight FOMNRR support of Tribal connections to the Missouri River.
- An outcome from the discussion is the importance of having the FOMNRR website be updated with links functional to provide for group transparency. Rich, Dennis Menke, and any additional volunteers will work on improvements to the FOMNRR website.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.