

FOMNRR BOD Meeting Minutes

OS-Teams Video Conference Invite and Telephone Conference Call Line Option
September 29, 2020 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Members Present: Shane Bertsch, Rich Burns, Tim Cowman, Jeff Fields, Bob Foley, Pat James, Tony Kellar, Kristina Laska, Paul Lepisto, Dennis Menke, Don Nelson, Marshall Pritchard, Dave Swanson, and Barbara Yelverton. Rick Clark, Teresa Mentzer, and Dugan Smith attended representing the NPS-MNRR.

President Rich Burns opened the meeting at 1:32 pm.

A. Reports/Updates

- 1. MNRR Superintendent's Report: Rick Clark** – most of the NPS-MNRR activities for the past summer were curtailed due to COVID and to reduced staffing. Seasonal employees were tasked with different jobs this summer (e.g., web page, social media). Science & Resource Management activities included cedar removal on Green Island and clover removal and mowing, with some cedar removal and vegetation thinning at Bow Creek. The initial steps in implementation of the Goat Island management plan also occurred, which included development of trails and two primitive camp sites in the south camping area. The cleaning and maintenance schedule for MNRR properties was upgraded over the summer to keep MNRR areas open. This involved the MNRR contracting private vendors to perform these duties.

The acquisition of the James River Island property is proceeding slowly. The next steps include appraisal and negotiating with property owners.

The recent passage of the Outdoor Recreation Act will result in increased funding for parks across the US and should reduce the maintenance backlog and allow facilities improvement projects to occur at the MNRR. In addition, permanent funding support for Land & Water Conservation Fund is now approved. For the MNRR, the next targeted acquisition via this funding source is Sanctuary Island, which would be the first land ownership parcel for MNRR in the 39-mile stretch). The current landowner is willing to sell the Sanctuary Island property to NPS.

Other upcoming projects include paving the gravel road from Timber Road to the Myron Grove River Access Area.

- 2. Finance/Membership - Bob Foley:** Activity has been low this year because of COVID-19 (e.g., no MRE activities were conducted this year). The current checking balance is \$15,701.99. Of this total, \$5296.46 is reserved for MRE activities, \$2,000 from the VCDC is reserved for Frost Trail signage, and \$750 is reserved from Howard Coker memorial. September 30 is the end of 2019-2020 FY for FOMNRR. FYI - \$2,300 of funds raised this year for FOMNRR activities were from TransCanada and NewStar Energy.

Membership activity has also been impacted by COVID-19. Calendar year memberships include 8 corporate and 24 individual current memberships. This comprises only a small percentage of active memberships since inception. The count of personal memberships for anyone who has ever paid to belong to FOMNRR is 116. In addition, there are 34 non-current corporate/business memberships.

3. NPS Sign Standardization Update - Rick Clark – South Dakota signage for Myron Grove and Clay County Park has now been installed. The MNRR is working with Nebraska DOT for signage in Nebraska, but this work is lagging behind that on the South Dakota side of the river.
4. Niobrara Access Update - Rick Clark – The Lower Niobrara River Access is essentially completed. The ribbon-cutting for the official opening is slated for Spring 2021.

B. Old Business

1. Strategic Planning Update – Rich Burns gave a report outlining criteria for strategic planning issues and goals. Subcommittee members have met twice over the summer and created a draft template of a strategic planning document based on a model used by the St Croix River Association.

Strategic Planning Goals include: (1) Education, especially focusing on kids and tribal networking; (2) Conservation – this includes river clean up and natural resource preservation/protection; (3) Recreation – this includes developing access and promoting recreational use of the river; and (4) Public Awareness – this includes promoting river opportunities and resources.

The FOMNRR strategic planning effort working to dovetail with the development of the 6-yr MNRR Strategic Planning effort (2022-2028) beginning in 2021. The MNRR is looking to hire 5 permanent staff positions within the next couple of years.

Some discussion ensued about how to develop the FOMNRR strategic plan and whether we wanted to do it internally or hire someone to help with development of the plan. One idea was to recruit an M.S.-level graduate student at USD that could work with FOMNRR and NPS-MNRR to help develop the strategic plan. Dave Swanson will contact some people at USD to gauge their interest in such a project.

2. Website Committee Update - The Website Committee met several times over the summer and came up with revisions in the content, layout, and appearance of the website. Some basic revisions to content and layout are currently being worked on. Once those revisions are complete, the committee will meet again to talk about additional changes to the website. (Report from Board Members Tim and Dennis).

Tim Cowan gave the report. Dennis Menke and Pat James also served on this committee. Layout and content improvement work for the FOMNRR website is underway. The initial homepage verbiage has been revised to be more inviting to the public. Revision of the Projects and Activities section is now underway and will eventually provide thumbnails for current activities. Clicking on the thumbnails will lead to more information on that specific activity. Membership sections will be split out for both corporate and individual/family members to provide specific information for different membership categories. The hope is to better connect with members and use the website to enhance membership numbers.

3. FOMNRR Newsletter - The original idea was for an annual newsletter with an attached membership application. Rich Burns led the discussion. No FOMNRR newsletter was produced last year, partly because Dan Peterson moved on. The FOMNRR BOD needs some questions answered before we can proceed with a newsletter strategy. These include ...
 - What is the purpose of the newsletter and how often do we want to produce one (hard copy or electronic) and to whom do we want to make it available?

- What is the content that we want to include in the newsletter?
- Do we want to produce a newsletter ourselves or contract out to produce newsletter? The latter strategy would require raising funds for this purpose.
- Who from FOMNRR will be responsible for preparing the newsletter now that Dan Peterson is gone?

Discussion followed. Consensus was to try to produce an annual newsletter with articles/content written by the FOMNRR BOD. Pat James volunteered to serve as Newsletter Editor for this year (Dennis Menke and Rich Burns will help). We will plan to mail out a hard copy of this newsletter toward the end of 2020 with a reminder for membership renewal. The electronic version of the newsletter will be placed on the FOMNRR website.

It was also suggested that we send new or renewing members a letter and swag (swag for new members only). We also hope to figure out ways to engage members throughout the year to remind members of events and other activities in which the FOMNRR is involved.

- 4.** Outreach Initiative - FOMNRR is developing member, partner, and working relationships beyond the region, however, our organization only belongs to the Yankton Area Chamber for promoting organizational initiatives. Rich Burns initiated the discussion on this topic and asked the question "How can we effectively reach out beyond Yankton?" Rich Burns and Dugan Smith recently participated in the *Up Next Coffee Hour* in Vermillion (a Virtual Meeting). The possibility of joining the Vermillion Chamber was raised. Tony Kellar provided information on prices and benefits for joining the Vermillion Chamber. The current rate is \$200/yr for a non-profit organization and FOMNRR would get good marketing attention in return for that investment. A motion to join the Vermillion Chamber for the upcoming year was seconded and approved unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:37 pm.