

Minutes - Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (FOMNRR), Board of Directors Meeting
OS-Teams Video Conference Invite and Telephone Conference Call Line Option
December 9, 2020 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Members Present: Rich Burns, Tim Cowman, Bob Foley, Kasi Haberman, Pat James, Terry Julesgard, Kristina Laska, Paul Lepisto, Dennis Menke, Don Nelson, Rick Spellman, Dave Swanson, and Barbara Yelverton. Rick Clark and Dugan Smith attended representing the NPS-MNRR.

Tony Kellar tried to join but was not able to log into OS-Teams.

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

A. Reports/Updates

1. *MNRR Superintendent's Report* - Rick Clark

- Pursuit of title commitments for James River Island is in progress. Title commitments are needed prior to appraisal of the property, which is required before official purchase of the property by NPS can take place.
- Efforts to secure funding for the purchase of Sanctuary Island, in the 39-mile reach of the MNRR, by NPS are currently underway.
- Recruitment is now underway for filling five new full-time positions, including two law-enforcement Park Ranger positions, for the MNRR. Anticipated start dates for these positions range from April to June of 2021.
- COVID-19 is still impacting MNRR activities – operations continue with intermittent remote work, reduced in-person meetings, etc. The Visitor Contact Station remains open, but access is limited to 5 individuals for no longer than 15 minutes. Face coverings and social distancing during visits are required.
- Improvements to the Mulberry Bend property, including handicap access to the overlook, are slated to begin in April of 2021.

2. *Finance/Membership* - Bob Foley

- Very little recent financial activity has occurred due to COVID-19. FOMNRR did recently join the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce for a \$200 membership fee.
- 2020 was a poor year for membership renewals, but a few renewals have come in since the FOMNRR Newsletter was mailed out last week, so the newsletter should help stimulate renewals.
- Other strategies for increasing renewal rates may need to be discussed in the future.

3. *Newsletter* - Rich Burns/Pat James

- The newsletter was mailed last week.
- Some thoughts on content for upcoming newsletters were discussed. These included publishing photographs from a competition, either among FOMNRR members or more broadly (likely to include advertisement at State Parks within the MNRR footprint). The photograph issues would likely be alternated with issues focusing on Missouri River stories.

4. *Website Update* - Tim Cowman

- Tim has been working with a staff member with Web Design expertise to update the format and capacity for accessing information on the website.

5. *Hiking Trails* – Tim Cowman

- Conceptual designs for trailhead signs for two parking areas at Frost GPA have been submitted to the SDGFP for approval. Once Tim hears back on acceptability of these signs to the SDGFP, he will run the designs by BOD members for discussion and approval of the final design.
- North Alabama Bend Trail System: the current trail system consists of mowed paths on which the vegetation grows over the summer, but no trail signage is present. Tim has initiated discussions with the USACE regarding placing signage at trailheads and upkeep of the trails. The USACE is favorably disposed to these ideas, so negotiations are underway for the degree of trail development that might occur and what role FOMNRR might want play in these plans. This could be a future project for the FOMNRR.

6. *Strategic Planning* - Rich Burns

- Progress on development of a strategic plan by the Strategic Planning committee is being made. Rich composed a document that summarized discussions to date and made it available to BOD members prior to the meeting.
- The committee will meet again soon for additional discussion, including some targeted discussion on the format of the strategic plan (e.g., relative roles of narrative vs. images).

B. Old Business

1. Year in Review – Rich Burns provided an overview of FOMNRR activities during the past calendar year and led a discussion of potential activities for 2021.
 - The majority of FOMNRR activities were cancelled due to the pandemic. However, progress continued on the Niobrara River Public Access and the Frost and North Alabama Trails projects. N
 - New initiatives emerged including development of a strategic plan, revision of the current FOMNRR website, and the creation of the biennial FOMNRR Newsletter.
 - Regarding MRE events in 2021, the Missouri River Watershed School Festival is canceled. The other activities, including the Lake Yankton Festival, Missouri River Cleanup, and Third Thursday Social Events are currently on hold. The possibility of hosting Third Thursday events consisting of outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained were discussed. These are likely to occur in spring and summer, perhaps alternating between Yankton and Vermillion.
 - The ROSCOE school program will not occur during spring of 2021 and the Junior Ranger academy is currently on hold.
2. FOMNRR Board of Directors Appointments – Current members of the Executive Committee have all agreed to a second term in their current positions.
 - Rick Spellman was nominated to serve as a Member-at-Large on the BOD. A motion (Lepisto/Nelson) to accept this nomination passed unanimously.
3. Membership Subcommittee – Rich Burns (on behalf of the membership subcommittee: Dennis Menke, Teresa Mentzer, Paul Lepisto, Tony Keller) mentioned that several outreach activities had been completed, including the Vermillion Morning Coffee Hour.

- The subcommittee also is working on drafting letters to connect new and renewing members to the organization. The process for writing and distributing these letters needs to be defined.
- Consensus was that postcards (perhaps featuring photo contest winners), MNRR maps and FOMNRR brochures should be delivered to all new members.

C. New Business

1. Opportunities to Develop Future Public MNRR access - Bob Foley and Barbara Yelverton provided a slide presentation and led a discussion regarding a potential public access opportunity located on the South Dakota side of the Missouri River within the 39-mile reach of the MNRR in Charles Mix County. The proposed access site is opposite Sanctuary Island.
 - Barbara has made initial contacts with the Ree Township Board and they have noted an interest in potentially developing such an access area at this site.
 - Much work remains to be done prior to development, but a motion (Nelson/James) to move forward with pursuing this opportunity, with Barbara and Bob spearheading the effort, passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.