

Minutes

**Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River (FOMNRR)
Board of Directors Meeting
MS-Teams Video Conference
December 1, 2021**

Members Present: Rich Burns, Tim Cowman, Bob Foley, Pat James, Terry Julesgard, Kristina Laska, Paul Lepisto, Don Nelson, Rick Spellman, Dave Swanson, and Barbara Yelverton. Marshall Pritchard joined by phone. Milt Haar and Thomas Downs attended representing the NPS-MNRR.

Chair Rich Burns called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm.

A. Reports/Updates

MNRR Superintendents Report - Milt Haar/Tom Downs

Milt – The new MNRR Superintendent (Curt Dimmick) is targeted to begin his appointment on 2 January 2022. He has previous law enforcement and resource protection experience in the NPS, most recently at Pinnacles National Park in California.

- Milt attended a recent Clay County Zoning Commission meeting (Milt attended) regarding re-zoning an area just downstream from Clay County Park from natural resource to residential designation. Despite opposing comments during the public comment period, the Zoning Board voted 4-1 to approve the re-zoning request.
- Service-wide research proposals are due by early January. The MNRR staff are currently working with faculty at the MRI at USD to get a proposal submitted by the deadline.
- MNRR staff are meeting with the Yankton Sioux Tribe soon to broach the topic of establishing a new boat ramp in the Greenwood area. There is also the potential for an additional kayak/canoe access area downstream from this site.
- The purchase of James River Island with Land and Water Conservation Funds just received the appraisal for the property. The appraisal came back low, so landowners, understandably, are not happy. MNRR staff are currently working on a response to the appraisal.

Tom – The MNRR will have a “float” in the Festival of Lights parade in Yankton tomorrow. “Roscoe” the otter (played by Rich Burns) and Dugan Smith will be riding on the float. FOMNRR provided candy for handing out along the parade route.

- Tom will be working with Rich Burns to develop the annual Statement of Work plan document defining MNRR-FOMNRR cooperation for the coming year.

Finance/Membership –Bob Foley provided the report. Highlights included a total balance of \$14,356.25 as of 22 November 2021. Of this balance, \$5,291.46 is reserved for MRE events, leaving \$9,064.79 remaining as discretionary funds. During COVID, both income and expenses have decreased dramatically, but with the recent release of the newsletter, we expect membership renewals to increase.

Newsletter – The newsletter was recently delivered to FOMNRR members. The BOD officially thanked Pat for her work on producing an outstanding newsletter. Rich asked whether additional copies could be made available to *Yankton Thrive* and the VCDC. Tom Downs has about 100 extra copies of the newsletter currently, so copies are available for further distribution. Stories or articles for the upcoming Spring/Summer newsletter were solicited.

NPS/MNRR Signage Initiative with the State of Nebraska - Don Nelson attended a Railroad Group meeting in Omaha at which the Nebraska DOT Director spoke. Don broached the topic of NPS signage coordination on the Nebraska side of the river with the DOT Director. The Director seemed receptive to the idea but mentioned that overcoming administrative inertia likely would make progress slow. Milt Haar is willing to help facilitate a meeting between Deputy Regional Director, and former MNRR Superintendent, Rick Clark and the Nebraska DOT Director in Omaha. Consensus was that the BOD supported moving forward with this plan.

Update on Clay County Zoning Initiatives – Tim Cowman mentioned that zoning changes for a 17-house development proposed for just downstream of Clay County Park were recently approved by the Clay County Planning and Zoning Board. Approval by the Clay County Commission is the next step – approval for the re-zoning is not guaranteed but appears likely. Local residents do not appear to support the arguments about the development being inconsistent with preserving the Outstandingly Remarkable Values for the MNRR. FOMNRR may want to submit a letter to the County Commission opposing the zoning change. The Planning and Zoning Board and the County Commission have both voted against approving the RV park proposal for a location near Myron Grove, mostly based on a legal issue. The developers are trying to resolve to attempt to gain approval for the RV park again later. Local residents seem to be opposed to the RV park proposal.

Legislative Affairs Nebraska - Rick Spellman mentioned that the STARS committee in Nebraska has identified several potential areas for future funding for recreational opportunity development, including Lewis and Clark Reservoir and the 39-mile reach of the MNRR, as well as Niobrara and Niobrara State Park. Included among the foci for funding are increasing access to the lake/river, so changes facilitating increased access may be forthcoming.

B. Old Business

Missouri River Events (MRE) – Paul Lepisto mentioned that a video conference was held on 10/25/2021, where the MRE Committee decided to move ahead with holding all events beginning in 2022. The final decision on moving forward with the events in the current COVID era will be made later. The proposed schedule is:

- The Missouri River Watershed School Festival is scheduled for Thursday, May 5, 2022 at Riverside Park.
- The Missouri River Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, May 7, 2022 at Riverside Park.
- The Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival/Homestead Day event is scheduled for Saturday, June 11, 2022 at Pierson Ranch and at the Training Dike area near Lake Yankton.

Assistance from FOMNRR is being requested to assist with all these events, with as many FOMNRR members as possible involved, including both BOD members and non-Board members. Responsibilities will include helping with grilling brats for the Volunteer Cleanup scheduled May 7 and participating in the Lake Yankton Outdoor Festival and Homestead Day Event on June 11. Paul mentioned that no Missouri River Cleanup has been conducted for three years due to high water and COVID concerns, so this will be an especially important year for that event.

FOMNRR Board of Directors (BOD) Appointments - We are in the process of recruiting Board members to fill the Executive Committee positions of Chair and Treasurer. New terms start in January 2022. Members leaving the Board are Dennis Menke and Bob Foley creating two openings for Landowner Interests. There may be other position/classification changes as well. The FOMNRR By-Laws will serve as a guide to filling these positions. This topic was tabled until a January 2022 special BOD meeting.

Website and Social Media Presence – Rich Burns mentioned that a plan for keeping the social media presence for the FOMNRR up to date has been the responsibility of Tim Cowman, who is rotating off the BOD soon. Options for maintaining and updating our social media presence include using a FOMNRR partner for management and oversight, recruiting a FOMNRR member to continue to operate social media accounts, or creating a partnership for social media oversight with another “Friends Group” nonprofit organization. Pat James mentioned that she had made some initial conversations about working with an outside vendor (Heartland Internet Services) to take over social media development for the FOMNRR. Charges of \$1,200 per year were required by this vendor. Some discussion of additional outside vendor or partner options ensued. A motion (Nelson/Cowman) to move forward with a plan to pay an outside vendor at up to \$1,500 per year to maintain and update the FOMNRR website, with Pat James serving as the liaison between the FOMNRR and the outside vendor, was approved unanimously. FOMNRR will also move forward with a plan to partner with the VCDC for development of other social media outlets, with costs for this partnership to be determined later.

Public Outreach Initiative – Within Vermillion, opportunities are great for public outreach. Within Yankton, changes such as the merger of the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development to create “*Yankton Thrive*” had an impact on FOMNRR’s exposure. FOMNRR likely needs to approach *Yankton Thrive* to renew relationships. In addition, other locations with strong FOMNRR membership presence, such as Sioux Falls, Sioux City, Norfolk, and Omaha, should be considered for public outreach opportunities. Rich Burns and Tom Downs led a discussion to determine the best plan to start moving forward. Rich proposed that a representative of the BOD is needed to serve as lead to approach *Yankton Thrive* first. The next step would be to involve additional BOD members to approach organizations in other areas where FOMNRR has substantial membership (e.g., Sioux Falls, Sioux City, Norfolk, Omaha, other municipalities along the MNRR) for public outreach opportunities. Discussion ensued regarding some potential organizations to approach to give FOMNRR presentations to attract membership. Rich Burns will serve as the “clearing house” for maintaining a list of potential organizations to target for outreach.

The meeting adjourned at 3:14 pm.