

Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River  
Minutes. Monday, March 3, 2025.

Chair Paul Lepisto called the meeting to order at 1:00pm, Tuesday March 3, in the NPS/Yankton conference room and online via MS Teams. Paul Lepisto, Marsha Olnes, Don Nelson, Harry Freeman, Tyler Wulf, Bob Foley, Curt Dimmick, Thomas Downs, Abigail Schauer and Caroline Ver Mulm attended.

Secretary Dave Swanson was unable to attend. Bob Foley agreed to take notes and prepare minutes. No changes were suggested for the agenda. Minutes from the prior meeting were approved unanimously.

Treasurer Foley reported a bank balance of \$7,798.26. Upcoming approved expenses will be mostly food expenses for the Watershed School Festival, the River Cleanup and the balance due Black Hills Raptor Center for a Homestead Day presentation. A \$600 ½ year payment to Heartland for internet services will be due at the end of this month.

Curt Dimmick, NPS Park Superintendent, reported that MNRR has one of 33 national park office leases, nationally, where the Government Services Administration (GSA) notified the owners that building leases, as park HQ, will be terminated or not renewed on September 30. Niobrara National Scenic River in Valentine is also one of those 33. Program and project activities for this fiscal year will continue, but are being evaluated. Government credit cards have been essentially frozen, with a \$1.00 purchase limit except for gasoline/fuel cards.

Thomas Downs reported the freeze on temporary, seasonal positions was lifted, and that he has hired and is interviewing for those positions authorized in the budget. NPS will attend the Sioux Empire Watershed School Festival in Sioux Falls on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Abigail Schauer reported a National Park Foundation grant for fishing equipment remains pending. FOMNRR will administer these funds, if awarded. Volunteers to help with seasonal programs are needed. See Caroline Ver Mulm or visit the NPS/MNRR website for details.

Thomas Downs reported the Niobrara (Nebraska) State Park intends to become designated by 'International Dark Sky Places' as a certified viewing site. They seek partner organizations to assist this process. Harry Freeman volunteered to be the FOMNRR contact for this effort with NPS and NE G&P, and report back when specific requests become defined for board action.

Thomas Downs reported the MNRR Water Trail website is available through the NPS/MNRR website, and that he is the NPS primary contact for the water trail.

Bob Foley reported the USD Foundation sent a letter of appreciation for the \$2500 donation to the MOTUS program. Foley circulated an article from the Spirit Mound newsletter by David Swanson that explained the program. Curt Dimmick noted that this program offers research potential not just for birds but for other species like bats

Bob Foley discussed the Annual Work Plan (AWP). It contains several programs and projects, but does not contain any fundraising efforts. Current programs and projects are funded from the capital surplus developed, but will be mostly expended next year, 2026. So, fundraising efforts need to be implemented for the organization to continue. Relying upon memberships will not produce the required funds. Corporate and foundation donations are needed. Contact lists are available. Most organizations now use an online portal to make requests. While each is unique to that organization, most of the required information is common. A continual effort to request donations is needed. Foley said he would help this effort with the financial info, but more coordination is needed to develop metrics to “the story” of programs and projects to be funded. Paul and Bob agreed to follow up with this idea.

Harry Freeman suggested that FOMNRR could partner with other organizations or proposals like the MNRR Access effort now underway in Vermilion, Clay County. This approach may increase the appeal to some people for participating in a consistent fundraising effort.

Abigail reported MRE events were on plan. FOMNRR needs to confirm with donors food for the events, especially with Runza in Yankton. Foley agreed to do this.

Tom reported on River Appreciation Day (RAD) in Vermilion set for Sept 25 at Clay County Park. This group wants to hand-off organizational responsibility for the event to another entity, and asked NPS & FOMNRR to consider assuming such. This event does align with NPS/MNRR and FOMNRR purpose. NPS will ‘shadow’ the event this year, and report on resources needed, so FOMNRR can decide if this event can be successfully managed. One issue is that RAD pays some presenters, while MRE does not. Discussion tended toward this being a resolvable issue.

Paul will circulate a Doodle Poll for an April meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm.