



**Friends  
of Lake  
Sakakawea**

Volume 9, Issue 1, January 2010

*Building on the  
Recreational, Economic and  
Environmental Opportunities  
of Lake Sakakawea*

Friends of Lake Sakakawea  
c/o P.O. Box 309 • Garrison, ND 58540  
friends@lakesakakawea  
www.lakesakakawea.com  
http://lakesakakawea.blogspot.com

*Always at the table . . . working on your causes*



Photo at left: Bob Valeu, board member second from the left, makes a point while the Friends Board of Directors discuss how to pave more access roads to Lake Sakakawea at a fall 2009 board meeting. Terry Fleck, Chairman, left, Greg Power, and Brad Thrall were at the table when the vote was taken to provide start-up engineering study funding for landowners with road improvement plans. Photo at right: David Johnson, board member, builds his case at a Corps' meeting to re-examine the purposes of the Missouri River. Listening, to the right, is Dennis Donald with the Osprey Group, a company hired to conduct the meetings and coordinate the information.

**Board Members**

Terry Fleck, Bismarck/Van Hook .....  
Brad Thrall, Pick City .....  
Clarence Weltz, Van Hook .....  
Jill Denning Gackle, Garrison .....  
Ardel Horob, New Town .....  
David Johnson, Watford City .....  
Kelly Sorge, Bismarck/Indian Hills .....  
Blair Ihmels, Bismarck .....  
Herman Backhaus, Tioga .....  
Larry Kerzman, Wolf Creek .....  
Bob Valeu, Bismarck/New Town .....  
Mike Hammerschmidt, Beulah .....  
Emmanuel Stroh, Manning .....  
Bill Butcher, Bismarck .....

**Representing**

Chairman  
Economic Development, Vice Chairman  
Treasurer, Mountrail County  
Secretary, Local Businesses  
Mountrail County  
McKenzie County  
McLean County  
Recreation  
Williams County  
Cabin Sites  
Recreation  
Mercer County  
Dunn County  
Economic Development

**Annual Meeting/Board Meeting • Thursday, March 4 • Noon  
ND Game & Fish Auditorium, Bismarck**

# It's the season of acronyms

It took us a while to figure out the difference between Master Manual and Master Plan.

Now we've graduated to a whole slew of acronyms that all start with MR.

Here's a primer to make it a little easier to navigate:

**MRRIC** – Missouri River Restoration and Implementation Committee. This is a committee formed by the Corps, after direction from Congress, to guide the development of the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan (see next item) and to provide guidance to the Corps.

Board Members Terry Fleck, chairman, and David Johnson are members of the committee.

For more information, go to <http://missouririver.ecr.gov>

**MRERP** – Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan. That means that the Missouri River – from top to bottom – is being studied to develop a plan for the next 30 years. The new plan will address the loss of habitat (shallow water, sandbars, forests and wetlands), how to save threatened or endangered species (birds, pallid sturgeon) and to restore and protect river habitat required by native species.

The study was authorized by Congress and involves the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services and the U.S. Corps of Engineers as lead agencies with support from various state agencies. The Friends of Lake Sakakawea has been involved in the process from the start. We have two board members on a committee that oversees MRERP action (MRRIC, see above), Terry Fleck and David Johnson, along with Steve Dyke of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. It's a big process that will take more than a few people watching out for the interests of Lake Sakakawea.

The Friends encourage you to support management objectives that promote fish spawning and recreation over navigation. The overall economic impact to upper basin communities must be considered in all decisions. We support the draft statement that includes planning for social, economic and cultural values for future generations. Draft purpose and need statement are here: <http://www.moriverrecovery.org/mrrp>

We believe that maintaining healthy Missouri River ecosystems is a critical consideration in managing the Missouri River system. Healthy ecosystems will ensure the long-term vitality of North Dakota's sport fisheries which in turn, supports a vigorous recreation industry. The high quality of life we enjoy in North Dakota will only be sustained if we maintain diverse and healthy ecosystems in and adjacent to the Missouri River.

The Friends of Lake Sakakawea encourage the development of a practical plan that will not adversely impact Lake Sakakawea's fishery and the recreation pursuits it supports.

For more information, go to [www.moriverrecovery.org](http://www.moriverrecovery.org)

**MRAPS** – Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study. It's a five year study to determine the modern purposes of the Missouri River. Back in 1944, when the purposes were determined, the purposes were fish and wildlife habitat, floor risk management, irrigation, navigation, power generation, recreation, water quality and water supply.

North Dakota's congressional delegation pushed for the study so we could build the case that recreation and other purposes are far more important than navigation.

The study is in its infancy. The first meeting in our region was Dec. 8 in Bismarck. There will be personal interviews, public meetings, surveys and lots of opportunity for the public to weigh in to say what purposes for the river are most important.

It's important for North Dakotans to get involved in this process. Over 90 percent of North Dakota's surface water flows in the Missouri River. As most everyone knows, the system is currently operated under the authority provided for in the Flood Control Act of 1944. That plan, the Pick-Sloan Plan, included elements that would have provided as much as one million acres of irrigation in North Dakota, restoration/stabilization of Devils Lake and water supplies to areas of the state that can not meet their water needs during prolonged drought. This was to be in return for North Dakota giving up about 500,000 acres of land for Oahe and Garrison reservoirs. That act also included an amendment, the O'Mahoney-Milliken Amendment, that established a priority for beneficial uses of Missouri River water in the basin states over the use of water for navigation. These "promises" could go by the wayside in a new plan.

While we'll probably never see the promised irrigation and stabilization of Devils Lake, these promises have been important leverage in getting federal funding support for critical North Dakota water supply infrastructure. There is a risk that if navigation on the lower Mississippi River becomes part of the "contemporary" uses of Missouri River water as a national priority, the new plan could favor using Missouri River water during drought to supplement Mississippi flows for that industry. Mississippi navigation is far more substantial than meeting the needs of navigation on the lower Missouri River. North Dakotans, ALL North Dakotans, must be diligent in participating in the MRAPS process.

For more information, go to [www.mraps.org](http://www.mraps.org)

# *Opinion: Getting the other side(s):* **River issue has many shades of gray**

*Daily Republican, Mitchell, SD*

Sales people almost always try to learn your name, so they can use it again and again in their pitches. Politicians do it a lot, too.

The goal is to make things a little less formal, as if the person who just interrupted your evening or Saturday afternoon is a long-lost friend whose only reason for showing up at your door is to show you a product or service that you simply can't live another day without.

I can be cynical about the personal approach as a sales technique, but I know it sometimes works. With me, almost anytime I get to know someone personally, it's much more difficult to ignore their side of an argument, even if their side is completely at odds with mine.

There are sides, and then there are sides. In news reporting, we often talked of "getting the other side" in some situation. Sometimes that was all that was required. Other times, it became apparent as I researched a story, there were far more sides than I'd expected when I began the reporting.

Maybe we're conditioned to think of two sides, the pro and the con, ours and theirs, right and wrong. But often as I aged in the reporting business, I discovered that many issues had several sides, several "right" answers. Some issues were us and them and them and the other folks and those people.

In a business that sometimes seems to grow increasingly black and white, I often discovered more shades of gray than can be found in the giant economy-sized box of crayons. That's a messy situation, and it requires some subtle reporting and writing.

I was thinking about that the other day as I read some news clips about the Missouri River study that Congress authorized and ordered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake. The goal is to see if the authorized purposes for the system of reservoirs on the upper river — purposes such as flood control, navigation, hydropower and irrigation — are the purposes that should be emphasized today.

The upstream states argue that recreation ought to be a higher priority, among other things. There have been some heated exchanges between representatives of upstream and downstream states in the past. I have tended to side with the upstream argument where I live and boat and go to the river simply to be there.

I have to say, though, that I developed some sympathy for some of the downstream arguments while I was a daily newspaper reporter covering the river controversy. I had the opportunity to call farmers in Iowa and Missouri and to talk

with barge operators who work the river below Sioux City. I found that after spending some time on the telephone with these folks, I had a better appreciation for their concerns. That didn't mean I changed my thinking, exactly. It just meant that I came to know a few downstream people as, well, people, rather than voices in an argument between us and them.

I remember talking with a downstream farmer who didn't want releases from the dam increased while the upstream states were experiencing high-water times. I started out figuring it was a no-brainer. We had reservoirs brimming full with water, and the only sensible thing to do was run some downstream to ease the pressure. Well, this guy said he understood that problem. He said if he lived up here, he'd probably think the same thing.

But he lived and worked a low-land farm that his dad and his grand-dad before him had worked, and if releases were increased to help us, his land would flood.

"I know I'm just one guy with one family, but this is all we have," he said.

I talked with a few others with similar stories. I came away still believing that the upstream states would benefit if releases were altered in their favor, but I no longer thought it wouldn't matter to the downstream folks.

Getting to know the other side made me take some time to think about what I believed was the better course. That can't be a bad thing.

## **Mo. seeks to boost shipping on Missouri River**

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — State transportation officials are looking for ways to boost barge traffic on the Missouri River.

The Department of Transportation says a new task force is coordinating a market assessment of the Missouri River, while two other teams are examining ways to improve river port infrastructure and river management.

Currently, seven of the state's 14 public ports have the capability to transport goods across their dock. About 2.4 million tons of goods and services have passed through in 2009.

MoDOT officials say the goal is to increase freight moved across the docks onto the river, add connections to other modes of transportation and provide economic development opportunities along the river corridor.

# What did we accomplish in 2009?

- Worked closely with federal and state political leaders, state agencies and Corps of Engineers through public meetings, working committees and one-on-one contacts to give you a voice.
- Worked in partnership with the Corps of Engineers and North Dakota Game & Fish to identify lake access points for stakeholders to use year-long. We helped the Corps of Engineers reach area media with information on ice fishing and year-round access points.
- Worked in partnership with the Corps of Engineers and the North Dakota agencies to determine how \$500,000 in Congressional funding that was spent for access, parking lots, fish cleaning stations and restrooms around the lake. The Friends have a reputation for fighting hard for your interests while being willing to hear all viewpoints.
- Monitored runoff and storage situations to assure that the Corps of Engineers adhered to the mandates in the Master Manual concerning curtailing the navigation system and adjusting releases.
- Had two board members at the table in the Missouri River Recovery and Implementation Committee. Terry Fleck, Friends of Lake Sakakawea chairman, and David Johnson, board member and employee of the Garrison Conservancy District, are both working hard to participate in efforts of the MRRIC. The MRRIC is in charge of mitigating losses of aquatic and terrestrial habitat, ensuring the recovering of the federally listed species under the Endangered Species Act and involved in restoration of the ecosystem to prevent further declines among other native species.
- Participated in the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study and working hard to educate North Dakotans about the importance of participating.
- Continued to share our story about Lake Sakakawea and this organization's passion and progress through a DVD. The DVD has been widely distributed and shown to organizations and clubs in the lake region.
- Served as a voice at numerous public meetings by working with others to find solutions. The Friends are regularly in contact with the North Dakota Game & Fish, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Garrison Conservancy District, Missouri River Joint Water Board, local chambers and county organizations, water boards and weed boards.
- Kept our membership up to date on lake related issues through emails and newsletters. We are vigilant in monitoring ever changing developments and working for you year-round to give you first-hand information on the lake the Missouri River Basin system.
- Continue to share the message of our efforts and concerns about the lake with area media. The Friends have earned a reputation of an organization that is accessible, committed and dedicated to the causes of the lake.
- Raised public awareness statewide about the economic impact of our superb fishery and the serious impact low lake levels can have on the fishery and associated industries. We fight hard to share the story and raise concern.
- Supported and developed partnerships between concessionaires, local businesses and federal agencies and concerned citizens.
- Continue to support responsible use of the lake and surrounding lands by All Terrain Vehicles and warn of the dangers of Aquatic Nuisance Species.

## Governor speaks out on recreation's impact

*Highlights from a speech by Gov. John Hoeven on the Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study*

"The Missouri River Authorized Purposes Study (MRAPS) is an opportunity to create the right balance in the uses of the river. If the history of the past 20 years on the Missouri has taught us anything, it is that good drought conservation ensures maximum benefits for all of the authorized uses of the river, both upstream and downstream.

"As part of your efforts, you will obviously need to quantify the various beneficial uses of the river, which include recreation, municipal water supplies, power generation, irrigation, fish and wildlife, flood control, and navigation.

"Our Game and Fish Department has estimated that recreational fishing on the Missouri River System alone has accounted for more than \$100 million in economic benefit to North Dakota annually. To take a more recent example, according to a recent study by IHS Global Insights, between 2006 and 2008, McClean County – just one of a number of North Dakota counties that benefit from recreational use of the Lake – saw \$60 million in tourism activity. Recreation is only one of several major uses of the river system with a significant economic benefit for both upstream and downstream states."