

FINAL REPORT
ENVIRONMENTAL, RECREATIONAL, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF
IOWA'S RIVERS AND LAKES STUDY COMMITTEE

December 1991

AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Environmental, Recreational, and Economic Development of Iowa's Rivers and Lakes Study Committee was established by the Legislative Council and directed to focus on opportunities and problems facing Iowa's rivers and lakes. The charge of the Study Committee was "to improve Iowa's quality of life by identifying current and future needs for the environmental, recreational, and economic development of Iowa's rivers and lakes. The Committee shall consider the feasibility of the development and restoration of high quality waters which can be used for fishing, boating, and other water activities and as an attraction for other water activities and as an attraction for other recreational purposes, including recreational trails, camping, and hunting".

Members of the Committee were:

Senator Al Sturgeon, Co-Chairperson
Representative David Osterberg, Co-Chairperson
Senator Donald Gettings
Senator Michael Gronstal
Senator Beverly Hannon
Senator Jack Hester
Senator Emil Husak
Senator Paul Pate
Senator Wilmer Rensink
Representative Brad Banks
Representative Dennis Black
Representative Rick Dickinson
Representative Chuck Gipp
Representative Josephine Gruhn
Representative Scott Krebsbach
Representative Emil Pavich

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

The Study Committee was authorized three meetings which were held on September 12, October 14, and November 18, 1991.

MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 12, 1991

The proceedings and presentations of the meeting of September 12 are summarized as follows:

Mr. Allen Farris, Administrator, Fish and Wildlife Division, Department of Natural Resources, gave the Study Committee an overview of the recreational activities provided by the lakes and rivers of the state. He discussed the Open Spaces Plan of the Department and the major activities and programs of the Department which impact on the water resources of the state.

Mr. Tom Bruegger, Director, Monona County Conservation Board, gave the Study Committee a slide presentation providing a pictorial history of the Missouri River and the development of the river under the Pick-Sloan Plan established by the United States Congress in 1944. He noted that channelization of the Missouri River between Sioux City and Omaha resulted in degradation and the loss of thousands of acres of wetlands and oxbow lakes along the river. Following Mr. Bruegger's presentation, the Committee members were given a tour of several areas along the Missouri River where potential for mitigation of the degradation is high.

Mr. James Hall, representing the State Department of Transportation, described the economic impacts of barge traffic on the Missouri River. He stated that there are 10 river terminals in Iowa on the Missouri River and that the state is highly dependent on river travel for the export of agricultural commodities.

Mr. Chet Worm, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, gave a presentation as to the current hydrologic and reservoir conditions of the Missouri River. He explained that the reservoir system has the purposes of flood control, navigation, power generation, irrigation, fish and wildlife habitation, recreation, and maintaining supplies and water quality. He also stated that the Corps is studying various mitigation plans.

Ms. Diane Blankenship, Sierra Club, urged continued efforts to obtain mitigation funding from the federal government with an emphasis on flood plain forests, wet or hydric prairies, wildlife habitats, fish nurseries and spawning areas, and other natural areas. She also reflected on the importance of the Loess Hills State Historic Forest.

Mr. James Becic, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District, explained that the district in Nebraska provides an example of a land authority with a protective policy. He stated that Nebraska has twenty-three multipurpose districts with a board of elected directors who serve four-year terms and have property taxing authority to fund their programs. He noted that the district has priorities of reducing soil erosion and sedimentation damages, maintaining water quality and quantity, participating in solid waste management, providing outdoor recreational

facilities, and improving fish and wildlife habitat and forest resources. He also discussed current projects under development.

Mr. Don Meisner, Director, Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) urged interstate cooperation and involvement in the solution of Missouri River issues. He stated that the states must jointly approach problems of water allocation, out-of-basin transfers, water pricing, flows, pool levels, and water uses. He also suggested that Iowa should assume a leadership role in establishing a Missouri River Basin States Compact, continue efforts for a Nebraska-Iowa boundary solution, develop and implement a comprehensive mitigation program, designate a Missouri River test area where various antidegradation techniques can be designed and tested, and establish a water resources development fund to assist cities, counties, conservation districts, and the Missouri River Preservation Authority in developing and implementing water resources and related land use projects.

MEETING OF OCTOBER 14, 1991

The proceedings of the October 14 meeting are summarized as follows:

At its second meeting which was held at the Bellevue State Park Lodge, Mr. Allen Farris, Administrator, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Division, Department of Natural Resources; Ms. Marian Kieffer, a member of the Natural Resources Commission; and other staff of the Department described the wildlife and natural resources of the Mississippi River. Mr. Bob Sheets, Department staff, provided a tour of the Green Island State Wildlife Area and related areas which have resulted from the environmental management program of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He said that the Corps matches dollar-for-dollar the federal funds spent on the new lock and dam at Alton, Illinois. The federal funds are dedicated entirely to projects to restore fish and wildlife habitat along the Mississippi River. As a part of this program, \$2.6 million in federal moneys were also spent on the rehabilitation of Brown's Lake.

Another area of concern along the Mississippi River is the protection of the overall beauty of the river corridor. The Study Committee received testimony from Mr. Steve Johnson, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Mr. Gus Kerndt, a banker and attorney from Lansing, Iowa, concerning the development of blufflands along the river. Mr. Johnson stated that Minnesota has initiated a two-year bluffland protection project which focuses on local control of bluffland development with state technical assistance. Mr. Kerndt recommended mandatory county zoning ordinances to require setbacks and sedimentation controls so that the natural beauty of the blufflands is preserved. Mr. Kerndt argued that both developer and preservationist interests can be protected with rational planning and a little care.

The Study Committee also received information from Ms. Holly Stoerker, of the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association, concerning the history and activities of the Association. She stated that the Association is interested in pollution control, response to hazardous spills, and regulation of hydroelectric power plants. The Study Committee also heard from Mr. Gary Mensinger, a commercial fisher, concerning the conflicting interests of commercial fishers and barge traffic. Mr. Mensinger explained the importance of both fishing and barge traffic to the local economy and the efforts that are needed to co-exist.

Mr. John Edmans, Mississippi River Parkway Commission, explained the historical background and current promotional efforts to maintain the Great River Road which connects 10 states along the river and has received about \$1.3 billion of federal moneys in recent years. He added that no additional federal money is expected in the next federal highway bill, but efforts are being made to market the river and promote its tourism value.

MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 1991

The November 18 meeting of the Study Committee is summarized as follows:

At its final meeting, the Study Committee concentrated on interior rivers and lakes of Iowa. The Department of Natural Resources and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship informed the Committee of the current status of point source pollution and nonpoint source pollution throughout the state. Mr. Hank Sinda, City Manager, Sioux City, emphasized the need for intergovernmental cooperation in resolving flood control problems in some areas of the state. The Perry Creek Basin in Plymouth and Woodbury Counties, he noted, caused extensive flood damage in Sioux City in 1990, but efforts since that time to establish protections against future flood problems have not been successful.

Mr. James Gulliford, Director, Soil Conservation Division, Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, discussed the programs and projects which have been funded through the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) and the Committing the Lottery to Environment, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (CLEAN) appropriations. He outlined the expenditures from the Water Protection fund which include both water quality practices and projects, and summarized the work of the soil and water conservation districts in recent years.

Mr. Mark Ackelson, Associate Director, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, urged the Study Committee to promote the creation of a legislative study committee to focus on bluffland protection, evaluate the investment of riverboat gambling proceeds in bluffland protection programs, and maintain the REAP program at its current level as a minimum to ensure that some funds may be available for bluffland projects.

Mr. Allan Stokes, Administrator, Environmental Protection Division, Department of Natural Resources, presented the Study Committee with a lengthy analysis of state wastewater facilities and classified receiving systems, compliance status for major municipal and industrial wastewater facilities, compliance sampling inspections for major municipal and industrial wastewater facilities, enforcement action summary for all wastewater facilities since January 1987, state of Iowa and regional maps of municipal, industrial, and semipublic wastewater facilities, and state of Iowa maps of streams impacted by point and nonpoint sources. Mr. Stokes also explained enforcement procedures when appropriate quality standards are not met.

Mr. Marty Lamberti, Iowans for Better Fisheries, urged continued support for the REAP program and for lake restoration to improve recreational fishing opportunities for Iowans as well as promoting tourism. Mr. Lamberti also expressed support for the Clear Creek project.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Study Committee considered and unanimously adopted the following recommendations:

1. Encourage the Department of Natural Resources to initiate Missouri River mitigation projects with other states.
2. Provide more state resources and assistance to the Missouri River Protection Authority.
3. Adopt a concurrent resolution calling on the Iowa delegation and the United States Congress to support full funding of Missouri River mitigation projects and Mississippi River environmental management projects.
4. Encourage the Department of Natural Resources to have, as a high priority of the Open Spaces Account of the Resource Enhancement and Protection Fund (REAP) after the funding of the Brushy Creek project is completed, the acquisition, protection, management, and development of lands and waters on the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers.
5. Authorize a study to develop a bluffland protection plan. The study would consider, among other things, an acquisition and easement program, development of a blufflands recreation area, development of a model ordinance based on laws or ordinances of other states, and what should be the role of local and state zoning laws as a tool to protect the blufflands.
6. Encourage the Department of Natural Resources to pursue the restoration of existing lakes and to obtain federal funding whenever possible.

7. Retain state ownership of and support the Lakeside Laboratory located at West Lake Okoboji.
8. Continue funding for programs to reduce nonpoint source pollution.
9. Fund programs for the environmental, recreational, and economic development of Iowa's rivers and lakes from fees generated from riverboat gambling.

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