

MIDDLE ARKANSAS SUBBASIN NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2007

COLLABORATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Collaboration is the characteristic of most successful environmental management efforts.

Successful collaboration efforts encourage opportunities for greater levels of interaction among agencies, community groups, interest groups and private landowners, by creating working groups and coordinators. These relationships help create a shared sense of ownership of a problem. Ownership is important because people take care of and remain committed to what they own.

The middle Arkansas River subbasin working group is a good example of environmental management collaboration. The working group consists of local stakeholders composed of residents of the middle Arkansas River subbasin and other governmental agencies. By working together, they have developed voluntary management strategies to address issues related to water resource concerns.

This relationship between local stakeholders and governmental agencies established a basis of common concerns that let them approach their differences creatively. As a result, goals were promoted while reducing conflict and increasing trust and communication within the community.

Successful collaboration helps people realize their need to work together by focusing on shared goals, common problems and a sense of crisis.

Why Collaborate?

- Collaboration is critical to any management approach.
- Collaboration is part of life in a diverse society. Either we find ways to deal with our differences creatively, or decision-making institutions will bog down in familiar impasses.
- Collaboration can produce better decisions than adversarial processes. Building an understanding of shared and individual concerns promotes information sharing as well as creative win-win solutions. In contrast adversarial processes like litigation create a win-lose dynamic, and regulatory programs tend to promote one-size-fits-all strategies.
- Collaboration can improve the chances that decisions are implemented. When people are not involved in change, they resist it. When they are involved, they are committed both to a plan of action and to sharing resources to get things done.

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MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS

2007 NO-TILL ON THE PLAINS
WINTER CONFERENCE

JANUARY 30-31, 2007
BI-CENTENNIAL CENTER,
SALINA, KANSAS

VISIT <http://www.notill.org> FOR
MORE INFORMATION

KANSAS DAM SAFETY
CONFERENCE 2007

MARCH 12-14, 2007
HOLIDAY INN
605 FAIRLAWN ROAD
TOPEKA, KANSAS

EMAIL bcooper@kda.state.ks.us
FOR MORE INFORMATION

GMD #5
ANNUAL MEETING

FEBRUARY 15, 2006
ST. JOHN LIBRARY
406 N MONROE
ST. JOHN, KANSAS

1541

The Arkansas River is discovered before the Mississippi River.

1682

La Salle claimed the Arkansas in the name of the King of France.

1787

George Washington, concerned about waterway use and internal development, endorsed the Ordinance of 1787. This act provided the cornerstone for the free waterways policy of the United States during the past two centuries.

1800-1814

Through riverboat trade, early French explorers and traders brought goods suitable for trading with the Indians for furs and skins. They used bull-boats constructed by stretching buffalo hides over a framework of tree limbs), pirogues (hollowed-out logs), flatboats and keelboats (designed for one-way use; after cargo was delivered and unloaded, keelboat would be broken up for scrap).

1803

The United States purchases the Louisiana Territory, which includes the Arkansas River basin.

President Jefferson commissions Merriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the region, but they never explored the Arkansas River basin.

1806

Zebulun Pike explored the Arkansas River.

1822

William Becknell made his second trading expedition to northern Mexico with three loaded wagons; the first known use of wheeled transportation.

1824

April 24, the General Survey Act authorizes the president to use Army engineers to survey road and canal routes "of national importance, in a commercial or military point of view."

1825

Joseph C. Brown crossed the Arkansas River near present Ford, Kansas.

1838

The Cherokee, on the "Trail of Tears," came up the Arkansas River on flatboats.

1871

According to county commission records, the first ferry license for the Arkansas River within Cowley County was issued April 11, 1871, to W.H. Speers and others. This ferry was located at the point where the South 6th Street bridge of later date crossed the river and was one of the busiest ferries in the county.

December 25, the first katy locomotive crossed the Arkansas River.

THE HISTORY OF THE ARKANSAS RIVER IN KANSAS, 1541-1900

At 1,450 miles, the Arkansas River is the longest tributary in the Mississippi-Missouri system. The Arkansas River starts in central Colorado, in a pocket of peaks in Lake County, near present day Leadville. The river drops 10,000 feet in 125 miles, carving out scenic beauty, including the Royal Gorge. The river enters Kansas near Coolidge, in Hamilton County, and crosses the counties of Kearny, Finney, Gray, Ford, Edwards, Pawnee, Barton, Rice, Reno, Sedgwick, Sumner and Cowley, leaving Kansas at a point about 8 miles southeast of Arkansas City. It then travels through northeast Oklahoma and then through Arkansas, where it empties into the Mississippi River 600 miles north of New Orleans.

On June 29, 1541, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado crossed the Arkansas near present day Dodge City, Kansas, using a fording place frequented by native peoples and buffalo. A short time later, Hernando de Soto was on the lower part of the Arkansas and, within a month, he discovered the Mississippi.

The Spaniards accompanying Coronado's expedition called the river the "River of Quivera." Marquette, the French explorer, called it the "Akansa," and the Mexicans called it the "Rio Napete." William Delisle, on his map of 1700, called it the "Acansa" and Emanuel Bowen's map of 1752 lists it as the "Rio des Acansas." LePage du Pratz's map of 1757 designates the river as the "Arkansas"; this most likely being one of the earliest spellings of the name as we have it today.

During the 1800s, the lower portion of the river was navigable as far as Fort Smith. The head of navigation on the river was 24 miles below old Fort Mann, this being about south of present Kinsley, and then it was navigable only by boats of light draft. Some attempts at navigation had been made during the 1870s, and a small steamboat, the Aunt Sally, reached Arkansas City on June 30, 1878. During the early 1880s several small craft had managed to navigate from the lower river up as far as Wichita, but these attempts to prove the navigability of the river were disappointing to those most interested.

On the Santa Fe Trail, one of the most referred to and researched crossings is the Arkansas to the Cimarron route or cutoff. These routes and crossings of the Arkansas River in western Kansas are probably the most talked about and researched places on the Santa Fe Trail today. The confusion about the crossings starts with there being so many of them. Starting from present day Great Bend, to near Syracuse, a distance of about 175 miles, there were many crossings that were used by the Santa Fe Trail trade. The earliest route of Santa Fe traders struck the Arkansas River near the "Great Bend," the present day town of Ellinwood. The route along the Arkansas was the safest trail because of the available water in the river. Sometimes a little digging was required to find water in the river, as it would be nearly dry.

In 1822, William Becknell made his second trading expedition to northern Mexico with three loaded wagons. Becknell's party crossed

THE HISTORY OF THE ARKANSAS RIVER, 1541 TO 1900 CONTINUED

the Arkansas below the present day town of Great Bend. His exact route is not recorded, but it is almost certain he followed Mulberry Creek from where it empties into the Arkansas River east of present day Ford, Kansas.

Farther down the Arkansas River, near present day Ford, another crossing was mentioned by Joseph C. Brown in his field notes of the 1825 survey team. He stated, "it would be much nearer to cross the river here and ascend the Mulberry Creek . . . and then . . . to the lower spring on the Semaron; but on trial of the way travelers has discontinued it as unsafe. It is discommodious of water. . . . On this route has been much suffering; in a dry time 'tis dangerous'."

Up to the mid 1870s, there was generally always an abundance of water in the river, even down to the ever-flowing Little Arkansas near Wichita. Occasionally, the river was a bed of dry sand above the mouth of the Little Arkansas for a couple of months in the fall.

Low water was not unheard of during prolonged dry spells. Water in the channel has been known to disappear suddenly, only to make its reappearance as unexpectedly within the next day or two. This phenomenon was recorded by one of the early Sedgwick County newspapers, which, having mentioned that the river was dry, discovered water in the channel the next day. A short time later the water again disappeared. It reappeared just before the paper went to press, causing the scribe to record an item to the effect that "The Arkansas wet its bed again last night."

With the settlement of Kansas lying along the river between Dodge City and the west line of the state, the pioneers in irrigation began construction of canals and ditches, and the waters of the Arkansas were diverted for irrigation purposes. With the influx of settlers in the valley from the base of the mountains eastward to the Kansas line, so much of the flow of the river was diverted for agricultural purposes that by the time the river reached Kansas the stream was dry. This action by farm owners in Colorado was the cause of ruining many farmers living along the river in western Kansas, and finally resulted in a suit brought by the state of Kansas against Colorado for a more equal distribution of the Arkansas' waters in the early 1900s.

References:

(Kansas Historical Quarterly, Ferries in Kansas, Part IX—Arkansas River by George A. Root, February 1936)

(The Arkansas River Historical Society Museum, An Outline History of the Arkansas River From Early European Explorations to the Development of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, author unknown)

(Santa Fe Trail Research Site, Where it all Begins-Crossing of the Arkansas River by Larry & Carolyn Mix)

1877

Unprecedented high waters in the river during late May 1877 carried away or disabled all the bridges on the lower Arkansas, so everyone in Cowley County being put out of commission.

1878

The Aunt Sally, 85-foot-long, 18-foot-wide steamboat, left Little Rock on June 18 and arrived in Arkansas City, Kansas, June 30.

During June 1878, high waters in the Arkansas again caused inconvenience to the residents of Cowley County.

1880

From 1880 to 1905, 12 irrigation canals were constructed to divert water from the Arkansas River between the Colorado state line and Great Bend.

The first two Kansas ditches, that are still active west of Garden City, began diverting water (Garden City Ditch Company and the Finney County Water Users Association).

1881

The Great Eastern Ditch began construction on November 5.

1882

The Great Eastern head gate first diverted water from the Arkansas River.

1883

The Eureka Irrigating canal, known also as the "Soule Ditch," began in 1883 by Asa T. Soule. The canal was intended to divert water from the Arkansas River at what is now Ingalls, Kansas, 96 miles across Gray and Ford counties, to Coon Creek in Edwards County.

1885

"The bottom too near the top." So said an owner of the Kansas Miller in July, 1885, when 2,000 pounds of flour from Arkansas City, consigned to the Kaw Agency, had to be unloaded and hauled overland the last few miles because the river was too low.

1888

The last of the six currently active Kansas ditches began diverting water.

The Eureka Irrigating canal reached Spearville in 1888, but the project failed due to similar irrigation projects upstream and a prolonged drought.

1900

From 1900 to 1910 irrigation wells began to be constructed in the Arkansas valley. This development occurred because of the rapid expansion of irrigation in Colorado. This expansion in Colorado caused the flow in the Arkansas River to cease during July and August, when water was sorely needed by Kansas irrigators. Well water could be obtained at depths of 6 to 20 feet. These early wells were constructed to supplement the river flows, not to replace river water.

COUNTY PRECIPITATION

Precipitation information is provided by the Kansas State University Weather Data Library at www.oznet.ksu.edu. Rainfall reports for all stations within a county have been summarized and given as a county average.

County	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total	Yearly New Normal
Rush	0.06	0.00	1.55	1.45	2.47	4.17	1.49	10.28	2.25	1.22	24.92	23.63
Pawnee	0.02	0.00	0.90	2.24	4.31	4.01	2.85	8.37	0.56	1.95	25.20	23.99
Stafford	0.02	0.00	1.89	1.59	3.09	4.23	1.66	6.75	2.92	2.39	24.56	26.03
Rice	0.02	0.00	1.29	3.43	2.02	2.39	3.24	4.71	3.44	2.12	22.64	28.25
Edwards	0.11	0.00	1.41	1.58	3.20	3.12	2.14	5.15	1.40	2.84	20.92	26.75
Barton	0.07	0.00	1.41	3.36	3.06	3.29	2.61	8.63	1.50	1.07	24.99	26.62