

BACK TO THE RIVER, INC.



OUR MISSION, VISION, GOALS & PROJECTS

MISSION

Back to the River, Inc. seeks to enhance the quality of life for citizens of the region by supporting the creation and expansion of parks, recreation, habitat and open space along our 64 mile boundary of the Missouri River, from Mondamin, Iowa, south, to the mouth of the Platte River.

To accomplish our Mission, partnerships are key. We provide coordination, financial support and planning in conjunction with a varied group of sponsors. The Project Section recognizes our many partners - along with their project.



VISION

Back to the River, in its direction and projects, will exemplify the best efforts of a partnership committed to balancing the needs of natural and human systems. Our efforts will support and enhance conservation, economic development, recreation and education along the river which unites our two states' urban and rural landscapes.

GOALS

The Goals of Back to the River reflect a comprehensive vision for the future of our Missouri River corridor. Individual Back to the River projects will address these goals to varying degrees, supporting the overall aim of developing a vital, sustainable river environment.

Promote Recreation and River Access

Back to the River supports creation and expansion of parks, recreation and open space along the Missouri River and events and activities designed to bring visitors “back to the river”.

Improve Wildlife Habitat

Back to the River encourages projects which preserve, enhance, restore and create wetland and river habitat for native plants and wildlife.

Encourage Compatible Economic Development

Back to the River encourages economic development opportunities which are compatible with natural ecosystems and the built environment within the Missouri River corridor.

Emphasize Historical and Cultural Resources

Back to the River promotes public art and the interpretation of historic places and events along the Missouri River.

Promote Education

Back to the River promotes informational and educational programs which provide learning opportunities for all ages to gain a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Missouri River’s value.

Improve Water Quality

Back to the River advocates actions to improve the water quality of the Missouri River, assuring a safe and attractive environment as well as a healthy and reliable source of drinking water.

Endorse Responsible Floodplain Management

Back to the River encourages balanced and appropriate use of the Missouri River floodplain, achieved through integrated structural and non-structural measures.

PROJECTS

Over \$90 million dollars! That's the estimated value of the projects we've supported.

Our work illustrates the diversity of the Missouri River and reflects our Mission, Vision and Goals. For example, we partnered on the award winning Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. We sponsored the Missouri River Relief Organization's reoccurring river clean-ups – during their last visit, volunteers removed over 8 tons of trash from our river banks.

Our efforts to assist in the expansion of Fontenelle Forest within the Boyer Chute Natural Wildlife Refuge boundaries and secure the Heinz Property exemplify our commitment to environmental stewardship and the enhancement of wildlife habitat.

The Missouri River is rich in history. As a result, historic Interpretation and education are incorporated into many of our projects. Public art has also found its way into our sponsorships. Both local and nationally known artists are showcased within facilities we've partnered.

We've used our projects to promote learning opportunities. For example, elementary students played a critical role in the Children's Art Wall and the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Trail Exhibit. And to help envision a new green Riverfront infrastructure, we brought together Landscape Architecture students from the Iowa State and the University of Nebraska - Lincoln for a fifteen-week service studio.

And we helped to bring "fun" Back to the River! Our early vision resulted in a trail system along both sides of the Missouri River. Now our BCycle stations make using these trails even more convenient.

The parks we've supported have greatly increased Riverfront visitation. The River's Edge Pavilion, with its views of the river and Omaha skyline, is in year around demand. Belles' Play Garden has become a "must visit" stop on the Riverfront and you can even "play in the water" courtesy of the water playgrounds located on each side of the river.

Finally, the concerts and special events now hosted along the Riverfront annually attract thousands of visitors, from both Nebraska and Iowa, to come together and celebrate on the banks of the Missouri River. Attendance for headliners like the Beach Boys, Chicago, the Band Perry, the Omaha Symphony, Shaggy, Creedence Clearwater, TLC and 98 Degrees clearly indicates our support of these events and the parks where they now perform have successfully brought residents and visitors "Back to the River".

Pictures and detailed information regarding all of our projects follow.



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ASARCO on Omaha's Riverfront circa 1995

ASARCO Conversion to Public Space

In 1995, Omaha's Riverfront was an ugly place. It needed to be cleaned up! Our Founder, Senator Bob Kerrey, worked with the City, to make that happen. "The riverfront was drab and dismal." said then Mayor Hal Daub, "It was embarrassing to come to Omaha with all the industrial junk yards and Asarco."

ASARCO was the primary property owner on Omaha's downtown Riverfront. One of the nation's largest lead refineries, evidence was increasing that ASARCO's byproducts polluted the Missouri River, soil and the air. The company was facing national scrutiny.

Senator Kerrey engaged with Mayor Daub to coordinate the Environmental Protection Agency's role in addressing options for ASARCO. Eventually, ASARCO agreed to spend millions to cap the soil, preventing further contamination. In 1999, the City accepted ASARCO's donation of the property and \$8 million to develop the park.

This first piece, to a revitalized riverfront, was officially named Lewis & Clark Landing. Initially, it included a restaurant, performance area, green space, marina

and public art. New projects are under way which include a new, next generation Science Center and expanded park amenities.



ASARCO in the 1930's

Project Partners: City of Omaha, P-MRNRD, Nebraska Environmental Trust, EPA, Nebraska Dept. of Environmental Quality, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River – Federal Funding by Bob Kerrey

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$9,000,000

Year: 1998, 1999

The “Baby Bob”

The “Baby Bob” will span Riverfront Drive and the UP tracks, connecting the award winning Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge to 10th Street.

This extension will greatly improve visitor access from the convention center, ballpark, North Downtown, Creighton and both the Omaha and Council Bluffs Riverfronts.

Previously, we partnered to construct the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. For the “Baby Bob”, we supported Omaha’s grant application and agreed to partner in the project’s funding.



Since its opening in 2008, the Bob Kerrey Bridge has become not only a popular

Riverfront facility and a critical component to the Metro’s trail system, but an icon for the Omaha/Council Bluffs skyline.

Now, the popularity and importance of the Kerrey Bridge has been reinforced by the City’s decision to proceed with the “Baby Bob”.



Project Partners: City of Omaha, P-MRNRD, Federal Grants, Riverfront Revitalization Philanthropy, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$150,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$7,500,000

Year: 2023



Back to the River Master Plan

Back to the River began as a loosely formed group of agencies, representing both sides of the river, and interested in coordinating and cooperating in their Missouri River efforts. As the group began to meet, it became clear a framework and parameters needed to be established.

The Back to the River Master Plan was the first step in formalizing the group's operating framework. The plan evaluated membership, discussed geographical boundaries and provided operational recommendations.

At that time, many METRO agencies had turned their interest to trail development. Clearly, the Missouri River's banks provide an ideal opportunity for an extended, connected trail system. This plan also researched and identified prior plans for Riverfront trail locations, and for the first time, illustrated how an entire trail system might be constructed along the Missouri.

Project Partners: All Back to the River Partners.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River – \$40,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$40,000



Belles' Play Garden

In 2022, we helped land a colorful, 15-foot-tall pelican landed next to the River's Edge Pavilion! This pelican features climbing structures, a slide, a hammock and a lookout perch. Its new home is called Belles' Play Garden. The Play Garden also features a series of Missouri River-inspired play and educational elements, interpretive seating, and rich native plantings.

Belles' Play Garden is part of the "Go Play" initiative co-founded by Rick Knudtson & Heather Tomasek, and Marlina & Dusty Davidson. Together with their families, they provided the project's major funding. Marlina and Dusty were born and raised in Council Bluffs. Heather formerly worked for Council Bluffs, managing Phase II of River's Edge Park.

'We founded this Go Play initiative to return play to the park and surrounding neighborhoods,' Tomasek said. 'Both our families have young daughters, Ella (El Belle) Knudtson and Annabelle Davidson.

They love spending time in parks, so Belles' Play Garden is named in their honor."

We partnered with the Iowa West Foundation to provide additional funding for this project.



Project Partners: Rick Knudtson & Heather Tomasek, Marlina & Dusty Davidson and the Iowa West Foundation, City of Council Bluffs

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$300,000
Estimated Total Project Cost - \$600,000

Year: 2022



The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge

Our founder, former U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey, had a vision for a pedestrian bridge spanning the Missouri River and connecting two cities and two states! His vision found support. Following extensive planning, BttR, along with numerous partners, advanced a preliminary bridge design that was both functional and architecturally significant. Funding followed. The Senator delivered an \$18 million grant and we joined other public and private sources to provide an additional \$4 million. Upon completion, both cities agreed to name the bridge in honor of Bob Kerrey. On September 28, 2008 the bridge opened.

The resulting Pedestrian Bridge is defined by twin spires reaching 200 feet into the sky, representing the connection between the cities of Council Bluffs and Omaha. The graceful curved design of the bridge – named by Travel+Leisure magazine as one of the world’s most beautiful pedestrian bridges – reflects the elegance of the water that rushes below. At night, the twin spires and graceful cable stays light up the Missouri River for miles.

The landmark showcases the trail access, wildlife and compatible economic development that is possible along the Missouri River. Walkers, bikers, joggers, birdwatchers and others can traverse the 3,070-foot span, which connects nearly 150 miles of trails in both Iowa and Nebraska.



Project Partners: The States of Nebraska & Iowa, Cities of Council Bluffs & Omaha, Kiewit Foundation, Iowa West Foundation, P-MRNRD, Federal Grants, MAPA and others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$450,000

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$22,000,000

Years: 2007, 2008



Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge Development

Acquisition of additional property and improvement of access roads are among the projects we've supported for the Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge was established to recover fish and wildlife habitat in and along the Missouri River and to restore a natural environment that became scarce when the river was altered for navigation over 50 years ago. It exemplifies our core vision and goals.

When the Krimlofski property became available, offering an opportunity for the Refuge to expand, we supported it. And when the popularity of Boyer Chute eventually grew and required improvement of the County road serving it, our Founder, Senator Bob Kerrey, lead a Washington based effort, eventually providing Federal funding for road improvements.

Today, Boyer Chute National Wildlife Refuge provides visitors an opportunity to experience rare Missouri River floodplain habitats. These diverse prairies, floodplain forests, wetlands and riverine habitats provide for the needs of many threatened and endangered species. The Refuge provides wildlife recreation and education opportunities to the surrounding Metro area.



Project Partners: Fontenelle Forest, P-MRNRD, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Washington County, Ducks Unlimited, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$25,000

Estimated Total Project Cost – \$1,000,000

Year: 2019



Children's Lewis and Clark Art Wall

School children, local agencies and a Lewis & Clark group teamed with us to imagine, fund and build this unique attraction. The Children's Art wall combines public art and historic education. Its completion highlighted Sarpy County's Lewis & Clark Bicentennial celebration.

The Children's Wall is an interpretative art piece constructed in Bellevue's Hayworth Park. The art work was contributed by elementary school students in communities along the routes of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Each student's work was reproduced on tiles and arranged

geographically from Illinois to Oregon. The wall is comprised of 750 of these tiles. It stands 8 foot high and is 65 feet long.

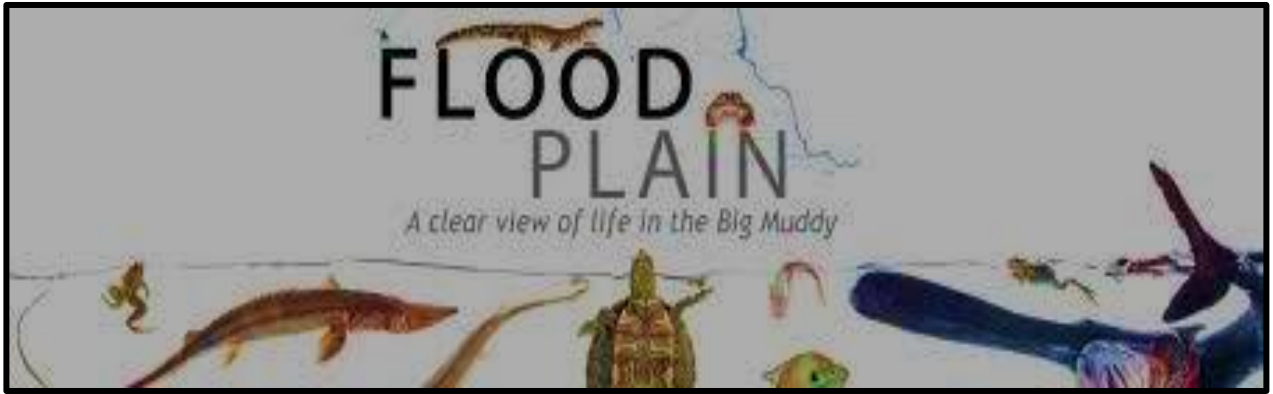
In 2011, we again turned our attention to the Children's Wall when waters of a 100 year flood reached the foot of the wall. As a result, the wall was relocated within Hayworth Park. We managed this process and partnered with Bellevue to fund it.

Project Partners: Sarpy County, the County's Lewis & Park Committee, P-MRNRD, City of Bellevue, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River – \$37,960

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$290,000

Year: 2005 and 2012



FLOOD PLAIN – *A clear view of life in the Big Muddy*

We found creative ways to advance both artistic endeavors and educational programs focused on the Missouri River. For example, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, we supported photographer Alex Wiles’s effort to produce a unique photographic study of Missouri River wildlife. His creation, FLOOD PLAIN - *A clear view of life in the Big Muddy* brought a new appreciation to the beauty of the river’s native creatures.



As a photographer, Alex found the Missouri River’s water clarity not conducive to photographing the species that live in it. Eventually, he settled on using a white background to provide a glimpse into the world of the Missouri River floodplain. This technique, known as high-key photography, has typically been used for scientific purposes. This approach allowed Alex to produce clear, artistic and beautiful photos, giving recognition to the rarely seen charismatic Missouri River aquatic life.



Once the collection was complete, selected pictures were transitioned into large “stickers”. With approval from Omaha and Council Bluffs, these “stickers” were installed on the surface of various Riverfront Trails – and even the Pedestrian Bridge. As a result, thousands of trail and bridge users were delighted to see a these unique pictures of Missouri River wildlife!

Eventually, Alex arranged his work into an exhibit which was premiered at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center. Thereafter, his exhibit traveled to nature centers and museums along the Missouri River, including a viewing in the River’s Edge Pavilion.

Project Partners: Fontenelle Forest.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River \$13,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$20,000

Year: 2018



Flood Resiliency: A Green Vision

We sponsored a fifteen-week interdisciplinary service-learning design studio with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Iowa State University and Sasaki. Students from landscape architecture, architecture, and community and regional planning were engaged with stakeholders during a five-phase process. The five phases included establishing the partnership, principle-based inventory and analysis, a green infrastructure framework plan, prototypical design projects, and final documentation.

Throughout this process, the role of the landscape architecture studios was dynamic and extensive; from establishing a partnership with BtR as well as a diverse stakeholder group of 20 community leaders and professionals; to developing an interconnected open space system improving the quality of life through the enhancement of ecological services. A detailed analysis of these complex systems lead the studios to redefine the study from a river restoration and flood prevention effort to a comprehensive integrated green infrastructure strategy necessary to achieve greater impact within the community.

The development of a green infrastructure vision focused on the reciprocal relationship between development and conservation.

Input from stakeholders and an expert panel, helped students develop a consensus of goals and objectives that guided the creation of the green infrastructure framework plan, outlining specific long- range challenges and solutions to new and existing development. Lastly, studio demonstrated flood resilient green infrastructure strategies through priority projects ranging in scale from trail network and floodplain master plan to district, corridor, and site design.



Project Partners: University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Iowa State University, Sasaki.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River -\$25,000

Estimated Total Project Cost -\$47,797

Year: 2012



Heartland BCycle

We are proud to have partnered with Heartland BCycle to bring rental bicycles to the Riverfront! And they've been a success – in fact our bike stations are among the Metro's most popular.

Why are our stations so heavily used? Certainly, the development of the Omaha/Council Bluffs Riverfront attractions is a factor; however the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge also contributes. The Bridge allows visitors to simply hop on a bike and explore the trails - on both sides of the river!

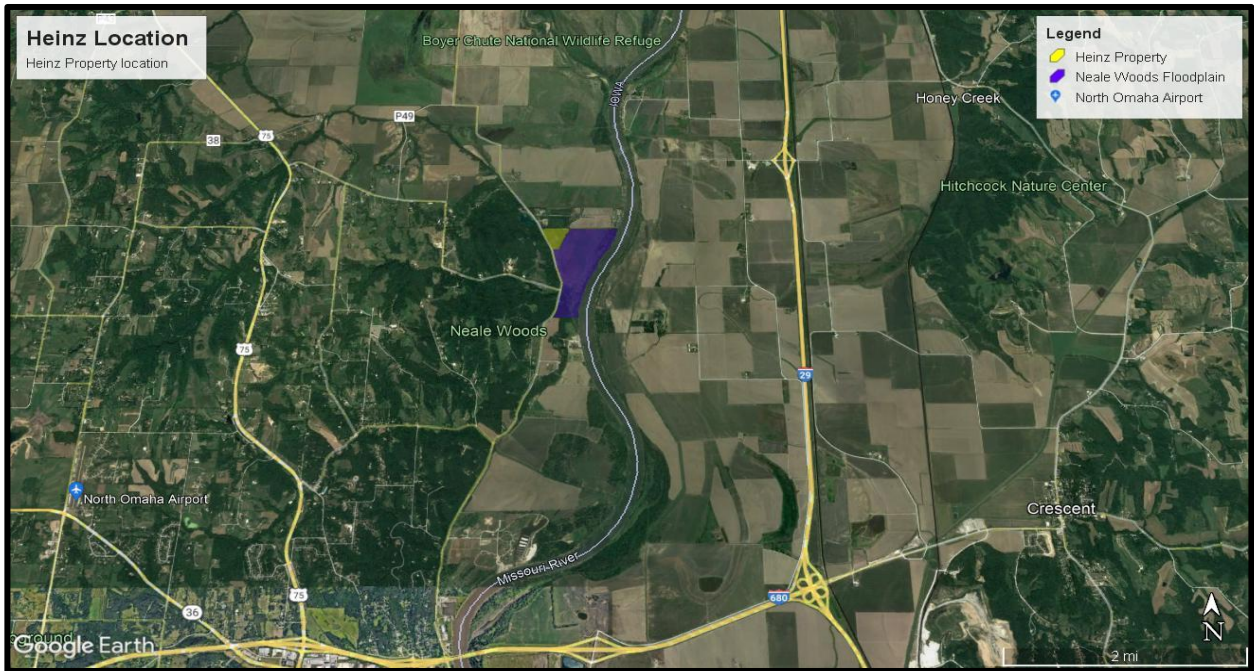
Today, electric bicycles are the rage! As a result, many of the older bikes and Riverfront rental sites have converted to electricity. Riding a bike continues to be a “cool” way to visit the Riverfront – we helped make it easy!

Project Partners: The Cities of Omaha & Council Bluffs, P-MRNRD, Live Well Omaha, the Iowa West Foundation, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River Contribution - \$58,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$468,000
Year: 2014, 2019





Heinz Property Acquisition

Our interest in habitat development and responsible floodplain management lead us to support Fontenelle Forest’s effort to purchase the Heintz property. These 20 acres adjoin and expand Neale Woods, a nature preserve managed by Fontenelle Forest.

Neale Woods Preserve features 600 acres of forest and hilltop prairies - along the Missouri River. It offers 7 miles of walking trails and abundant plant and animal life. Securing the Heintz property protects the edges of Neale Woods and expands the Preserve’s opportunities for habitat development and public use.

For the Heintz property, Fontenelle Forest staff developed a management/restoration plan. As a result, this project not only expands Neale Woods but offers the public an opportunity to observe the habitat restoration process.

Project Partners: Fontenelle Forest, Ducks Unlimited, others.

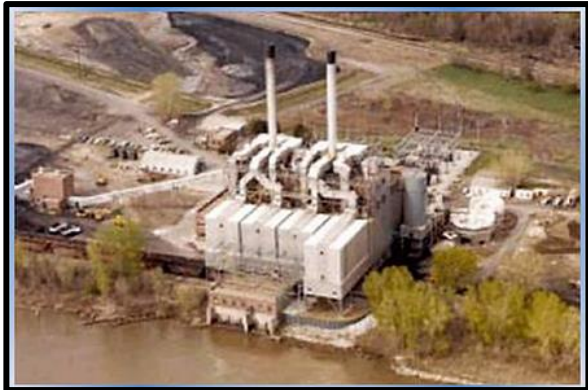
Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$50,000

Estimated Total Project Cost – \$185,000

Year: 2019

Kramer Power Plant Acquisition

For forty years, the Kramer Power Plant operated on the banks of the Missouri River. In 1987, the plant closed. Fifteen years later, due to deterioration and vandalism, the plant remained a significant eyesore on Bellevue's Riverfront. Our Founder, Bob Kerrey, successfully championed federal assistance for Bellevue's effort to remove the plant.



In 2004, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District and the City of Bellevue demolished the Plant and the 100 acres site began a rebirth. A youth football field opened in 2009.

In 2013 - 2015, a 10 acre pond and a fishing pier were constructed. The park, now named American Heroes Park, also includes a War on Terror Memorial.

The park now hosts major community events including River Fest. A Master Plan has been approved and additional park improvements are planned.



Project Partners: FEMA, City of Bellevue, P-MRNRD, Bellevue Sport Association, Bellevue Community Foundation, AHP Volunteers, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River – Federal Funding by Bob Kerrey

Year: 2003



Lewis & Clark Interpretive Trail Exhibit

We partnered with artists, historians and others to acknowledge Lewis & Clark's expedition's visit. For this project, we participated in both the planning and funding.

Planning began by identifying river locations to help "tell the story" of Lewis & Clark's visit. At each location, a large, artist designed, 12 foot high, precast monument was erected. Every monument differed, but each incorporated a center banner designed for unique art work. Additionally, at each location, historic signage was installed specifically detailing the "story to be told" there.

For each monument, a different local artist was then selected to incorporate original art into the monument's banner area. Many of the artists engaged with local groups, including schools, in planning their art. As a result, each monument is unique, both in size and subject.

Monuments are located at Miller's Landing Park, Boyer Chute, Lewis & Clark Park, Dodge Riverside Golf Course, Levi Carter Park, Haworth Park, the Western Historic Trial Center, Lewis & Clark Landing and Lauritzen Gardens.

In addition to the individual sites, Miller's Landing Park was chosen to display many of the monuments at one location.



Project Partners: National Park Service, P-MRNRD, City of Omaha, Lewis & Clark Challenge Program.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River: - \$20,000

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$150,000

Year: 2004



Loessfest – Flood Plain, Habitat & Wildlife Preservation Programs

On several occasions, we partnered with the City of Council Bluffs to incorporate programs focused on flood plain education, river habitat issues and wildlife preservation as part of the City’s Loessfest celebration.

Originally created to celebrate the opening of Tom Hanafan River’s Edge Park, Loessfest quickly became the Riverfront most popular activity. Visitors came, not only from the Metro area but from across the region. In its first five year, over 175,000 attend Loessfest.

In 2013, we partnered with the University of Iowa to bring their “Living with Floods” program to Council Bluffs and Loessfest. For this program, the University selected seven Iowa communities, trained their teachers in environmental learning teaching techniques and sponsored flood related community forums and learning events for K-12 students. For the concert portion of their program, the University booked the Preservation Hall Jazz Band to Loessfest.



In 2018, we brought Jeff & Page to Loessfest. Jeff and Paige's family oriented concert carried the message of a love of the outdoors and their interest in ecology, wildlife and habitat conservation.



Also that year, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wild & Scenic River Act, we brought Alex Wiles’s *Flood Plain – A clear view of life in the Big Muddy* exhibit to Loessfest.

Project Partners: City of Council Bluffs, IWF, SWIF, Broadmoor, Cox, HGM, Noddle Development, Kiewit Foundation, Am. Nat. Bank, Broadmoor, HDR, others. Living with Floods partners: the Iowa College of Engineering, College of Education, the Center for Global & Regional Environmental Research, and the Iowa Flood Center.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River \$60,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$870,000

Years: 2013, 2018

Missouri River Central Pedestrian Crossing Study

This study fostered the eventual construction of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. The need for a river crossing, tying together the projected trail system on both side of the river, was well documented. Our prior Trail and River Crossing Plan had not only solidified the need but established possible locations.



The study's challenge was not only where to make the connection – but how. The Study Group reviewed other similar success stories. Three river crossing methods were evaluated. For each method, consultants provided preliminary design along with estimated construction, maintenance and operation costs.

The first method for pedestrian river crossing was by ferry. Several existing similar pedestrian ferry operations were studied.

Another option for crossing the Missouri was by gondola. These installations, first used on the ski slopes, had also found their way into urban pedestrian transportation projects.

Finally, construction of a bridge was analyzed.

Following a review of all options, the Committee recommended a free standing pedestrian bridge as the most viable method for connecting the two sides of the Missouri River. Additional preliminary engineering was accomplished and used to pursue funding.



Project Partners: All Back to the River Partners, MAPA, National Park Service, others.

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$100,000

Year: 1998



Missouri River Clean-Up

We continue to partner with the Missouri River Relief to remove trash from the river. For example, in 2021, 116 volunteers and 29 crew members worked on 12 miles of our riverfront. Over three days, they removed 8.2 tons of trash and 257 large Styrofoam sections.

For these cleanups, Back to the River provides not only funding but our members assisted with boat launching sites, camping facilities, land based trash removal and heavy equipment. Volunteers, however, are the heart of this effort. According to Colby Williams, a 10 year old clean-up participant “We need to protect wildlife. They were here first and then we polluted it, so we need to help clean it up”.

Missouri River Relief is a volunteer based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to connecting people to the Missouri River through volunteer river clean-ups, education and stewardship. We look forward to continuing our partnership with them.

Other Project Partners: The Cities of Council Bluffs and Omaha, the National Park Service, Hy-Vee, Bass Pro Shop, Mutual of Omaha, Fontelle Forest, Union Pacific, Keep Omaha Beautiful, and others.



Estimated Financial Support: BttR
Contribution - \$37,500

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$129,600

Years:
2006,2007,2011,2013,2015,2017,2021



Missouri River Floodway Acquisition

During his time as a U. S. Senator, Bob Kerrey championed initiatives to address reoccurring property flooding along the Missouri River. To address this issue, the Papio-Missouri NRD joined with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the City of Bellevue and Sarpy County to purchase property and clear houses from the banks of the Missouri River, in three communities prone to flooding.

Purchases of Holub's Place and other properties transpired over twenty years. In 2012, Sarpy County, the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resource District and FEMA initiated a buyout plan budgeted at \$3 million. Later, in 2015, the \$1.5 million purchase of the Iske Place properties finalized the effort to secure these

properties and relocate their owners. Senator Kerrey supported the effort with FEMA grants to purchase the additional individual properties and relocate its residents.

Project Partners: P-MRNRD, Sarpy County, City of Bellevue, Nebraska Environmental Trust, FEMA, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River – Federal Funding by Bob Kerrey

Estimated Total Project Cost – \$4,500,000

Years: 1996 - 2015



National Park Service Building

In 2002, our Founder, Senator Bob Kerrey, became aware the National Park Service was seeking to relocate its Regional Headquarters. He recognized Omaha's fledgling Riverfront presented the perfect location! The City of Omaha supported the Senator's efforts and agreed to provide the property.

Although, initially opposed in Washington, the Senator persisted and eventually persuaded Congress to approve his recommendation. In 2004, a new three story, 68,000 sq. ft., Gold Certified LEED building became home to National Park Service Regions 3, 4, 5. Its staff now manages over sixty National Parks spread across the Midwest.

Later, the building took on another purpose. In this area, the Lewis & Clark Expedition traveled, camped and counseled with Indian Chiefs. Recognizing this, the Park Service chose the Curtis Building to house the Lewis & Clark Historic Trail Visitor Center. Today, the Visitor Center, its exhibits and Rangers, provide information regarding the Expedition and the 4,900 mile long National Historic Trail.

Securing the National Park Service as a tenant was a key to the early transition of our Riverfront. It illustrated the early vision of a place not only to play and visit – but also to work – was possible.



Project Partners: City of Omaha, National Park Service, General Services Administration, Noddle Development, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River – Federal Funding by Bob Kerrey

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$9,000,000

Year - 2004



Nutrien Property Acquisition

Due in part to this property's location at the confluence of the Missouri and Platte Rivers, its acquisition is one of our top priorities. The Nutrien property provides a unique opportunity to secure 550 acres of floodplain habitats and wetlands. In major Metropolitan areas, opportunities like this are rare.

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District leads the effort to acquire this area for passive public recreation, the conservation of the property's unique ecosystems and protection of the area's wildlife and habitat. We funded the project's Master Plan and appraisal. We also committed to provide partial funding for the site's purchase. Later, we partnered on a MAPA study focused on this property's impact on Offutt Air Base.

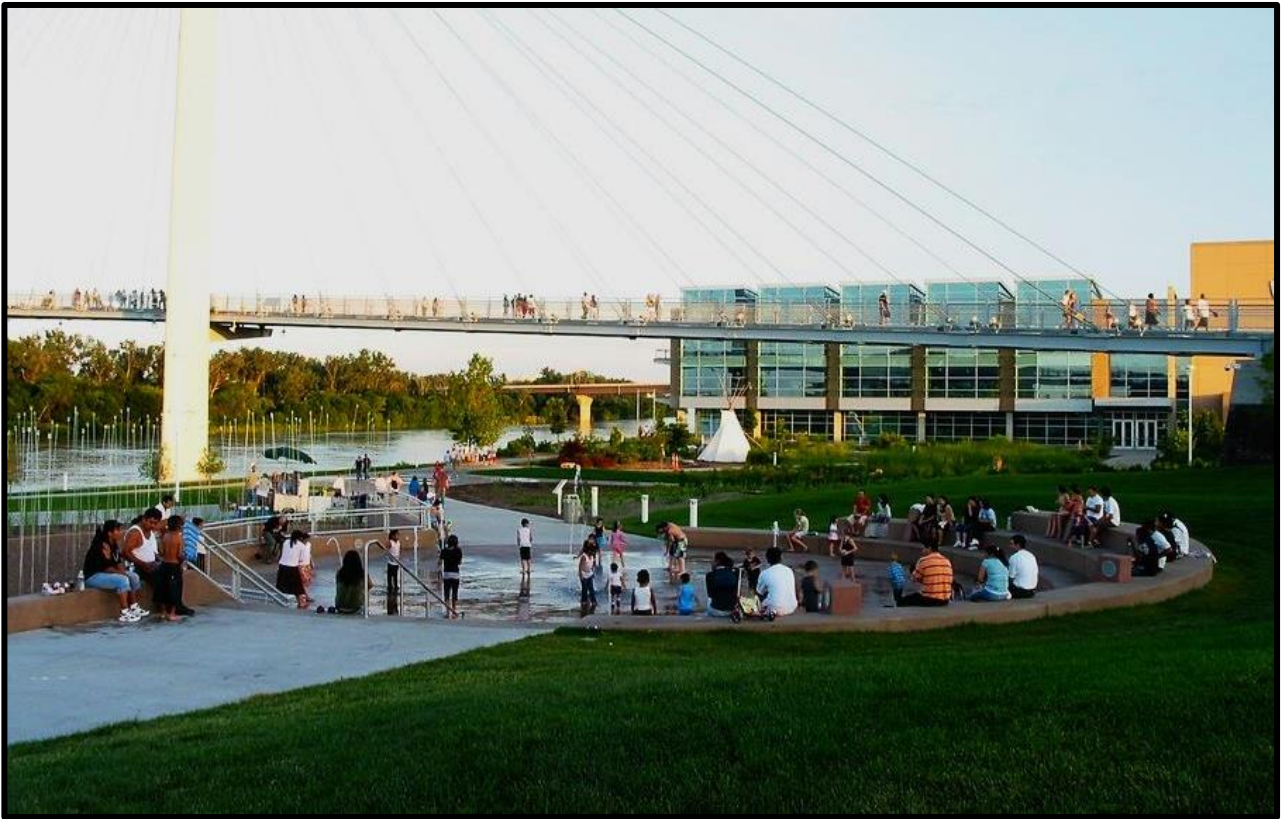
However, acquisition of this property has proven difficult. Initially, 1,100 acres were offered for sale. Although much of this property had development value, 550 acres, adjacent to the river, did not – but were ideal for public use and wildlife conservation. Currently, the private purchase of the development property and public purchase of the non-developable land is being pursued.

Project Partners: P-MRNRD, City of Bellevue, Sarpy County, Nebraska Environmental Trust, Ducks Unlimited, MAPA, Offutt, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$82,100

Estimated Total Project Cost – \$11,839,600

Year: 2013, on-going



Omaha Bridge Landing Park

Escalating costs forced reductions in the park originally planned for the Nebraska side of the Bob Kerrey Bridge. We assisted Omaha by coordinating a fund raising effort to expand the Park's amenities. We were successful – fifteen private donors and foundations partnered with us to fund the additional improvements.

This new funding allowed for the construction of a plaza - with a water spray park. A graded, sloped lawn, retaining walls and connector walks were added along with a display of public art. And the first Riverfront BCycle station was located here. As originally hoped, the park became a popular gathering area for bridge visitors. Eventually, a stage was added to the Plaza and the walls, steps and slope became a small performance area.

Project Partners: Richard Holland, 1st National Bank, America 1st, Sherwood Foundation, City of Omaha and others.



Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$200,000

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$1,800,000

Year: 2009

Other Channels Presentation

Other Channels explored the history of the Missouri River as it flows in and through our riverfront. For this composition, we partnered with the Bemis Center to bring artist and composer Nadia Botello to Omaha. Her original, experimental music asks “What happens when we pay attention and listen to a river? What develops in the moment when we juxtapose the natural against the engineered?”

To compose her score, Ms. Botello used both early and present day geographic maps, along with United States Geological Survey data.

In 2021, the Omaha Symphony string ensemble premiered Ms. Botello’s composition, aboard a river boat, where the symphony strings mixed with the sounds of the surrounding river.

In addition to the performance, a group of experts representing the UNL Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, the Corp of Engineer and the Naturalist School discussed the Missouri’s history and, its future impact on Omaha and Council Bluffs.



Project Partners: Bemis Center for the Contemporary Arts, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Mid-American Arts Alliance, others.

Estimate Financial Support: Back to the River - \$5,000

Estimated Total Project Cost – \$44,750

Year: 2021



Pylon Lighting - Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge

As work began on the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, one element was missing. The original design called for the bridge's 200 foot high pylons to be topped with colored lights. These lights, however, were not included in the bridge's final package. We partnered with Omaha to add this critical item.



Once a preliminary design was completed, we assisted with the City's fund raising effort. Eventually, Gallup expressed interest. Their donation, however, required payment over a five year period. Since immediate funding was necessary, accepting Gallup's donation was not possible.



We solved this problem by agreeing to advance Gallup's total donation, which they repaid over a five year period.

Once completed, these lights provided the visual "cap" to the twin spire pylons. In 2021, Omaha further upgraded the pylon lights and added controllable, colored lights to illuminate the cable stays.

Project Partners: Scott Foundation, Gallup, City of Omaha, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$250,000

Estimated Total Project Cost: \$450,000,000

Year: 2007



Sand in the City

Some of our partnerships brought unique activities to the Riverfront. One such project, Sand in the City, was produced by the Nebraska Children's Home Society's and gave thousands of visitors an opportunity to "play in the sand" along Omaha's Riverfront.

This program began with the delivery of over 300 tons of sand, transforming a portion of the Riverfront into a mini beach! Once the sand was in place, local corporations, community teams, service clubs, over 150 volunteers and master sand sculptors sculptured the sand into temporary works of art.

The general public watched the process, inspected the sculptures and eventually voted on a "People's Choice" award winner.



During the event, concessions, musical acts and other family friendly activities were offered.

The project's sponsor, the Nebraska Children's Home Society, provides year-round services to children and families throughout Nebraska.



Project Partners: Nebraska Children's Home Society, Millard Rotary Club, others.

Estimated Financial Support: \$5,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$18,000

Year - 2005



Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park – Concert

After years of major events - and big crowds, flooding and COVID forced this Park's Great Lawn to "go dark". In 2021, we agreed to partner, with the City of Council Bluffs, to return a major event back to the Great Lawn.

Reestablishing Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park as a premier outdoor venue was important to the City and the Riverfront. So a search was on for an event to once again fill the park. Eventually, a concert stepped forward – Sweetstock. Previously one of the area's largest draws, the Great Lawn provided the perfect venue for Sweetstock's return.

On August 28th the event went off without a hitch. The performers included TLC, Shaggy, 98 Degrees, O-town, C+C Music Factory and others. The media attention was significant and even with an uptick in COVID and very hot weather, Sweetstock drew over 5,000 very happy music fans. "Great times!" wrote Matt T, "Already looking forward to next year!"



Project Partners: City of Council Bluffs, Broadmoor, HDR, Noddle Development, Iowa West Foundation, Waste Connections, American National Bank, CB Visitors Bureau, Judd Construction, Meco-Henne, Arbys, Hurrdat, Smart Water, Coke and others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River \$5,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$280,000

Years: 2021



Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park – Phase I

Dedicated to the public in 2013, Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park reflects the power of the Missouri River and mirrors the strength and grace of the adjacent Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. We joined with 600 private donors, the City of Council Bluffs and the Iowa West Foundation to fund this project.

Carved from the river's riparian woodlands, the park's award-winning design creates a simple yet grand public space. And the Park offers something unique for everyone. The Great Lawn is a perfect space for large events. To showcase the Park, thousands gathered to celebrate its opening, which featured the Beach Boys, Omaha Symphony and Fireworks.



The Park's Grand Stairway is a popular resting place for trail users, enjoying the view of Omaha's sky line and smaller events. The tree lined perimeters of the park are perfect for walking, resting and people watching.

The Park's design included areas for public art and, in 2014, it became home to *Big Mo*. This 75 foot tall steel sculpture was designed by internationally recognized artist Mark di Suvero.



The Park attracted other elements to the Riverfront. Its completion, coupled with the popularity of the adjacent Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, attracted private development. As a result, the Council Bluffs Riverfront now offers apartments, condos, shops, an office complex and a parking garage.

Project Partners: The City of Council Bluffs, the Iowa West Foundation, State of Iowa, 600 Private Donors.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$100,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$11,000,000
Year: 2013



Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park – Phase II

An indoor Pavilion with rooftop deck and Belle's Play Garden highlight this second phase Council Bluffs facility – and we helped fund it. Young visitors also enjoy the park's interactive water play features, designed to reflect the Missouri River. Small concerts and events are popular on the Tilted Lawn. Blending seamlessly with Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park, Phase II provides an intimate counterpoint to the original park's large scale spaces.

The River's Edge Pavilion, with its rooftop deck and its adjacent Water Wall, provides a civic element to the space and allows public, year-around use of Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park. The Pavilion's indoor space accommodates 50-60 people and has proven popular for public rentals. It's equipped with a catering kitchen, restrooms and AV capabilities. The Pavilion's public rooftop, also available for rent, offers breathtaking views of the park, the Missouri River and Omaha's skyline.

The project's design anticipated future park elements might be added – and they have!

In 2021, Tom Friedman's *Looking Up*, a 33-foot tall silver statue peering into the sky, found a home there. And, in 2022, Belle's Play Garden was added. With its colorful spaces and a bright yellow pelican, Belle's is truly one-of-a-kind attraction.



Project Partners: The City of Council Bluffs and the Iowa West Foundation

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$100,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$8,000,000

Year: 2017

Trail and River Crossing Plan

This plan accomplished two critical tasks. First, building on the preliminary information of the Back to the River Master Plan, this study established specific alignment for an interconnected trail system. To accomplish this, our members and consultants, put “boots on the ground” for the 64 river miles of our BttR territory.

The final product was a detailed, specific trail alignment, for both sides of the river. Upon adoption, this Missouri River Trail System was incorporated into all major area trail plans, including the plans for both Omaha and Council Bluffs, the overarching METRO Trail Plan, MAPA’s bicycle plan and transportation plans for both Nebraska and Iowa.

This plan had a second purpose. The prior Back to the River Master Plan established the need for a physical element to connect the Nebraska and Iowa trails. This plan furthers this discussion. It offered several

potential areas where a connection might be possible and recommended further study of crossing options to include detailed costs for construction, operations and management.



Project Partners: All Back to the River Partners, MAPA, National Park Service

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$80,000

Estimated Total Project Cost - \$80,000

Year: 1998





Urban Land Institute and River Commons

The Omaha Chamber of Commerce led this effort to improve Riverfront program offerings. The Chamber organized a coalition of business, community, government and philanthropic leaders to develop a new vision and activate our Riverfront. We were a financial partner and participated in the study.

For this effort, the Chamber enlisted assistance from the Urban Land Institute. The Institute met with public and private agencies engaged in Riverfront programming activities. Eventually, they issued a report highlighting strengths, opportunities and recommendations.

To implement the Institute's recommendations and coordinate Riverfront programming, the Missouri River Commons group was formed. We were represented on this group and participated in its funding.

The group hired an Executive Director and the Chamber agreed to support the initiative with office support and space. Several activities and programs were initiated by this group.

A major accomplishment was the completion of a Riverfront Event Facilities booklet. This document provided detailed information of our Riverfront public facilities, providing everything any event promoter might need to find the ideal location.

Project Partners: Omaha Chamber of Commerce, Cities of Omaha & Council Bluffs, Downtown Omaha, Inc., MECA, Con Agra, MAPA, P-MRNRD, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$60,000

Estimated Total Project Cost -\$675,000

Year: 2014, 2016



Bellevue Rocks! Riverfront Festival 2023

Partnering with *Bellevue Rocks!* *Riverfront Festival* allows us to support a free event bringing 50,000 visitors to Bellevue's Riverfront, and we have history with this celebration's site. We supported the acquisition of the Kramer Power Plant, which Bellevue converted to American Heroes Park and now hosts *Bellevue Rocks! Riverfront Festival*.

In its third year, *Bellevue Rocks! Riverfront Festival* has become a regional attraction. Sponsored by the Bellevue Community Foundation, in coordination with the City of Bellevue, the 2023 event will be held in American Heroes Park, June 8th-11th. Music will be a major attraction and the Park's stage will host both national and local performers. This Riverfront event is family oriented and features activities and offerings for all ages including carnival rides, games, food and fireworks. There is no charge to attend.

In 2003, this portion of the riverfront was occupied by an eyesore - the Kramer Power Plant. Today, that Plant's been replaced by American Heroes Park which provides sports fields, a lake, fountain, trails, a War Memorial and it hosts the *Bellevue Rocks! Riverfront Festival*. We're proud to be a partner in this unique Missouri River success story.

Project Partners: Bellevue Community Foundation, City of Bellevue, P-MRNRD, DJ's Dugout, Keno Casino, Belle Vue Downs Racetrack, Beardmore Subaru, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$10,000.00

Estimated Total Project Cost:
\$225,000.00

Year: 2023



Missouri River Clean-Up 2023

During their prior visits to our stretch of the Missouri River, Missouri River Relief has removed tons of trash and debris from our riverfront. We look forward to supporting their 2023 return.

On Saturday, May 29th, 2023 the Missouri River Relief, and their volunteers, will again arrive for a major cleanup effort. One of their objectives is to return to the vacated marina and continue removal of the Styrofoam sections left there after the floods. These materials are particularly detrimental to the river and present a challenge for land side removals. In their 2021 visit, their volunteers removed 257 of these Styrofoam blocks and even more remain to be addressed in 2023.

For these cleanups, Back to the River provides not only funding but our members assisted with boat launching sites, camping facilities, land based trash removal and heavy equipment. The Missouri River Relief volunteers, however, are the heart of this effort. According to Colby Williams, a 10 year

old clean-up participant “We need to protect wildlife. They were here first and then we polluted it, so we need to help clean it up”.

Missouri River Relief is a volunteer based, not-for-profit organization dedicated to connecting people to the Missouri River through volunteer river clean-ups, education and stewardship. We look forward to continuing our partnership with them.

Other Project Partners: The Cities of Council Bluffs and Omaha, Bell’s Brewing, the National Park Service, Lewis/Clark National Historic Trail, Hy-Vee, Fontenelle Forest, Keep Omaha Beautiful, Missouri Stream Team, Us Corps of Engineers, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Pottawattamie County Conservation and others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River Contribution: \$10,000.00
Estimated Total Project Cost: \$22,800.00

Years: 2023



Summerfest at River's Edge Park 2023

The City of Council Bluffs, together with numerous partners, proposed a new, family oriented festival for Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park. We agreed to join this partnership and support Summerfest.

Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park was specifically designed as a space where residents and visitors, from both Nebraska and Iowa, could come together to celebrate on the banks of the Missouri River. Summerfest at River's Edge Park furthers this objective. The program's goal is to reach the attendance and popularity of Council Bluffs "Winterfest" and become a "must attend" summer event.

Summerfest at River's Edge Park will bring a wide variety of activities to the riverfront. Live music, food trucks, activities in Belles' Play Garden, face

painters, inflatables and field events including baseball, soccer, lacrosse, disc golf and flag football are all planned.

Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park reflects the power of the Missouri River and mirrors the strength and grace of the adjacent Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. Back to the River joined with 600 private donors, the City of Council Bluffs and the Iowa West Foundation to fund this project. Programs held in Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park that address our Mission and Goals, continue to receive our support.

Project Partners: The City of Council Bluffs, Council Bluffs Library, PACE, the 712 Initiative, YMCA, others.

Estimated Financial Support: Back to the River - \$5,000
Estimated Total Project Cost: \$40,000

Year: 2023