

# GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION

## COVETS LOWER PLATTE, ELKHORN AND LOUP

On December 19, 2007, at the State Capitol there was a very important public hearing relating to the future of irrigation in the Lower Platte River Basin (LPRB). The Department of Natural Resources called this hearing to hear testimony about whether the LPRB should be shut off from new irrigation development, which the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (GPC) so desperately wants to happen for the alleged benefit of the pallid sturgeon, least tern and piping plover. It is important to know that the area sought for closure by the GPC includes a 100 mile stretch of the Platte (from Columbus to its mouth at the Missouri River) as well as "all surface areas that drain into the Loup River and the Elkhorn River, and all aquifers that impact surface water flows of the basin." The total area targeted by the GPC is about 25,400 square miles.

We are pleased to report that opposition to the GPC's initiative was overwhelming. Natural Resources Districts in the crosshairs stepped up big time and spoke out strongly against the GPC plan. Nebraskans First Executive Director Don Adams testified in opposition to the GPC. Here are a few of his comments:

*"Nebraska irrigated agriculture - the producers in this state - took it big time on the chin for threatened and endangered species when the governor, back in October 2006, signed onto the Platte River Cooperative Agreement program. Unless the governor pulls us out of this program, hundreds of thousands of highly productive irrigated farmland will be retired for the alleged benefit of certain birds and a fish."*

*"The pendulum which Game and Parks seeks to*

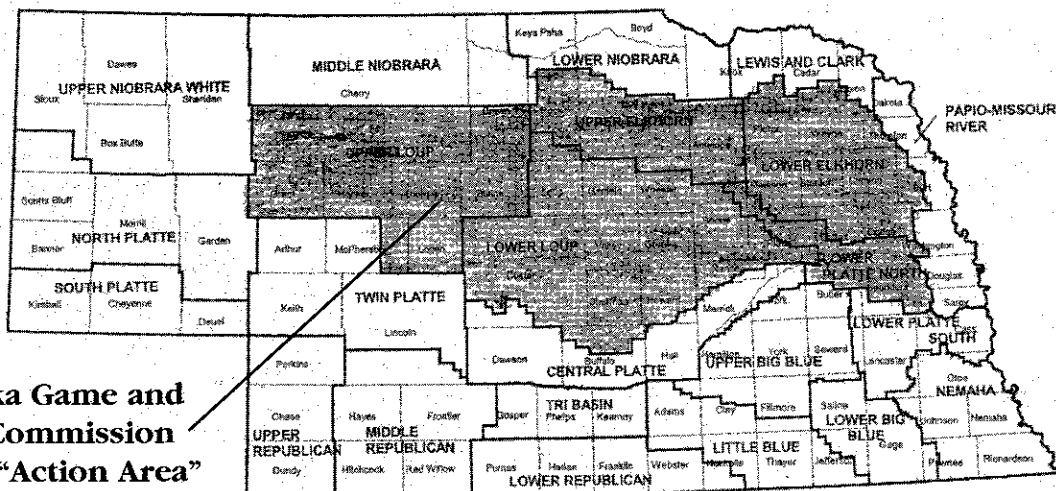
*swing more to the left has gone far enough in that direction. It is now time for Nebraska policy makers to reestablish a commitment to our agricultural based economy before any more harm is done."*

*"What is happening here is the US Fish and Wildlife Service's (FWS) smaller alter ego, the GPC, is attempting to step in to gain control over an area that the big dog (FWS) could not bite off using the federal Endangered Species Act. The fact remains that the Lower Platte, Loup and Elkhorn basins are not critical habitat for plovers, terns and pallid sturgeon."*

*"The legal route for the GPC to take would be to seek an instream flow appropriation for the species' benefit. This legal avenue is not as easy as just trying to convince the DNR to buy their theory and to stop new development by issuing a decree of fully appropriated status."*

*"The future of irrigated agriculture and its continuing ability to generate billions of dollars for our state's economy will be seriously jeopardized if the DNR continues to shut down development and deny Nebraska producers the ability to do what they do better than anyone in the world."*

We are pleased to report that on January 16, 2008, the DNR issued a final determination the Lower Platte, Loup and Elkhorn River Basins were not fully appropriated and that, at least for one more year, the area will not be shut down by the DNR. But rest assured, the GPC, FWS and their environmentalist allies will not give up. When they try again, Nebraskans First will be there to defend the rights and freedoms of producers who rely upon irrigation.



**Nebraska Game and  
Parks Commission  
targeted "Action Area"**