

Arkansas River Corridor



Planning for Access



Welcome to the Arkansas River Corridor Access Project. This project is a recreational planning effort in response to an interest by regional communities along the Arkansas River corridor. The project plan will include a reach of the River from the Reno County Line which is upstream of Hutchinson extending down stream about 100 miles to Oxford south of Wichita. A Steering Committee was formed to prepare a scope of work for the plan and select a consultant to assist in preparing the plan. Members of the Steering Committee are representatives of the communities and interests along the corridor and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

Project Team



Tom Huntzinger, PE

Project Manager/Senior Hydrologist



Stephen Rhoades

Landscape Architect



Mark Andersen

GIS Analyst/Ecologist

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A consulting team was selected to work with the Steering Committee and the public in preparing a plan for establishing recreational access points along the River corridor. The firms of Applied Ecological Services and Patti Banks Associates were retained to do this work. Tom Huntzinger, senior hydrologist and engineer from AES is managing the project. Steve Rhoades, a landscape architect and skilled planner from Patti Banks Associates and Mark Andersen, GIS specialist and ecologist from AES complete the consultant team.

Team Capabilities

- Ecologists
- Hydrologic Engineers
- GIS Specialists
- Environmental Engineers
- Civil Engineers
- Landscape Architects
- Community Planners
- Natural Resource Planners
- Fisheries Biologists
- Geologists



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Both firms, whose offices are in the Kansas City area, are established and reputable. They have worked together on other projects of this kind in the past and both firms have done other projects independently. The combined capabilities of these firms have the knowledge and skills available to address the challenges of this project including:

Landscape architectural and engineering services to design and establish stable and ecologically functional recreational facilities in natural and urban settings

Establishing and protecting ecological systems reminiscent of native environments by applying ecological principles

Developing simple and focused master plans that rely on collection of public interest and natural science data and quantitative assessment to define options and set

Vision & Objectives

“The guiding vision is to establish the Arkansas River as a premiere recreational amenity for the state and the region.”

- Select access points based on objective assessment
- Address dam obstructions
- Build public awareness and support for the vision
- Prepare Master Plan for implementation

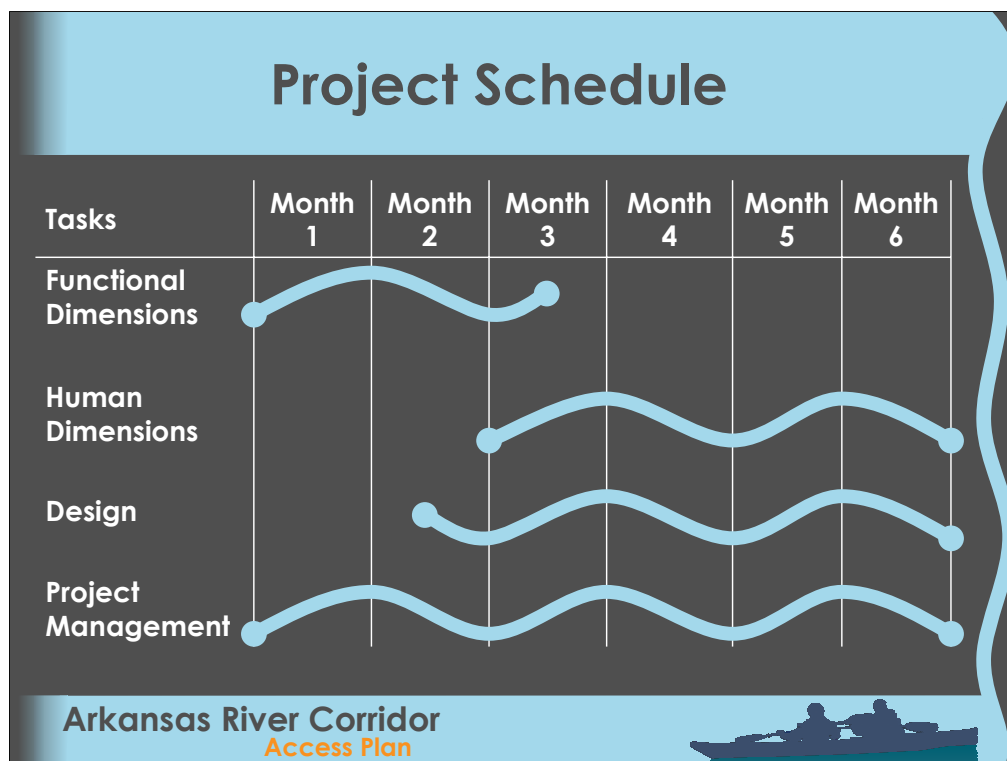


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The communities represented by the Steering Committee and the Consultants are committed to establishing the Arkansas River as a premiere recreational amenity for the state and the region. There are three objectives for the Arkansas River Corridor Recreational Plan.

1. Determine the optimal access points along the approximately 100 miles of stream channel so there is access about every 5 miles.
2. Address the dam obstructions in downtown Wichita and suggest alternatives for getting past these structures with small boats.
3. Prepare a master plan for implementation of the Arkansas River Corridor Recreational access plan.



The planned work effort is expected to take about 6 months. It is divided into 4 primary tasks.

1. The functional dimensions relate to the scientific and physical information and analysis. This effort will begin first because it provides the factual basis for the master plan. It is scheduled to take about 3 months.
2. The human dimensions relate to the public and stakeholders input to priorities, planning decisions, and their support and acceptance of the master plan. The human dimension will come into the analysis in about the 3rd month and be an important resource for the remainder of the project.
3. Design and implementation aspects of the project will define the concepts for the amenities and services that will be available at the various access points. Design aspects of the access points will describe the specific elements that would need to be constructed or developed at each site. The master plan for the recreational system will describe the links among the various components that would make the plan a reality.
4. Management of the project will occur throughout the project life. This task will ensure the project stays focused on the objectives and the deliverables are done well and completed on time.

Information Gathering: *Initial Public Meeting*

- **Project fact sheet or Newsletter**
 - *Define what you need public input on*
 - *Keep it focused*
- **Steering Committee Involvement**
 - *They help answer questions by location*
 - *Serve as a familiar face to residents*
- **Pick the right meeting place**
- **Keep it simple and listen**

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The public interaction will formally begin at an initial public meeting. Steering Committee members will provide the local support to determine the 4 locations where meetings will take place, the means for getting notices out, and the effort required to get their community to the meetings. Meetings will be held in the evenings or weekends to provide the most opportunity for attendance. Meetings will be open house format with information displays and consultant staff available for one on one interaction. The consultant team and Steering Committee will be prepared to explain the information, answer questions, and address conflicts that might come up.

Information Gathering: *Field Survey*

- **Recreational access opportunities**
- **Obstructions, bridges, and outfalls**
- **Bank stability**
- **Hazards**
- **Personal interviews**
- **Unique or high quality ecological/aesthetic features**



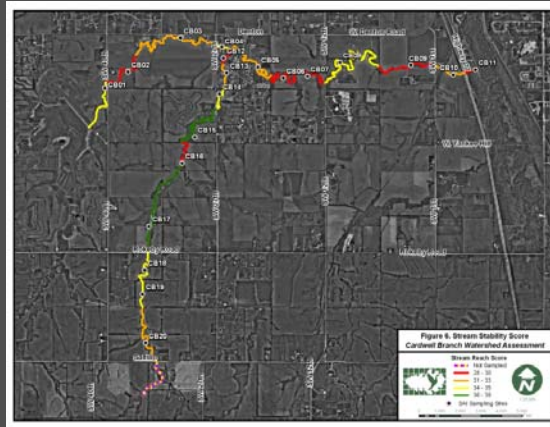
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The field survey will provide on the ground understanding of site conditions. Locations along the river will be observed and evaluated for such characteristics as stable slopes, adequate stream flows, presence of significant natural resources or aesthetic features, and hazards. Another key aspect of the field survey will be interaction with recreational users and land owners to obtain their knowledge of the area. All observations will be recorded with GPS technology and digital photos so the information is automated and spatially oriented so it is easily accessible for assessment and analysis.

Information Gathering: *GIS Data Collection*

- **Stability**
- **Hydrology**
- **Accessibility**
- **Ecological Significance**

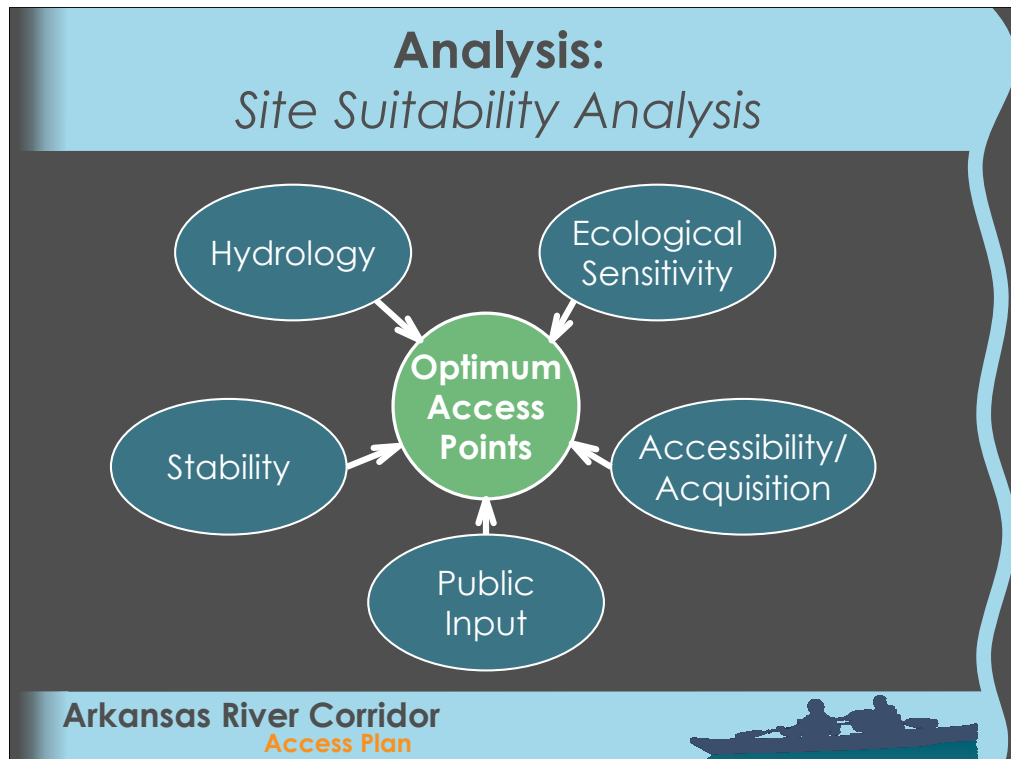


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Geographic information systems, GIS, data will be used to assist in the site assessment and selection process. Spatially oriented information important to developing the plan fall into the following categories:

1. indication of bank and channel stability can be obtained from soils data, bank slopes, stream cross sections and historical aerial photos that compare channel locations with time.
2. hydrologic characteristics about stream channel shape and location, flow rates, flow depths, flood plains, sand scour and bars.
3. accessibility may be the single most important factor in site selection. GIS information about bridges, road crossings, land ownership, public rights of way, easements, parks, and other existing access opportunities will provide spatial orientation of these important characteristics.
4. information on critical habitat, wetlands, native landscapes, and unique features that should be protected or showcased will be noted.



The site suitability analysis will be primarily a GIS based approach that relies on field observations, spatial data compilations, and local knowledge obtained from public input. Site suitability will be described by the following factors:

1. location and frequency of adequate flows for watercraft.
2. relative stability of the banks and channel near the access locations
3. areas that present opportunities for access that would be given priorities such as; sites with existing easements, public roads or rights of way, utility corridors, and land owner cooperation.
4. ecologically sensitive areas that should be protected, or areas of special interest that should be showcased.
5. a distribution of locations that meet the goal of one about every 5 miles

The results would be presented on a map showing suitability rankings by reach of the River.

Analysis: *Compatible Recreational Uses*

- Preferred Uses
- Compatible/
Incompatible Uses
- Place-specific Uses



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A successful corridor master plan must originate from both a solid understanding of the site conditions and a thorough understanding of the preferences of those managing and using the resources when the plan is implemented. This must consider the compatibility of uses among sites. For example, some users may prefer sites with more developed services that support family activity and others may prefer more secluded surroundings reminiscent of the native riparian setting. These preferences may conflict if they are not separated from each other or planned in locations compatible with these uses.

Analysis: *Dam Obstruction Solutions*

- Flow & Channel Transition Options
- Obstacles vs. Amenities
- Safety Issues
- Habitat Connectivity
- Costs



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Dam obstructions, one at Lincoln Street crossing and another at 21st Street crossing, in downtown Wichita are currently a limitation and safety risk for boaters and any instream activity nearby. Concrete structures at these locations create a shallow pool upstream and spill water over with a drop in stream elevation on the order of 5-8 feet. A study of these obstructions will assess reasonable flow and channel transitions that may allow instream passage.

Some fundamental ideas that will be considered to create a recreational amenity out of these obstacles would be:

1. Are there structural options such as a gentle transitional chute for those who wish to float this transitional area?
2. What must be done related to safety in approaching this area and how should a portage be conveniently linked to user options?
3. Can these obstacles be made into a whitewater park destination?
4. What general design concepts should be considered to insure structural stability?
5. How might this be done to improve habitat connectivity and serve as a functional natural landscape?
6. A general sense of how much it will cost?

Analysis:

Funding/Partnership Opportunities

- **Funding Opportunities**
- **Strategic Partners**
- **Public Outreach**
- **Complementary Projects**



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1. Some effort will be made to develop a strategy for identifying funding for implementation, such as potential sources and special interests
2. Identify other recreational, wildlife, and economic development activities that might enhance the opportunities for funds and resources
3. Identify those that could provide assistance in construction and maintenance such as volunteer groups, business sponsored work days, and formal business partners that could benefit from the recreational activities
4. Identify those willing to sponsor activities promoting the river recreational areas

Analysis: *Public Review Meeting*

- **Revisit project facts**
 - *Remind them what input you need*
- **Recap first public meeting**
 - *What was said*
- **Confirm the plan reflects public comments**
 - *Show them we listened*
- **Allow a method for further comments**
 - *Close the feedback loop*

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The public meeting will be an opportunity to reaffirm the facts about the functional aspects of the project and recap the public input to show the plan reflects their contributions. Attendees will have an opportunity to discuss the proposed plans and findings.

Analysis: *Prioritization*

- **Construction priorities**
- **Acquisition/Accessibility Opportunities**
- **Distribution of Access Points**

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At this point in the project the analysis has defined the optimum locations for sites along the corridor. All the information from a functional perspective and the public has been obtained. The potential sites are priority ranked to define the focus for implementation. Factors to be considered in setting priorities include:

1. top priority sites must have opportunities for implementation in place or can readily be put in place that includes public support and preference
2. construction of the River access and other associated amenities are achievable and can be maintained at reasonable cost
3. any site that has an acquisition requirement must have clear evidence that this challenge can be met
4. it must provide a meaningful destination for recreation from a functional and public interest perspective
5. it is consistent with the spatial distribution of access points so there are reasonable distances between access locations where reaches between points are providing the recreational opportunity.

Recreational Planning and Design: *Corridor Usage*

- Access point usage designations
- Public input
- Stream signage
- Emergency services
- Maps
- Web/brochure materials



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The level of corridor usage is dependent upon public awareness of the location and recreational opportunities at the sites. It is important to define the series of site locations and functions as a system that allows users to plan their activities around the River access network. Important items to address include:

1. clearly define the location of access points by clearly written maps and ample and descriptive signage on the ground.
2. use public comments to define the aspects of each site that make them recreational attractions
3. include safety measures in the site design and address the emergency services availability that is consistent with the level of use expected at the site.
4. define the rules and regulations that should be in place to insure a safe and pleasurable experience
5. define a plan to familiarize potential users with the corridor access network and the strategy for marketing the recreational activities.

Recreational Planning and Design: *Access Point Concepts*

- **Site types:**
 - *Primary (Developed)*
 - *Secondary (Primitive)*
 - *Unique sites*
- **Typical amenities**
- **Conflict mitigation**



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Typical site design will be guided by three levels of use. Designs will be provided for a typical site for each level.

1. Primary sites will be those with the most developed services. They will be located where the user group will expect the most conveniences. Public input may reflect that these sites should provide family services similar to those at a camp ground or public park.
2. Secondary sites will be those with primitive services that may have no more than a multi seasonal access road, some parking, a basic access facility or trail head to the river access. These sites would serve as input or takeout sites for primary sites. They also would serve those preferring a more secluded setting.
3. The third site would be those identified as a unique location along the corridor. An example of a unique site would be habitat with notable vegetative characteristics or frequented by wildlife. Another might be a location of historical significance to the area or suited to a specific aspect of water or other outdoor recreation.

Recreational Planning and Design: *Master Plan*

- **Stitch the details together**
 - *Recreational Details*
 - Access points, amenities, etc.
 - *Engineering Components*
 - *Ecological Components*
 - *Reflect Public Input*
- **Create a simple plan**
 - *At a regional level and local level*

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A master plan is a means to “stitch” all the details and parts together into a coherent and structured approach to implementing the series of access locations into a recreational corridor along the Arkansas River. Details would be:

1. access points and their associated amenities
2. engineering components and maintenance requirements, and rules of use
3. ecological components and habitat protection
4. reflections of the public input and interests

It is important to create a simple plan that applies to both the local and regional recreational interests.

Comprehensive Access Plan

- **Final Report and Executive Summary**
 - *Site Suitability/Prioritization*
 - *Dam Obstruction Options*
 - *Preferred and Compatible Uses*
 - *Funding/Partnership Opportunities*
 - *Public Involvement*
 - *Cost opinions*
- **Master Plan Map and Access Point Concepts**

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A final report and executive summary will be submitted that presents the analysis of site design, dam obstruction options, optimization, prioritization, details of public input, and cost opinions.

The master plan will be a poster- or plan sheet- sized map showing access point locations and other location details along the corridor. It will also include typical site design concepts.

Implementation: *Final Plan Presentation*

- **Steering Committee Presentation**
- **Presentation Materials and Narrative**
- **Opinion of Probable Costs**

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The final plan will be presented to the Steering Committee at a closing meeting. Presentation materials, narratives, and final report and opinion of probable costs will be discussed.

Summary

- **Balanced Approach**

- *Ecological and engineering considerations*
- *Community involvement*
- *Recreational planning*
- *Comprehensive, sustainable solution*

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A balanced approach to a recreational access plan for the Arkansas River is expected to result in a premiere recreational amenity for the region.

The proposed approach—

- meets this challenge with a scientific basis and considers the engineering aspects of the design.
- brings in the human dimension with equal priority using community involvement and expert public consensus methods
- keeps recreation as a primary focus
- uses natural ecological principles that lead to a comprehensive and sustainable solution that showcases the River as a valuable natural feature

Questions?



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