

■ BEND

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there, and they wanted to have access to it.”

While both of the presented plans included a walking trail that went down by the river, Crane said they did not run along the whole property.

Attendees indicated that even a simple mowed trail would be acceptable, she added.

One of the other concerns that arose from the meeting is that residents might not know the land exists, and if they do, they may not be able to find it.

“One of the members of the public said it’s not very well-signed, so they don’t know where to get into the property and how to access it, so that’s something we’re going to take back and work on, too,” Crane said.

Proper signage will be installed along the highway for this purpose, she said.

When visitors do find the site, Crane said they won’t have to be concerned about trespassing because the property’s boundaries are clearly marked.

“We’ve put up a fence all the way around the property, so once people get in there, there shouldn’t be any confusion as to where the property starts and stops,” she said.

The main thing Crane wanted people to know is that the property is open for their use.

“It is in Corps ownership now ... and they’re welcome to come in and enjoy it,” she said.

For more information on the Missouri River Recovery Program, visit <http://www.moriverrecovery.org>.

Mo. River kayaking & canoeing planned

On Saturday, Sept. 22, join area river enthusiasts for an outing on the Missouri National Recreational River Water Trail. The route will be about 15 miles from Riverside Park at Yankton, to Myron Grove (Highline) near Meckling. Unique features of this river segment include the confluence of the James River, Audubon Bend, and miles of undeveloped wild and scenic river.

Meet at the Riverside Park boat ramp at 9 a.m. Bring your own water, snacks, and sunscreen. No guide service will be provided, you must be able to navigate on your own. Provide your own kayak/canoe or rent one in advance from DJ’s Sports Rentals, and do your own shuttle or pre-arrange any other pickup/delivery service in advance from DJ’s Sports Rental, 605-665-3206, www.djssportsrentals.com

■ GIFT

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“While a little later than we had hoped, the timing couldn’t have been better,” he said. “With the drought, there is even more of a critical need for water from Lewis & Clark.”

It has taken over two decades for the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System to reach this milestone. Treated water from the water plant began flowing through the system’s distribution pipeline during the last week of July.

Work on a feasibility project for the water system began in 1990. The project was authorized by Congress as a Bureau of Reclamation project a dozen years ago, and workers began burying pipe from the source of the water – a well field near the Missouri River in the vicinity of the Clay County Park – in 2003.

When completed, the Lewis & Clark system will supply water to 15 cities, including eight in South Dakota, and five rural water systems. Water is flowing to seven of those eight communities – Sioux Falls, Beresford, Centerville, Harrisburg, Lennox, Parker, and Tea. Madison is scheduled to receive Lewis & Clark water in the near future.

Missouri River water is also flowing to the Lincoln County, South Lincoln County and Minnehaha County rural water systems in South Dakota, and the Rock County Rural Water District in Minnesota.

Still waiting to be hooked up to the system are the Iowa communities of Hull, Rock Rapids, Sheldon, Sibley and Sioux Center. In Minnesota, the communities of Luverne and Worthington, along with the Lincoln-Pipestone Rural Water System are also destined to one day be recipients of treated water from the new Lewis & Clark plant.

Arndt pledged that every effort will be made by the Lewis & Clark board of directors to make sure that the remaining nine members of the system will one day receive a reliable supply of Missouri River water.

The construction contract for the first phase of the water treatment plant was awarded in July 2008. A second phase of construction to the facility began in mid-2009.

Raw water is delivered to the treatment plant from the Missouri River well field through an 8-mile long 54-inch diameter pipeline. Over 100 miles of treated water pipeline, and over 24 miles of customer service lines deliver water to the currently connected member systems.

The pipeline system currently in place can hold over 44 million gallons of water. The

current reservoirs in the treatment plant, including the clearwell, can hold 21 million gallons.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard knows personally of the challenges that South Dakotans have always faced while attempting to secure a safe, adequate water supply. He noted that his family couldn’t drink the water produced by the well on his parent’s farm because of high nitrate levels.

“My dad hired a well-digger to drill a second well closer to the house, and that water was very good, but then supply was always an issue,” Daugaard said. “During years when it was very dry, we would always worry that the water quality would decline or the well would go dry.”

Those worries eventually disappeared, he said, thanks to the development of a rural water system that supplies plentiful, safe water. The governor said the Lewis & Clark system offers that same hope of abundant water.

“Regional water systems like this one have given millions of people the chance to have that clean and abundant water that they need,” he said. “But they don’t happen by accident. They take a lot of vision, and planning, and a lot of persistence and determination, and that’s what happened here.”

Congress authorized the water project as a multi-state water supply system for 300,000 people in South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota. The authorization calls for 80 percent of the construction costs to come from the federal government. State governments pitched in 10 percent of the costs, and the remaining 10 percent of needed revenue comes from the member communities.

“So far our three states and 20 members have all put in virtually every dollar of their share,” Daugaard said. “The project is now 66 percent complete, but we still need about \$200 million in federal appropriations to totally complete the project.”

Sen. John Thune was a member of the U.S. House when the Lewis & Clark project was first authorized. Troy Larson, executive director of the water project, said Thune has steadfastly battled to secure appropriations so that work

could progress.

“This is an historic day ... it’s the culmination of over 20 years of work by the communities, the states, obviously the federal delegations, and all of the participants who are here today,” Thune said. “There are people here in South Dakota – farmers, ranchers, small businesses – who contribute mightily to the health and vitality of our economy and our nation.”

“It is important that when we prioritize the things that we are going to do that will contribute to a better quality of life, that we look at those basic infrastructure needs,” he said.

The Lewis & Clark water system, Thune noted, is a prime example of a project that improves the economy, that improves the standard of living and provides a higher quality of life and makes it more likely for people to want to live, work and raise their families in South Dakota.

“We are declaring victory today, but it’s only a partial victory,” he said, after pledging to continue to work at seeing needed federal dollars continue to flow to the water project. “A complete victory won’t happen until those nine communities that don’t have the water do begin to receive it, and this project reaches its final completion date.”

“Having access to a dependable water system is absolutely necessary for the predicted population increases that we are going to see, and to support economic development that we want to see,” the governor said.

Daugaard said he recognizes that the federal government is not unlimited in its resources, and that future spending must be disciplined.

“But a critical infrastructure project like this, meeting basic necessities of life, should be at the top of the list,” he said.

Rep. Kristi Noem noted that she would “stand arm in arm” with proponents of the water system to help secure future funding to complete the project.

“Other people might have quit. There were a lot of challenges along the way – funding would dry up or become challenged,” she said. “Other people may have given up, but here in the heartland, we don’t do that. We buckle

down and work together and make sure that we get it done.

“I know that I have a responsibility, along with my colleagues that are standing here today, to make sure that we tell the story in Washington, DC, of how important it is to prioritize dollars for clean drinking water projects,” Noem said.

“What a magnificent day we have, and what a wonderful, wonderful event to celebrate,” said South Dakota Public Utilities Commissioner Gary Hanson. “We are so enormously fortunate to live in the United States of America. The promise of America is freedom. The promise of the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System is life itself. Lewis & Clark is a lifeline to our communities and our rural water systems.”

Hanson served as the first chairman of the water system’s board, until he was elected mayor of Sioux Falls in 1994.

“In 1988, we were suffering from a drought, and nearly every community was threatened by water shortages or quality problems,” he said. Hanson remembers how first lawn watering, then the washing of cars was prohibited in Sioux Falls. City leaders even suggested that restaurant owners stop serving water to their patrons.

Industries, including Morrell’s in Sioux Falls, were also threatened.

“From that crisis grew short, medium and long-range plans for water development,” Hanson said. Sioux Falls originally considered a plan for a pipeline west to the Missouri River near Chamberlain.

A cooperative effort by individuals from South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa made the Lewis & Clark project a reality, he said. “We knew that an incredibly arduous, extensive and expensive journey lay ahead, without a guarantee of success. This has proven to have been, and continues to be, a challenging journey.”

U.S. Senator Tim Johnson applauded the collaborative work and Recovery Act funding that made possible Tuesday’s

celebration possible. He was unable to attend the ribbon cutting because he is helping care for his wife, Barbara who recently fractured her shoulder and her wrist.

“This stands as an example of regional cooperation that will address common challenges in a more effective way than each state or local sponsor could do alone,” Johnson said in a message delivered during the ceremony. “I look forward to continuing to work with you all to ensure we keep this critical project moving forward so all of the member communities in South Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa can enjoy the benefits of economic growth and improved quality of life.”

“I hope today’s celebration will reiterate how vital rural water projects are to our state,” said Johnson. “I look forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure we complete Lewis and Clark.”

The Lewis & Clark project, Hanson said, stands as a monument to cooperation, trust and promises that were honored between dozens of communities, numerous counties and townships, water supply systems, and hundreds of elected officials.

He also reminded the audience that much work remains to be completed.

“There are still thousands of citizens who need Lewis & Clark to be completed so that they may have safe and dependable drinking water,” Hanson said. “This project must be completed. Our federal government continues to look for ways to assist the economy, and here is a shovel-ready project. It has been authorized by Congress and it will strengthen the economies of several states.”

Throughout its lifetime, the Lewis & Clark water project will benefit the lives of millions of people, Hanson said.

“Lewis & Clark is truly a lifeline to our communities,” he said. “What a wonderful legacy.”

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