

Red River Watershed Management Board

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Board of Managers

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RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

August 17, 1999

Norwest Bank, Barnesville, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Tuesday, August 17, 1999, at the Norwest Bank, Barnesville, Minnesota.

Chairman Ron Osowski called the meeting to order.

Members present were: Farrell Erickson Harlen Solberg
Vernon Johnson Daniel Wilkens
Robert Wright Curtis Nelson
Jerome Deal

Others present were: Don Ogaard, Executive Director
Naomi Jagol, Administrative Assistant, Sand Hill River WD
George Dailey, Red Lake WD
Chuck Fritz, Administrator, Red Lake WD
Ron Adrian, Engineer, Middle River-Snake River WD
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator
Brent Johnson, Engineer, Houston Engineering
Rick St. Germain, Engineer, Houston Engineering
Charlie Anderson, Engineer, JOR Engineering
Jerry Bennett, Administrator, Wild Rice WD
Roger Ellefson, Buffalo-Red River WD
Gale Mayer, DNR

No additional items were added to the agenda.

The minutes of the July 20, 1999 meeting were read and approved with minor corrections. **Motion** to approve the minutes as written by Manager Wright, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

The Treasurer's report was presented and it was approved as read. **Motion** by Manager Nelson, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**.

Ogaard reviewed the monthly bills received. A **Motion** to approve and pay bills by Manager Nelson, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

Turtle Lake Discussion

Roger Ellefson, Buffalo-Red River WD Chairman, requested to discuss the funding status of the Turtle Lake Project. He noted his concern relative to the RRWMB denying the funding request submitted by the BRRWD at the previous monthly meeting. He distributed pictures of Turtle Lake for review. He explained that siphoning pipes are currently being installed. He stated that the pipes have shut-off valves and would not be operated during peak flooding periods. He added that the BRRWD is faced with the problem of addressing the flooding concerns of the Turtle Lake residents since they are within the Buffalo-Red River watershed. He encouraged the RRWMB to contribute to the Turtle Lake project for public relation reasons.

Manager Osowski stated that the funding request submitted by the BRRWD was denied at the previous monthly meeting since the benefits associated with the project are strictly local in nature. He commended the BRRWD on responding to the problem in such an expedient manner and noted that all the watershed districts in the RRWMB would benefit from the positive publicity that was received in conjunction with the project.

Ellefson stated that the Turtle Lake project is a costly project for the BRRWD and encouraged the RRWMB to reconsider partial funding for the project. Manager Wilkens explained the background regarding the establishment of the RRWMB and stated that the board was organized to address mainstem benefits of the Red River. Wilkens added that the legislation enacting the RRWMB allows each of the member districts to levy funds with half of the funds remaining with the individual districts as their "construction" account, and the other half forwarded to the RRWMB to address mainstem issues. Wilkens further stated that the RRWMB is in the process of updating the Project Evaluation Manual which addresses the projects eligible for funding from the RRWMB.

Ellefson noted that any amount of funding received from the RRWMB would be appreciated by the BRRWD. Manager Osowski stated that the RRWMB determined at the previous monthly meeting that the board could not fund projects that reduce lake levels since a precedent would be established which could create future problems for the RRWMB.

Proposed "Logo"

Manager Wilkens requested that the issue of updating the RRWMB logo be tabled until next month since due to scheduling conflicts, the committee was unable to meet to discuss this issue.

Letter of Support for Devils Lake Outlet

Ogaard distributed a letter of support for review regarding the construction of an outlet system for Devils Lake in Ramsey County, North Dakota.

Motion by Manager Wilkens to approve the letter as written, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

District Reports

- The Roseau River WD reported that Roseau County will resubmit its disaster application to FEMA. Included in the revised application will be a request to reimburse the District \$6,000 which was allocated to the DNR-Section of Wildlife for the emergency repairs to Pool #2 at the Roseau River Wildlife Management Area.

The board had a lengthy discussion with a county commissioner regarding a number of issues. Both the RRWD and the county commissioners have expressed an interest in improving the working relationship between the District and the County.

- The Two Rivers WD reported that the District received a request from the City of Halma to investigate the current high water problem that the city is experiencing. Water has been standing at most locations around town, and the result is that homeowners are pumping their basements constantly. The District is collecting survey information and will develop various alternatives for the city.
- The Middle River-Snake River WD reported on the status of the Angus Oslo Site #4 Project. The contract had been awarded to Strom Construction of Moorhead. However, they were unable to furnish the required Performance Bond and Payment Bond. Due to these circumstances, the contract was awarded to the second lowest bidder which was Dennis Drewes Construction of Frazee, MN. The contract has been signed and the "Notice to Proceed" was issued on Monday, August 9, 1999. The contractor has begun work on the project. Due to the wet conditions, the time actually lost due to the delay in the inability of the lowest bidder to provide the required bond is unknown.
- The Red Lake WD reported that dredging of the Thief River Falls reservoir is underway. The dike for the holding pond has been constructed and seeded. The actual pumping of the sediment began on Thursday, August 12, 1999.
- The Wild Rice WD reported that the flood protection diversion project in Waubun is nearing completion. The new diversion project to protect the City will divert the greatest portion of water through a newly constructed ditch just east of Highway #59 to the south, while a lesser flow, that the system can handle, will be allowed to continue through the City. The total project costs thus far have been approximately \$100,000, and it is planned that funding through the community flood protection project fund will be available to help the City cost share the mitigation acreage costs.
- The Buffalo-Red River WD reported that the District held a public hearing on the Bisson Lake Restoration project in Callaway on August 12, 1999. This project is a 100-acre wetland restoration proposed by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuge. The audience (approximately 25 people) was generally in opposition to the project for various reasons including waterfowl depredation and changes in microclimate. The District has not made a determination as to whether the project should proceed or not.
- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that the Board of Managers authorized the removal of trees throughout the Traverse County Ditch #52 system and the removal of problem beavers and respective dams. The Board also authorized repair of Traverse County Ditch #28 and Judicial Ditch #6. Tree removal in a three (3) mile stretch of Traverse County Ditch #11 was also authorized to accommodate the survey ordered. The District is currently awaiting spoil licenses from the landowners before actual repair will be conducted. Traverse County Ditch #10 will be staked and repaired this fall as all the landowner agreements have been obtained.

Red River Coordinator/TAC Report – Dan Thul

Thul stated that the TAC had met prior to the RRMWB meeting and discussed the guidelines of the Project Evaluation Manual. He explained that the TAC agreed that they could be available to facilitate discussion with

the committee developed to update the Project Evaluation Manual with regard to how different types of projects could provide local and regional benefits. He added that the TAC could develop a summary of previous board expenditures regarding how the activities of the RRWMB have changed over time. The TAC also discussed the development of budgets to be included in the Project Evaluation Manual.

Manager Wilkens inquired about which members of the TAC could participate in the update of the Project Evaluation Manual. Thul responded that Charlie Anderson and Rick St. Germain would be available to assist the committee.

Thul explained that the TAC reviewed a report received from Mark Brigham from USGS regarding the Mercury Study conducted on the Good Lake Impoundment. The report described the winter monitoring data collected. The TAC determined that long-term monitoring data would be desirable and they would review such a proposal should one be forwarded by USGS.

Thul stated that a proposal was received from USGS regarding a study to analyze flood volumes and timing. The TAC reviewed the proposal and determined that overlap exists among the data collected for the timing analysis of the 1997 flood. The TAC determined that should the federal agencies desire to update the timing analysis, it should be conducted by the USACE since they could provide more accurate routing of gaged data from the individual gages to the mainstem. He noted that the TAC does not discourage the USGS from conducting the proposed study, however, they do not recommend that the RRWMB participate.

Motion by Manager Erickson to forward a letter to the USGS stating that the RRWMB would not participate in a study to analyze flood volumes and timing conducted by the USGS, **Seconded** by Manager Wilkens, **Carried**. Ogaard noted that he would forward copies of the letter to Jim McClaughlin of the Red River Joint Water Resources Board and Jeff Volk of Moore Engineering for their information.

The TAC discussed the wetland guidelines and questioned whether they are being followed by agencies. Thul added that in Roseau County, the NRCS has been addressing the CRP program requirements for ditch plugs and noted that recommendations from the TAC could be forthcoming regarding permit recommendations.

Manager Johnson inquired whether a permit is needed to create a wetland. Thul responded that permits are required to either restore or create a wetland. Thul added that the guidelines developed by the TAC have addressed this issue.

Manager Wilkens stated that the RRWMB had requested BWSR to conduct a seminar on rules and regulations in order to create uniformity throughout the watershed districts in the Red River basin. Thul noted that he would be in favor of such a seminar and suggested that the guidelines developed by the TAC could be utilized in the seminar.

Executive Director Report – Don Ogaard

Ogaard updated the board on the status of the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group meeting conducted on August 12, 1999 at the Northland Inn, Crookston, MN. He stated that the work group reviewed the previous funding allocations which included funding assistance for the Angus Oslo Site #4 project and the Deerhorn Creek project. He added that a meeting was conducted in St. Paul on July 22, 1999 during which all agencies involved in the work group discussed the various funding programs available. He noted that the purpose of the meeting was to make all the work group members aware of all the potential initiatives available. He stated that although the environmental interest groups were in attendance, no potential funding programs were forwarded from the environmental representatives.

Mayer added that he is developing a one-page summary which highlights the specific programs available from state and federal agencies, as well as environmental groups. He noted that the summary would also include organizations and contacts which might not have specific programs available, but could provide funds for projects they would like to see completed.

Ogaard discussed the need to establish a project selection funding mechanism. He explained that the method used to select a project for funding by the work group was totally inappropriate given that the members had virtually no background information of the projects selected.

Deal concurred with Ogaard regarding the inappropriate method of selecting projects to receive legislative funds. However, he added that should some of the projects selected to receive state funds not be ready for construction by July of 2000, the designated funds could be used to fund other projects.

Ogaard discussed the North Dakota Consensus Council (NDCC)/ International Flood Mitigation Initiative (IFMI). He distributed a handout highlighting the legislation that was passed regarding the receipt of federal funds for the Red River Basin. He added that Congressman Collin Peterson was instrumental in getting the legislation passed.

Ogaard stated that the final draft of the Red River Basin Water Quality Plan was adopted on August 16, 1999. Mayer added that he was in attendance at the meeting and each section of the plan was reviewed prior to its adoption. Mayer noted that the recommendation that buffers be considered for all drainage ditches was included in the plan. Mayer added that the installation of buffer strips was only a recommendation and not a requirement, however, 100% funding for the installation of buffers would be provided by agencies rather than landowners. Mayer added that he would insure that each watershed district would receive a copy of the plan.

“Liaison/Project Funding” Position

Ogaard stated that he has been in contact with an interested party who would be available on a part-time basis. He stated that the interested party is Dick Nelson, Mayor of Warren. He explained that he has been involved with Nelson on the Red River Basin Board (RRBB) and he is a very capable individual. He added that the reason the PL 566 project is progressing in the City of Warren is due solely to the determination of Nelson. Manager Osowski concurred that Nelson has been a great asset to the City of Warren.

Manager Wilkens inquired whether Nelson could also coordinate between all the watershed districts in order to keep the mediation process progressing. Manager Osowski responded that due the cooperative effort between the City of Warren and the MRSRWD, Nelson has become better informed on the operations of watershed districts.

Manager Johnson recommended remuneration for the liaison position on a straight salary basis rather than remitting a percentage of the funds obtained. Manager Osowski responded that offering an incentive package could produce a much greater benefit than offering a straight salary. Manager Nelson suggested obtaining legal advice regarding whether offering a commission would be legal.

District’s Funding Requests:

1. Wild Rice WD / Dalen Coulee:

Motion by Manager Johnson to authorize the Wild Rice WD to submit a Step II proposal to the RRWMB for consideration as per the project evaluation manual, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**.

Bennett discussed the perspective of the outcomes of the mediation process. He stated that Dalen Coulee involves repeated flooding problems to the agricultural land along the coulee. He noted that since it is a natural waterway with a variety of natural resource values, permitting became an issue for this project. He added that the project originated as a drainage project, but in order to address both the drainage issues and the natural resource enhancements, a project with one solution could not be accomplished. He explained that various agencies were involved with reviewing several alternative solutions. He stated that the primary function of the project is to reduce damages to agricultural land, however, vegetation and sediment removal and channel restoration would also be included in the project. He added that the storage component of the project would provide for 200-acre feet of flood storage which would protect 1,000 acres of agricultural land. He compared the Dalen Coulee project to that of the Marsh Creek project in that some flow reduction would be recognized with the overall concept of the project to reduce flood damages.

Bennett reviewed a breakdown of the project costs on Page 15 of the Step II Submittal. The project costs and proposed funding sources are as follows:

PROJECT COST

Costs to Date	\$ 64,446
Total Estimated Project Cost, Alt. E	<u>\$ 1,059,636</u>
Total Project Cost	\$ 1,124,082

PROPOSED FUNDING

BWSR and NRCS (set aside)	\$ 392,000
Mediation Funding	\$ 200,000
Local and Land Owner Contribution	\$ 200,000
Remaining Funding to be Identified	\$ 132,082
Request from RRWMB	<u>\$ 200,000</u>
Total Funding	\$ 1,124,082

Paul Borgen, Flood Damage Reduction Work Group participant and local landowner, discussed his perception of how the Dalen Coulee project would meet the goals identified in the mediation agreement. He stated that discussion regarding the project began in the mid 1990's among landowners, the watershed district, and a variety of agency representatives. He added that the project was discussed throughout the mediation process since the project not only involved early coordination among various interest groups, but natural resource enhancements as well. He encouraged the RRWMB to fund the project in concert with fulfilling the mediation agreement. He added that the mediation agreement acknowledges that projects might not include all the components that a particular organization would desire, however, all parties involved need to recognize that a compromise must be reached in order to resolve flooding issues.

Manager Johnson noted that although the project would benefit 1,000 acres of agricultural land, the natural resource benefits associated with the project are difficult to quantify. Manager Wilkens inquired as to how the project cost estimates were determined. Bennett stated that funding has been secured from BWSR and NRCS for \$392,000 and, in addition, state and federal dollars are in the process of being identified. Bennett noted that various alternatives were considered to provide 10-year, 24-hour summer storm protection, however, not one solution could provide this benefit by itself. Borgen added that both Clay and Norman County water planning initiatives have agreed to provide funding over a two-year period.

Manager Osowski noted his concern that the project has only local benefits. He inquired whether the project should have initially been a drainage project which could have been assessed to the local landowners.

Bennett stated that the Dalen Coulee should be viewed as a pilot project. He explained that a variety of solutions could be applied to the project area and then used on a larger scale to address problems in the Red River basin.

Adrian added that the Angus Oslo Site #4 project was evaluated in terms of percentage mainstem benefits and suggested that the Wild Rice WD should direct their project funding request to flood retention for reducing mainstem damages. Manager Johnson inquired about the funding obtained for the diversion portion of the Public Law 566 project. Adrian responded that funding was obtained from the RRWMB for only the impoundment portion of the project since the impoundment would provide mainstem benefits.

Bennett stated that the RRWMB should consider funding projects that could benefit the entire the Red River basin. Thul inquired on the acre-feet of storage of the project. Bennett responded that the project would provide for 200 acre-feet of storage.

Manager Wilkens added that the mediation agreement involves a new focus for the RRWMB which would include not only flood damage reduction efforts, but natural resource enhancements as well. Wilkens inquired whether funding had been obtained for the natural resource enhancements included in the project. Bennett responded that although the Dalen Coulee project is consistent with the goals outlined in the mediation process, it is difficult to quantify natural resource enhancements.

Manager Johnson suggested that a point system for benefits be developed in conjunction with updating the project evaluation manual since the RRWMB has only a limited amount of funds. Manager Deal concurred with Johnson's recommendation but stated that action is needed in the short term.

Manager Osowski noted his concern over the cost of the project compared to the acre-feet of storage it is providing. Bennett stated that additional funding sources would be sought from agencies such as the MPCA and the USFWS.

Borgen agreed with Manager Deal's comments that action is needed in the short term. He added that this project could be the catalyst that would force organizations off of the sidelines and encourage them to participate in a project that would include flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancements.

Anderson stated the question comes down to what is an organization willing to pay for in a project. He noted that in order to do so, values would need to be placed on natural resource benefits.

Bennett stated that in order to address the flood problems associated with the Dalen Coulee, a combination of alternatives need to be implemented.

Ogaard referred to the Step II application procedures of the RRWMB and stated that a motion is needed to approve the Step II application, however, approval is not a final commitment of funds. He noted that should Step II approval be obtained and the district does not follow through and meet the qualifications for a Step III application, or should the original design specifications be altered, the project and/or funding would need to be resubmitted.

Manager Johnson suggested that the RRWMB wait until the project evaluation manual is updated prior to making a decision on the Dalen Coulee project. Manager Wilkens responded that, as chairman of the

committee to update the manual, the process of updating the manual could take several months and the Wild Rice WD should not have to wait for a decision until the process is complete.

Manager Johnson stated that a portion of the funding request could be funded and following the completion of the project evaluation manual update, the funding request could be re-evaluated at that time.

Manager Nelson suggested that the RRWMB could support the project in the amount of \$100,000 at this time. Manager Wilkens noted his concern with funding the project at a portion of the original request since the Wild Rice WD is already seeking additional funding sources and this would only add to the remaining funding to be identified.

Manager Wright stated that the Wild Rice WD would appreciate any action taken by the RRWMB. **Motion** by Manager Nelson to support the Dalen Coulee project in the amount of \$100,000, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**.

Deerhorn Creek Flood Control Levee – Bruce Albright

Albright discussed the Deerhorn Creek Project of the Buffalo-Red River WD. He noted that the project has been under study for 10 years. He added that the project has multi-faceted components, some of which have been constructed.

Albright stated that the Deerhorn Creek drainage area is 55.1 square miles with outlets into the south branch of Buffalo River with the major channel being Deerhorn Creek. He noted that flood water can go one of three routes which include County Ditch No. 42, County Ditch No. 43, or follow down the creek.

Albright noted that Deerhorn Creek is a DNR Protected Watercourse. He added that a long history of flooding and erosion problems have been experienced. He stated that in 1958, the District initiated a PL-566 study to address major flooding problems and inadequate drainage outlets, however, this did not result in a project. He noted that from 1986 – 1994, the District has initiated several studies.

Albright stated that the goals of the project are to reduce flood damages along Deerhorn Creek and Wilkin County Ditch No. 42. The proposed design involves levees located from the South Branch of the Buffalo River to CSAH No. 52 which is designed to convey a 25-year flood event with 2-feet of freeboard. This would be used only where the channel capacity is inadequate.

The components of the project include: 1) Levees constructed 75' minimum from centerline of channel, 2) Improvement to Wilkin CD No. 42 (completed), 3) Erosion control measures on Wilkin CD No. 43, and 4) Construction of an impoundment and/or wetland restorations with a storage component in the contributing drainage area (future).

A tour of the project area was conducted by Bruce Albright, Administrator, Buffalo-Red River WD.

Individual Watershed District Mediation “Project Team” Cost Share Funding

Ogaard distributed a handout that was forwarded to all member watershed districts requesting information relative to how the costs of the project teams are allocated for the individual districts. He stated that responses were received from each of the nine districts and then compiled into a comparative format.

Ogaard requested the managers to respond regarding the 2.5 multiplier that is used by some districts. Manager Deal responded that the Bois de Sioux WD only applies the multiplier to the staff or office time associated with the project team. Chuck Fritz, Administrator of the Red Lake WD, stated that the multiplier is included in the overhead and staff salaries.

Ogaard stated that funds from the construction account are eligible to be used for the project teams in addition to the administrative account. He added that a recommendation is needed for the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group in order to help them develop a formula for dividing the legislative funds. He explained that the work group had \$55,000 in unused funds from the mediation process which can be utilized by the project team and an additional \$50,000 was designated to be used from the most recent appropriation which equates to \$105,000 to be allocated to the project teams. However, the work group determined that \$8,000 of these funds would be needed for the meeting expenses of the work group itself, therefore, a remaining balance of \$97,000 is available to assist the individual watershed districts with project team meeting expenses. He noted his concern over the variety of methods used by the districts to allocate the costs of the project teams and stated that uniformity is needed prior to disbursing the legislative funds.

Manager Deal commented that the legislative funding could be forwarded to the districts using a variety of methods. He stated that the funds could be divided equally among the nine watershed districts to be used at their discretion, or the funds could be disbursed based on the workload of the various districts. Ogaard noted that a total of ten project teams are in operation with each district using one project team with the exception of Joe River and the Two Rivers utilizing one project team, and the Red Lake WD utilizing three project teams.

Manager Wilkens stated that the issue of actual expenses vs. utilizing a multiplier is of concern. He noted that the intent of the mediation work group was for each watershed district to utilize one project team in order to address a variety of issues. Manager Johnson responded that the Red Lake WD includes such a large area that it is not feasible for them to utilize only one project team.

Ogaard concurred with Manager Wilkens and stated the intention of the project teams were to be a broad representation of the various interest groups in the watershed district. He noted that the problem with breaking into project teams to address only one specific project is that the project team would include only those interested parties for the project in question.

Fritz explained that the actual administrative expenditures incurred for the Red Lake WD for the previous year was \$498,000. He stated that the Red Lake WD could not operate should the multiplier not be utilized. He agreed that in most cases it would make sense to use only one project team, however, this is not an option for the Red Lake WD due to its size.

Ogaard stated that a process of prioritization should be implemented. He also urged the districts to focus on the problem areas within each district rather than on moving directly into a project.

Manager Johnson suggested that each district apply the 2.5 multiplier to the staff time utilized but not for manager's per diem or consultants. Ogaard noted that uniformity is needed among the districts.

Ogaard stated that when an organization has staff and provides benefits, the cost of these benefits are included in the bill for services rendered. He added that the disbursement of state funds involves the question of whether the RRWMB should be involved or should it be between the state and the individual watershed district.

Ogaard suggested that the legislative funds could either be divided equally among each of the nine watershed districts, or equally among the number of project teams. Manager Wilkens responded that the numbers would be essentially the same whether the funds were divided according to land area or the number of project teams.

Ogaard referred to the handout distributed and explained that should the funds be divided on an approximate land area basis, the amount available to each watershed district would be as follows: Red Lake WD - \$29,100, each of the other eight districts - \$9,700.

Motion by Manager Wilkens to divide the legislative funds by the number of project teams, **Seconded** by Manager Johnson, **Carried**.

Ogaard stated that the next issue to be discussed is whether the RRWMB would be involved in funding the project teams. Manager Wilkens inquired whether the Flood Damage Reduction work group would be in danger of losing any additional legislative funding should they not support the project teams financially.

Manager Deal suggested that the cost of operating the project teams should be allocated as follows: 50% State, 25% RRWMB, and 25% local watershed district.

Ogaard noted that another questionnaire could be forwarded to the individual watershed districts requesting information as to how the costs of the project teams are broken down.

Manager Deal stated that there is a possibility that the state could fund the project teams but added that the RRWMB should share in the expense. Manager Johnson noted that the state often requires a 50/50 match, but recommended that the cost share be broken down as follows: 50% State, 25% RRWMB, and 25% local watershed district. Manager Deal suggested that the cost share percentage be discussed at the next Flood Damage Reduction work group meeting prior to the RRWMB making a commitment.

The next meeting will be on September 14, 1999, at 9:30 AM at the Red Lake Watershed District office, Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Harley Younggren
Secretary

Naomi L. Jagol
Administrative Assistant