

# Red River Watershed Management Board

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## Board of Managers

John Finney-Humboldt Farrell Erickson-Badger Harley Younggren, Secretary-Hallock Ron Osowski, Chairman-Oslo Vernon Johnson-Clearbrook Daniel Wilkens, Treasurer-Fertile Robert Wright-Felton Curtis Nelson-Barnesville Jerome Deal-Wheaton Don Ogaard, Executive Director-Ada

## RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

November 16, 1999

Sand Hill River Watershed District, Fertile, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Tuesday, November 16, 1999, at the Sand Hill River Watershed District Office, Fertile, Minnesota.

Chairman Ron Osowski called the meeting to order.

Members present were: John Finney Farrell Erickson  
Harlan Solberg Vernon Johnson  
Daniel Wilkens Robert Wright  
Curtis Nelson

Others present were: Don Ogaard, Executive Director  
Naomi Jagol, Administrative Assistant, Sand Hill River WD  
Chuck Fritz, Administrator, Red Lake WD  
Ron Adrian, Engineer, Middle River-Snake River WD  
Richard Nelson, Mayor of Warren  
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator  
Charlie Anderson, Engineer, JOR Engineering  
Brent Johnson, Engineer, Houston Engineering  
George Dailey, Red Lake WD  
Gale Mayer, DNR

Don Ogaard requested that discussion regarding the development of a display banner for the RRWMB be added to the agenda.

The minutes of the October 19, 1999 meeting were read and approved with minor corrections. **Motion** to approve the minutes as written by Manager Erickson, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**.

The Treasurer's report was presented and it was approved as read. **Motion** by Manager Finney, **Seconded** by Manager Nelson, **Carried**. Manager Osowski inquired as to why no tax levies had been forwarded from the Sand Hill River WD to the RRWMB. Manager Wilkens responded that the delay was due to the conversion of the new accounting program.

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

**Wetlands Conference - Annapolis, Maryland** – Vernon Johnson

Manager Johnson stated that several representatives that participated in the mediation process attended the Wetland Conference in Annapolis, Maryland. Johnson noted that Congressman Peterson's staff was responsible for scheduling the meetings with various individuals to explain the mediation process. Johnson added that a full report would be presented at the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group meeting on November 17, 1999 at the Northland Inn, Crookston, MN.

**Liaison "Funding Procurement" Position**

Ogaard explained that a request was forwarded to the insurance agent for the RRWMB regarding adding Richard Nelson to the "Errors and Omissions" coverage of the Board. He stated that the board itself is covered by the insurance, however, the policy does not provide for the addition of a rider for a function outside the board which would involve the newly developed liaison position. He noted that this type of insurance is usually required from a contractor and that Nelson, in his capacity as liaison for the RRWMB, would not be signing any contracts on behalf of the RRWMB. He added that Richard Nelson could carry "Errors and Omissions" insurance on his own behalf should he so desire. He explained that due to the opinion of the insurance agent, the "Errors and Omissions" requirement was eliminated from the original contract.

Richard Nelson noted that there was an error in his address listed in the contract. Nelson also stated that upon review of the contract by his attorney, he was advised to change the title of "President" to "Chief Executive Officer." Ogaard stated that the contract should be revised and then forwarded to Richard Nelson, Ron Osowski, and Harley Younggren for their signatures.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson to authorize Ogaard to revise the contract as discussed to be effective as of today's date and forward to Richard Nelson, Ron Osowski, and Harley Younggren for signatures, **Seconded** by Manager Finney, **Carried**.

Manager Osowski requested Richard Nelson to comment on his trip to Washington, D.C. Nelson explained that he met with officials at the Capitol to discuss the PL 566 Project of the City of Warren. Nelson added that a pilot program is being developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in order to utilize agricultural land for impoundment areas. Nelson explained that he is trying to identify bills that he could associate the PL 566 project with, in order to secure funding sources.

Richard Nelson explained that while he was in Washington, D.C., he also heard significant discussion regarding Garrison Diversion. He stated that Paul Wellstone had noted his opposition to the project. He noted his concern that projects from Minnesota would be blocked until the Garrison Diversion project is approved.

Richard Nelson also noted that while he was in Washington, D.C., a letter was forwarded from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) regarding sustainable use of the water supply for the City of Moorhead. The letter stated the MnDNR's recommendation was that the City of Moorhead should conserve the water supply in order to encourage economic development.

Manager Osowski added that the MnDNR has stated its opposition to Devils Lake. Richard Nelson noted that Schaefer has also publicly noted his opposition to the Union Lake/Sarah project.

The issues of preparing business cards for Richard Nelson was discussed. Ogaard stated that a title should be developed for the liaison position. Following discussion, the Board agreed on the title of "Financial

Coordinator.” Nelson added that he was having additional phone lines installed and after obtaining the new phone numbers, he would contact Naomi Jagol regarding the preparation of business cards.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson to approve the title of “Financial Coordinator” for the liaison position, **Seconded** by Manager Johnson, **Carried**.

### **District Reports**

- The Roseau River WD reported that the Board of Managers met with officials from Manitoba and the Roseau County Board of Commissioners at a special meeting on October 26, 1999. At a previous project team meeting, several Canadians had attended and expressed an interest to be involved in the Hay Creek project.
- The Middle River-Snake River WD reported that construction is underway for the Angus Oslo Site #4 project. The contract is approximately 58% completed. The concrete work on both the inlet structure and outlet structure is nearly complete. The fill in the embankment is approximately 50% completed. The weather has allowed construction to proceed relatively well considering the time of year. Construction is anticipated to be completed by mid summer of 2000.
- The Red Lake WD reported that the District anticipates some FEMA construction work this fall. Some work has been done on storm water outlets in conjunction with the Grygla Levee Project, however, embankment construction will be done during the 2000 construction season.
- The Sand Hill River WD reported that the Project Team met on October 29, 1999 to finalize both the operating plan and the monitoring plan. Each agency had their own operating plan which referred to their criteria, or other agencies’ criteria, which ever was more restrictive. To eliminate confusion, the DNR, MPCA, and the USACE agreed to combine the monitoring plans into one plan. There are also concerns with the easements that the Lake Improvement District (LID) obtained with the landowners to keep vegetation established in the waterways. The LID has requested the District to discuss the issue of certain agencies and individuals not working within the parameters of the mediation process at the next FDRWG meeting on November 17, 1999.
- The Wild Rice WD reported that the District has finalized the Acquisition Phase of the Rural Flood Buy-out Program being funded by the Division of Emergency Management, Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Trade and Economic Development. The demolition phase of the project is close to 50% completed.
- The Buffalo-Red River WD reported that a final hearing was held on September 9, 1999 for the Deerhorn Creek Levee Project. The Board is in the process of acquiring the landowner easement options. An archeological survey is being conducted at this time. Wetland delineations will also be completed this fall. Plans are to begin construction of this project next spring.
- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that the North Ottawa Project Team is scheduled to meet on November 22, 1999 and will focus their efforts on selecting a design option for the impoundment to recommend to the board. A total of four options are being reviewed all within the four square mile concept. The Ducks Unlimited Chief Surveyor has completed detailed survey work on the project. Upon completion of the survey work conducted by the District, the data will be joined and a one-foot contour map will be developed. This data will be of great use for detailed design and development of the impoundment.

### **Policy Manual Update**

Ogaard explained that the committee consisting of Daniel Wilkens, Curtis Nelson, Jerome Deal, Ron Osowski, Charlie Anderson, and Rick St. Germain had met last week and discussed revisions to the current policy manual of the RRWMB. He stated that a “draft” would be prepared which would incorporate the suggested changes of the committee and presented for comment at the Annual Watershed Management Conference scheduled for December 9-10, 1999. He added that the TAC is also reviewing the policy manual to determine whether any revisions are necessary with regard to technical issues.

Ogaard requested whether Jagol could assist with the development of a draft document to be presented at the upcoming conference. Jagol responded that she could assist with preparing the necessary documentation, however, she suggested that the document be printed by an outside publisher.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson to develop a “draft” policy manual to be prepared in the most effective manner which could include publishing by an outside firm, **Seconded** by Manager Finney, **Carried**.

### **Red River Coordinator/TAC Report** – Dan Thul

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met earlier this morning and reviewed the slide presentation prepared by Mark Brigham regarding the methyl mercury study conducted by USGS.

Thul explained that the TAC had also reviewed the policy manual specifically with regard to Section II which involves the criteria for dam construction. He stated that some revisions were agreed on by the TAC to update the dam criteria. He noted that he would discuss the recommendations with the policy manual committee which would be meeting following the conclusion of the RRWMB.

Manager Wilkens inquired whether any criteria was available regarding setback levees. Ogaard responded that this criteria is yet to be developed.

Ogaard stated that the policy manual refers to obtaining recommendations from the TAC prior to moving forward with projects. Thul responded that the TAC could also develop specific criteria to be incorporated into the policy manual.

### **Methyl Mercury Report** – Mark Brigham, USGS

Brigham discussed the results of the study relating to methyl mercury (MeHg) in flood control impoundments and natural waters of northwestern Minnesota during the years 1997-98.

The link between impoundments and the mercury cycle was discussed. High mercury levels in fish in Canadian reservoirs were identified as well as enhanced MeHg production observed in many types of impoundments including sub-arctic to the tropics.

Brigham explained the background about the source of mercury. He stated that it accumulates in the soils and is also a by-product of coal combustion. He added that when inundated through the construction of an impoundment, bacterial action converts organic mercury to MeHg.

Mayer inquired whether the creation of MeHg is an anaerobic process (no oxygen present). Brigham responded that most mercury is formed by an anaerobic process.

The issue of why we should be concerned about the “reservoir effect” and mercury methylation was discussed. Brigham stated that MeHg is the most toxic and bio-accumulative form of mercury in nature. He explained the effects on fish, wildlife, and humans.

Brigham noted that the study included the sampling of Good Lake in the Red Lake WD every month for two years. The study was designed to determine whether high levels of MeHg are being produced as a result of the Good Lake Impoundment and also to develop a comparison with reference lakes.

Brigham stated that MeHg was higher in Good Lake than in the reference lakes sampled. He noted that throughout most of 1997 and into 1998, the outlet of Good Lake had higher levels of MeHg than the inlet. He added that the next step would be to calculate total loading of MeHg based on the flow data, however, there were problems with obtaining continuous flow data. He explained that he would prefer to utilize two years of flow data in order to base flow estimates to accurately determine whether mercury loads are being retained in Good Lake Impoundment.

Brigham explained that various conclusions could be derived from the study. He stated that the outflow is usually higher in MeHg than the inflow. He also noted that inflow, pool, and outflow had high MeHg relative to nearby reference lakes and other impoundment types within the basin.

Roeschlein inquired whether the results of the study would effect the future development of impoundments. Brigham responded that the USGS does not use their data in order to make policy recommendations. Brigham added that although the study identified important points to emphasize, it was designed to be a reconnaissance study of numerous impoundments in the Red River basin. Brigham noted that the study was not designed to obtain quantitative information.

Brigham suggested reviewing the results of this study along with similar studies that included additional detail. He explained that in Ontario, experimental impoundments were constructed which would be comparable to Good Lake but on a much smaller scale. He noted that every component was evaluated in this study and by making comparisons to the study conducted by the USGS, generalizations could be developed.

Ogaard inquired whether a correlation could be made regarding the study and the available precipitation in a wet cycle. Brigham responded that he could not, and add that for a temporary pool, the dry cycle would be a non-issue.

Adrian inquired whether MeHg is a problem in impoundments, or is it rather a cyclical event. Brigham responded that high concentrations of MeHg were identified in impoundments.

Fritz inquired whether the study showed that retention time could effect MeHg. Brigham stated that in addition to the length of storage time, the production of MeHg was also related to temperature.

Roeschlein inquired whether the reconnaissance study would trigger water quality concerns. Anderson noted that the major concern relates to permanent pools as opposed to temporary pools. Anderson added that permanent pools aren't a significant exporter of MeHg.

Brigham concluded by noting that the study was initially designed to develop data on several sites, not a quantitative balance of sites. He cautioned individuals to place too much emphasis on management decisions. He noted that if MeHg is a concern, temporary pools should be of a short residence time.

Thul inquired whether the data was available regarding the studies conducted in Ontario. Brigham responded that the data is available and that the study is ongoing. Brigham stated that he would obtain the information and forward it to the TAC.

**Executive Director Report** – Don Ogaard

**A) MPCA Red River Basin Water Quality Plan**

Ogaard stated that the water quality plan developed by MPCA was the first basin water quality plan developed in the state of Minnesota. He noted the importance of relating the participating agencies to the mediation agreement.

**B) Annual Watershed Management Conference**

Ogaard stated that letters would be forwarded to all the participants with regard to the expectations of the presentations. The conference is scheduled for December 9-10, 1999 at the Best Western Inn, Thief River Falls, MN.

Ogaard discussed the development of a display banner to be used in conjunction with watershed conferences and for other promotional purposes. He distributed a handout with the new RRWMB logo and a description of the proposed banner.

Manager Johnson suggested that a booth could be developed by the RRWMB for the Minnesota Association of Watershed Districts (MAWD) Trade Show. He explained that this could offer excellent exposure for the RRWMB.

Ogaard requested Mayer to discuss the display developed regarding the mediation process. Mayer stated that the display outlines the flood damage reduction and natural resource goals developed in the mediation process and was used on the trip to Washington, D.C. conducted by several of the mediation participants. Mayer noted that the display is available to mediation participants to be used for promotion.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson to authorize the preparation of a banner with the RRWMB logo and also the development of a similar display as prepared by the DNR, **Seconded** by Harlan Solberg, **Carried**.

**C) Red River Basin Summit**

Ogaard noted that there was good attendance at the meeting on conducted on November 4, 1999, at the Energy and Environmental Research Center (EERC). He explained that the individuals involved with planning the summit were proposing that the Red River Basin Board (RRBB) be the overall basin authority in the basin, with the EERC to provide technical information. He noted that he would not recommend support from the RRWMB for such an initiative.

**D) Mediation Position Paper**

Ogaard stated comments were received from the individual watershed districts regarding the development of guidelines for the project teams. He explained that the guidelines would be distributed to each of the individual project teams for review.

**Motion** by Manager Johnson to adopt the guidelines developed for the mediation project teams, **Seconded** by Manager Nelson, **Carried**.

**District's Funding Requests:**

No requests for funds were submitted this month.

Alternative meeting dates were discussed in order to coincide with the Annual Watershed Management Conference scheduled for December 9-10, 1999. **Motion** by Manager Wilkens to reschedule the regular monthly meeting of the RRWMB for December 10, 1999, at 1:00 p.m. at the Best Western Inn, Thief River Falls, Minnesota, **Seconded** by Manager Finney, **Carried**.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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E. Harley Younggren  
Secretary

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Naomi L. Jagol  
Administrative Assistant