

# 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

December 10, 1999

Best Western Inn, Thief River Falls, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Friday, December 10, 1999, at the Best Western Inn, Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

In the absence of the Chairman, John Finney called the meeting to order.

Members present were: Farrell Erickson Harley Younggren  
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  
Chuck Fritz, Administrator, Red Lake WD  
Jon Roeschlein, Administrator, Bois de Sioux WD  
Dan Money, Administrator, Two Rivers WD  
Ron Adrian, Engineer, Middle River-Snake River WD  
Richard Nelson, Mayor of Warren  
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator  
Don Buckhout, Department of Natural Resources  
Charlie Anderson, Engineer, JOR Engineering  
Brent Johnson, Engineer, Houston Engineering  
George Dailey, Red Lake WD

Don Ogaard requested that information regarding a University of Minnesota endowed chair be added to the agenda. Chuck Fritz also requested that discussion regarding Ditch #83 be added to the agenda.

The Board dispensed with the reading of the minutes of the November 16, 1999 meeting. **Motion** to approve the minutes as written by Manager Nelson, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**.

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

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

Manager Deal inquired about the documentation needed in order to request reimbursement for the mediation project team expenses incurred by each individual watershed district. Ogaard responded that Buckhout is

preparing the documentation needed to be completed by each watershed district in order to receive reimbursement of 75% (with a maximum of \$9,700.00) of the expenses incurred by each of the project teams.

Manager Wilkens noted that verification is needed for the expenses incurred by the project teams in order to maintain adequate Treasurer's records. He added that watershed districts could submit pay requests to the RRWMB for reimbursement, however, payment would not be forwarded until funds were received from the DNR.

Ogaard stated that authorization is needed in order to forward payment to the Best Western Inn for conference expenses once they have been submitted for payment. **Motion** by Manager Erickson to authorize payment of conference expenses once received by the RRWMB, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**.

Manager Wilkens distributed stream gaging billings to the managers for their respective watershed districts' share for maintaining the USGS gaging stations supported by the RRWMB. He requested that each district forward payment to the RRWMB prior to year-end.

Manager Finney suggested that additional signors be added to the signature card at the First State Bank of Fertile due to Ron Osowski's unfortunate accident which will not allow him to sign checks for quite some time. He noted that the Treasurer's Manual states that two signatures are required to sign checks, except for the deposit of funds for payroll taxes and social security.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson to authorize both the vice chair and secretary as additional signors on the signature card, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

### **Richard Nelson Contract**

Manager Wilkens referred to the terms of Richard Nelson's contract regarding salary and the reimbursement of expenses incurred. He stated that his salary would be forwarded bi-monthly, however, other expenses incurred should be submitted on a monthly basis for approval at regular board meetings.

Manager Finney inquired whether both salary and expenses could be approved at regular board meetings in order to avoid the inconvenience of forwarding a check for salary to the second signor in addition to the regular monthly bills approved at the board meeting. Manager Wilkens stated that this would have been an ideal solution, however, the contract does not include the provision for that to occur.

### **Joint Powers Agreement– Policy, Project Evaluation, Treasurer's Manuals**

Ogaard stated that one of the conferences sessions focused on review of the revised Policy Manual as well as the Joint Powers Agreement, the Project Evaluation Manual, and the Treasurer's Manual. He explained that discussion has occurred regarding compiling all the manuals into one document for easy reference.

Manager Wilkens stated that, as chair of the policy manual review committee, a thorough review was conducted of the document with minor wording changes resulting. He added that a bid was received from the company that developed the new logo design for the RRWMB for printing 150 manuals at a cost of \$1,834.50 which would include the various manuals as above-mentioned. He noted that should the board desire a screen-printed cover rather than a color-insert page, an additional cost of \$200.00 would be incurred.

Ogaard added that additional minor changes need to be made as a result of discussions occurring at the annual watershed management conference. He stated that each manager received a copy of the revised draft and encouraged the managers to review the revised documents with their individual watershed boards prior to approving the final draft.

Manager Wilkens inquired whether the title on the revised draft document be changed from "Policy Manual." He stated that the Policy Manual is actually one of the documents in the compilation, not the title of all the combined documents. Manager Finney suggested that each watershed district manager consider the various changes suggested at the conference prior to approving the final draft.

**Motion** by Manager Wilkens to delay the approval of the revised draft documents until next month's meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Nelson, **Carried**.

### **District Reports**

- The Joe River WD reported that with the agricultural season coming to a close, the District has issued several permits for general maintenance. The dry weather conditions have enabled repairs to be made to several drainage systems damaged by the recent spring floods.
- The Two Rivers WD reported that the City of Kennedy has approached the District to discuss the possibility of establishing a legal ditch system through town. Presently there exists an unnamed intermittent watercourse along the proposed ditch route. The watercourse is linked by Kittson County Ditch #4 upstream and outlets into Kittson County Ditch #27 downstream. The City periodically has problems with maintenance on the watercourse and with flooding. A ditch petition is forthcoming.
- The Middle River-Snake River WD reported that construction on the Angus Oslo Site #4 project has been halted for the year. Due to the dry conditions this fall, construction continued until December 8, 1999. Construction is anticipated to be completed late summer of 2000.

The planning of the Snake River Flood Damage Reduction (Helgeland) site continues with the Audubon Chapter. The topographic survey of the expanded site has been completed. The District plans to develop a project that would provide both significant flood control and environmental features that would be supported by both flood control and environmental interests.

- The Red Lake WD reported that a tour was conducted last week with board members, DNR, and the USFWS of part of the Thief River watershed, along with several impoundment sites.

Water allocation to the wild rice growers is currently being performed. The District is closely monitoring the Clearwater Rivers flows so it does not drop below the minimum flow.

- The Sand Hill River WD reported that at the regular monthly meeting conducted on December 7, 1999, landowners in the northern part of the District discussed the possibility of revising the north boundary of the watershed of the Sand Hill River. The landowners noted their concern that their property is assessed into the Burnham Creek project of the Red Lake Watershed District when, in fact, it drains into the Sand Hill River watershed. The District determined that the Board could visit with township officials to determine the proper boundary. The District also informed the landowners that if the benefits had been incorrectly assessed to their property, a remedy is available under statute.

- The Buffalo-Red River WD reported that since September 4, 1999 Turtle Lake has been drawn down approximately 22 inches with the siphon system. An additional 26 inches of water need to be drained in order to reach the Ordinary High Water (OHW) level. Plans are to operate the siphon this winter. A meeting has been scheduled the week of December 13<sup>th</sup> with the DNR and MPCA to finalize the Water Quality Monitoring Plan for the downstream areas.

The Deerhorn Creek Levee project is progressing with thirteen of the required twenty-one landowner easement options signed. The archeological survey has been completed with no problems noted. The District is currently working on the wetland delineation's along the project alignment. Plans are to construct the project next summer.

- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that the North Ottawa project team met on November 22<sup>nd</sup> and discussed several alternatives for the impoundment design. The project team selected design option "F" which would involve changing the configuration of the impoundment to three-quarter sections east to west by five-quarter sections north to south. This option was selected due to the following reasons: 1) Reduce the amount of land needed by one-quarter section. 2) Concentrates the impoundment on the lowest ground. 3) Provides for maximum flexibility regarding management for multiple purposes by allowing interior design and operation to be manipulated without sacrificing flood control. 4) No change in flood storage capacity. The next project team meeting is scheduled for December 20, 1999.

#### **Discussion on Annual Watershed Management Conference**

Ogaard inquired about the possibility of combining the Annual Watershed Management Conference with the Early Coordination Conference conducted in March into a two-day conference. He explained that the purpose of the Annual Watershed Management Conference is to assist watershed managers in developing a better understanding of their duties and responsibilities as District Managers, while the Early Coordination Conference is designed to present the various projects that are progressing within each of the individual watershed districts.

Manager Wilkens inquired whether a need existed to continue the Early Coordination Conference since the project teams are currently operating. Ogaard responded that the Early Coordination Conference serves to update the participants on various projects and also assists in obtaining the proper authorization for funding.

Manager Wilkens discussed the need to develop a budget for the flood damage reduction funds which are used to help fund watershed district projects. Manager Johnson suggested developing a system to prioritize projects in terms of receiving funding assistance.

Richard Nelson noted his concern with the Early Coordination Conference being conducted in March since this would not allow sufficient time to prepare for the bonding bill. Ogaard explained that once a progression is developed within the current system, the timeframe of the conference would not be of concern.

Ogaard inquired whether the board would support a two-day conference, with emphasis the first day on the RRWMB and the second day on the progress of the flood damage reduction project teams. Manager Wilkens noted that it would be convenient to combine the two meetings.

Buckhout added that at the upcoming Early Coordination Conference, the individual project teams would be reporting on the activities that occurred during the past year. He noted that funding determinations would be based on the outcomes of the Early Coordination Conference. He stated that the project teams should report on the status of current projects as well as problem areas that have been identified.

Ogaard stated that once the problem areas have been identified and agreed on by the project teams, the watershed districts would determine whether a project would develop. He noted that only after the problem area has developed into a project of the watershed district could state funding be sought.

Ogaard inquired whether a list of projects should be developed in order that a funding determination could be made to present to the legislature. Buckhout cautioned about adding another layer of approval into the flood damage reduction process. Buckhout stated that should a project have progressed through the project team and obtained consensus, approval should not be needed from the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group.

Thul inquired whether the funds obtained by environmental interest groups would be used for both natural resource enhancements and flood damage reduction initiatives. Ogaard inquired whether the DNR would be in charge of distributing the legislative funds.

Buckhout stated that should a project team be operating in a sufficient manner with the appropriate interest groups represented, their recommendation to the watershed district should be sufficient for the watershed district to determine whether a project would be designated rather than the project team making a presentation to the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group.

Adrian questioned Buckhout regarding the idea of project teams operating by consensus. Buckhout responded that the mediation agreement outlines the concept of project teams achieving consensus on a particular problem area prior to presentation to the watershed district.

Adrian added that the Middle River-Snake River Watershed District's project team includes representatives from the District, the Audubon Chapter, and the DNR. He noted that consensus could be achieved should these groups operate as a whole rather than on an individual basis.

Money requested that the individual project teams be kept informed regarding the progress of the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group.

Finney inquired whether the board was in support of combining the Annual Watershed Management Conference with the Early Coordination Conference. Following discussion, the board agreed that the two conferences should be combined. Manager Deal noted that the mediation agreement states that the Early Coordination Conference will be conducted in March.

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

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met prior to the board meeting and discussed the new models being developed which would either enhance or replace the HEC 1 models. He noted that the TAC requested Brent Johnson to research this issue and report to the committee at the next meeting.

Thul noted that the next item to be addressed by the TAC would include developing procedures for evaluating wetland restorations utilizing the STAR value restoration method. The current procedure includes credit for natural draw-down for wetlands thus allowing available storage in the spring. He noted that the new procedures would utilize both the STAR value restoration method as well as the wetland guidelines developed earlier by the TAC.

#### **Executive Director Report** – Don Ogaard

**A) Annual Meeting/Red River Joint Water Resource Board**

Ogaard stated that the annual meeting with the Red River Joint Water Resource Board (RRJWRB) which is conducted in January of each year is scheduled to be hosted this year by North Dakota. He noted that the RRJWRB conducts their meetings on the third Wednesday of each month. Following discussion, the board agreed that in order to coincide with annual meeting held jointly with the Red River Joint Water Resource Board, the regular monthly meeting of the RRWMB should be rescheduled for Wednesday, January 19, 2000, at 9:00 a.m.

**B) Richard Nelson-Legislative Initiatives**

Nelson stated that he has visited with several representatives from the individual watershed districts and discussed the progress of their project teams. He noted that he has been in St. Paul trying to coordinate state funding for the implementation of the projects developed by the project teams.

He added that he plans to attend the various project team meetings conducted by each watershed district. He requested that each watershed district develop financial projections for the project teams for the next 5-10 years. He stated that the projections should include costs of engineering, administration, and construction associated with the projects developed by the project teams.

He stated that a meeting is scheduled next week in St. Paul with the USACE, BWSR, and environmental interest groups to discuss funding initiatives. He noted that a unified approach is needed in order to obtain legislative funding.

**C) Official District Resolutions**

Ogaard noted that resolutions are needed from each watershed district regarding the managers appointed as the official RRWMB representative and also the designated alternate. He suggested that he could forward a notice to each watershed district office requesting the information as well as a blank resolution. He added that a schedule of manager appointments is included on the front cover of the joint powers agreement for ease of reference.

**D) Annual Report**

Ogaard stated that each year the RRWMB annual report is prepared in cooperation with Dan Thul. He added that the printing of the report has been done in Baudette.

**Motion** by Manager Nelson to continue with the preparation of the annual report as has been done in previous years, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

**E) Ditch #83**

Fritz distributed a draft concept paper from the Thief River Subwatershed Flood Damage Reduction project team regarding Ditch #83. He stated that the Red Lake WD is currently in litigation with the DNR regarding the repair of Ditch #83. He explained that the District sued the DNR regarding non-payment of assessments in the benefited area. He added that the attorney for the DNR is Tibor Gallo and the case is being appealed.

Fritz explained that the project team's conceptual plan includes the following basic features:

1. A diversion channel south from Elm Lake/Agassiz Natural Wildlife Refuge routing around the east side of Ditch #83's low-flow-capacity reach and joining the Thief River 4 miles north of Thief River Falls.
2. Floodwater storage throughout the Thief River subbasin.
3. Land use changes throughout the Thief River subbasin.

4. Spot cleaning of Ditch #83 would be made where sedimentation or snags are major flow restrictions or defect flows into riverbanks and cause serious erosion threats to roads, farmland, or important ecosystem features, e.g. spawning areas or nesting cover and trees.

Ogaard noted his concern regarding Cheryl Miller's attempts to get this project approved in the bonding initiatives. He stated that this action would be premature since no project description or cost estimate has been developed.

Fritz concurred with Ogaard. He added that the concept paper is only a beginning and that substantial engineering needs to occur prior to obtaining funding for the project.

**F) Bernie Youngquist Endowed Chair in Land and Water Management**

Ogaard distributed an outline regarding the establishment of a position of an endowed chair at the University of Minnesota campus at Crookston. The individual would provide soil and water management, conservation engineering, and watershed instruction in the Natural Resources program of the College and develop a related research and outreach program through the Northwest Research and Outreach Center. The outreach component would strongly emphasize the coordination of land and water management efforts in the basin by connecting resource data and processes with user groups, conflict resolution, and the organization of decision-making systems. At least one graduate degree would be in watershed engineering and/or modeling.

Ogaard encouraged each manager to discuss the proposal with their respective watershed district in order to determine whether the RRWMB would support such an initiative.

**District's Funding Requests:**

No requests for funds were submitted this month.

Alternative meeting dates were discussed in order to coincide with annual meeting held jointly with the Red River Joint Water Resource Board. **Motion** by Manager Wilkens to reschedule the regular monthly meeting of the RRWMB for Wednesday, January 19, 2000, at 9:00 a.m., **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**.

Ogaard suggested that should the annual meeting not be scheduled as planned, an alternate meeting location should be designated. **Motion** by Manager Johnson to conduct the regular monthly meeting of the RRWMB on Tuesday, January 18, 2000, at 9:30 a.m. at the Red Lake WD office in Thief River Falls, MN should the annual meeting with the Red River Joint Water Resource Board not be scheduled, **Seconded** by Manager Younggren, **Carried**.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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E. Harley Younggren  
Secretary

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Naomi L. Jagol  
Administrative Assistant