

Red River Watershed Management Board

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Board of Managers

John Finney, Vice Pres.-Humboldt Farrell Erickson, Secretary-Badger Harlan Solberg-Greenbush Ron Osowski, President-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

March 17, 2000

Northland Inn, Crookston, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Friday, March 17, 2000, at the Northland Inn, Crookston, Minnesota.

Chairman Ron Osowski called the meeting to order.

Members present were: John Finney Farrell Erickson
Harlan Solberg Vernon Johnson
Daniel Wilkens Robert Wright
Roger Ellefson Jerome Deal

Others present were: Don Ogaard, Executive Director
Naomi Jagol, Administrative Assistant, Sand Hill River WD
Chuck Spitzack, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Chuck Fritz, Administrator, Red Lake WD
Richard Nelson, Financial Coordinator
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator
Brent Johnson, Engineer, Houston Engineering
Ron Adrian, Administrator, Middle River-Snake River WD
Charlie Anderson, Engineer, JOR Engineering
Jerry Bennett, Administrator, Wild Rice WD
Bruce Albright, Administrator, Buffalo-Red WD
Rob Sando, Administrator, Roseau River WD
Jeff Lewis, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Rudy Applequist

Chuck Spitzack requested to be added to the agenda to discuss the reconnaissance study scheduled to be conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Vernon Johnson requested that the Parnell Impoundment Project be added to the agenda.

The Board dispensed with the reading of the minutes of the February 15, 2000 meeting. **Motion** to approve the minutes as written with minor corrections by Manager Erickson, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

Ogaard referred to the special meeting of the RRWMB conducted on March 6, 2000 at the Red Lake WD office to discuss the "Prioritization Worksheet." He suggested that the notes of the meeting become a part of the permanent record rather than formally preparing them in minute form. **Motion** by Manager Erickson to adopt the notes as part of the permanent record of the special meeting conducted on March 6, 2000, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

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

Manager Wilkens reviewed the monthly bills received. He distributed a one-page handout of monthly bills to be approved. He stated that he had been contacted by the USGS regarding the frequency of billing for the stream gaging stations and noted that the bills would be forwarded on an annual basis in the future. A **Motion** to approve and pay bills by Manager Erickson, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Reconnaissance Study

Spitzack distributed a handout prepared by Tom Raster of the USACE relative to the Red River Basin study. He explained that the proposed study is a two-phase process that would include both reconnaissance and feasibility studies. The new initiative would utilize the USACE as the lead federal agency in a Federal/State/local partnership. The proposed \$500,000 12-month reconnaissance study would assess the basin's water-related needs and formulate overall study objectives.

Manager Osowski inquired whether the reconnaissance and feasibility studies would involve the mediation project teams. Spitzack responded that during the reconnaissance study, a multi-jurisdictional scoping group, involving Federal and State agencies, community and watershed representatives, and non-governmental organizations would be tasked with the development of plans of study for what are expected to be follow-up interim feasibility studies broken down by state or tributary subbasin.

Ogaard requested Spitzack to discuss the feasibility study. Spitzack responded that the feasibility study would utilize a watershed approach by using watershed management plans to select the best alternatives for accomplishing the goals and objectives of the stakeholders involved in the process.

Ogaard stated that typically a 50/50 cost share is used for federal studies and inquired about the responsible entity for the remaining 50% cost of the study. Spitzack responded that the signed agreement would be with the local sponsors which would most likely be the watershed boards. Spitzack noted that the local sponsors could utilize both cash and in-kind services for their portion of the cost of the study.

Manager Finney inquired whether the reconnaissance study would include an in depth review of the watershed management plans. Spitzack responded that although the study would be an intensive effort, he was not sure what level of detail would be included in the study.

Adrian inquired about how the feasibility of the USACE Section 206 authority is defined. Spitzack responded that the ecosystem is reviewed for efficiency in natural resource improvements and the ability to use them in a cost-effective manner. Spitzack added that during the course of a feasibility study, a strong desire exists for the project to succeed.

Manager Osowski inquired whether the reconnaissance study would include the entire Red River Basin, or only the projects that are progressing through the mediation process. Spitzack stated that the reconnaissance study would not be project specific, but would identify projects that would have a federal interest.

Spitzack stated that the feasibility study is fully open to other organizations and is not exclusive to the USACE. He noted that the issue relative to how the reports are prepared and presented is important to the different stakeholders.

Ogaard referred to the generic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and inquired whether the results of that study would have any effect on the reconnaissance study. Spitzack responded that the information from the EIS could probably be of value and would increase the efficiency of the reconnaissance study should it still be valid.

Thul inquired whether the environmental review would be similar to the Minnesota River basin EIS or would it include each sub-watershed. Spitzack responded that an individual Environmental Assessment (EA) would be prepared for each project with an understanding of the cumulative effects.

Osowski inquired whether Spitzack was familiar with UNET study north of Grand Forks and, if so, to comment on the status of the study. Spitzack responded that the UNET study resulted in a greater level of detail than what is necessary for an effective model but added that the model was used in conjunction with the IJC study.

Wilkins requested Spitzack to discuss the concerns associated with the reconnaissance study. Spitzack stated that once the reconnaissance study is underway, the scoping group involved in the process could address the stakeholder concerns.

Ogaard inquired whether the RRWMB could participate in the scoping group. Spitzack responded that the USACE would like involvement from all the stakeholders and that one part of the study includes public involvement which could be exercised within the parameters of the RRWMB.

Jerry Bennett, Wild Rice WD Administrator, stated that reconnaissance studies are the first step in identifying where federal support could be received for projects. Spitzack added that the reconnaissance study doesn't have to include specific projects but rather certain scenarios.

Motion by Manager Wilkins that the RRWMB forward a letter of support regarding the reconnaissance study to the congressional delegation (Collin Peterson), **Seconded** by Manager Johnson, **Carried**. Ogaard stated that he would prepare a letter of support and forward it with the chairman's signature.

Election of Secretary

Manager Osowski asked for nominations for Secretary of the Board due to the recent vacancy of the position due to the passing of Harley Younggren. Manager Wilkins nominated Manager Erickson for Secretary. Nominations were called for three times by Manager Osowski. No further nominations were made. **Motion** to cease nominations and have the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for Farrell Erickson for Secretary by Manager Wilkins, **Seconded** by Manager Finney, **Carried**.

Motion by Manager Wilkins to present Harley Younggren's family a plaque for his years of service to the RRWMB, and also \$50.00 as a retirement gift, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**.

Parnell Impoundment

Manager Johnson requested Charlie Anderson to update the RRWMB on the development of the operating plan for the Parnell Impoundment. Anderson reviewed the project capabilities. The impoundment will store 4,000 acre-feet of water, control up to 3.2 inches of runoff, and will direct water either south to the Red Lake River or west to the Red River.

Anderson discussed the limitations of the project. The impoundment cannot store water at high levels indefinitely. The embankment saturation could lead to instability failure if water levels are held above

elevation 936 for longer than 60 days. Wave action could lead to erosion and overtopping failure if water levels are held at the emergency spillway elevation of 941.

Anderson reviewed the following recommendations for operating the project:

1. Store contributing water to avoid dangerously high flood stages
 - a) 25 feet @ Crookston (~20 year flood)
 - b) 45 feet @ Grand Forks (~20 year flood)
2. Water should be stored up to full reservoir capacity for as long as necessary to prevent downstream flooding.
3. Any excess should be directed west to the Red River downstream from Grand Forks.

Anderson discussed the recommended operation to reduce local agricultural flooding. This recommendation would avoid discharging any water that can be safely stored while downstream ditch systems are above flood stage (may consider lower target stages during the growing stages).

Anderson noted that in order to reduce Red River agricultural flooding, the impoundment should avoid discharging any water that can be safely stored while the Red River is above flood stage. The flood stage is 36 feet at Grand Forks, and 34 feet at Oslo. Adrian noted that the flood stage in Oslo is closer to 32 feet.

Thul inquired about the operating plan referring to a 20-year flood in Crookston and Grand Forks, and suggested increasing those levels. Anderson responded that the Parnell Impoundment is not as strategically located as the Black River Dam.

Thul inquired whether the emergency spillway could be lowered as a safety issue since it only has two-feet of freeboard. Anderson responded that lowering the spillway would be a possibility, however, he would rather raise the dam than lower the spillway.

Anderson stated that the recommended modifications to the Parnell Impoundment are estimated at approximately \$150,000. He added that these recommendations would dramatically increase the value of the project.

Second Annual Early Coordination Conference

Ogaard stated that next year the Annual Watershed Management Conference would be combined with the Early Coordination Conference 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.

Ogaard suggested that next year the technical presentations be conducted during the first part of the Early Coordination Conference to insure participation by the project teams.

Review Funding Share Process Suggested by RRBFDWRWG for "Mediation Funds"

Ogaard explained that the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group developed a subcommittee to determine how to allocate the legislative funding for the next fiscal year of July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001. He stated that watershed districts should develop preliminary designs and submit to the work group for funding

consideration. He noted that in order to get the maximum use from the legislative funds, they should be distributed to the watershed districts with project activity.

Manager Wilkens explained that the work group had previously determined that project team expenses would be reimbursed to watershed districts at the rate of 75% of the cost incurred, not to exceed \$9,700. He stated that at the previous work group meeting, a decision was made to reimburse the watershed districts for project team expenses up to \$9,700 which would include the expenses incurred for staff time. He requested that each watershed district forward vouchers for expenses incurred by the project teams to be approved at the next monthly meeting.

Adrian inquired whether the total expenses incurred by the project teams should be included or only a voucher not to exceed \$9,700. Ogaard suggested that the total expenses be included in order to develop an estimate of the total project team costs to be submitted to the FDR work group.

Roeschlein inquired whether the project team expenses should be broken down for 1999 and 2000. Manager Wilkens responded that the watershed districts should submit vouchers for expenses incurred through the end of March 2000.

District Reports

- The Roseau River WD reported that Rob Sando-Administrator, Manager Farrell Erickson, and the U.S. delegation attended a meeting in Vita, Manitoba with the Canadian delegation to discuss the newly formed international watershed, "Roseau River International Watershed." The group was addressed by Manitoba's new Conservation Minister, Oscar Lathlen, and by a member of Parliament for Provencher, David Iftody. Over 25 people were in attendance to discuss the direction to be pursued by the newly formed group.
- The Two Rivers WD reported that due to the passing of Harley Younggren, the District has named Don Craigmile as its new Chairman, Keith Cummins the Vice Chairman, Ron Jacobson the Secretary, and Harlan Solberg the Treasurer. New appointments were made to the RRWMB as well, with Harlan Solberg appointed as the delegate and Keith Cummins the alternate.

The District received funding in the amount of \$46,747 to repair bank sloughing along a 2-mile stretch of ditch along Judicial Ditch #10. The work is scheduled to be completed during the 2000 construction season.

- The Middle River-Snake River WD reported that at the February 28th regular monthly meeting, the Board decided to proceed under the "Watershed Act" with the Public Law 566 (Snake River Watershed) project. The Board is in the process of interviewing individuals to serve as appraisers. The Board plans to select three appraisers at a meeting scheduled for March 20th.
- The Sand Hill River WD reported that a special meeting was conducted on March 9, 2000 with county commissioners, Lake Improvement District (LID) directors, watershed district board members, and interested citizens to discuss the Union Lake/Sarah project. Kurt Deter, Rinke-Noonan law firm, discussed various options regarding the LID turning over the project to the District. At the conclusion of the meeting, the LID determined that they would discuss this issue with their constituents prior to petitioning the watershed district to take over the project.

The mediation project team did not meet in March due to the Second Annual Early Coordination Conference, but has scheduled a meeting for April 11, 2000 to tour sites in the Maple Creek and Rindal areas.

- The Buffalo-Red River WD reported that Turtle and Long Lakes have seen a slight rise in water levels due to the spring snowmelt and rains. The electric compressor/venturi pump installed on the Long Lake siphon is working well, with continuous flows in the 9-cfs range. Landowners have expressed an interest in applying for a DNR permit to lower the lake below the OHW. Last summer, the DNR changed the OHW from elevation 1361.3 to 1362.7. Landowners feel this revised elevation could affect septic systems and basements.
- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that the Board extended the CRP Buffer Strip program for another year. This program offers money to the local SWCD offices to assist with the implementation of promoting and installing CRP buffer strips. The SWCD offices are using the money to defray administration costs and, in some cases, contract additional staff to promote the program.

Financial Coordinator Report – Dick Nelson

Nelson stated that in the Senate, the following are recommendations for funding which have passed through the appropriate committees:

- ◆ \$6.9 million is to be appropriated for “Flood Damage Reduction Measures in the Red River Basin that have been approved for funding by the RRBFD RWG.”
- ◆ The state cost share shall be 75% of the total cost of FDR projects and the local (RRWMB, WD, Other sources) shall be 25%.

Nelson explained that in the House of Representatives, the following are recommended to be passed by the appropriate committees:

- ◆ \$10.6 million for statewide FDR projects.
- ◆ (The \$6.9 million designated for the RRB was deleted.)
- ◆ (The 75/25 language for cost share was deleted.)

The bills with the above language will go before their respective assemblies for consideration. Next the bills would go to “conference committees” for final resolution and then on to the Governor for his signature for approval, or rejection in the form of a veto.

Red River Coordinator/TAC Report – Dan Thul

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) had met and discussed revisions to the Star Value method. He noted that he would forward the recommendations to Naomi Jagol to be included in the *Governing Documents* publication. Thul added that the draft of the Annual Report would also be completed shortly and forwarded to Jagol to have published.

Executive Director Report – Don Ogaard

A) Prioritization Worksheet

Ogaard discussed the Prioritization Worksheet currently being developed by the RRWMB. He suggested that the worksheet be forwarded to the individual watershed districts for review with a request for a formal reply to the RRWMB regarding any recommendations.

Manager Johnson inquired about the length of time allowed for the individual watershed districts to respond. Roeschlein stated that the watershed districts should be given at least two months to discuss the worksheet and respond to the RRWMB.

Motion by Manager Johnson to forward copies of the Prioritization Worksheet to the individual watershed districts with a request to forward any recommendations to the RRWMB by the regular May meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**.

B) USGS Request for Funding Assistance

Ogaard reviewed a letter received from USGS regarding the Joint Funding Agreement for fiscal year 2000 for the cooperative study “Evaluation of Contaminant Contributions to the Upper Red River of the North Basin.” The agreement is for \$7,526 with \$3,763 from the RRWMB and \$3,763 from the USGS.

Jeff Lewis-Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) stated that MPCA is also a partner in the funding. He added that he had forwarded USGS a letter requesting a long-term commitment with a work plan submitted upfront.

Ogaard stated that he could forward a letter to USGS stating that for any future funding consideration, the USGS must consolidate individual contracts into one contract which would include the various participants.

Motion by Manager Wilkens to authorize the two-year funding request, **Seconded** by Erickson. Discussion followed. As there was no further discussion, a vote was taken. Those voting in favor of the motion included: Osowski, Deal, Erickson, Solberg, Wilkens, Wright, Johnson, and Ellefson. Those voting against the motion included Finney. Motion **carried**.

Ogaard discussed a second letter received from USGS regarding the Joint Funding Agreement for the operation of 1 new streamflow gaging station (Red Lake River near Fisher, MN, \$2,575) and to modify the cost of three other station costs no longer covered by the USACE (Red River at Fargo, \$3,075, Red River at Grand Forks, \$3,060, and Red River at Halstad, \$850). He stated that the contract referred to is a renewal of the previous contract with USGS.

Manager Johnson stated that the funding request for the streamflow gaging stations should be tabled until the next monthly meeting. He suggested that Ogaard forward a letter to the USGS requesting them to consolidate the individual contracts into one contract. **Motion** by Manager Johnson to table the streamflow gaging station funding request until the next monthly board meeting and forward a letter to USGS as stated above, **Seconded** by Manager Finney, **Carried**.

C) Report on IFMI Proposals for Flood Damage Reduction

Ogaard distributed a handout regarding the International Flood Mitigation Initiative (IFMI). He stated that the document reviews the current IFMI initiatives and potential work products for executive, legislative and stakeholder consideration.

D) Progress Report on Joint Powers Agreement

Ogaard explained that last month the signature page of the Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) had been forwarded to each individual watershed district to be signed by the districts' current chairman and secretary and returned to Naomi Jagol at the Sand Hill River WD office. He stated that minor changes had occurred in the Joint Powers Agreement upon revision prior to the publishing of the *Governing Documents of the Red River Watershed Management Board*. He added that four signature pages have been received to date and encouraged those districts who had not yet forwarded their copies to return them as soon as possible so the documents could be published.

E) Draft Copy of Watershed District Project Team Guidelines

Ogaard distributed a copy of the detailed instructions to watershed district project teams prepared by the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group. The guidelines are to serve as a proposed "flow chart" for FDR project implementation.

F) Request for Appointment to Ottertail River Watershed Improvement Project

Ogaard distributed a handout from the Otter Tail River Watershed Improvement Project (OTRWIP). The OTRWIP committee is comprised of representatives from each Soil and Water Conservation District and County Water Planning Staff in Otter Tail, Becker, and Wilkin counties. The committee will be developing a watershed basin plan for the Otter Tail Watershed. The OTRWIP requested that the RRWMB appoint one person to serve on the planning committee.

Motion by Manager Wilkens to authorize Don Ogaard to serve on the planning committee of the OTRWIP, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**.

District's Funding Requests:

1. Roseau River WD / Roseau River International Watershed:

Manager Erickson explained that a steering committee has been established consisting of seven Canadians and seven Americans to examine how to develop an international conservation district (watershed district). He inquired whether the RRWMB would be interested in advancing funds for assistance regarding the development of the new entity. He stated that these funds would be used to obtain technical staff and also provide for operation until flood mitigation grants become available.

Manager Johnson inquired about the IJC establishing a watershed district at the border between the United States and Canada. Manager Erickson responded that this initiative does not have participation from the IJC. Erickson further noted that the IJC initiatives are funded quite well in Canada, but not in the United States.

Manager Erickson stated that the steering committee determined it would cost approximately \$40,000 to operate the newly formed entity for a one-year period. He noted that the steering committee had contacted Kent Lokkesmoe-DNR with a funding request and he had indicated that approximately \$10,000 could possibly be available from the DNR for this initiative. He added that the Roseau River WD would be contributing to this initiative as well.

Manager Deal inquired whether the county was involved in this initiative. Manager Erickson responded that the steering committee has been in contact with the county and that they could be involved with assessing the watershed area.

Manager Osowski inquired about the amount of the funding request. Manager Erickson responded that \$5,000 could assist in determining whether this initiative was feasible.

Motion by Manager Wright to authorize the consideration of the funding request for the Roseau River International Watershed as per RRWMB policy, **Seconded** by Manager Solberg, **Carried**.

Motion by Manager Wilkens to approve the \$5,000 funding request contingent on receiving funding from other sources, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

Drainage Research Forum

Manager Wilkens stated that a Drainage Research Forum is scheduled for Thursday, March 23, 2000 in Owatonna. He stated that a Memorandum of Agreement is being signed between the University of Minnesota and Iowa State University that will lead to new cooperative efforts in drainage research. The forum will discuss the past, present, and future of agricultural drainage research.

Motion by Manager Erickson to authorize Daniel Wilkens to attend the Drainage Research Forum in Owatonna, **Seconded** by Deal, **Carried**.

The next meeting will be on April 18, 2000, at 9:30 a.m. at the Norwest Bank in Barnesville, Minnesota.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Farrell Erickson
Secretary

Naomi L. Jagol
Administrative Assistant