

Red River Watershed Management Board

705 Fifth Street West Ada, MN 56510 Phone: (218)784-4156, Fax: (218)784-2015

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

November 20, 2001

Red Lake Watershed District , Thief River Falls, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Tuesday, November 20, 2001, at the Red Lake Watershed District Office, Thief River Falls, 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
Dick Nelson, Financial Coordinator
Naomi Erickson, Associate Director
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator
Ron Adrian, Administrator, Middle River-Snake River WD
Brent Johnson, Engineer, Houston Engineering
Lance Yohe, Executive Director, Red River Basin Board
Chuck Fritz, Program Manager, Red River Basin Board
Jon Roeschlein, Administrator, Bois de Sioux WD
Rob Sando, Administrator, Roseau River WD
Nate Dalager, Engineer, HDR Engineering
Charlie Anderson, Engineer, JOR Engineering
Dennis Nikolayson, Red Lake WD
Dale M. Nelson, Red Lake WD
Brian Fischer, Houston Engineering

An additional item was discussed prior to item no. 3 on the agenda. Manager Finney inquired about the board's position regarding the Devils Lake outlet. Ogaard noted that the board adopted an official position stating support of the outlet in a letter that was authorized at a previous board meeting. Ogaard added that he would forward the letter to the board members to review prior to the December meeting and also add the item to the agenda for further discussion.

Motion by Manager Erickson to approve the minutes as written with minor corrections, **Seconded** by Manager Solberg, **Carried**.

The Treasurer's report was presented and it was approved as read. **Motion** by Manager Nelson to approve the Treasurer's Report, **Seconded** by Manager Finney, **Carried**.

A one-page handout of monthly bills to be approved was distributed. **Motion** to approve and pay bills by Manager Johnson, **Seconded** by Manager Solberg, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

Report on Red River Basin Board (RRBB) November 2nd Meeting

Manager Wilkens distributed a handout which included highlights of the November 2, 2001 board meeting. Lance Yohe, Executive Director-RRBB, discussed the items currently being addressed by the RRBB. Yohe explained that a basin plan is being developed which includes a flood damage reduction component. The various components further address the specifics of the plan. Yohe added that the RRBB is establishing links with other organizations in order to facilitate the development of a common vision. The association with the Red River Basin Institute is an example of such a link. The RRBB is also developing an outreach program by requesting cooperation from stakeholders in order to enhance communication.

Financial Coordinator Report

D. Nelson reported on a recent trip to Washington, D.C. He noted that the bill regarding the Public Law 566 project for the City of Warren had passed in both Houses and is awaiting the President's signature.

D. Nelson stated that he was informed that several interest groups were against the proposed language changes to the DNR rule-making legislation regarding the 25-year maintenance on public drainage systems. He added that since proposed language changes have not been defeated, he would continue to monitor the progress on this issue.

D. Nelson noted that the DNR is currently communicating with FEMA in an attempt to resolve the issue of no new building or substantial repairs on property protected by a ring dike. He added that he has been in contact with Congressman and Senators and they are aware of the problem.

D. Nelson discussed the \$5.575 million obtained from the legislature for flood damage reduction projects. He explained that should one of the four projects named in the appropriation not proceed, the funds would need to be allocated to one or more of the remaining projects.

Red River Coordinator/TAC Report

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met prior to the board meeting and reviewed the coordinated effort between Houston Engineering and the RRBB. He noted that a request was made to Houston Engineering to develop a proposal that could be used by the RRBB to forward to consultants in an attempt to solicit studies to promote a basin-wide goal. The effort is an attempt to provide a technical basis for the RRBB to develop flood damage reduction goals for the basin and provide incentives to organizations dealing with these efforts to work towards the common goals as outlined by the RRBB.

Executive Director Report – Don Ogaard

A) FEMA Determination on Legal Ditch Disaster Assistance

Ogaard explained that several districts have received notification from FEMA regarding ineligibility for disaster assistance. He stated that he discussed this issue with Maynard Pick of Collin Peterson's office and prepared a draft letter to distribute to Peterson and both U.S. Senators. He distributed the letter to the board for review. **Motion** by Manager Johnson to forward the letters to Representative Peterson and both State Senators, **Seconded** by Manager Nelson, **Carried**.

B) RRBFDRWG Funding Committee

Ogaard reported that a funding committee meeting has been scheduled for November 30, 2001 in Alexandria, MN to coincide with the MAWD Annual Meeting. He added that the issue of when districts could apply for preliminary and final engineering cost reimbursement would be discussed.

C) RRBB Flood Damage Reduction (FDR) Task Force Report

Ogaard stated that the FDR committee would be forwarding proposals to engineering firms requesting them to compile existing data. He noted that the information would be used to update the McCombs-Knutson and other reports.

D) USACE Reconnaissance Study

Ogaard stated that the report has been completed for the reconnaissance study and is available for distribution. The USACE will now consider moving into the feasibility phase. He noted the importance of including tributaries in the feasibility phase, rather than just the mainstem.

E) USGS Streamflow Gaging Contract

Ogaard discussed the streamflow gaging contract for the period of 10/01/01 – 09/30/02. He added that all gages have been consolidated into one contract with quarterly payments under the cost share program. **Motion** by Manager Wilkens to approve the streamflow gaging contract for the period of 10/01/01 – 09/30/02, **Seconded** by Manager Nelson, **Carried**.

Associate Director Report

N. Erickson reported that a quote was obtained for comprehensive major medical insurance through Blue Cross/Blue Shield. The quote was based on the Red River Watershed Management Board listed as the applicant sponsoring a group health plan for the following employees: Naomi Erickson, Wayne Goeken, and Danni Halvorson. A significant cost savings is available should a group health plan be adopted, as compared to the employees purchasing health insurance individually. The preliminary quote states that health insurance available under the low table would be as follows: Erickson \$133.00 per month, Goeken \$168.00 per month, and Halvorson \$133.00 per month based on the ages of the applicants. The group health plan would be offered at no cost to the sponsoring entity, but merely allows the participants to obtain a lower rate based on group coverage.

Following discussion, the board agreed to sponsor the group health plan. **Motion** by Manager Wilkens to authorize a signature on the application for health insurance, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**. The board requested N. Erickson to inquire about possible coverage for board members and member watershed districts.

N. Erickson discussed information obtained from Forrest T. Jones Consulting Company regarding the establishment of a deferred compensation account. The establishment of such an account is in conjunction with the cafeteria plan outlined in the Personnel Manual and would be offered to employees at no cost to the board.

The account would allow employees to contribute pre-tax dollars to investments which would be taxed at the time the funds would be withdrawn.

Proposed Resolution: Resolved that the Board of Managers of the Red River Watershed Management Board shall adopt the Red River Watershed Management Board Deferred Compensation Plan to provide deferred compensation to eligible employees under the Employees Deferred Compensation Plan Act effective as November 20, 2001.

Motion by Manager Wilkens to adopt the resolution to approve the deferred compensation account, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**.

Red River Basin Decision Information Network

Brian Fischer, Houston Engineering, reported on the Red River Basin Decision Information Network (RRBDIN) initiative. He joined the staff of Houston Engineering, Inc. as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) programmer and Website developer in the Maple Grove Office. One of his roles is to work in the newly expanded area of GIS Web Application services. This area includes GIS Data Development/Maintenance, GIS Analysis, GIS Programming, GIS Internet applications, Base Map Creation/Maintenance, Database Design, Web Page Design, and Website Hosting.

Fischer stated that he is currently involved with a project funded by the USACE to develop an internet-based decision making support tool. He noted that since the flood of 1997, many efforts have been generated to improve preparedness in the Red River basin and the availability of bi-national data. The USACE secured funding to maintain a website through the year 2002. The website will be developed using a bottom up approach by engaging key decision makers and local users to drive the design. Two teams will provide direction for the website including a project review team and a project design team. The overall goal of the website (www.rrbdin.org) is to disseminate information and provide basin news. The homepage includes a reference section that explains the history of the Red River basin, historical flooding, and a photo gallery.

District Reports

- The Two Rivers WD reported that significant progress has been made this construction season on the Nereson Sub-Impoundment project. The original contractor for the project hired a sub-contractor who is locally based. The sub-contractor was able to install ditches and implement beaver control measures which helped dry out the site resulting in more suitable conditions for construction. Although considerable progress has been made over the past several months, the project is now at a standstill pending negotiations with the contractor and sub-contractor regarding project costs and potential change orders.
- The Middle River-Snake River WD reported that the ground-breaking ceremony for the Public Law 566 project was conducted on October 26, 2001. The notice of award has been delivered for Phase I and the contract documents have been completed. The notice to proceed has been issued with a start date of November 19th. The contract period is 85 calendar working days. The contractor, KGM Contractors, plans to start on November 19th and work single shifts through the week of Thanksgiving and, should the weather remain favorable, increase to two 11.5 hour shifts until the weather changes or the project is completed. The contract for Phase II is expected to be awarded this winter, with Phase III to be awarded the summer of 2002.

- The Red Lake WD reported that the Greenwood 27 project in Clearwater County was completed November 16, 2001. Final inspection will be completed in the next few days, with the final payment scheduled for December. A group application for wetland banking, consisting of 9 ½ acres, has been completed.
- The Sand Hill River WD reported that the pump on Union Lake was shut off on August 21, 2001 with three-tenths remaining in order to reach OHW as of the week of November 12th. At the time the pump was shut off, Lake Sarah was 20” higher than Union Lake. Lake Sarah is now eight-tenths of a foot above OHW. The Lake Improvement District (LID) has completed the purchase of the required mitigation acres. The LID is now working with the engineers and contractor to complete the project.
- The Wild Rice WD reported that a site visit was conducted on October 29th of the Lockhart Flood Storage Pilot project to finalize the construction contract with representatives from Ziegler Construction, Houston Engineering, landowners and the District in attendance. Seeding has been completed on the project with the easement area to be established into vegetation in the spring as a part of the CRP contract.
- The Buffalo-Red River WD reported that last fall the District requested the Clay County attorney’s office to file criminal charges regarding a rules violation in Kragnes Township. A jury trial was conducted on November 6, 2001 regarding the charges. The jury came back with a “not guilty” verdict. Because the District obtained a temporary restraining order (TRO) to immediately close the ditch draining directly into the Buffalo River, the jurors felt the 5-acre requirement for drainage had not been met. The District has a civil trial scheduled for December 13, 2001 for a permanent injunction blocking the ditch from entering the river.
- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that notice has been received from FEMA and the Minnesota Department of Emergency Management (DEM) that the District may be ineligible for disaster aid on the public ditches from damages occurring the spring of 2001. This news was very disturbing as the District believed that authorization was already obtained and repair work has begun. The total estimated damages from the 2001 spring flood are approximately \$90,000. Should the District not receive reimbursement for the costs of the repairs, they will have to be charged to the ditch systems.

District’s Funding Requests:

No requests for funds were submitted this month.

The next meeting will be on December 18, 2001, at 9:30 a.m. at the Red Lake Watershed District office, Thief River Falls, Minnesota.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Farrell Erickson
Secretary

Naomi L. Erickson
Associate Director