

# 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

December 18, 2001

Red Lake Watershed District, Thief River Falls, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Tuesday, December 18, 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  
Robert Wright Jerome Deal

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  
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  
Rick St. Germain, Engineer, Houston Engineering  
Jerry Bennett, Administrator, Wild Rice WD  
Jerry Bents, Engineer, Houston Engineering  
Molly MacGregor, Red River Basin Coordinator, MPCA  
Danni Halvorson, Monitoring Specialist, Water Quality Monitoring Project  
Dale M. Nelson, Red Lake WD

An additional item was added to the agenda in the Executive Director's Report as 8. (F).

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

In the absence of Dan Wilkens, Treasurer, the Treasurer's report was presented by Naomi Erickson and was approved as read. **Motion** by Manager Johnson 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 Solberg, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

### **Report on Red River Basin Board (RRBB) December 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

In the absence of Dan Wilkens, Dick Nelson reported on the RRBB December 13, 2001 board meeting. He stated that the financial implications of merging the RRBB and the International Coalition (TIC) were discussed. He added that the proposed budget for 2002 was reviewed but was not yet approved.

Manager Finney noted that he was in attendance at the board meeting, and requested clarification on Option No. 5 that was discussed. Fritz explained that the option referred to was related to the merger of the two organizations and added that it would involve a complete reorganization of the two entities with a new structure to emerge.

### **Financial Coordinator Report**

D. Nelson reported that he attended the Minnesota Association of Watershed District's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting and Trade Show conducted on November 29-December 1, 2001 in Alexandria, MN. He noted the importance of good manager participation since it provides an excellent opportunity to network with others in order to get a variety of opinions, input, and ideas.

D. Nelson stated that President Bush signed into law the Agricultural Appropriations Bill three weeks ago which contained \$6.45 million dollars for the completion of the Public Law 566 project for the City of Warren. Due to obtaining federal funding, this project has become the highest priority within the DNR Flood Damage Reduction program at this time.

D. Nelson discussed the current legislative session and noted that \$12 million dollars will attempt to be secured in the next biennium for FDR projects. Given the current budget shortfall within the state, securing this amount of funding will be a formidable task. He suggested that the board prioritize projects internally should there not be sufficient funding obtained.

### **Red River Coordinator/TAC Report**

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) did not meet prior to the board meeting due to scheduling conflicts of committee members. He distributed a draft of the TAC recommendation regarding the Step I submittal of the Felton Ditch Off-Channel Storage project. He noted that the TAC will schedule a meeting to further review the Step I submittal prior to making a final recommendation.

D. Nelson referred to the 75% state commitment listed in the Step I submittal and noted that it would be extremely difficult to get any new 75/25 language passed. Thul stated that should the state not provide 75% funding for the project, the funding shortfall would have to be obtained from other sources.

Thul explained that Brent Johnson, TAC committee member, will be transferring to the Maple Grove office of Houston Engineering. He stated that although Johnson would still be able to participate on the TAC should his expertise be needed, a new representative from Houston Engineering should be added to the TAC. Brent Johnson added that he would like to stay involved with the TAC as deemed practical, and suggested that Jerry Bents would be an excellent replacement for his position. St. Germain concurred with Johnson and noted that Bents would be available to attend regular monthly meetings. Jerry Bennett added that the Wild Rice WD Board of Managers supports Jerry Bents being added to the TAC.

**Executive Director Report** – Don Ogaard

**A) Report on RRBB/FDR Committee Progress to Date**

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

Thul noted that the purpose of compiling existing data is to develop a study which would provide a technical basis for developing FDR strategies in the basin. He added that it is an attempt to get a coordinated approach and define FDR goals.

**B) RRBFDRWG/RRWMB March Conference Agenda**

Ogaard requested the Board of Managers to contact their respective boards regarding issues to be addressed at the upcoming March Conference.

Thul stated that the conference provides a forum for individual watershed districts to present what is working and what isn't, not only with regard to project teams but also with the operation of the watershed districts in general.

Manager Finney suggested a presentation regarding the overall plan updates. He added that information could be given regarding the GIS and modeling efforts that would be included in the new plans.

Ogaard stated that the planning committee is trying to obtain a panel of legislators to participate in the conference. D. Nelson suggested inviting various different agencies that have funding programs available with regard to the projects developed by the project teams.

**C) Report on Red River Basin County Commissioner Meeting**

Ogaard stated that a meeting was conducted by the Northwest Regional Development Commission (NWRDC) in Mahnommen which included the county Joint Powers planning group. He noted that he distributed copies of last year's annual report to the commissioners in attendance and used it as a basis for his presentation.

Ogaard noted that many comments he received at the meeting were regarding lack of communication between the county commissioners and the watershed districts. He encouraged the managers to invite commissioners to attend board meetings and also participate on the project teams in order to keep them better informed.

**D) 1999 Devils Lake Outlet Position Letter**

Ogaard stated that the Board of Managers adopted an official position stating support of the outlet in a letter that was authorized at a previous board meeting in 1999. The letter was forwarded to board members to review prior to the December board meeting.

**E) Report on December 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the RRBB, RRBI, and RRWRC**

Ogaard reported on the meeting conducted on December 17, 2001 with the Red River Basin Board (RRBB), the Red River Basin Institute (RRBI), and the Red River Joint Water Resource Council (RRJWRC). He stated that the meeting was to discuss the potential for consolidating organizations in the Red River basin.

Fritz stated that the problems with the Tri-College system are the costs associated with it. He noted that the goal is to eliminate administrative overhead. He added that the three chairman of the RRBI including Francis Schwindt, Bruce Furness, and George Sinner, are very interested in consolidating the organizations and have another meeting scheduled to discuss this possibility.

Ogaard distributed a handout which outlines the various initiatives of the RRBI. He stated that he would forward this information to the individual watershed districts and request their input with regard to which initiatives should be pursued. D. Nelson concurred with Ogaard and stated that these initiatives need to be locally driven.

**F) Two Rivers WD /Public Law 566 Application**

Ogaard distributed a handout relative to a PL 566 application submitted by the Two Rivers WD to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Two Rivers WD requested the assistance of Dick Nelson, Financial Coordinator, from the board since he has had vast experience with the PL 566 program and has successfully obtained funding. The Two Rivers WD further requested that D. Nelson's assistance be included as part of his contract duties with the RRWMB. D. Nelson noted his willingness to assist the Two Rivers WD with providing the names of the appropriate contacts.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson to approve D. Nelson's participation in the Public Law 566 project for the Two Rivers WD, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

**Annual Report**

Ogaard stated that each year the RRWMB annual report is prepared in cooperation with Dan Thul. He added that the printing of last year's report was done in Crookston.

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

**Associate Director Report**

N. Erickson reported that she attended the Minnesota Association of Watershed District's 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting and Trade Show conducted on November 29-December 1, 2001 in Alexandria, Minnesota. The conference was highlighted in the November issue of *News & Views*.

The application was completed regarding the group health plan sponsored by the board. Individual applications were also completed by the employees and forwarded to an insurance agent to obtain final quotes from BlueCross BlueShield. At the previous monthly meeting, inquiries were made regarding the eligibility of insurance coverage under the group health plan. The Personnel Manual states that all full-time employees are eligible for coverage. To be considered a full-time employee, an employee must work a minimum of 40 hours per week which would not allow the managers to be eligible for coverage. The issue of providing coverage to employees of member districts under the group health plan was also discussed at the previous monthly meeting. The deductions for the premiums of the insurance come directly from the employee's paychecks, with the board billed on a monthly basis for the amounts deducted. The group health plan is offered at no cost to the sponsoring entity, with the board merely acting as the "pass-through" agent remitting the funds deducted from each employee's paycheck. Providing insurance coverage to member districts under the group health plan

would not be in accordance with the Personnel Manual which states that all full-time *employees* of the board are eligible for coverage.

The completed forms were forwarded to the Forrest T. Jones Consulting Company regarding the establishment of a deferred compensation account for the board. A meeting will be scheduled with Richard Bendish, Registered Representative, later this month with the employees of the board to further discuss the establishment of the account.

The *News & Views* newsletter was discussed. Erickson stated Ogaard had a suggestion in order for the newsletter to be published the second week following the monthly meeting. Ogaard stated that should the board agree to not publish the newsletter for a one-month period, the information could be prepared in time for the board meeting with only the district reports and meeting highlights needing to be obtained from the meeting. He noted that once this information is obtained and prepared in newsletter format, the information could immediately be sent to the publisher for printing. This would allow the newsletter to be published two weeks prior to the next board meeting. **Motion** by Manager Erickson to authorize the newsletter to not be published for a one-month period in order to facilitate the new printing schedule, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

### **Water Quality Monitoring Progress Report**

Molly MacGregor, Red River Basin Coordinator-Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Danni Halvorson, Monitoring Specialist-Water Quality Monitoring Project conducted a presentation on the status of the Water Quality Monitoring Project.

MacGregor distributed a handout which outlined the efforts of the project. Two employees have been hired to date including Wayne Goeken, Monitoring Coordinator, and Danni Halvorson, Monitoring Specialist. A monitoring task force advises the employees and meets at 10:00 a.m. on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month at the Sand Hill River WD office in Fertile, MN. Members include: Jim Ziegler-MPCA, Chair; Molly MacGregor-MPCA; Brian Dwight, BWSR; Gale Mayer, DNR; Henry Van Offelen, DNR; Dan Wilkens, RRWMB; Wayne Goeken, Monitoring Coordinator; and Danni Halvorson, Monitoring Specialist.

Halvorson explained that several initiatives were addressed during the months of September, October, and November. They included helping monitor existing River Watch programs, recruiting new participants in the program, helping organize new programs, and providing training and technical support to the RiverKeepers organization.

Halvorson stated that a goal of the program is to develop baseline water quality data using standardized methods that provide reliable, scientifically credible, consistent results throughout the Red River basin. Another goal is to promote greater citizen awareness and understanding of watersheds and land and water stewardship practices affecting water quality through hands-on, real-world science opportunities in their "own backyard."

### **District Reports**

- The Joe River WD reported that work has been completed on three miles of channel cleaning north of Humboldt. The ditch was constructed in 1970 and was not in need of maintenance until this time.
- The Roseau River WD reported that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is continuing the preliminary study (Section 206) on the Hay Creek Project. The Board of Managers recently purchased 2 tracts of land in the project area and is awaiting the preliminary project proposal from the USACE.

- The Two Rivers WD reported on the status of the Nereson Sub-impoundment Project. Due to the increased costs over the ten year period that the project was started, additional funding will be needed from both the Red River Watershed Management Board and the DNR. A detailed report regarding the increased costs will be presented at a future RRWMB meeting.

The construction of the sub-impoundment embankment made significant progress during the course of 2001, despite a presidential disaster being declared for the area. Barring another declaration, the embankment should be completed early in 2002. At the previous monthly meeting, the Board of Managers authorized the establishment of another bid package for the construction of the wildlife weir, an emergency spillway, and a sub-emergency spillway. The items listed include the final construction items which remain to be completed, and will be attempted during the 2002 construction season.

- The Middle River-Snake River WD reported that work on Phase I of the Public Law 566 Project began on November 19<sup>th</sup> which includes the lower end of the floodway. Thus far work has progressed almost without interruption and, in terms of value, the contract is approximately 40% completed. Phase I is expected to be completed early in the summer of 2002.

Advertisement for bids for Phase II of the project will be conducted early in March 2002. This phase which includes the Off Channel Floodwater Storage Site is expected to include two construction seasons. The plan for Phase III which is the upper end of the floodway should be completed early in the spring of 2002.

- The Red Lake WD reported that preliminary survey work has been completed on the Gully Township, Section 6 Project. This project is a riverbank erosion project located in eastern Polk County.
- The Wild Rice WD reported that the Board of Managers authorized the submittal of the Step I application to the Red River Watershed Management Board on the Felton Off-Channel Storage Project. This is one of the major projects identified by the Systems Approach Planning Process to reduce flooding in the Lower Wild Rice area. The project will provide needed flood protection by controlling flood waters from the 57.6 square mile drainage area.
- The Buffalo-Red River WD reported on the Wilkin Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) buffer strip proposal. The SWCD determined that a good opportunity exists to accelerate the installation of native grass buffer strips. The proposal seeks to maximize the use of technical and financial resources during the CCRP. Another program is Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM). The two programs have accelerated landowner interest in buffer strips, creating a backlog of work for existing staff. The initial goals of the project are to increase technical assistance to landowners, promote and market the programs, coordinate appointments, conduct site planning, complete cost and payment assessments, and provide follow-up to landowners for site preparation, seeding and maintenance. The Wilkin SWCD would like to hire a "specialist" to work with both programs. At the 12/10/01 meeting, the District contributed \$8,000 per year for 2002, 2003, and 2004 to help fund the position. Other funding partners will include the local Pheasants Forever chapter, the state Pheasants Forever, the Local County Water Plan, SWCD, and the Bois de Sioux WD.
- The Bois de Sioux WD reported on the progress of the Moonshine Lake Project. The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant has been approved. It is anticipated that this grant will provide in excess of \$400,000 to the project. A meeting of the core group of the project team will be conducted to develop the financial plan shortly after the holidays. A funding request will be submitted to the RRWMB following the development of the financial plan.

**District's Funding Requests:**

**1. Wild Rice WD Step I Submittal/ Felton Ditch Off-Channel Storage Project**

The Step I submittal for the Felton Ditch Off-Channel Storage Project was presented to the board for review.

Jerry Bents, Houston Engineering, stated that the project will have 8,550 acre-feet of gated storage with an additional 5,197 acre-feet of ungated storage. This is 4.7 inches over the 57.6 square mile watershed. The details of an operating plan are unknown at this time except that the design allows for complete gate control to the principle spillway crest elevation of 909.00 which equals 14,440 acre-feet. The primary purpose of the project is to reduce flood damages within the Felton Ditch sub-basin as well as downstream along the Wild Rice and Red River.

**Motion** by Manager Johnson to approve the Step I submittal contingent on the TAC's favorable recommendation, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**.

**2. Middle River-Snake River WD / PL 566 Request for Funding Assistance**

A handout was distributed to the board for review. A Step I submittal for this project was made in June 1999, and a Step II submittal was made in June 2000. The design of the project has not changed from that provided in the Step II submittal. The estimated non-federal portion of the project has increased from \$4,180,200 to \$5,122,000 or an increase of approximately 23%. Most of the estimated increase in cost is the result of more detailed estimates for the structures required for the two trunk highways and the two railroads. The estimated local cost of the off-channel floodwater storage structure has changed from \$1,017,000 to \$993,000 or a decrease of approximately 2.4%. The estimated cost of the non-federal portion of the floodway has changed from \$3,162,600 to \$4,074,000 or an increase of approximately 29%. The estimated local cost of the mitigation is \$55,000.

The Board of Managers of the Middle River-Snake River WD requested that the RRWMB advance (loan) to the District \$735,000 to finance the Snake River PL 566 project, which is expected to be repaid as soon as the state portion of the money becomes available which is expected to be approximately October 2002. The request was made to assist the District in implementing the project without delays due to lack of non-federal funds.

President Osowski turned the meeting over to Vice President Finney. **Motion** by Manager Deal to pay monthly draws up to \$735,000 as billings are received from the Middle River-Snake River WD, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried**. Manager Finney returned the chair to Manager Osowski.

The next meeting will be on January 15, 2002, at 9:30 a.m. at the Wild Rice Watershed District office, Ada, Minnesota.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Farrell Erickson  
Secretary

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Naomi L. Erickson  
Associate Director