

# Red River Watershed Management Board

1298 South Shore Drive Detroit Lakes, MN 56501 Phone: (218)844-6166, Fax: (218)844-6167

## Board of Managers

John Finney, President-Humboldt Farrell Erickson, Vice Pres.-Badger Dan Money-Hallock Ron Osowski-Oslo  
Vernon Johnson-Clearbrook Daniel Wilkens, Treasurer-Fertile Robert Wright, Secretary-Felton Jerome Deal-Wheaton  
Naomi Erickson, Associate Director-Detroit Lakes

## RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

March 26, 2003

Northland Inn, Crookston, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Wednesday, March 26, 2003, at the Northland Inn, Crookston, Minnesota.

Chairman John Finney called the meeting to order.

Members present were: Farrell Erickson Dan Money  
Ron Osowski Daniel Wilkens  
Robert Wright Jerome Deal

Others present were: Naomi Erickson, Associate Director  
Dick Nelson, Financial Coordinator  
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator  
Ron Adrian, Engineer, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD  
Rob Sando, Administrator, Roseau River WD  
Lance Yohe, Executive Director, RRBC  
Chuck Fritz, RRBI  
Kevin Scheidecker, Basin Coordinator, RRBC  
Curt Nelson, Buffalo-Red River WD  
Bruce Albright, Administrator, Buffalo-Red River WD  
Jon Roeschlein, Administrator, Bois de Sioux WD  
Harlow Grove, Red River Valley Shows  
Don Strickler, Red River Valley Shows  
Dave Haugo, Red River Valley Shows  
Tom Raster, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Maynard Pick, Congressman Peterson's office

Additional items were added to the agenda. Manager Wilkens requested adding the Red River Valley Shows Board of Directors debenture following the Treasurer's Report. Manager Finney stated that a committee should be developed to review the Governing Documents publication relative to the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (RRBFDRWG) transition to an advisory committee of the RRWMB.

**Motion** by Manager Deal to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the February 18, 2003 meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried.** **Motion** by Manager Deal to approve the minutes as written with minor corrections, **Seconded** by Manager Money, **Carried.**

The Treasurer's report was presented and it was approved as read. **Motion** by Manager Erickson to approve the Treasurer's Report, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**. A one-page handout of monthly bills to be approved was distributed. **Motion** to approve and pay bills by Manager Osowski, **Seconded** by Manager Wright, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

Manager Wilkens stated that representatives were in attendance from the Red River Valley Shows to make the final payment on the debenture secured by the RRWMB. In 1994, the RRWMB purchased a \$400,000 debenture from the Red River Valley Shows guaranteed by Polk County. Harlow Grove presented Manager Wilkens with a check for \$52,613.87 representing the final principal and interest payment on the debenture. The Board of Directors of the Red River Valley Shows thanked the RRWMB members for their assistance. Due to the assistance of the RRWMB, the Red River Valley Shows will be able to continue providing educational programs for the residents in the Red River basin.

### **Financial Coordinator Report**

D. Nelson reported that several watershed districts forwarded information to assist with the release of frozen bonding dollars. The DNR Division of Waters has compiled written responses which will be forwarded to the DNR Commissioner who will be in contact with the Department of Finance. A ranking process could occur with some projects not receiving the entire amount of funding approved. Possible reasons for not receiving full funding include that current funds have not yet been expended, and cities and federal matching projects would first be funded.

D. Nelson stated that a water user fee increase has been proposed and should it be successful, \$962,000 would be generated for the Division of Waters. These funds would be used towards funding the proposed cuts of stream gages, the functioning of project teams, and comprehensive watershed management plan updates. The anticipated objections to the user fee increase have not been very vocal as those affected have the ability to pass on their added costs to the consumer.

D. Nelson discussed new legislation that includes a regional flood relief bill that is primarily updating additional needs above the special session legislation. The majority of funds are earmarked for the Roseau area with some funding targeted at ring dikes.

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

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met on March 21, 2003 at Houston Engineering, Inc. in Fargo, ND. The TAC discussed revising the Star Value method and agreed to make changes to the spreadsheet and also the narrative in the Governing Documents. Thul added that he and Nate Dalager would finish developing Star Value calculations for projects already constructed.

Thul reported that the TAC discussed transferring the responsibilities of the Work Group to the RRWMB. Discussion has occurred relative to combining the Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee (TSAC) with the current TAC of the RRWMB. The TAC agreed that the success of the TSAC is based on each representative being funded by the interest group represented and suggested that these two groups continue to maintain their independence but collaborate on issues when requested.

**Red River Basin Institute – Chuck Fritz**

Chuck Fritz explained that the Red River Basin Institute (RRBI) is discussing a new initiative regarding the development of a framework to identify a pool of credible researchers. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been developed in an effort to bring together the technical expertise in the basin. The goal of the MOU is to offer an expanded peer review of proposed projects in the basin.

**Red River Basin “CREP” Proposal – Kevin Scheidecker, RRBC**

Kevin Scheidecker, Basin Coordinator-RRBC, updated the RRWMB on the status of the Red River Basin Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) application submitted by the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC). The application has been submitted and will be heard this week in the legislature.

**Associate Director Report**

**A) Special Board Meeting**

N. Erickson reported that on February 20, 2003, a special board meeting was conducted at the Northland Inn, Crookston, MN. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of legislative funding relative to the announcement from the Governor’s office. The Board agreed that the top priorities for Dick Nelson to address at this year’s legislative session would include: 1) Releasing the bonding money put on hold from last year; 2) Securing work group funding in order to keep the project teams functioning; 3) Obtaining ring dike funding; and 4) Obtaining funds for the beaver control program.

**B) Transition Team Meeting**

N. Erickson stated that following the special meeting, the *Transition Team* met and discussed the RRWMB’s position on transferring the responsibilities of the Work Group to the RRWMB. The Board discussed revising the Governing Documents with regard to funding criteria to possibly accommodate projects with local benefits. The Board agreed that the Mediation Agreement should also be adopted as part of the Governing Documents.

**C) 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Joint Conference / Don Ogaard’s Retirement Party**

N. Erickson reported that she has been assisting Don Buckhout and Jody Horntvedt with the planning of the upcoming conference and participated in conference calls on February 25<sup>th</sup> and March 13<sup>th</sup>. She prepared a presentation on the Governing Documents which will be presented at the conference by Jerome Deal and Vernon Johnson. She also arranged for Don’s retirement party following the conference.

**RRWMB Meeting Schedule**

Manager Finney reported that discussion has occurred among the Board of Managers to not schedule meetings during the months of May and August since these are especially busy months for managers. The Board discussed continuing to schedule meetings on a monthly basis, but allowing for a five-day notice to cancel the meeting should it be deemed necessary. It was agreed to discuss this issue again at the next regular monthly meeting.

**District Reports**

- The Two Rivers WD reported that on March 2, 2003 the Preliminary Engineer's Report was submitted to the Board of Managers for the Ross No. 7 project. The District anticipates that over the next few months, submittals for funding will be presented to the RRWMB for Step II and the RRBFDWRWG for final engineering. The legislative funding status is still unknown at this time due to the budget shortfall. The legislature had approved \$1 million for project funding last year, however, the governor placed the appropriation of funds on hold.
- The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD reported that the Board of Managers met with the Two Rivers WD Board of Managers to resolve issues related to their common boundary. The details of the proposed boundary change are being worked out by the staff of the two districts. It is expected that the Board of Water and Soil Resources will be petitioned for a joint boundary change this year.
- The Red Lake WD reported that staff is working on two potential drainage ditch improvement projects. A meeting was conducted with landowners regarding Polk County Ditch No. 19 with several legislators in attendance to answer questions and express interest in the project. The water levels in impoundments are being monitored and routine maintenance is being conducted. Permit applications are increasing in number with the promise of spring thaw.
- The Sand Hill River WD reported that a representative from the Energy and Environmental Research Center (EERC) conducted a presentation on the waffle plan. The project started last April with \$700,000 in funding assistance provided by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Additional funding in the amount of \$1,000,000 is being sought. The EERC is developing modeling for all watershed districts in the Red River Basin, and conducting presentations in all the districts regarding the waffle plan. The culvert data collected will serve as the database. Springtime flooding events will be the focus as well as an economic analysis of damage due to farmland storage. Advisory boards have been established consisting of agency representatives and citizen groups. Modeling is currently being conducted on the Wild Rice WD.

### **District's Funding Requests**

#### **1. Buffalo-Red River WD / Whisky Creek Project / Step I Submittal**

Bruce Albright, Administrator-Buffalo-Red River WD, presented a Step I Submittal for the Whisky Creek Project to the Board of Managers for consideration. The project involves the improvement of two tributaries to the legal ditch portion of Whisky Creek known as Clay County Ditch No. 34. The total drainage area of the east tributary at its outlet is approximately 5.1 square miles, while the west tributary has a drainage area of approximately 3.6 square miles. The project has a number of goals including flood control, natural resource habitat, and to reduce erosion. The total estimated project cost is \$900,000.

Manager Finney inquired whether the Board of Managers could approve a Step I Submittal from a non-member watershed district. Manager Deal noted that the request could be accepted, however, the proposed project site must be inspected (toured) by the Board before a decision on approval is acted upon. The RRWMB agreed to conduct a tour of the project area at the next monthly meeting.

### **Forwarding of Levy Funds**

The issue of submitting levy funds in a timely manner was discussed at the previous monthly meeting.

A handout was distributed to the Board of Managers along with the monthly meeting notice regarding the motion that was passed previously regarding the timeliness of submitting levy funds collected by the individual watershed districts to the RRWMB. The motion passed on May 21, 1991 is as follows: *on a motion by Manager Person, seconded by Manager Kuzel that the funds collected from the counties or state be remitted to the RRWMB within 30 days of receipt by the Watershed Districts, duly carried.*

The issue of the Buffalo-Red River WD not forwarding the tax levy funds collected for the RRWMB in a timely manner was the reason for discussion. N. Erickson stated at the February board meeting that on January 31, 2003 she was notified from Bremer Bank that a check received from the Buffalo-Red River WD for the 2002 levy funds was being returned to the RRWMB account since a stop payment had been placed on the check. At that time, Manager Finney inquired about this issue with Bruce Albright-Administrator of the Buffalo-Red River WD who indicated that he was instructed to place a stop payment on the check by the Board of Managers since they were displeased that the RRWMB did not discuss the funding request submitted for the Whisky Creek Project at the January board meeting. Manager Finney informed Albright that the BRRWD had not followed proper procedure on requesting to be added to the agenda and also the representatives left shortly after arriving at the meeting.

Curt Nelson, Buffalo-Red River WD, stated that a second check was prepared in the amount of \$296,174.71 for the second half of taxes for 2002 from the BRRWD. He noted that remitting the levy funds to the RRWMB was contingent on the RRWMB agreeing to pay the \$25,000 that was withheld from the RRBC funding. Nelson stated that the RRWMB signed a contract, not the BRRWD. Manager Finney explained that there was no contract, only a commitment on behalf of the counties and at their request.

Manager Wilkens stated that when the RRWMB increased the levy to 100%, a decision was made to fund \$100,000 for the RRBC on behalf of the residents in the Minnesota portion of the basin. The counties requested the RRWMB fund the Minnesota local share from the RRWMB levy. This would alleviate the need for counties to establish an additional levy for the RRBC. He noted that due to the withdrawal of the Buffalo-Red River WD from the RRWMB, a 25% decrease occurred in revenue. The Board of Managers agreed that since the counties included in the BRRWD are no longer contributing to the RRWMB levy, the amount forwarded from the RRWMB to the RRBC would be reduced by 25% (\$25,000). The RRBC would need to request \$25,000 from the individual counties in the BRRWD to make up the difference.

A letter received by the BRRWD from the Clay County Commission was distributed. The letter requested the BRRWD to forward the \$25,000 to the Red River Basin Commission on behalf of the counties. Curt Nelson reiterated that he would not release the check for tax levy funds until the RRWMB agreed to pay the BRRWD's portion (\$25,000) to the RRBC. Several board members discussed the issue. Manager Finney requested that the BRRWD reconsider their position and report back at the next monthly meeting.

The next meeting will be on April 15, 2003, at 9:30 a.m. at the Wells Fargo Bank, Barnesville, Minnesota.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Robert Wright  
Secretary

---

Naomi L. Erickson  
Associate Director