

# Red River Watershed Management Board

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## 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, Administrator-Detroit Lakes

## RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

September 20, 2005

Sand Hill River Watershed District, Fertile, Minnesota

The RRWMB met on Tuesday, September 20, 2005, at the Sand Hill River Watershed District, Fertile, Minnesota.

Chairman John Finney called the meeting to order.

Members present were: Farrell Erickson Dan Money  
Vernon Johnson Daniel Wilkens  
Warren Seykora Jerome Deal

Others present were: Naomi Erickson, Administrator  
Dick Nelson, Financial Coordinator  
Maynard Pick, Congressman Peterson's office  
Myron Jesme, Administrator, Red Lake WD  
Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator  
Jerry Bents, Engineer, Houston Engineering  
Nate Dalager, Engineer, HDR Engineering  
Nick Drees, Acting Administrator, Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD  
Charlie Anderson, Engineer, JOR Engineering  
Diane Ista, Wild Rice WD  
Rob Sando, Administrator, Roseau River WD  
Don Buckhout, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Keith Mykleseth, The Nature Conservancy  
Phil Gerda, The Nature Conservancy

Manager Finney requested reviewing the criteria for retrieving information requested from the board under *Other Issues*.

**Motion** by Manager Erickson 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 Deal to approve the Treasurer's Report, **Seconded** by Manager Johnson, **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 Deal, **Carried**. For further reference, copies of the bills approved are attached hereto in the Treasurer's Report.

### **Financial Coordinator Report**

D. Nelson reported that during the previous legislative session, language was proposed to revise the buffer strip criteria. The proposed revisions were not adopted, however, the outcome of the discussion was to conduct a study relative to the impact of buffer strips on ditch systems. The Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) is the lead agency in conducting the study with assistance provided from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Literature reviews are currently being conducted at Mankato State University to determine what information is available regarding ditch inlets. Following discussion, the board determined that the Technical Advisory Committee should pursue participating in the study.

D. Nelson stated that due to an increased concern regarding projects not being constructed in a timely manner, several individuals met at Houston Engineering, Inc. on September 13, 2005 to discuss the various impediments to project construction. It was agreed that watershed district administrators have time constraints and do not have the time to devote to full-time project management with all of their other responsibilities. As a result, some projects are not proceeding as quickly as they could. An outcome of the discussion was that it would be helpful if districts would prepare/submit a timeline for project implementation when applying for funding assistance from the RRWMB. The timeline could include a work plan, a list of permits needed for the project, a schedule for project implementation, and an assignment of responsibilities. The group agreed to request that the board direct the TAC to develop a draft *Timeline for Project Implementation* to be discussed at the September board meeting.

D. Nelson requested that a Human Resources Committee meeting be conducted following the board meeting today to conduct a performance review and/or salary adjustment for his position as well as the Administrator position.

### **The Nature Conservancy**

Keith Mykleseth, Project Manager, discussed the Glacial Ridge Project of the Nature Conservancy. The largest prairie and wetland restoration project in the United States now forms the heart of the 35,000-acre Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge.

Phil Gerla, the Nature Conservancy's Conservation Hydrologist and an associate professor at the University of North Dakota, conducted a presentation on the benefits of the restoration. He reported that the ecological and hydrological improvements are contributing to economic activities. Surrounding agricultural lands are being enrolled into perpetual conservation easements for the benefit of farms and neighboring communities.

Mykleseth explained that the initial instrumentation and data collection phase of the project is nearing completion, and noted the importance of continuing monitoring on a regular basis until after the completion of the restoration efforts at Glacial Ridge. This will involve continued monitoring until September 30 of 2010, with a final overall study to follow with a completion date of 2012. At that time, the Nature Conservancy hopes to have transferred all remaining lands to the newly established Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge. The estimated annual costs to continue monitoring efforts will be approximately \$44,000 for the next five years, with the exact costs of the final overall study yet to be determined.

During the past couple months, the Nature Conservancy has been working with partners to develop a financial plan that would sustain funding through project completion. The year one funding proposal is as follows: (October 1, 2005 - September 30, 2006) the Nature Conservancy Glacial Ridge budget \$14,000 (secured); Red River Watershed management board \$20,000 (pending approval); and the Red Lake Watershed District \$10,000 (pending approval).

**Motion** by Manager Johnson to direct the Technical Advisory Committee and Water Quality staff to review the proposal for the water quality study of the Glacial Ridge Project with representatives of the Nature Conservancy, **Seconded** by Manager Deal, **Carried**.

### **Administrator Report**

#### **A) IRS Increases Mileage Rate**

N. Erickson reported that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has increased the standard IRS mileage rate for all business miles driven between September 1 and December 31, 2005. The 40.5-cent rate, effective since January 1, 2005, has increased to 48.5 cents per mile. The rate effective for January 1, 2006, to be announced later this year, may be lower than 48.5 cents.

#### **B) Funding Committee Recommendations**

N. Erickson stated the Funding Committee of the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group met on September 1, 2005 and proposed two items for Work Group approval on September 7, 2005:

1. Reallocate remaining FY 05 funds from Project Team support and Communications to FY 06 Watershed Planning (\$4400) and to reimburse Buffalo Red River WD for part of their FY 05 project team expenses (\$5422). Approved by FDRWG.
2. Establish that FY 06 project team support money will be available in amounts of \$10,000 (\$5000 administration/\$5000 alternatives analysis) per district that has a project team functioning in accordance with the requirements of the mediation agreement. Approved by FDRWG. This formula will be evaluated and likely will be revised for FY 2007.

N. Erickson added that it was also discussed at both the Funding Committee and the Work Group meetings that the RRWMB may want to consider supplementing the funding available for project teams of member districts. **Motion** by Manager Seykora to authorize an additional \$5,000 for project teams of member districts for FY 06, **Seconded** by Manager Johnson, **Carried**.

#### **C) Project Management**

N. Erickson reported that a meeting was conducted on Tuesday, September 13, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. at Houston Engineering, Inc. in Fargo, ND to address the potential of obtaining/identifying project managers to help expedite FDR/NRE projects. This issue had been discussed at both the Funding Committee meeting on 09/01/05 and the Work Group meeting on 09/07/05. Please refer to the *Financial Coordinator Report* for details.

#### **D) Farmstead Ring Dike Assessment**

A needs assessment of member watershed districts was conducted relative to the farmstead ring dike program in order to determine the distribution of state funding appropriated during the recent legislative session. Following discussion, the board allocated the \$125,000 of legislative funding for eligible watershed districts as follows: Roseau River WD, \$15,000; Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD, \$52,500; Red Lake WD, \$5,000; and Wild Rice WD, \$52,500.

#### **E) Upcoming Meetings/Conferences**

1. Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group, October 19, 2005, at a location (likely Crookston) and time coordinated with the Capital Bonding Committee tour itinerary, and January 11, 2006, Northland Inn, Crookston.
2. MAWD 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting & Trade Show, December 1-3, 2005, at the Arrowwood Resort and Conference Center, Alexandria, MN.

### **District Reports**

- The Red Lake WD reported on the Grand Marais Creek Sub-Watershed Project No. 60 project. The District received the signed State Grant Agreement for the project dated August 30, 2005. The Board agreed to begin the land acquisition process on both the Brandt Site and the Euclid East Site. A meeting was conducted on August 30<sup>th</sup> with BWSR, USACE, Polk County SWCD and HDR Engineering, Inc. to discuss the vegetation and wetlands that may be impacted on the Brandt Site. The goal of the meeting was to assist in obtaining the permits that will be required for the site. Plans are to begin construction on the Euclid East site in the late spring or early summer of 2006, with bids to be let on the Brandt Site in the late fall of 2006.
- The Sand Hill River WD reported on the Polk County Highway No. 41 Project No. 17 project. Construction of the first phase of the project which involves approximately 6 miles is almost complete. Contractors Kern and Tabery sub-contracted out this portion of the project to Zavoral Brothers due to a large amount of work at other sites. A significant portion of the work was completed during the dry periods this summer. This project is located east of Climax, Minnesota.
- The Wild Rice WD reported on the Felton Ditch Storage project. The Board passed a preliminary resolution at the regular July meeting to begin the process of establishing a project. This allows work to begin toward the project including engineering reviews and other activities. This is the beginning of the process where the board can initiate a project instead of a petitioned project. The RRWMB approved approximately one third of the funding for the project (1.56 million). Total project costs are 4.8 million dollars. The project design has 4,670 acre-feet of gated storage and 2,470 acre-feet of ungated storage. Total flood storage is 7,140 acre-feet.
- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that construction on the North Ottawa Impoundment project has been delayed for one year due to wet conditions. The contractor has started work on constructing the perimeter drainage ditches with a backhoe and dozer. Plans are to have the ditches seeded yet this fall, so work can continue on the remaining portion of the project next spring.

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

Thul stated that the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met prior to the board meeting and discussed the Farm to Stream project of the Red Lake WD. The study consists of a two-year study to comprehensively investigate how water quality affected by agricultural drainage and best management practices relates to drainage in several different locations in the district. Nate Dalager reported that insignificant flows have been coming from the tile drainage systems due to very dry conditions resulting in minimal data collection.

Thul reported that the TAC was requested to review the operating plan for the Skull Lake Wildlife Management Area in the Two Rivers WD. The proposed revision includes a modification with an approximate cost of \$7,000 to \$10,000 to the existing PL566 project. The current pool elevation does not provide for the waterfowl

benefits that were originally envisioned for the project but instead has negatively impacted the upland area. The proposed change will provide an additional four feet of drawdown storage. The pool elevation will be high in the spring for a short period of time to accommodate migrating waterfowl and then be drawn down in the summer. The revision will provide for an additional four feet of drawdown or 800 acre-feet of storage which will change the Star Value for the project from a negative to a positive score. The TAC recommended that the board participate in funding the proposed change at a 50% cost-share. **Motion** by Manager Deal to approve a 50% cost-share for the proposed revision to the Skull Lake Wildlife Management Area, **Seconded** by Manager Money, **Carried**.

Thul added that Charlie Anderson was requested by BWSR to assist in the development of a wetland restoration guide. The TAC discussed the request and agreed that it would be beneficial for the committee to work with BWSR in the development of the guidelines in order to ensure consistency with regard to the objectives of both organizations. Following discussion, the board authorized the TAC to work cooperatively with BWSR in the development of the wetland restoration guidelines.

Thul noted that a workshop has been scheduled for September 29-30, 2005 in Moorhead, MN at the Red River Basin Commission in order to gain familiarity with the MIKE 11 model. Several different scenarios will be simulated to determine the effectiveness of the model.

The membership of the TAC was discussed. The committee has historically been comprised of one engineer from each firm representing the member watershed districts. The committee previously included Ron Adrian due to his affiliation with the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD as engineer. However, Mr. Adrian has recently changed employment and now works with Houston Engineering, Inc. of Thief River Falls, MN. Following discussion, the board agreed that in order to provide for continuity on the committee it would be beneficial for Mr. Adrian to remain on the TAC.

Thul stated that the TAC addressed developing a timeline/checklist for member watershed districts with regard to project implementation as was discussed previously in the *Financial Coordinator Report*. The TAC agreed that a checklist could assist member watershed districts in keeping the board informed on tasks, duration, and costs of various projects progressing through the step process. Jerry Bents of Houston Engineering, Inc. added that their organization has a similar checklist that could be modified to meet the needs of the board and agreed to develop a draft for the TAC to review.

#### **Data Practices Act**

Manager Finney inquired as to whether the board could be reimbursed for the costs associated with retrieving data for information that is requested from the board. **Motion** by Manager Deal to authorize Naomi Erickson to discuss the board's Data Practice's Act policy regarding policies and procedures for public access to documents with attorney Louis Smith, **Seconded** by Manager Money, **Carried**.

#### **Letter of Support / Wild Rice Watershed District**

Manager Seykora discussed the Proposed Upper Felton Storage project of the Wild Rice WD and stated that the RRWMB recently approved funding for the project for 32.5% of the estimated project cost or \$1,560,000. A letter of support for the project was requested from the board in order to secure bonding for the project.

**Motion** by Manager Deal to authorize a letter of support for the Wild Rice Watershed District for the Proposed Upper Felton Storage project in order to secure bonding for the project, **Seconded** by Manager Money. As there was no further discussion a vote was taken. Those voting in favor of the motion included: Finney, Erickson, Money, Johnson, Wilkens, and Deal. Those opposing the motion included: none. Those abstaining from voting included: Seykora. **Motion carried.**

**District's Funding Requests**

No requests for funds were submitted this month.

The Board of Managers discussed rescheduling the next regular monthly meeting from the third Tuesday of the month in order to accommodate a bus tour scheduled by the Senate Capital Bonding Committee. The bonding committee plans to meet with the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group in conjunction with their tour of the Red River Basin. **Motion** by Manager Wilkens to reschedule the regular monthly meeting of the RRWMB as needed to coincide with the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group meeting, **Seconded** by Manager Erickson, **Carried.**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Robert Wright  
Secretary

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Naomi L. Erickson  
Administrator