



RON HARNACK RETAINED AS PROJECT COORDINATOR

The Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) is pleased to introduce Ron Harnack as the board's new Project Coordinator. In addition to previously serving as Executive Director for 16 years with the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR), Ron also performed various duties in his 20 years with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' Division of Waters.

The Board of Water & Soil Resources recognized many accomplishments under Ron's direction. One such accomplishment was transforming the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) of 1991 from a conceptual law into a specific program that has overcome countless challenges to protect the quantity, quality and biological diversity of Minnesota's wetlands. It also serves as a safety net for wetlands that are exempt from other programs, like Swampbuster, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) programs.

Another accomplishment was modifying the roles and membership of the 17-member BWSR board to give voting rights to the commissioners from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and state Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Natural Resources. This change provided those departments greater public input in setting policy and choosing priorities. "Good communication among those agencies and local water management entities is essential in meeting the state's conservation goals," Harnack said.

Ron also worked with local, state and federal government partners to accomplish the goals of the Conservation



Ron Harnack

Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). With project partners like local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency, Ron was instrumental in attracting and implementing \$254 million in funding for the program that established 100,000 acres of conservation easements on privately owned lands in the Minnesota River watershed, including almost 50,000 acres of restored wetlands.

Ron's new duties in the position will include exploring potential sources and providing assistance in obtaining funds for the implementation of flood damage reduction projects. Ron will also assist in the implementation of the Mediation Agreement that was adopted to facilitate future flood damage reduction

initiatives and will attend the legislative session on behalf of the RRWMB.

Ron is currently in St. Paul working to have legislation introduced for the RRWMB and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group. Some of the funding initiatives sought in the biennial budget include: \$800,000 over two years for the Farmstead Ring Dike program to address the needs of landowners; \$600,000 for the development of a high-resolution digital elevation model of the Red River Basin; and an increase in the annual appropriation for Work Group operating expenses from \$210,000 to \$310,000 each year.

The board is certain that Ron's skill and experience will help them fulfill their mission of instituting, coordinating and financing projects and programs to alleviate flooding and assure the beneficial use of water in the watershed of the Red River of the North and its tributaries.

The next scheduled meeting of the RRWMB will be held at the Red Lake Watershed District, Thief River Falls, MN, on March 20th, starting at 9:30 a.m.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled February meeting, the RRWMB:

- *Discussed the findings of the Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) Program Evaluation Report.*
- *Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.*
- *Considered revisions to draft letters reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committee to be forwarded to the Red River Basin Commission regarding the completion of the MIKE 11 model.*
- *Received a progress report on the status of the North Ottawa project of the Bois de Sioux Watershed District.*
- *Received a Water Quality Project Monitoring report from Wayne Goeken - Monitoring Coordinator.*

MARCH CONFERENCE

The email address to register for the 9th Annual Joint Conference of the Red River Watershed Management Board and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group to be held at the Northland Inn, Crookston, MN on March 29, 2007 is: rrwmb@arvig.net. To reserve a room at the Northland Inn, call (218) 281-5210.

WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on the Thief River Watershed Sediment Investigation Grant. The District received a signed grant agreement from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for \$96,500. The MPCA encouraged the District to apply for the grant received through the Clean Water Partnership Resource Investigation Grant. The grant will assist the District and its partners to identify water quality issues including sedimentation in the Thief River Falls Reservoir, suspended solids and nutrients, streambank/ditch erosion, channelization, flooding, low dissolved oxygen and hydrogen sulfide.

The project originated through the Marshall County Water Resources Advisory Committee, the Red River Basin Water Quality Team and through the development of the Marshall County Water Plan and the District's Comprehensive Water Management Plan Update.

The RLWD also reported that in 2005, the District received a \$25,000 cost share grant from the Board of Water & Soil Resources (BWSR) to complete a comprehensive inventory and mapping system of all the legal drainage ditches under the jurisdiction of the District. The project includes the development of maps using Arc View and GIS format as well as entering culvert inventories,

ditch grades, side slopes, buffer strip and maintenance schedules for each ditch system. To date, the District has completed ~ 80% of the project, with plans to have the entire project completed by June of 2007.

MIDDLE-SNAKE-TAMARAC RIVERS WD

The Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD reported that the District anticipates construction of several ring dikes during the 2007 construction season. To date, 72 farmstead ring dikes have been built throughout the District.



Farmstead ring dike located on the Tim Anvinson farm of Section 16, Higdem Township, Polk County, Minnesota.



NEWS & VIEWS
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Your comments and contributions are always welcome. If you are receiving this newsletter and are not currently a member of a governing unit in the Red River Basin, please notify us and provide the name of the appropriate person to be added to our mailing list. News & Views, c/o RRWMB, P.O. Box 763, Detroit Lakes, MN 56502-0763, Phone: (218) 844-6166; Fax: (218) 844-6167.