



## WILD RICE WATERSHED DISTRICT'S SYSTEMS APPROACH TO FLOOD PROTECTION

*Warren J. Seykora  
Wild Rice Watershed  
District Chairman*

There have been a lot of printed reports in local and regional newspapers lately about the role of the Wild Rice Watershed District (WRWD) and its proposed projects toward flood protection and control. Among the statements are those by representatives of special interest groups who have consistently submitted critical news stories that have received front-page coverage. I applaud the efforts of all concerned citizens, because like me, they are concerned with providing the best possible flood control projects that help maintain and guarantee the agricultural vitality of our region. All citizens of the WRWD, including those opposed to its proposed projects are welcome, if not obligated, to engage with the WRWD as we work together for ensuring equitable and manageable flood protection. I look forward to continued discussion with all citizens interested in the workings of overall watershed management for the benefit of all.

Yet, for those not involved in the debates, accusations, and criticisms that have been published in local and regional news-

papers, and for the benefit of those who do not regularly attend watershed meetings, I feel it necessary to clarify the flood protection and control approach that guides the work of the WRWD. In short, the WRWD respects a strict mission and follows policies in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 103 D that states: "It is the intention of the Managers to promote the use of the waters and related resources within the District in a provident and orderly manner so as to improve general welfare and public health for the benefit of its present and future residents."

Therefore, the WRWD and its staff and managers are obliged to provide comprehensive water management practices that benefit all citizens—not only those concerned with the preservation of farmland, but all of the approximately 18,000 citizens living in Norman, Mahanomen, Clay, Clearwater, Becker, and Polk counties that make up the WRWD. It is for this reason that the WRWD takes a systems approach to flood protection.

The goal of the systems approach to flood protection is to develop comprehensive and innovative concepts for reducing

flood damages within the watershed district. The concepts developed using the systems approach will be oriented towards achieving flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement goals. The intent is to undertake a detailed technical review of various flood damage reduction alternatives and initiatives and to evaluate how various alternatives can be used in combination to achieve a technically defensible concept necessary for a long-term solution to flooding in the Wild Rice and Marsh River basins. In short, the WRWD follows a systematic process that involves technical, social, and natural resources reviews. Once these reviews are completed and recommended by engineers, technicians, citizen advisory boards, in collaboration with local, state, and often federal officials and agencies, the WRWD can move forward with the proposed flood reduction project.

Recently, Project 42 (South Branch Storage Project), co-sponsored by the WRWD and the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) has been challenged by concerned citizens. Although no flood control project can ever receive 100% support by all citizens, Project

42 has been recommended as a vital project that will bring about significant flood protection. In fact, Project 42, like all projects initiated by the WRWD, must receive the "go-ahead" from all the engineers, technicians, and regulators committed to providing a systematic approach to flood protection—a process that must not only aid farmers, but all citizens and habitat of the watershed.

Some very credible people support Project 42—a project that will provide substantial flood protection. Yet, I understand the difficulties that some people have in opposition to this project. I am steadfast in supporting and promoting Project 42 because it is supported by a systematic approach to flood protection that supports our compliance with MN Statutes, Chapter 103 D. It is not by choice, opinion, or preference that Project 42 must move forward; it is a project that must move forward because it follows a holistic approach to flood protection that complies with MN law.

I understand that as Project 42 and others move forward, many opposed to Project 42 and other projects will continue to find fault with the

*Continued...*

## WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

### ROSEAU RIVER WD

The Roseau River WD reported on the Hay Creek / Norland Project. The District is currently in the process of acquiring the final three parcels of land along the corridor and connecting channel of the project. HDR Engineering is working on the permitting, final engineering and wetland delineation of the project. Construction on Phase I of the project is expected to begin in 2009.

### RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on the Brandt Outlet Restoration Project 60E, Phase II. Construction has started on the restoration of approximately 6,000 feet of channel with the project loca-

tion ~ 1.5 miles downstream of the Brandt Impoundment. This project not only restores the existing channel back to its original condition but also establishes a 65-acre riparian corridor which will adjoin an ~ 4,000 foot existing natural riparian corridor and the 3,800 foot riparian corridor of the Brandt Outlet Restoration Project 60E Phase I. The project also includes installation of setback levees and side inlet pipes and the planting of buffer strips. The total project cost, with land acquisition is approximately \$200,000.00. Funding partners include the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Working Lands Initiative and the Red Lake WD.

WRWD and our watershed partners. Yet, the WRWD and the RRWMB is committed to working with all who support and challenge us now and in the future—not in a climate of hostility and finger-pointing, but rather in a climate of collaboration and understanding. The WRWD understands the necessity of flood protection in our watershed and we are committed to sponsoring and promoting projects that are comprehensive, justified by science, and warranted for the protection of all citizens.

Finally, I encourage all citizens of the WRWD to become familiar with our approach to flood protection and water management. Please visit the WRWD website at [www.wildrice-watershed.org](http://www.wildrice-watershed.org) for information about permitting, proposed projects, and other water management programs.



VISIT US ONLINE AT  
[WWW.RRWMB.ORG](http://WWW.RRWMB.ORG)

## RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

*At its regularly scheduled August meeting, the RRWMB:*

- Received a report from Mark Meister, Public Information Officer.
- Received a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.
- Authorized R. Harnack to work with the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) to develop the proposal for implementation of the Red River Valley RIM Reserve Proposal.
- Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.
- Discussed the Performance Review and Assistance Program (PRAP) Report developed by BWSR regarding the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers WD.
- Received a progress report on the Con-Con Ditch Rule update from Dave Holmbeck, Con-Con Drainage Project Coordinator.

## EVENTS COMING UP

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, September 16, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. at the Wild Rice WD, 11 5th Avenue East, Ada, MN.

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