



MEDIATION AGREEMENT: EVIDENCE OF UNIFYING LEADERSHIP

Fourteen years ago, the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) collaborated with several local, state, and federal agencies in the development of a Mediation Agreement. The agreement created the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (Work Group), a collaboration of conservationists, landowners, scientists, technicians, and other leaders.

So what has this group done for the citizens of the Red River Basin in Minnesota?

Beyond the countless number of flood damage reduction projects that continue to protect citizens and improve water quality, the Work Group and the mediation process is an example of visionary leadership by water management officials committed to action and not rhetoric.

The Work Group continues to find consensus while working together. John Finney, RRWMB President, points to the key elements of flood reduction planning, public input, and cooperation between conservationists and landowners. "Our work is unified because the group is committed to both flood protection and natural resource enhancement."

In many ways, the mediation agreement exemplifies "unifying leadership."

Unifying leaders emphasize planning and collaboration in the creation of shared decisions. Unifying leaders are frank and bold. They share their opinions and are respectful of others. Instead of conflict, unifying leaders are committed to action.

Professor of Public Policy and Water Resources at Oregon State University, Gregg Walker, has studied and authored collaborative leadership models for the past 25 years. Walker notes that collaboration is only now becoming a guiding leadership principle.

For the past two decades federal and state natural resource management and environmental policy agencies have increasingly considered collaboration, particularly with stakeholders, as an important part of planning and decision-making.

In fact, the community-based collaboration movement, for example, has featured agencies in various roles, including sponsors, conveners, partners, specialists, participants, stakeholders, and decision-makers. Planning processes, such as those guided by the 2005 and 2012 USDA-Forest Service planning rules emphasize collaboration with citizens, communities, and stakeholders.

This emphasis on collaboration "implies the importance of a new form of leadership; agency leaders not only as decision-makers but as key unifying, collaborative leaders," says Walker.

SO WHAT IS UNIFYING LEADERSHIP?

According to Walker, unifying leaders emphasize planning and collaboration in the creation of shared decisions. Unifying leaders are frank and bold. They share their opinions and are respectful of others. Instead of conflict, unifying leaders are committed to action.

"Today, we are committed to working together in order to move dirt. This was not always the case. The mediation agreement required us to work together and now we do," says Finney.

In many ways, unifying leaders don't talk much. They listen and rely on diligent planning and consultation for working out differences. Unifying leaders are good listeners

because flood damage reduction and natural resource enhancement programs and policies are complex. For example, water retention projects, like all flood damage control projects are funded collaboratively.

While other leadership models emphasize controlling resources and administering with an iron fist, unifying leaders understand the systematic ways in which watershed policy shapes all citizens and stakeholders.

"We are moving forward with great momentum. Projects are being designed, constructed, and paid for in ways that are responsible," says Finney.

Fourteen years of unifying leadership clearly means flood damage reduction in the Red River Basin.



EVENTS

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, December 18, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the Sand Hill River Watershed District, 219 N Mill Street, Fertile, MN.

WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

ROSEAU RIVER WD

The Roseau River WD reported that final construction on Hay Creek/Norland is complete. The Board of Managers are working with the county on the property taxes and exemption status for land in the project. A response from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on the proposed adaptive management plan for wetland mitigation requirements on the project has not yet been received. Due to the delay in receiving the plan, a one-year extension for the state grant agreement has been requested. A hearing is scheduled for December 12th to discuss the possibility of using State Ditch No. 51 funds for the project.

TWO RIVERS WD

The Two Rivers WD reported that the District has been awarded a \$30,000 grant to plan and install conservation practices and strategies that have been developed to reduce the potential water quantity and quality impacts of sub-surface drainage. These practices deal not with installation of tile systems, but rather concentrate on managing the outflows from the tile and how to reduce downstream impacts.

Al Brazier of Greenbush, MN has been appointed to the Board of Managers. Brazier is from rural Greenbush, MN and he is one of two managers on the board from Roseau County. He will represent an area located within the District north of MN Highway 11 from the City of Badger to Greenbush to the Roseau and Kittson County line. This area consists of the upstream drainage area of the North and Middle branches of the Two

Rivers and the State Ditch Nos. 72 and 95 systems. Brazier replaces Dick Novacek on the Board of Managers, who had served on the Board for the past nine years.

MIDDLE SNAKE TAMARAC RIVERS WD

The Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers WD reported on the Brandt/Angus Impoundment project. Construction on the entire embankment and ditches/coulee have been completed. Seeding is also complete, but not enough of the project has vegetative cover in order to operate it next spring. The District anticipates that the MDNR will fund the entire project this year.

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on the Grand Marais Creek Cut Channel Stabilization Project. The contractor has completed the original phase of the project in accordance with the plan. Due to the fact that construction and engineering costs are considerably lower than anticipated, the District decided to expand the project to better address erosion areas that were omitted from the original design. A new USACE permit was submitted for approval on November 1, 2012 and has been received. Construction is expected to continue this year with a completion date scheduled for next summer.

WILD RICE WD

The Wild Rice Watershed District is discussing potential future projects including gating options for the proposed Upper Becker Dam site and also the Goose Prairie Marsh area.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled November meeting, the RRWMB:

- *Discussed the progress of the accelerated project planning initiative with C. Fritz - International Water Institute and H. VanOffelen - Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.*
- *Received a recommendation from the Public Information Committee to retain the services of Mark Meister with CR*CS for the position of Public Information Officer.*
- *Reviewed the proposed amended Joint Powers Agreement of the Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) with Louis Smith, legal counsel.*
- *Discussed a letter received from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) regarding a draft proposal developed by the Technical Advisory Committee regarding the installation of pattern tile systems.*

NEWS & VIEWS

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