



SAND HILL RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT HOLDS PLANNING EVENT

On December 14, 2011 a group assembled in Fertile, Minnesota to consider future opportunities and challenges for the Sand Hill River Watershed District. Organized by District Administrator Dan Wilkens, the group included Sand Hill board members, Advisory Committee members, community members and guests. Led by facilitator Jody Horntvedt of the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the group followed an introductory planning process that reviewed the past, looked to the future and focused on the present.

The group began with an exercise that covered the respective expectations and responsibilities of watershed district staff, the board of managers, and advisory committee members. This opening discussion provided a useful framing for the day that gave background and depth to the question of 'who

does what?' in a watershed district.

After sharing timeline information indicating the Sand Hill River Watershed District's establishment in 1974, Ms. Horntvedt introduced her three panel guests. Naomi Erickson, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) Administrator, Jon Evert of the Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), and Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) board member Jerome Deal each provided their perspective and focus on the future.

Ms. Erickson's presentation dialed in on human resource needs for the future. Succession planning is necessary, and especially so in the context of a district like the Sand Hill, where the timeline for possible transitions may be shortening. The "institutional memory" and broad watershed experience enjoyed by the SHRWD is a

source of strength that needs to be preserved and protected in the years to come.

Jon Evert of the RRBC highlighted the evolution of cooperative efforts in the Red River Basin to work on long-term flood solutions. He emphasized the greater return that benefits all basin residents when collaborative and comprehensive approaches are utilized to steward our shared resources, something true also at the district level.

Jerome Deal brought the discussion full-circle with a dramatic vision of a new future for the Red River Basin that employs comprehensive water retention efforts. The Red River Retention Authority offers a new way forward in flood reduction for the valley with strategies that partner with the North Dakota Joint Water Resource Board to leverage appropriations through the United States Department of Agriculture.

Future retention projects of the RRRA will include individual watershed districts throughout the basin, including the Sand Hill.

Ms. Horntvedt led the conclusion of the day's meeting into a useful 'next step' phase. With an eye toward what is needed to assure a healthy future for the watershed district, action steps were focused on what to preserve, what to change and what to create next in the district. The consensus of the group was to formulate a communication plan, devise a succession plan, and direct staff and board to begin addressing a building plan for the district.

One person's expression during a break that "I sure learned a lot today" seemed to characterize the sentiment the group had toward the work of the day.

MAWD CONFERENCE 2011

While the snow cover outside at the Minnesota Association of Watershed District's (MAWD) 40th Annual Meeting and Trade Show in Alexandria, MN was slim to none, the December 1-3, 2011 agenda inside was piled high with substance. With content areas ranging from geospatial data for watershed planning to aquatic invasive species to the Red River Basin/Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Project, there was plenty of subject matter indoors for the 600-plus attendees at the Arrowwood Conference Center.

The pre-conference included three separate tracks that included a Minnesota drainage workshop, a communications workshop, and a watershed management session for new and experienced managers and staff.

With a backdrop of over 40 vendors on the trade floor, the regular portion of the conference kicked off with Thursday events that included a MAWD Director's Meeting and three concurrent general sessions.

Highlights Friday following plenary session speaker Don Baloun of the Natural Resource Conservation Service were District Administrator technical sessions followed by two more concurrent general sessions offering

watershed management educational opportunities across a broad spectrum of topics.

Saturday's concluding day offered three more sessions including the aforementioned FM Diversion project, a seminar on the study of lake sediment cores that provide historical evidence of a lake's past and strategies that may prove useful to restore them, and the role of trees in stormwater management and watershed planning.

At the conclusion of the conference the MAWD Board of Directors elected Jerome Deal (Bois de Sioux Watershed District Chair and Red River Watershed Management Board Manager) as their 2012 Board President.

EVENTS COMING UP

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, January 17, 2012 at 9:30 a.m. at the Sand Hill River Watershed District, 219 N Mill Street, Fertile, MN.

WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake Watershed District was informed that Gene Tiedemann of West Polk County was re-appointed to another three-year term on their Board of Directors; Clearwater County representative Kelly Nordlund will not be seeking another term on the RLWD board.

Final payment to Olson Construction for the Crookston Bible Baptist Church ring dike was approved by the Red Lake Board on November 23, 2011. Final transactions on all RLWD ring dikes for 2011 will be completed before year-end.

HDR Engineering will be providing bids and specification to the RLWD board at their next meeting for the Thief River Falls Flood Damage Reduction/Improvement to Pennington County Ditch #1 project.

Landowners in the Red Lake District not in compliance with Minnesota Statutes 103E.021- which addresses maintaining buffer-strip vegetation in appropriate areas as determined by the drainage authority- have been notified and have until June 15, 2012 to re-seed or the RLWD will proceed as directed under Minnesota Statutes.

WILD RICE WD

The Wild Rice Watershed District ordered an Environmental Assessment Worksheet completed in relation to a landowner submitted permit that requested a diversion around land owned by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Landowner meetings have been scheduled to begin negotiations of land purchases for community ring

dikes in the City of Shelly, Minnesota.

Mayor Curt Johannson of Hendrum, MN has begun his tenure as a board director for the WRWD.

TWO RIVERS WD

Draft plans for the Springbrook PL 566 Project 10 from the Natural Resource Conservation Service will be provided to the Two Rivers Watershed District in December 2011. Following receipt of those plans, the TRWD staff will be meeting with affected landowners to review plans and secure the necessary right-of-way for the project. In addition, the district will be applying for all necessary permits to the appropriate agencies. If all goes as anticipated, the project will be bid in the spring with construction in 2012. \$370,000 in Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) funding has been secured for the project under the Red River Valley RIM made available in 2008 through the Minnesota Board of Water and Resources (BWSR).

Activity and highlights for 2011 for the Two Rivers Watershed District included:

- Constructed a farmstead ring dike under the Environmental Quality and Incentives (EQIP) program
- Surveyed 30 miles of ditch system
- Inspected 85 miles of ditch system
- Repaired three ditch bank sloughs
- Processed 76 permits
- Surveyed 4 DNR protected watercourses to assist landowners with permitting
- Cleaned out/maintained 15 miles of ditch system.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled December meeting, the RRWMB:

- *Toured the Roseau River Wildlife Management Area Project. Following the tour, authorization was granted for Step 1 approval for project funding of the Pool 3 Outlet Project.*
- *Received a report from Jeff Nyquist, Public Information Officer, on the 2012 RRWMB Calendar, a possible communications approach for the Red River Retention Authority, and the Sand Hill Watershed District December planning event.*
- *Received a report from Naomi Erickson, RRWMB District Administrator.*
- *Received a report from Dan Thul, DNR/Red River Coordinator, on the progress of the prioritization committee.*
- *Received a report from Project Coordinator Ron Harnack that included an emphasis on the need for project-readiness to take full advantage of funding that will likely be available in the next cycle of Congressional Farm Bill appropriations.*
- *Discussed the administrative needs of the Red River Retention Authority.*

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