



BRANDT/ANGUS COULEE FLOOD CONTROL PROJECT IS UNDER WAY

**By: Nancy Mattson,
Warren Sheaf**

Construction has begun on the Brandt/Angus Coulee Flood Control Project. This is Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District's (MSTRWD) fourth water retention project in 10 years. A ground-breaking ceremony for the project was held on May 28, 2012. The project, located in northwestern Polk County, occupies approximately 1-1/2 sections of land (960 acres) and is expected to hold 3,800 acre-feet of water storage.

Water retention projects and impoundments are constructional-designed to store floodwater during peak flooding to minimize flood damage. In MSTRWD projects, the impoundments are "gated" so the time and amount of water released can be controlled. Nick Drees, administrator of MSTRWD, informs that an impoundment provides three main purposes in flood damage protection. The first purpose is the ability to bring water into an impoundment area, the second is to store the water, and lastly, create an avenue for releasing the water. To minimize flooding, the water is released prior to or after peak flood periods.

The \$6 million project expense is being split three ways. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is paying for 65 percent of the cost, the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) 23-2/3 percent and MSTRWD 11-1/3 percent. Drees says, "We're very fortunate to get flood bonding money for this year, when most requests were told to come back."

R.J. Zavoral & Sons of



The Brandt-Angus Flood Control Project Ground-Breaking Ceremony, May 2012.

East Grand Forks is constructing the project. Drees speaks highly of the Zavoral company, "They do excellent work. They also built the district's Agassiz Valley project." Though Brandt/Angus is anticipated to be a 2-year project, Zavoral is much ahead of schedule due to the early spring. Also, the company has brought 30 pieces of equipment to the job site, indicating it will be completed much ahead of schedule.

Drees informs the new impoundment is being supported by more federal funding than most because it is a pilot project. MSTRWD will be the first to incorporate the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) into the project plan. The WRP is a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program designed to restore and enhance wetlands.

In any water retention project, Drees says, consideration is certainly given to build it where there is a flooding problem. But, he says, a very critical factor is having willing sellers. In this particular project, the entire potential impoundment area was owned by two landowners,

and they both were willing to sell. The ditching easements needed for the project involve 36 landowners. So far, all but two have made agreements with MSTRWD.

Other water projects constructed by the district in the last 10 years include:

- Angus-Oslo No. 4, located approximately 3 miles northeast of the Brandt/Angus Project in Polk County.
- PL-566 Snake River Flood Control Project, which includes an off-channel storage site approximately 8 miles northeast of Warren and accompanying river diversion channel (Richard P. Nelson Floodway) around Warren.
- Agassiz Valley Water Resource Management Project, located 5 miles southeast of Warren.

A February 2010 "News and Views" newsletter of the RRWMB informs: "The PL-566 Snake River Flood Control Project, although only completed in 2006, has prevented the City of Warren from flooding twice. The NRCS estimated that in 2006 alone, \$8.7 million in flood damages were prevented in Warren. The annual benefits to the Warren community are \$1.26 million, which include

soil erosion, water conservation, road and bridge damage reduction, wildlife habitat creation and personal property protection. With the construction of the Richard P. Nelson Floodway, the City has been removed from the 500-year floodplain, thus relieving the need for costly flood insurance."

Although the Brandt/Angus project will provide flood damage reduction and enhance natural resources, Drees says, "This is just part of the process." Water retention projects will continue for the watershed district.

Drees does not think it is realistic to look at this as "just a flood control project." It is designed to be beneficial to habitat and provide abundant educational opportunities.

The District collaborates with the local and federal Audubon Society on several projects. The Audubon Society of Warren is actively working on providing educational activities and bird watching opportunities, some at MSTRWD impoundment structures.

The RRWMB is an organization formed 40 years ago that uses a basin-wide perspective concerning water management. Its jurisdiction and authority encompasses an area managed by eight watershed districts in the Red River Valley that have membership on the board, including Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District.

According to Drees, the RRWMB's goal is to reduce peak flows during major flooding by 20 percent, as it is during that peak when most of the damage occurs.

WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

RED LAKE WATERSHED DISTRICT

Construction on Phase I of the Thief River Falls Flood Damage Reduction/Red Lake Watershed District Ditch #14 is moving along well. Completion percentages are as follows: 57% completion on RLWD Ditch #14 (Improvement to Pennington county Ditch #1) and 31% on the Thief River Falls Flood Damage Reduction Project.

Construction by R.J. Zavoral, Inc. began June 11 on the Grand Marais Creek Cut Channel Stabilization Project 60FF. The RLWD awaits the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) permit approval for later stages of the project.

The RLWD has been awarded a \$150,500 fish passage grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Grand Marais Creek Outlet Restoration Project 60F. Accordingly, the RLWD wishes to extend thanks to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) - Fisheries for their assistance in the grant application.

WILD RICE WD

An option for installing a control structure on the Upper Becker Dam that will allow longer water storage will be discussed at the June 27 Project Team Meeting.

The City of Halstad has asked the District for assistance in reviewing improvements that will be needed to get their ring dike Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) certified.

Zavoral Construction is nearing completion of the Project 30 repair. The Project 30 ditch commences at the Green meadow Dam and then flows generally in a westerly direction through Green Meadow, Pleasant View, and Anthony Township to its outlet at the Marsh River approximately 3/4 mile northwest of Anthony, MN.

ROSEAU RIVER WD

An adaptive wetland mitigation plan for the Hay Creek/Norland project has been submitted to the USACE and the District awaits their decision.

The Board of Managers have agreed to a joint powers agreement with the MDNR and stop logs will be placed in Palmville Project structures this summer.

Administrator Rob Sando met with two representatives from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and discussed the proposed Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) at the Arpin Impoundment site. Preliminary engineering will be conducted by NRCS and supplied to the Board of Managers for review.

TWO RIVERS WD

The NRCS has provided draft project plans to the District and authorized \$1.4 million for construction for the Springbrook PL566 Project No. 10. An additional \$425,000 was appropriated through the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) program to help secure the right of way. A local share is also needed along with \$160,000 provided through the MDNR flood damage reduction bonding bill.

Permit applications were submitted in February to various agencies. Approvals have been received from the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) for the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), the MDNR, and Kittson County, however, no response has been received from the USACE and MNDOT. Viewers have been meeting and have completed a Viewer's Report.

Upon receiving the remaining permits and securing the right of way, bids will be let and plans are to begin construction as early as mid to late August.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled June meeting, the RRWMB:

- Reviewed the implications of Briefing Paper No. 2 of the Red River Basin Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee and agreed to forward recommendations and conclusions of the study to the Red River Retention Authority to adopt a process that best aligns with achieving a drain tile permitting policy for the entire Red River Basin.
- Approved a motion to review watershed district rules and regulations of the RRWMB member districts with the intention to ascertain the potential benefits of achieving shared and uniform policy where possible and advantageous.
- Heard from Bois de Sioux Watershed District (BdSWD) officials of the plan for a tile drainage workshop designed to benefit valley agricultural producers that will focus on effective water management. The workshop, which will include a tour, is set for August 28 and 29 in Hankinson, ND. (Request more information at bdswd@frontier.net)
- Received a report from Project Coordinator Ron Harnack that included more information regarding funding in the aftermath of Minnesota bonding bill allocations. This construction season (summer/fall 2012) includes an initial \$3.76 million for RRWMB related projects (from a total allocation of over \$30,000,000 to the RRWMB) and will include \$650,000 for the City of Shelly and \$850,000 for the City of Climax for acquisition of real estate and flood-prone structures in the right-of-way for their respective levees.

EVENTS

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

The Finance Committee will meet following the board meeting on July 17, 2012.

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