

# News & Views

RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD

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## WARREN MAYOR DIES THURSDAY

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Grand Forks Herald

By Ryan Bakken  
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### *City flood protection, motto stand as part of Dick Nelson's legacy*

**WARREN, Minn.** - When work on the city's flood control project began in 2002, Mayor Dick Nelson commissioned a logo to commemorate the groundbreaking ceremony.

Nelson supplied the logo's image an eagle and the words "Soaring to a bright future." When professionally finished, the logo was so appropriate that it was adopted as the city's logo and motto.

"Soaring to the future' that says it all about Dick Nelson," said Mike Williams, the president of Warren's Chamber of Commerce. "That was his view of things."

Nelson died Thursday at age 47 from cancer. Before his death, he had the satisfaction of seeing his vision of flood protection fulfilled last fall, when the project was finished except for a few details.

In December, after the public learned that Nelson's cancer was not treatable, the diversion ditch around the city of 1,700 residents was named The Richard P. Nelson Floodway.

"Dick brought more than \$30 million for flood protection and flood recovery into this town," said Bob Brooks, city clerk/treasurer. "That alone is quite a legacy to bring that to a town of this size.

"That's a feat and a half."

### *His vision*

However, Williams said, flood protection was just the start of Nelson's vision.

Nelson was elected mayor in 1996 in the midst of three floods that rocked the city, leaving 90 percent of it in the flood plain.

"We might think the flood protection was Dick's (ultimate goal), but really he thought that when the protection was done and we were dry, then we'd really be able to start doing things," Williams said. "With that in place, we could grow and thrive again instead of shrinking.

"He wouldn't have been done until the entire city was reconstructed."

Nelson, who was a farmer and emergency room nurse before 1996, converted his flood experience into a job. He worked as a consultant for large flood reduction projects and was the financial coordinator for the Red River Watershed Management Board. He was the National Watershed Coalition's "Person of the Year" in 2003.

In all of his work, Nelson was known for being aggressive, dedicated and persistent.

"Dick came on the job as mayor at the right time for the people of Warren," Williams said. "He was young and energetic and had vision.



*Dick Nelson is presented with the 2003 Watershed Person of the Year Award by John Peterson, Executive Director of the National Watershed Coalition.*

"He was a mover and shaker, and I don't think he was ready to quit moving and shaking. Who knows what he could have done? We'll never know."

Warren City Council member Dave Conely said residents appreciate the long hours that Nelson spent in the city's behalf.

"The job he did for Warren was phenomenal, and the whole community is going to miss him," Conely said. "He knew how to get doors open.

"But the worst part is leaving a wife and family at such a young age."

Nelson was born and raised in Warren. His survivors include his wife, Sheila; son, Dillon, 14; and daughter, Emilie, 11. A family member said the funeral hasn't been set officially, but likely will be held Jan. 27.

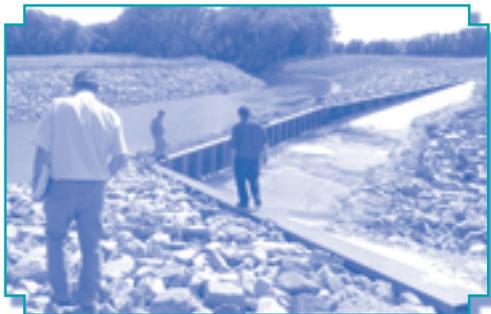
## Floodway Named For Mayor

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12/23/05

WARREN, MINN.

Mayor Dick Nelson's name is now attached to the flood control project that nears completion largely because of his efforts.

By unanimous approval



of the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District Board, the diversion ditch around Warren will be named the Richard P. Nelson Floodway. The floodway-impoundment project will take the town of 1,500 people out of the flood plain.

Nelson, who is stricken with inoperable cancer, is at his home in Warren.

"Dick is so deserving of this being named for him because he's put his whole effort into making sure this happened," said Bob Kliner, Warren's vice-mayor. "Without him, I'm not certain

that it would have been done in such a short time or perhaps done at all. "We're all so grateful for having him in charge during this period of time."

Kliner was referring to Warren suffering three serious floods in a span of 15 months shortly after Nelson took office in 1996. Nelson pledged then to bring permanent protection, which is expected to be finished in late spring.

"When Dick was first elected, his goal was to revitalize Warren," said Mike Williams, Warren Chamber of Commerce president. "Then, the

— CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE —

# WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

## ROSEAU RIVER WD

- The Roseau River WD reported that the district engineer is working cooperatively with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on a wetland restoration plan for the West Interceptor project. After numerous discussions with the USACE, the district was informed that a permit with conditions will be issued prior to the end of January. After the USACE permit is received, the district will then be able to purchase the last remaining 11 acres need for the project currently owned by the MnDNR.

Manager Erickson and Administrator Sando were involved in mediating the remaining 440 acres needed to complete the wetland restoration in Section 33. The negotiations were successfully completed in Bemidji on January 12<sup>th</sup>.

The project is funded through the U.S. Department of Commerce (EDA) and the State of Minnesota. The WCA permit remains under review. Once the permits have been received and all the property has been purchased, the project will be bid.

## RED LAKE WD

- The Red Lake WD reported on the Grand Marais Sub-Watershed Creek Project 60 project. Land acquisitions have been going well. To date, either perpetual easements have been acquired or land has been purchased fee simple for approximately 1,038 acres of land for the Brandt and Euclid East Impoundments. The District plans to have all the properties which have signed options completed by the end of February.

On January 6, 2006, Administrator Jesme attended a joint meeting in Warren, Minnesota with Nick Drees, Administrator of the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD, and landowners located near the outlet of the Grand Marais Creek. The meeting was to discuss with landowners the investigations

taking place for the restoration and repair of the outlet on the Grand Marais Creek. The restoration and repair of the outlet is one of the phases initiated by the Project Team. The Board of Managers accepted the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group's request to investigate this project at the meeting conducted on November 22, 2005.

## BOIS DE SIOUX WD

- The Bois de Sioux WD reported that contractors have poured the last of the six outlet structures on the North Ottawa project. The remainder of the winter will be spent installing the steel catwalks, gates, and other hardware on all six structures. When conditions are favorable, the inlet and outlet pipes will be installed on each structure. At the January board meeting, discussions will occur to identify the next phases of construction.

The Eighth Annual Joint Conference of the Red River Watershed Management Board and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group will be held at the Northland Inn in Crookston, Minnesota on March 30, 2006. The conference agenda includes an overview of project team activities, technical studies on tap, hydrologic planning with the MIKE 11 model, and a presentation of the new Project Team Handbook. A block of rooms is being held at the Northland Inn for conference attendees. For reservations, call 218-281-5210.

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, 1298 South Shore Drive, Detroit Lakes, MN 56501, Phone: (218) 844-6166, Fax: (218) 844-6167.

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## RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

*At it's regularly scheduled January meeting, the RRWMB:*

- *Elected the following individuals at the annual organization of the board: John Finney-President, Farrell Erickson-Vice President, Robert Wright-Secretary, and Daniel Wilkens-Treasurer.*
- *Authorized the contract with MPCA for the Water Quality Project Monitoring initiative.*
- *Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.*
- *Discussed the Red River Basin Land & Water International Summit Conference conducted in January in Winnipeg, Manitoba.*
- *Received a presentation from Robert Whiting, USACE Regulatory Branch Chief, St. Paul District regarding various coordination opportunities relative to project teams in the Red River Basin.*

## FLOODWAY NAMED FOR MAYOR...

*Continued from front*

flooding came. "But the flooding didn't stop his vision. He picked the city up, put it on his shoulders, and said we're going to get this problem solved."

Nelson was known for his aggressiveness, as the mayor and as a consultant/lobbyist for the Red River Watershed Management Board. He didn't mince words.

"Dick's a mover and a shaker," Williams said. "When you're moving and shaking and other people don't like being shaken, you're going to sustain some criticism. But he took it. "We're all sure glad now that he took action right away. He did it for Warren, not himself."

Nelson's position was that Warren could grow but

that people wouldn't move to town or reinvest in their properties until they knew that the city would be protected from flooding. So, his first priority was protection, which will be completed within nine years, fast for such a big project. "We're just a tiny little burg, and he convinced the powers that we should have this," Williams said.

Kliner accompanied Nelson on many of his visits to the state and national capitals. "He always wanted two of us to go so that if something happened to one of us, the other could continue the work," Kliner said. "He always had a backup plan. It's really come to light how important that was now that he's sick." Nelson knew the people in power, knew the process and knew how to secure funding, Kliner said. "He took a lot of his own time for all this," Kliner said.

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