



## CHANGE IN WILD RICE RIVER OVER PAST 20 YEARS POINTS TO NEED FOR HELP FROM CORPS

If you know a little about computers and a program called Google Earth, it's possible to take a virtual bird's eye view tour of the Wild Rice River with the assistance of this amazing technology. From this aerial vantage point, you can follow the river upstream as it winds its way east from the Red. As you travel east from Hendrum, the Wild Rice River looks pretty much like what you would expect a river to look like. But when you reach the area of the river just southwest of Ada and continue east to Twin Valley, these satellite shots from 2005 show the story of a river in peril.

"A lot of things have changed on the river since the old U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Twin Valley dam project was shelved 20 years ago. That's why we really believe that it is imperative to take another look at the project," said Steve Dalen, Wild Rice Watershed District administrator. "Not only as a way to find meaningful flood protection, but as a way to save the river."

Thanks to the area's congressional representatives, there will be language in the 2007 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill to provide the funds of the Twin Valley Lake or Dam project. However, a WRDA bill has not been approved since 2000. The Congress came close to finishing working on a bill in 2006, but it fell apart in the final days of the session. The Conference Committee was unable to reconcile the differences (funding levels and projects to be authorized, as well as provisions to revise the Corps' review process).

Back in 1988 the Twin Valley Lake

project was recommended for "inactive" classification by the St. Paul District of the Army Corps of Engineers. This was due to the economics of the dam, which Corps officials said resulted in a benefit-cost ratio of less than 1:1. The Corps assessment at that time was that the dam would alleviate some flood damage, but considerable flood problems would remain.

"What we want to see is if a project would now have a positive cost-benefit ratio," Dalen explained.

The cost-benefit ratio represents the overall efficiency of a plan. It is determined by dividing the value of the annual benefit by the annual cost.

"It is 20 years later and we have gone through eight major floods. We think that we should take a look at it again," Dalen said.

The possibility is that the Army Corps of Engineers may not consider building the old Twin Valley Dam project. But the request to the Corps will be to look at the old project, and come back with a project which would provide similar flood protection benefits of the old Twin Valley Dam project.

"So we're not telling them come and build the Twin Valley dam, but we are saying that we want to look and see if there is a feasible project there," Steve said. "The Wild Rice is the biggest flow contributor in the District, and we want the Corps to give us the options that are out there."

Also, a lot of information has been gathered about the Wild Rice River since the Twin Valley Dam project was placed

in the inactive category, including the recent feasibility study conducted by the Corps.

Dalen said the scope of a project on the Wild Rice River, whatever it is, will take help from the federal government and that will require a project which can receive approval by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers is the federal agency authorized to partner with local governments (such as the Watershed District) to conduct major water resources projects.

There are currently hundreds of Corps projects nation wide that have been approved, but have not been funded through the WRDA bill.

Dalen said they are working with Congressman Peterson and Congressman Jim Oberstar (new chairman of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee which oversees the WRDA Bill in the House of Representatives), and Senators Coleman and Klobuchar, seeking support for the re-evaluation request.

"We have to make a concerted effort to get approval for the re-evaluation," Dalen noted, "we don't know at this time what the outcome will be, but we know it has to be done. We are hoping that everyone from around the District will support our legislators in their efforts to help us get this accomplished."

*This article reprinted courtesy of the Norman County Index.*

### RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

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

- *Elected the following individuals at the annual organization of the board: John Finney-President, Orville Knott-Vice President, Robert Wright-Secretary, and Daniel Wilkens-Treasurer.*
- *Welcomed Ron Harnack as the board's new Project Coordinator.*
- *Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.*
- *Received a presentation from Holly Johnson-TeamWorks International, and Rick Foy-LaBreche Murray regarding public information strategies.*
- *Discussed the North American Wetland Conservation Act Grant with Scott Kahan, District Manager, Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District-U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.*

### HAVE YOU REGISTERED?

*The email address to register for the 9th Annual Joint Conference of the Red River Watershed Management Board and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group to be held at the Northland Inn, Crookston, MN on March 29, 2007 is: [rrwmb@arvig.net](mailto:rrwmb@arvig.net). To reserve a room at the Northland Inn, call (218) 281-5210.*

**RED LAKE WD**

The Red Lake WD reported on the Project No. 60 – Grand Marais project.

1. Grand Marais Outlet Restoration: The Board of Managers have decided to try to find funding partners for the Preliminary Engineer’s Report for the project. It’s been estimated that the report may cost approximately \$40,000 to \$50,000. The project is another phase of the Governor’s Clean Water Cabinet Pilot Project which among many things will restore portions of the Grand Marais Creek Channel which were abandoned in the early 1900s. The District will try to develop the project with the cooperation of the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District and a Project Team comprised of agencies and landowners in the project area.

2. Brandt Channel Restoration: This project is a channel restoration project to a coulee downstream of the Brandt Impoundment. The project at one time included restoring the approximately 2 miles of the coulee to its original course, the implementation of setback levees and buffer strips. Due to insufficient funding, the District and Project Team have scaled the project back to include the first ½ mile. The District has started negotiations with landowners along the coulee and anticipates having agreements by early spring.

**MIDDLE-SNAKE-TAMARAC RIVERS WD**

Congratulations to the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD on receiving the Red River Basin Commission’s Outstanding Project Award for the Public Law 566 Flood Control Project, RICHARD P. NELSON FLOODWAY, for efforts that exemplify flood damage reduction.

The residents of Warren, MN have endured many floods throughout their history. In 1996 and 1997 the city suffered three major floods that caused \$12.7 million in damages. It was projected that if the flood control project had not been in place last spring, there would have been a flood with a peak even worse than in 1997.

The City of Warren and the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and others in the planning and construction of the Snake River Public Law 566 Flood Control Project. The project was ordered established by the Board of Managers in 2001. Construction on the project began in late 2001. Construction

of the Off Channel Floodwater Storage Site was completed in 2005. The Floodway was completed in the summer of 2006.

Engineering and funding for the flood control components at Snake River were provided by the USDA-NRCS under the Public Law 566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program. The City of Warren and the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed District were responsible for the purchase of right-of-ways, installing road crossings, and all contracting related to construction.

Dick Nelson, Warren’s former Mayor, and Red River Basin Commission Board member worked tirelessly at the state and national level to advocate for the Snake River flood control project to protect his city. In record time, his efforts resulted in approval and funding of the \$18 million project. The flood diversion channel, which routes floodwaters of the Snake River around the town, has been named the Richard P. Nelson Floodway in his honor.

*The next scheduled meeting of the RRWMB will be held at the Sand Hill River Watershed District, Fertile, MN, on February 20th, starting at 9:30 a.m.*



*Jon Evert presents the Outstanding Project Award at the Red River Basin Commission’s 24th Annual Summit Conference to John Nelson and Ben Kleinwatcher, Board Managers of the Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers WD for the RICHARD P. NELSON FLOODWAY, Snake River Public Law 566 Flood Control Project.*

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*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, P.O. Box 763, Detroit Lakes,*