



## FARGO-MOORHEAD SUPPORTS REDPATH

*By Patrick Springer.  
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Now that Fargo-Moorhead leaders have agreed that a North Dakota diversion provides the best flood protection benefits for their cities, questions about how the diversion will impact upstream communities is directing much of the debate. At several meetings in the past week, Fargo city leaders and Cass County officials have discussed the importance of water retention projects as formidable contributions to reducing flooding in rural communities north of Fargo-Moorhead.

As reported in the Fargo Forum, Fargo and Cass County leaders have discussed financially contributing to the Redpath water retention project being constructed near Wheaton. Fargo City Commissioner Mike Williams wants the city

to help build an upstream water retention project in Minnesota as part of comprehensive flood control efforts. Redpath, which would store water equal to a pond covering 21,700 acres at a depth of 1 foot, could be the first of what Williams hopes would be a series of retention projects benefiting Fargo-Moorhead.

"We can start with the Redpath project," he said.

The Redpath project is presently being funded by the Bois de Sioux Watershed District and the Red River Watershed Management Board. Many agree water storage projects are an important component of a com-

prehensive program, which local officials also hope will include the billion-dollar diversion channel, to protect Fargo-Moorhead against a 500-year flood.

Fargo's contribution also would send a strong signal to others, especially the state of Minnesota, demonstrating the city's willingness to collaborate on flood control, Williams told The Forum editorial board.

If the evaluation formula determined the Redpath project's benefit to the city would be 1 percent of a project with a roughly \$25 million price tag, the city would contribute \$250,000, he said.

"It's the best \$250,000 I

can think of now," Williams added, referring to ways Fargo can quickly achieve incremental progress on comprehensive flood control and create political goodwill in one stroke.

"It demonstrates good faith for our neighbors, and it buys us something," Williams said. "We get benefits."

Even under the most optimistic scenario, it likely would take 10 years to complete a flood control diversion channel, Williams said. Meanwhile, Fargo-Moorhead will remain vulnerable to severe floods.

Systematically adding water storage would help

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## HOLDING BACK THE RED COULD COST \$1 BILLION

*By Kristen Daum, INFORUM,  
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Minnesota Rep. Collin Peterson said he wants a greater focus put on water retention efforts in the Red River Valley as part of the comprehensive approach toward permanent flood protection.

But it might come at the cost of about \$1 billion over the next decade, said the Democrat who represents the state's 7th Congressional District, which includes western Minnesota and Clay County.

As state and local officials in North Dakota and Minnesota weigh options for a diversion on the Red, Peterson said Friday it's equally as important to resolve concerns of downstream impacts and water retention, which will help minimize flooding.

"We're not talking one or two big projects," Peterson said after meeting with the Red River Watershed Management Board in Moorhead. "We're talking 50 to 60 projects over the next 10 years to get to where we need to get. ... There's a lot of little projects that can amount to big storage at the end of the day."

In order to get 1 million acre-feet of storage between North Dakota and Minnesota, Peterson said it will likely cost about \$1 billion over the next 10 or 12

years.

That would be in addition to the \$1.3 billion it's expected to cost federal, state and local governments to construct the Red River diversion.

"This is doable," Peterson said, because funding mechanisms exist through several federal programs, the local and state watershed boards and additions to congressional legislation, like the next farm bill.

"We need to take all these resources and make them fit together," Peterson said.

Jerome Deal of the Red River Watershed Management Board agreed that water retention and storage needs to be a "very high priority" for the area.

"We are in a position to do it, and we want to get busy and do it faster than we've been doing," Deal said.

The next step, Peterson said, is to hold a meeting in June with federal, state and local officials and both states' regional water boards.

At that meeting, officials plan to lay out the potential projects to pursue and begin looking further at federal funding resources to get the retention efforts started, Peterson said.

"I can guarantee you this is not going to get dropped. This is going to be a priority," Peterson said. "We're going to make this happen. It needs to happen. It will happen."

### EVENTS COMING UP

#### THE NEXT MEETING OF THE RRRWMB

will be on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the Wild Rice Watershed District, 11 5th Avenue East, Ada, MN.

**THE 12TH JOINT ANNUAL CONFERENCE** of the Red River Watershed Management Board and the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group will be held at the Holiday Inn on the Lake, Detroit Lakes, Minnesota on June 23, 2010.

## RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled April meeting, the RRWMB:

- Received a report from Jerome Deal, Chair of the Finance Committee.
- Discussed the Farmstead Ring Dike Program funded in conjunction with the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with Dave Jones – USDA/NRCS.
- Received a report from Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator.
- Received an update from Lance Yohe, Executive Director – Red River Basin Commission (RRBC), regarding the Building Capacity for Multi-Purpose Land and Water Investments in the Red River Basin which is a project involving a partnership between the RRBC and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). Mr. Yohe also discussed the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) which is available to landowners/producers through the NRCS for activities including water flow retardation and restricted flow sediment pool strategies.
- Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.
- Discussed the establishment of a federal authority in the Red River basin with the Minnesota federal delegation.
- Distributed a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.

lessen the severity of floods, both as an interim step and long-term solution, he said.

Officials estimate water storage projects totaling 400,000 to 600,000 acres of water 1 foot deep would remove about 1 foot from the crest of a 100-year flood and about 1½ feet from a 500-year flood.

The Redpath project, combined with another water retention project already built in the Bois de Sioux watershed at the headwaters of the Red River, would store more than 40,000 acre-feet of water.

"Here's two projects that are 10 percent of that already," Williams said, referring to a 400,000 acre-foot storage goal.

The North Ottawa Project west of Minnesota's Elbow Lake holds up to 23,800 acre-feet of water. Both projects in the Bois de Sioux watershed have other benefits as well, including improved water quality and recreation.

## WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

### ROSEAU RIVER WD

The Roseau River WD reported on the Hay Creek/Norland Project. The impoundment construction and inlet structures of Phase 2 have been let for bids with a bid opening date of May 5, 2010. Seeding on Phase 1 is anticipated to begin in mid May.

The District is working on two new ring dikes through the EQIP and rural ring dike programs with construction slated for this summer. Estimates for the ring dikes range between \$120,000 - \$130,000 per ring dike. Meetings have been conducted with the NRCS and landowners.

### RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on the Pennington County Ditch No. 1 (Proj. 171) / Thief River Falls Flood Damage Reduction Study (Proj. 171A) Project. The preliminary engineer's survey report for the projects was filed with the District on April 8, 2010. A preliminary hearing has been scheduled for both of

the projects on June 30, 2010 in Thief River Falls, MN.

If completed, the projects will address the yearly flooding that occurs in the southern portion of Thief River Falls in the vicinity of the Galaxy Twin Theatre and Meritcare Clinic continuing in a northerly direction under Trunk Highway No. 59 by the Holiday Station and outletting into the Red Lake River.

### BOIS DE SIOUX WD

The Bois de Sioux WD reported that the North Ottawa Impoundment Project is operational. This spring all the water was captured from the drainage area and held until the crest in Fargo/Moorhead. A total of 8,500 acre-feet was stored (about half the capacity) with a little over 2" of runoff. Due to late seeding of the cover grasses, some erosion problems occurred but repairs have already begun. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have expressed a renewed interest in Phase 5 (the natural resource enhancement component) and the ability to provide funding.

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