



WE NEED SHOVELS, NOT HEADS, IN THE SAND

While the festivities of the holidays and the arrival of the New Year may have provided a distraction to date, the evidence continues to pile up around us all that we're in for trouble come spring. One doesn't have to listen too intently or read the forecasts word for word. We know that tone and what it entails, we've heard it before.

There is no need to list the years. You were there then, just like you were this fall when the rains wouldn't stop as the ground saturated. We tried to remain optimistic, hoping for a dry winter. Now only a spring thaw so slow as to defy explanation will...you get the picture.

So what do we do? We know what's in store and what it means to us, our neighbors and the region as a whole. The impacts are all too fresh in everyone's mind.

It's easy to find targets on the plinking wheel for hasty criticism. Government entities, accused of moving too slowly, usually are the first to get hit. Environmentalists then quickly feel the rounds of people vs. fish. The not-in-my-backyard and downstream coalitions follow by swiftly taking it on the chin.

But criticism doesn't fill sandbags. Downstream residents have every right to be concerned over flood stage increases resulting from upstream diversions. Speak up loudly for them as well as yourselves so

planners and engineers will get it right for everyone. Upstream retention can and will mitigate for downstream impacts if the initiative - your voice - ruffles enough feathers.

And nobody claims fish are more important than people. But if we're going to do it, let's do it right. Economic vitality can certainly be created and maintained while enhancing the environment.

Government entities and taxing authorities, including us, the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB), simply must find ways to cut red tape to put more projects on the ground faster. We've had some successes but not nearly enough.

The North Ottawa Impoundment Project in the Bois de Sioux Watershed District holds back thousands of acre feet of water from the mainstem of the Red River during spring runoff and was designed with components that enhance the environment to boot. It's just one of over thirty RRWMB-funded flood damage reduction

projects built up and down the Minnesota side of the basin that will be in operation when the spring melt begins.

Many of these projects were made possible by an agreement reached with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources in 1998. The Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group Mediation Agreement provides a template by which state and federal regulatory agencies send their representatives to work side by side with member watershed district personnel to help design environmental enhancements within flood water retention projects. Although this increases the cost of projects, sometimes significantly, the time needed to receive the required permits has been reduced dramatically.

But it must get faster, much faster. Floods like those experienced over the last fifteen years are occurring with even greater frequency. The "once every hundred years" flood appears to be readying for

yet another curtain call this spring. The project development process must be shortened, efforts increased, commitments reinvigorated, all during a time when budgets have been cut and staff are spread thinner than Grandma's lefse.

We have no choice. Trouble is not just a possibility, it's three months away. And criticism still doesn't fill sandbags. Tax-paying citizens do. We'll see you there, shovel in hand.

EVENTS COMING UP

The 13th 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 Courtyard by Marriott & Conference Center, Moorhead, Minnesota on March 15-16, 2011.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled December meeting, the RRWMB:

- Received a report from Mark Meister, Public Information Officer.
- Distributed a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.
- Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.
- Received a report from Jerome Deal, Chair of the Finance Committee.
- Received a report from Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator.
- Reviewed a written report regarding water quality initiatives of the IWI.
- Received an update from Lance Yohe, Executive Director, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC).
- Discussed a program reimbursement request for the Palmville Project from the Roseau River WD.

WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

ROSEAU RIVER WD

The Roseau River WD reported on the Hay Creek/Norland Project. The Spruce Valley Corporation continues work on Phase 2 of the project. This phase (impoundment portion) is approximately 1/3 complete. Phase 2 is scheduled to be completed by July of 2012. Phases 1 and 3 are approximately 95% complete.

TWO RIVERS WD

The Two Rivers WD reported on the Springbrook PL566 Project. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has indicated that the watershed plan for this project has cleared all of the agency and interagency hoops, and has been forwarded to the NRCS Chief for his signature. Once that happens, funding will be authorized to begin the implementation phase of the project.

The Drayton Bridge project over the Red River has officially opened connecting Minnesota Hwy. 11 to North Dakota. This will provide all-weather, all-flood access between the two states.

MIDDLE SNAKE TAMARAC RIVERS WD

The Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers WD reported on the Brandt/Angus Flood Control Project. The final engineer's report is being completed for the project. Permitting continues with summer of 2011 construction anticipated. The District is working with the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group on determining eligibility for up to 75% state cost-share funding. When completed, the District will enter into an agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR).

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported that the District has received two grants through the Clean Water Fund. The first grant was for the installation of six grade stabilization structures, side water inlets, and stream bank stabilization in the lower 2.5 miles of Marshall County Ditch No. 20 which directly outlets into an impaired stream known as State Ditch No. 83/Thief River. The grant amount approved for this project is \$102,895.00.

The second grant that was awarded to the District

is for the Grand Marias Creek Cut Channel Stabilization Project which is a component of the Grand Marais Outlet Restoration Project. This project will stabilize the outlet of Grand Marais Creek (Cut Channel) thus reducing sediment that is presently carried to the Red River of the North. The grant award approved for this project totals \$662,000.00. It is assumed that both these projects will be completed in 2011 and 2012.

WILD RICE WD

The Wild Rice WD reported that consensus was reached at a meeting conducted at the District office on December 9, 2010 which included the District along with Wynne Consulting (representing Marshall County and themselves), Clay County, Buffalo-Red River WD, and the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The discussion was how to equitably distribute funds from a DEED grant which was applied for to assist with the acquisition process for the homes that didn't meet the requirements for other acquisition programs from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

BOIS DE SIOUX WD

The Bois de Sioux WD reported on the North Ottawa Impoundment Project. The project is ready to take spring runoff. All pools have been drawn down as far as possible and the gates are set accordingly for the season. Staff has been in communication with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regarding Phase 5 funding. The draft report will be available soon and the board will have an opportunity to make a decision whether or not to proceed.

The Redpath project is moving forward. Discussions have begun with the Traverse County Ditch No. 35 landowners in regard to improving the system and moving it to accommodate the impoundment dike. Landowners are cautiously supportive of the project and the concept of moving a ditch. Two parcels have been acquired in the last month to finish acquiring the land rights for pool one. The District now owns pools one through four in fee title. Negotiations continue with landowners in pool five.

NEWS & VIEWS
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