



FLOOD CONTROLS TO BE PART OF FARM BILL

RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD WILL HELP SHAPE 2012 FARM BILL

U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn. invited watershed leaders from Minnesota and North Dakota to begin digging through the federal government's toolbox to see what's available to fix the valley's flooding problems by boosting water storage.

Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) members John Finney, Jerome Deal, Ron Osowski, Project Coordinator Ron Harnack, and Administrator Naomi Erickson participated in the discussion. Bois de Sioux Watershed District engineer and Red River Watershed Management Board Technical Advisory Committee member Charlie Anderson presented information to the group about the need for flood storage.

According to Osowski, a farmer who represents the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District on the RRWMB, having the opportunity to shape the next farm bill with water storage funding for the Red River valley is "the best news I've heard about water efforts, ever."

The July 6 meeting at the Courtyard by Marriott & Conference Center, Moorhead, MN was the first step in what's expected to be a yearlong process of identifying how best to accomplish the goal of keeping 1 million acre-feet of water out of the Red River



U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee.

during peak flood periods.

Also attending the meeting was Dave White Chief of the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. White leads all federal efforts related to natural resources and together with Peterson are hoping that permanent flood storage becomes a reality in the Red River valley.

Leading the charge is Peterson, who hopes to secure \$500 million for flood control projects when work begins on the federal farm bill next summer. The current bill expires in 2012.

Peterson, citing his position as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, expressed optimism that the money – \$50 million a year for 10 years – will make it into the farm bill as a mandatory program.

Peterson noted that fellow Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., also sits on the committee, and the idea has the backing of Senate Agriculture Committee members Sen. Kent Conrad, D-N.D., and Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn.

There is precedent. The 2008 farm bill included similar funding to address water quality in Chesapeake Bay, and the 2002 bill provided more than \$100 million to help conserve water for drought-stricken farms and ranches in Oregon's Klamath Basin.

A mechanism for managing the projects was finalized Tuesday with the creation of a joint powers agreement between Minnesota's Red River Watershed Management Board and North Dakota's Red River Joint Water Resource Board.

The agreement means that both groups will work together and help prepare the next farm bill for including water storage efforts in the Red River basin. The two states and watersheds would have to match the federal funds, which Peterson believes is "doable."

The joint effort to shape the farm bill by the Minn. and North Dakota joint powers group will begin soon with a report due to Peterson in May 2011. According to Harnack, "this provides a great opportu-

nity to direct significant federal funding to water storage efforts" to the Red River valley.

Peterson said the total funding of \$1 billion would be enough to establish 1 million acre-feet of storage and mitigate the effects of a proposed Fargo-Moorhead diversion on downstream residents.

Roughly 200,000 to 250,000 acre-feet of storage would be upstream from Fargo-Moorhead, said Anderson of JOR Engineering which has studied potential storage sites in the valley. During the 1997 flood, that would have lowered the river level by about 2 feet in the metro area and by about 1 foot in Halstad, Minn., he said.

Deal, President of the Bois de Sioux Watershed District and RRWMB member, said large storage projects such as the 17,000 acre-foot North Ottawa Impoundment Project may be too big to qualify under current NRCS guidelines, so program changes may be needed.

Like his fellow board members, he's excited about the prospect of federal funding for retention projects.

"That would be absolutely great. I mean, we're going to be able to progress on these and have more projects under construction at the same time," he said.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled July meeting, the RRWMB:

- *Discussed the FY 2011 RRWMB tax levy rate and approved maintaining the levy at 100%.*
- *Received a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.*
- *Approved continued service with Mark Meister, Public Information Officer.*
- *Authorized N. Erickson to draft and forward a response to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers based on the Technical Advisory Committee's review of the Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement for Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Flood Risk Management.*
- *Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.*
- *Authorized retaining an email marketing service to provide an electronic distribution for the monthly newsletter circulated by the board.*
- *Received a report from Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator.*

EVENTS COMING UP

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, August 17, 2010 at 9:00 a.m. at the Courtyard by Marriott & Conference Center, Moorhead, MN.

A joint meeting of the RRWMB and the Red River Joint Water Resource Board will begin at 1:00 p.m. following the conclusion of the RRWMB meeting.

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WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on the Thief River Falls Diversion/Project No. 171A Project. A public hearing was conducted on June 30, 2010 in the Imperial Room located in the Engelstad Arena in Thief River Falls, MN for a flood damage reduction project that consists of a diversion channel to Pennington County Ditch No. 1. The two-mile diversion channel is a project that was established by the District to assist with local flooding problems caused by legal drainage system, Pennington County Ditch No. 1, which outlets into and through the City of Thief River Falls. The two-mile diversion channel will allow 100% of floodwaters to be released in a westerly direction upstream of the City of Thief River Falls thus outletting downstream of the city.

On July 8, 2010 at the District's regularly scheduled board meeting, the Board of Managers adopted by motion to proceed with Option No. 3B as presented in the preliminary survey report for the Thief River Falls Diversion Project and to also add the Urbanization portion of the report to the portion of the legal drainage system that flows through the City of Thief River Falls. The estimated project cost for the diversion is estimated at \$1,200,000 with an estimated cost of the urbanization to be \$775,000.

If completed, these projects will address the annual flooding that occurs to 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 thus outletting into the Red Lake River.



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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, MN 56502-0763, Phone: (218) 844-6166; Fax: (218) 844-6167.