



RED RIVER VALLEY WATER BOARDS NEARING AGREEMENT

Red River Valley water boards in North Dakota and Minnesota appear close to reaching a joint powers agreement to cooperatively manage flood-control projects.

The proposed agreement was approved last week by Minnesota's Red River Watershed Management Board. North Dakota's Red River Joint Water Resource

District is expected to give its OK this week.

The aim of the agreement is to enable the two states' boards to better set project priorities and coordinate flood-retention efforts in the Red River Valley.

Chairmen of the two joint state water boards said they have worked cooperatively in the past,

but a joint powers agreement will allow them to better coordinate technical expertise and funding for retention projects to mitigate flooding.

"We hope to smooth out permitting projects and secure federal funds," said Jim Lyons, chairman of the North Dakota Red River Joint Water Resource District, adding the pact

would not create another layer of government.

Meanwhile, the governors of the two states continue their talks over how to divide the states' share of funding for a diversion channel to protect Fargo-Moorhead against severe flooding.

Earlier analysis by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers calculated that 90 percent of the benefits of a diversion would fall on the North Dakota side of the Red River, with 10 percent in Minnesota.

That assessment, however, was based on an initial determination that the most cost-effective flood-protection project would be a relatively small diversion channel in Minnesota.

Subsequent study, according to figures released Friday by Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., has shown that a Minnesota diversion twice as large as first determined could be the best national economic investment.

The latest figures conclude that a diversion capable of handling 40,000 cubic feet per second of water would prevent annual flood damages of \$195.9 million.

The locally preferred option, a North Dakota channel capable of diverting 35,000 cubic feet per second, now is estimated to cost \$1.462 billion, with a non-federal share of \$626 million, Dorgan said.

Aaron Snyder, a project manager for the Army Corps of Engineers, said

Continued on Next Page

WILD RICE WATERSHED DISTRICT WELCOMES NEW ADMINISTRATOR

After about a month at the administrator position of the Wild Rice Watershed District, Tom Wollin reported that he is busy learning about the District and its people.

Most recently, Wollin was in international and government sales for Mattracks in Karlstad, Minnesota, a company that makes all-terrain rubber track conversion systems for a wide-range of 4X4 vehicles.

Tom is a native of the Greenbush area. His Dad was the John Deere dealer in Greenbush for over 50 years, and his brothers still have a short line implement dealership in Greenbush.

Wollin went to college at Moorhead State University. He and his wife Judy have two children.

Wollin said as he learns about the Watershed District, he notes he is fortunate to have an extremely knowledgeable staff with Loretta Johnson and Kari Kujava in the watershed office.

"The support they have given me in getting my feet on the ground has been amazing. They have a wealth of knowledge," he said.

Wollin said he has been going out with the board members and district contractors to look at projects and ditches in all areas of the 2,085 square mile watershed district. "That has proven to be a good way to learn more about the history and projects in the District," he said.

Wollin said he believes what the Watershed District Board of Managers were looking for in an administrator was someone to provide organization and structure to the direction they want to go as a District. "As I told them when they hired me, I will always try to voice both sides of the argument, and point out the likely results of the decisions they make, either way," he said. "The goal is to get the managers up to speed as quickly as possible with the pertinent information, so that they can make good choices, because that's

their job."

So far, Wollin said manning the administrator desk has been a good experience. "What I've found pleasant, is how open people have been and willing to provide background, so that I receive information on both sides of an issue," he said.

Tom comes to the Wild Rice Watershed District at a busy juncture, with the District deciding on whether or not it is in the public interest to pursue Project No. 42, which is a proposed project to expand the Lower Becker Dam, located in Becker County.

"Again, it comes to getting the information out, making sure the procedure is correct so all voices are heard, and then taking the step forward, one way or the other," Wollin said of the project. "We don't want to see it languish with no clear direction. That's what the Board said they want to get away from."

At its regularly scheduled May meeting, the RRWMB:

- Approved the Joint Powers Agreement between the RRWMB and the Red River Joint Water Resource Board of North Dakota relative to the establishment of a federal authority in the Red River basin.
- Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.
- Discussed the Farmstead Ring Dike Program and modified the board's farmstead ring dike funding policy as follows: EQIP Engineering 100%, EQIP Construction 75%, Watershed District 0-12.5% as determined by the local watershed district, and landowner 12.5-25% (RRWMB 0% unless there are special/unique engineering/construction issues, then up to 25% RRWMB funding upon request of the local watershed district, not to exceed 75% total cost-share by the RRWMB and NRCS).
The rural ring dikes cost-share as follows: BWSR/DNR Construction & Engineering 50%, RRWMB Construction & Engineering 25%, remaining 25% to be divided between the individual watershed district and landowner as determined by the local watershed district.
- Received a report from Dan Thul, Red River Coordinator.
- Adopted a resolution and authorized John Finney to execute a contract to transfer the River Watch Program and water quality initiative from the RRWMB to the International Water Institute as of May 31, 2010.
- Received a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.
- Received an update from Julie Goehring, Communications Coordinator, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC).

EVENTS COMING UP

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, June 15, 2010 at 9:30 a.m. at the Sand Hill River Watershed District, 219 North Mill Street, Fertile, 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.

analysts haven't yet calculated the relative benefits for the two states of bigger diversions that now are showing the most favorable cost-benefit ratios.

The benefit split between North Dakota and Minnesota will be an important guidepost in the negotiations between the two states in sharing costs for the project.

North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven first asked Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty to contribute \$200 million toward the project. In response, Pawlenty asked North Dakota to make its case for the economic benefits Minnesota would

receive from the project.

In the most recent discussions, North Dakota has proposed that Minnesota contribute \$100 million toward a diversion project, with another \$40 million to \$50 million to help address downstream impacts.

Minnesota communities, including Hendrum and Halstad, are concerned that a diversion to protect Fargo-Moorhead would increase downstream river levels during severe floods.

Lance Gaebe, an aide for Hoeven, is involved in the discussions between governors. He said the cost-sharing talks are somewhat hampered until

the project is identified and costs are known.

In the discussions, Gaebe has pointed out that Moorhead would have to spend \$225 million to remove houses and build dikes in flood-prone areas without a diversion project.

Also, he said an estimated 15,000 and 18,000 residents of northwest Minnesota, mostly in Clay and Becker counties, work in Fargo or Cass County. Thus, if their worksites were flooded, Minnesota would sustain a significant economic loss, Gaebe said.

"Minnesota continues to work with the Corps of

Engineers and the local sponsors to develop a project that can address the needs of the communities and downstream interests," said Brian McClung, Pawlenty's spokesman.

Those ongoing talks will resume Wednesday when the Metro Flood Study Work Group meets, the same day North Dakota's water board will vote on the joint powers agreement with Minnesota.

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