



MEMBER WATERSHED DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS SHARE THEIR VIEWS

This month the *News and Views* focus is on administrators of member watershed districts of the RRWMB. These individuals serve a key role in the effective leadership of their respective watershed districts. Our question and answer session yielded the following perspectives from administrators Kevin Ruud of the Wild Rice Watershed District, Nick Drees of the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District, Rob Sando of the Roseau River Watershed District and Myron Jesme of the Red Lake Watershed District. (The remaining member district administrators will be interviewed in a later issue of *News and Views*.)

WHAT TALENTS OR ABILITIES ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO BE EFFECTIVE IN YOUR JOB?

Kevin Ruud (KR) The reason I was hired here two years ago was for my people skills. I'll be blunt, I knew little about water, but I learn quickly. I offer stability and talent at dealing with difficult situations and people. It has worked. We now have a quieter, calmer atmosphere in our district.

Nick Drees (ND) I would say an ability to diffuse problems, for example upstream/downstream disputes. It really requires people skills, an ability to work with landowners.

Rob Sando (RS) Organization and communication skills, especially with the public on projects. You have to know exactly what you are trying to accomplish and then be able to organize your efforts around that.

Myron Jesme (MJ) I believe the diversity of experience I have gained in my 29 years of watershed work



Kevin Ruud



Nick Drees



Rob Sando



Myron Jesme

dating back to working in oil exploration, as lead inspector on various construction projects, and now the past 9 years working in this administrative capacity.

WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING THING ABOUT YOUR JOB?

KR: Anytime you work with a board, trying to figure out which way they want to go is a real challenge. Getting them to focus and move in a direction is something I haven't accomplished yet. That is an ongoing task.

ND: Getting landowners to recognize the "bigger picture." Water issues are interconnected, problems are shared and people can become too focused just on their land, their own perspective. Working with permitting agencies can also be a challenge, and always there is the funding challenge.

RS: Wearing all the hats you need to wear - legal, engineering, administration, and the wide range of people that are involved. Also time management is a challenge.

MJ: This can include dealing with folks who have problems with neighbors dating back generations who don't seem interested in getting things resolved. We have such a diverse district from east to west so you never know what issue will arise on a day-to-day basis.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT YOUR JOB?

KR: The people. I've

always enjoyed dealing with people. It's the easy part of the job for me. Agencies and the permitting process can be frustrating. But helping people is always an enjoyable part of this job.

ND: I'm competitive. I like a challenge, and we are always looking for the next project. It is rewarding to get projects like Agassiz Valley completed in the face of obstacles, in spite of efforts to derail them.

RS: I like going out in the field, visiting project sites and getting out of the office.

MJ: Meeting so many good people and working with my staff which in my opinion is second to none. The Red Lake Watershed District staff has upwards of 140 years of water related experience and has proven to be very valuable to the taxpayers of the Red Lake Watershed District.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOUR WATERSHED DISTRICT WILL LOOK LIKE IN FIVE YEARS?

KR: Unfortunately I think it will look exactly like it does today. I see that we do a good job with permits, project maintenance, ditches - we're very efficient at that. And we're getting better. But when it comes to big projects, my board is very fiscally conservative, and unless it can be shown that a project can maintain itself, I don't see a lot of projects happening.

ND: That is anybody's guess. Our board has been strong, but we could be fac-

ing a big turnover in managers. If that happens it is hard to determine what will come next. That outcome will determine where we will go. If we keep our current board, I see more and bigger projects. We have a great board, I hope that continues.

RS: I see activity in current flood damage reduction (FDR) operations, like Hay Creek and Palmville. Also we will be involved in the Arpin project and Beltrami projects, getting those up and completed. And I believe we will continue to see closer partnerships with local governmental units and state and federal agencies.

MJ: I would like to see us move forward under the leadership we have in place. I would hope that we make strides in reducing flows to the Red River of the North in the form of FDR projects large and small, and that we continue to actively move forward with projects consistent with our Ten Year Overall Plan as well as updating that plan.

EVENTS

The next meeting of the RRWMB will be on Tuesday, September 18, 2012 at 8:30 a.m. at the Red Lake Watershed District, 1000 Pennington Ave. S, Thief River Falls, MN. Please note the change of the regular meeting time (9:30 a.m.). The change is to assist those who attend the bus tour conducted the day prior to the board meeting and wish to briefly attend the board meeting before leaving for their return trip home.

WATERSHED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENTS

MIDDLE SNAKE TAMARAC RIVERS WD

The Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers WD reported on the status of the Brandt/Angus Impoundment construction:

- The entire embankment has black dirt placed, with approximately 3/4 seeded.
- Concrete work on the NW and SW outlets, as well as the east inlet structure is complete.
- The east inlet ditch has black dirt placed and is awaiting seeding.
- The coulee rehabilitation is complete.
- County Ditch No. 43 lateral outlet is complete to US Highway No. 75.
- Final documents from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) have not yet been received.

The District is widening the embankment in the northwest corner of the Agassiz Valley Water Resource Management Project to accommodate the increase in visitors, due to the efforts of the Agassiz Audubon Society.

A judge has ruled favorably for the District in an open meeting lawsuit challenge filed against the watershed district. Another separate open meeting lawsuit against the District was dismissed in summary judgment, again in favor of the MSTRWD.

ROSEAU RIVER WD

The Roseau River WD is waiting to hear from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) on their adaptive wetland mitigation plan proposal for the Hay Creek/Norland project. While completing the final "punch-list" of tasks for the project, monitoring still continues.

Individual assessments were done on each of the six dam sites in the Beltrami Island State Forest. Houston Engineering will compile the results from the project subcommittee and it is anticipated that a project team will be

organized in September or October to discuss the assessment. The district has submitted comments to the MDNR on the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) for the Beltrami area.

HDR Engineering anticipates a preliminary engineer's report by the September 5th Roseau River Watershed board meeting for the Roseau River Wildlife Management Area project. The District met on August 9th with landowners from the proposed WRP/Arpin Impoundment project area. Also attending were NRCS representatives Keith Weston, Casey Olson and Alice Klink. NRCS engineering has broken down the project into a two-phase approach with an east to west design. After discussions with the landowners from the east phase, there was an agreement to proceed with the project.

WILD RICE WD

The Wild Rice Watershed District is waiting to complete additional acquisitions for the buyout of properties that were unable to have ring dikes built due to river instability issues.

The engineer's report for the City of Shelly community ring dike is proceeding with the intention of bringing this to a public hearing in late summer or early fall of 2012.

RED LAKE WD

The Red Lake WD reported on the Thief River Falls Flood Damage Reduction/Red Lake WD Ditch No. 14 project. The contractor has left the site for two weeks, however, plans to return next week. The project is ~ 88% complete with the Thief River Falls FDR project, and 98% complete with the construction of the Red Lake Watershed District Ditch No. 14 (Improvement to Pennington County Ditch No. 1). The project must be completed by November 15, 2012.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled August meeting, the RRWMB:

- *Reviewed a letter sent to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) responding to the Regional General Permit proposal; questions about the USACE's proposal include what problem the proposal is trying to solve. The board desires greater understanding of the issue, with more dialogue that includes stakeholder participation.*
- *Heard RRWMB Administrator Naomi Erickson describe the planning for the upcoming (September 17 and 18) Tour to Promote Efficiency and Responsiveness for FDR projects in the Red River Basin. The event to be held in Thief River Falls will include meetings in Thief River Falls and a tour of the Agassiz Valley Water Resource Management Project near Warren, MN. The meeting's purpose, which will include representation from signatory organizations to the 1998 Mediation Agreement, is a recommitment to the intentions of the agreement, and reaffirming the value of stakeholder responsiveness that supports the individual Project Teams.*
- *Heard a report from Dan Thul of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) on draft recommendations for managing tile drainage systems, both controlled and uncontrolled. Thul emphasized that their work is a proposal and he requested feedback and input on the draft outline as work continues.*

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