

# ***BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT***

BARNESVILLE, MINNESOTA 56514

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10 Year Comprehensive Plan Update  
Mainstem Planning Region Public Input Meeting  
Hawley Community Center, Hawley, MN

July 31, 2007

In attendance were: Bruce E. Albright, Administrator, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) and Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.); Erik S. Jones, Engineer, and Mark D. Aanenson, H.E.; Roger G. Ellefson, Curtis M. Nelson, John E. Hanson, E. Robert Olson, Gerald Van Amburg, Managers, BRRWD; Pete Waller, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); Jack Frederick, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA); Scott Kahan, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Jerome Flottesmesch, Kenneth Schellack, Eddie Bernhardson, and Lauren Peterson, Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC); Bob Zimmerman, Henry VanOffelen, and Michael T. Murphy, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); and landowners: Rodney Wyland, Curtis Erickson, Carol Schoff, Gary Leach, James Giedt, Robert Ullrich, Cameron Ullrich, Brenda Strom, Charles Strom, Dale O'Connell, Tony Zurn, Sean Felker, L. Richard Olson, Gary E. Johnson, Everett Nelson, and John Young, Jr.

**7:40 PM – Welcome and Introductions – Bruce Albright - BRRWD Administrator**

Albright welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. He indicated that this is the last of the seven public input meetings for the BRRWD's Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP). He talked about the plan update process. State Law requires the BRRWD to update their plan every ten years. We completed our first plan in the late 1970's and subsequently updated it in 1998. The BRRWD is one of the last districts to update their current plan in accordance with the Mediation Agreement. The older plans were short and more general in nature. Albright introduced the Board Members. He noted that the board meets twice each month on the second and fourth Monday. Their next meeting is 8/13/07. He discussed the planning process and the planning regions. The BRRWD is diverse from the west to the east, and the plan goals and objectives are also diverse. Albright gave a brief history of the BRRWD. It was formed in 1976, after a historic flood in 1975. In 1976, we had a drought, but since 1993, we have had above average rainfall. Again this year, we have received excessive rainfall. Albright introduced Mark Aanenson for the next presentation.

**7:55 PM – Introduction to the Planning Regions and General Description of the Mainstem Planning Region - Mark D. Aanenson, H.E.**

Aanenson gave a PowerPoint presentation on the establishment of the planning regions and a general description of the Mainstem planning region. He also discussed the different way in which the new plan will be organized. He showed the subwatersheds of the BRRWD and the differences between the subwatersheds and the planning regions. He discussed the approach that was used to identify the planning regions. Aanenson then gave a general description of the Mainstem planning region and showed a number of maps including land use, presettlement vegetation, ecological resources, groundwater aquifers, soils, annual soil loss by subwatershed, and wind erodibility.

**8:10 PM – Hydrology of the Mainstem Planning Region – Erik Jones, BRRWD Engineer**

Jones went through a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the hydrology of the Mainstem planning region. He went over the sizes of the contributing areas at different points in the BRRWD. The Lakes Planning Region contributes 93-square mile drainage area to the Mainstem Planning Region. Just downstream of Hawley, there is approximately a 900-square mile contributing area from the South Branch of the Buffalo River, which makes up around 55% of the BRRWD and the mainstem around 45%. The gauging stations can be used with the model to evaluate projects. He then discussed the timing of the contribution areas in the BRRWD as compared to the flood peaks on the Red River. The Mainstem Planning Region is in the early and middle contribution areas, as it contributes some of its runoff prior to the peak on the Red River and some of its runoff during the peak on the Red River. Jones then demonstrated how the runoff travels through the planning region by looking at the large rainfall events that occurred in 1975, 1993 and 2000.

**8:20 PM – BRRWD Projects and FDR Problem Areas in the Mainstem Planning Region – Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator**

Albright discussed how flood storage project interests collided in the early 1990s, which resulted in the creation of the Mediation Agreement. Now both flood damage reduction (fdr) and natural resource enhancement (nre) interests must be considered in the project development process. The new Plan will be more comprehensive in nature, and in some cases, the efforts that are identified may be implemented by other agencies. For example, the Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) may be the lead agency on an erosion project. Albright discussed some the known problems in the Mainstem planning region.

Many of the ditch systems were built in the 1920s and are in need of maintenance. Many ditches do not have the capacity due to additional drainage since the time that they were constructed. There is increased pressure on the lakes south of Lake Park due to development. Additional floodwater storage is needed in the eastern part of the planning region. All of the runoff goes to Georgetown; and some needs to be held back. Erosion has been a problem in the Hawley area. New drainage from gravel pits in the beach ridge area has caused problems for agricultural producers. Additional storage could be planned on the Tamarac and Hamden Slough National Wildlife Refuges.

**8:30 PM – Natural Resource Enhancement Opportunities in the Mainstem Planning Region – Henry VanOffelen, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)**

VanOffelen discussed the natural resource (NR) assessment work that he has completed in the BRRWD as part of the plan update process. He discussed the goals of the NR effort. They include the identification of opportunities for projects that will result in both nre and fdr goals. The goals also include the avoidance of future conflicts between nre and fdr projects and the possibilities of pooling funding. VanOffelen encouraged everyone to provide good input on the forms so their concerns and opportunities can be recorded and reflected in the plan. He went through some PowerPoint slides including maps of the percent grass, restorable resources, and buffer conditions of ditches and streams. Potential NR goals for the Mainstem Planning Region include: improve the existing hydrologic conditions in the watercourses by reducing peak flows, reestablish the habitat corridor along the Buffalo River, reduce erosion and sedimentation in watercourses, protect and enhance grassland areas east of Trunk Highway No. 9, and protect high quality natural resource features.

**8:40 PM – Water Quality Issues in the Mainstem Planning Region – Jack Frederick, MPCA**

Frederick discussed the water quality program administered by the MPCA. He discussed the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) process and how it relates to the state water quality standards and intended uses. He also covered the types of stressors including toxics and conventional parameters. Many of the stream reaches in the Red River Valley are impaired due to turbidity levels. With the appropriate data, he commented that all of the waters in the Valley are probably impaired for turbidity. The turbidity levels are currently affecting fish habitat and causing hypoxia in Lake Winnipeg and the Gulf of Mexico. He also discussed the causes of turbidity such as the agricultural runoff, wind erosion, and streambank erosion. Much of the streambank erosion is caused by the variable flows in the systems. Some flood control projects can have a positive effect on these flows and sediment levels. A question was asked regarding the effect of tiling versus ditching on water quality. Frederick responded that generally ditching has more impact on water quality than tiling; however, while tiling may reduce sediment, it can actually increase the nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the runoff. Another question was asked if Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) acreage is included in the definition of grasslands. Frederick said that for most of the available data layers, CRP would be considered grasslands. Jerome Flottesch commented that the Becker SWCD has found that residue levels are showing more than a 30% increase in the last ten years or so on agriculture lands. The Becker SWCD measures residue levels across the county each year.

8:55 PM - The group took a 15 minute break.

**9:10 PM – Identification of FDR and NRE Issues - Small Group Workshop- Bruce Albright and Mark D. Aanenson - Houston Engineering**

Albright instructed the group to provide input on the maps and works that were provided. Aanenson commented that the small group worksheets do a good job of highlighting the types of information that the BRRWD is interested in. Aanenson went over the input forms and surveys.

**9:30 PM – Reports from the Small Groups**

Albright thanked everyone for attending the meeting and discussed how the information will be used. He commented on the good discussions that took place at the tables. The BRRWD will have another meeting for the Mainstem Planning Region to present solutions based on the input from this meeting later this winter.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 PM.