

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

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## **10 Year Comprehensive Plan Update**

### **Northern Planning Region Public Input Meeting Community Center, Georgetown, MN May 22, 2007**

In attendance were: Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) and Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.); Erik S. Jones, Engineer, and Mark D. Aanenson, H.E.; Curtis M. Nelson, Roger G. Ellefson, John E. Hanson, and E. Robert Olson, Managers, BRRWD; Wayne Brendemuhl, Alvin Hansen, Kenneth Schellack, Eddie Bernhardson, Arvid Thompson, and Lauren Peterson, Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC); Steve Hofstad, Robert A. Zimmerman, Brian Winter, Henry VanOffelen, Michael T. Murphy, Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); and landowners: Carol Schoff, George H. Peters, Paul Hartke, Wayne Lepper, Kelly Brantner, Lanny Baer, Donald Hurner, Jeff Richards, Melvin Richards, Chanyce Dahl, Brian Dahl, Dave Ronsberg, Jean Ward, Gary Leach, Wes Mikkelsen, Ron Wang, Roger Wang, Curt Brendemuhl, John David Lee, David Watt, Terry Eidem, Bob Norby, Paul Kukowski, David Kragnes, Jerry Syvrud, Wescott Tommerdahl, Duane Brendemuhl, Dalen Rasmussen, Peter Luhman, Clayton Richards, Loren Ingebretsen, and Joe Richards.

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

Albright welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. He talked about the plan update process and how the BRRWD is required by state law to update their plan. The first plan was done in the late 1970s and updated in 1998. The older plans are short and generic in nature. He discussed the planning process and differences between the old plans and the new planning process. In the 1980s, the watersheds were building dams and retention areas. When they began having conflicts with environmental agencies in the 1990s, dam building projects came to a halt. Now, large on-channel retention projects may not be feasible in light of higher costs and permitting issues. However, many projects can still be constructed; smaller more environmentally friendly projects can accomplish meaningful flood damage reduction (fdr). He further discussed the planning process and the number of public meetings; this will be the fourth meeting out of seven public input meetings. Albright stressed the importance of hearing the concerns of the landowners in the different regions.

8:00 PM – **Introduction to the Planning Regions and General Description of the Northern 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 Northern planning region. He also discussed the different ways 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. Donald Hurner questioned the location of the dams that were constructed during the 1980s by the BRRWD. Albright indicated that he could show the locations after Aanenson finished his presentation because the dams are not located in this planning region. Aanenson then gave a general description of the Northern 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. Albright then showed the locations of the dams the BRRWD built and discussed the characteristics of each.

**8:15 PM – Hydrology of the Northern Planning Region – Erik Jones, BRRWD Engineer**

Jones went through a PowerPoint presentation and discussed the hydrology of the Northern Planning Region. He then went over the ditch systems in the region and showed the drainage areas for each of the systems. He compared the timing of the contribution areas in the BRRWD to the flood peaks on the Red River. The Northern Planning Region is in the early contribution area, as it contributes most of its runoff prior to the peak on the Red River. Jones demonstrated how the runoff travels through the planning region by looking at three large rainfall events. These included summer floods in 1975, 1993, and 2000. He showed the timing of the peak flows at different gauging stations for each of the rainfall events. Jones then discussed the types of projects that have been built in the Northern Planning Region. He went over slides of the various types of projects. These included ditch repairs and improvements, the Georgetown Flood Control Levee, Clearing and Snagging along the Buffalo River, Ring Dikes, and the permitting program.

**8:35 PM – BRRWD Projects and FDR Problem Areas in the Northern Planning Region – Bruce Albright, BRRWD Administrator**

Albright discussed the existing problem areas that were identified by the Planning Team. He discussed the flooding problems in and around the Village of Kragnes and the solutions that have been proposed. A project could be constructed this year if it is accepted. Drain tile and irrigation is also becoming more prevalent in the area. In recent years, we have had an excess of precipitation. If a drought occurs, irrigation could be a significant issue for the area when different interests compete for a limited supply of water. Another problem is the Texas crossing in Georgetown. This area tends to collect debris. The BRRWD has had requests to clean the Oakport Coulee. This area has logs and debris in it and may also have accumulated silt. The flowage just upstream of County Ditch No. 9 in Spring Prairie Township has had erosion problems. Much of the eroded material is deposited in County Ditch No. 39 and has to be cleaned out at ditch system expense. Grass buffer strips need to be established in this area as part of a solution. A new farm bill could also have effects on water issues. If the acres of land in currently enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) go back into production, the runoff patterns would significantly change. Flooding could become worse and sediment levels in streams could increase.

Albright also discussed the benefiting areas of the ditch systems in the Northern Planning Region. Some of the ditches were established many years ago and have benefiting areas that may be relatively accurate, but the benefit values are very low compared to existing land values. These outdated benefit levels can be problematic when conducting large repair projects. Another issue that could have significant implications to watershed district projects is water quality. The TMDL program, implemented by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) could have regulatory authority over ditch maintenance projects. For example, if a stream is listed as impaired and a ditch repair is planned, the MPCA may have additional water quality requirements that must be addressed

prior to conducting the repair. Currently this hasn't been the case but it may become a reality in the future. Large "factory farms" are another issue that may affect water quality in the BRRWD. Large livestock operations continue to be in the spotlight, and many landowners have concerns about the water quality and social issues.

Another important concept in the water management business is that BRRWD residents need to work together as neighbors. The Watershed District to the north of the BRRWD has experienced excessive controversy. When folks work against each other, projects are difficult to accomplish. Also, it is important to work together with agencies. Projects today are expensive to build and getting funding assistance is a key part of implementing them. In the new planning process, everyone is invited to the table, including the environmental agencies. Henry VanOffelen is working with the BRRWD on the natural resource enhancement (nre) opportunities to assure they are addressed in the plan. Albright then discussed the funding implications of the BRRWD belonging to the Red River Water Management Board (RRWMB). The BRRWD has not been a member since 2003. Currently, the BRRWD is having discussions with the RRWMB to resolve differences and to see if they could become a member again. If the BRRWD does renew their membership, approximately two million dollars would be levied with one million being sent to the RRWMB and one million staying with the BRRWD. Depending on the nature of the BRRWD's projects, some of the money sent to the RRWMB could be returned to the BRRWD as project funds.

**8:50 PM – Natural Resource Enhancement Opportunities in the Northern Planning Region–**  
*Henry VanOffelen, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA)*

VanOffelen discussed his nre assessment work that for the BRRWD as part of the plan update process. This watershed is the seventh of the nine watershed district plans he has worked on in the Red River Basin. He discussed the goals of the nre effort. They include the identification of opportunities for projects that will result in both nre and fdr goals. They also include the avoidance of future conflicts between nre goals and fdr projects. He indicated that the nre opportunities are somewhat limited in the western part of this planning region due to the intensive agriculture. Most of the resource opportunities are in the beach ridge area, essentially west of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9. He went through some PowerPoint slides including maps showing the percent of grass, restorable resources, and ditch and stream buffer conditions. Potential nre goals for the Northern Planning Region include: improve the existing hydrologic conditions in the watercourses by reducing peak flows, reestablish the habitat corridor along the Buffalo and Red Rivers, reduce erosion and sedimentation in watercourses, protect and enhance grassland areas east of T.H. 9, create impoundments for migratory bird habitats, and protect high quality natural resource features such as beach ridge areas and natural watercourses.

Following VanOffelen's presentation, the group took a 15 minute break.

**9:15 PM – Identification of FDR and NRE Issues - Small Group Workshop- Bruce Albright and Mark D. Aanenson, H.E.**

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

9:40 PM – **Reports from the Small Groups**

Albright thanked everyone for attending the meeting and discussed how the information will be used and when we will hold our next scheduled meeting. He commented on the good discussions that took place at the tables. He also indicated the BRRWD will have another meeting for the Northern Planning Region to present solutions based on the input from this meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.