

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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MEDIATION PROJECT TEAM MINUTES

May 23, 2013

The Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) Mediation Project Team (PT) held a meeting on Thursday, May 23, 2013, at 7:00 PM at the BRRWD office, Barnesville, MN.

Attending were: Gerald L. Van Amburg, Roger G. Ellefson, Curtis M. Nelson, John E. Hanson, and Peter V. Fjestad, BRRWD Managers; Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.); Robert A. Zimmerman, Engineer, City of Moorhead; Pete Waller, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); Emily Siira, Area Hydrologist, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Lynn Foss, Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); and Mandy Erickson, DNR Fisheries.

Members absent were: Breanna L. Paradeis Kobiela and Troy E. Larson, BRRWD Managers; Shawn May, Detroit Lakes Wetland Management District (WMD) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Doug Wells, Fergus Falls WMD and USFWS; Julie Aadland, Area Hydrologist, DNR; Brad Grant, District Manager, Becker SWCD; Don Schultz, Area Wildlife Manager, DNR; and Henry Van Offelen, Red River Basin Coordinator, DNR; Edward J. Musielewicz, District Conservationist, Becker Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Keith Weston, Red River Basin Coordinator, NRCS; Jack Frederick, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA); Tony Nelson, Farm Bill Biologist, Pheasants Forever (PF); Ross Aigner, Landowner/Wilkin SWCD; Ryan Frohling, Detroit Lakes WMD and USFWS; Audubon Dakota; Brian Dwight, Board Conservationist, BWSR; Craig O. Evans, PM-D, Army Corps of Engineers (COE); Leo Grabowski, Project Manager, COE; Larry Martin, USFWS and Fergus Falls WMD; Kevin Kassenborg, District Manager, Clay SWCD; and Brian Winter, Program Director, The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

Albright called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM. The PT members introduced themselves. Albright gave an overview of the history of the Mediation PT and a few projects that were developed using the Mediation PT process, including ongoing drainage concerns in Barnesville Township; Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration; Project No. 31, Deerhorn Creek levees; Project No. 58, Riverton Township; and Project No. 54, Whisky Creek Tributaries.

Business brought before the group included:

Meeting Minutes. The 04/04/13 meeting minutes were distributed with the meeting notice. **Motion** by Zimmerman to approve the minutes. **Seconded** by Foss. **Approved.**

Long Term Flood Damage Reduction Goals/Opportunities. Albright discussed the Red River Basin Commission's (RRBC) Long Term Flood Study (LTFS), which called for a 20% stage reduction goal at the first major gauging station on the Red River downstream of a particular watershed. Using the overhead monitors, Jones discussed H.E.'s continued modeling work to find new sites within the BRRWD in conjunction with the RRBC's LTFS efforts. Through the use of an HEC-RAS unsteady model, the RRBC has been able to create hydraulic and hydrologic modeling to look at the 100-year runoff event and potential storage sites within a given watershed. The RRBC received an additional \$500,000 from the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority to develop the "Halstad Upstream Study" (HUR), which can be used

to determine both the upstream and downstream impacts of possible storage sites for the F-M Diversion area. The model could use thaw progression data to tie into the early/middle/late contribution timing concept. Jones explained that by using the model, they would be able to identify potential retention sites, and predict the potential impacts those sites could have on the 100-year runoff event in an attempt to meet the peak flow reduction goals set by the RRBC. The results of this modeling will be used to help design the Diversion Project. The Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB) provided funding to develop Sub-Watershed Distributed Detention Plans, using this model, for the Wild Rice and Bois de Sioux Watershed Districts and similar water authorities are doing the same in North Dakota. Since the BRRWD is not a member of the RRWMB, Albright noted that the RRBC and the BRRWD are working together to cost share a similar model for the BRRWD.

Zimmerman commented that the COE conducted a study that was not as detailed as the HUR for the F-M Diversion project. The DNR is currently conducting an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the Diversion project.

Jones described the features of the four new sites in the BRRWD expansion area in conjunction with the new modeling effort. The PT discussed the value of the potential retention sites and area drainage patterns. Jones explained that once the data from the other sub-watersheds has been accounted for in the HUR model, we will be able to determine the potential downstream benefits of the retention sites. Van Amburg asked in which timing zone the potential sites were located. Jones noted that most of the sites would be in the "middle" contribution area. Ellefson questioned if there would be any benefit to "speeding up" the middle area water. Jones thought it might be possible to speed up the "front end" of the middle area. He speculated that there would be more operation opportunity with potential retention in the "back end" of the early stage sites using gated storage.

Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration. The Board made the Order to construct the project on 4/29/13. The 30-day appeal period expires on 5/29/13. An agreement has been finalized with BWSR, DNR, and the BRRWD regarding the \$682,365 in RIM project funding. The Outdoor Heritage Council (LOHC) Conservation Partners Legacy Grants (CPLG) Program deadline for construction funding is 6/30/13. The DNR has now approved the use of the funding for easement acquisitions, so we will be able to use the funding by the deadline. Albright discussed the three easement options left to acquire. Since this project has significant natural resource enhancement (nre) features, NRCS has agreed to allow the use of their property within the project area for borrow pits and project features. The bid opening is scheduled for 6/10/13. After that, we will refine our project budget. Rick St. Germain, H.E., is working with the DNR to obtain the dam safety permit. The group also discussed landowner concerns about crop insurance availability concerns for their property under project easements.

The Board discussed a recent interim ordinance imposed by Wilkin County on construction or maintenance of large surface water impoundments in response to the proposed F-M Diversion project. The Wilkin County Commissioners agreed to make an exception for the Manston Slough Restoration project and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) projects in conjunction with the NRCS, not exceeding 640 acres.

Albright plans to schedule a pre-construction agency meeting. The group also discussed a possible ground breaking ceremony for project construction.

Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation. The BRRWD needs approximately \$5.18 million from the 2013 State bonding bill to complete Phase 4. Albright wasn't hopeful that we would get the entire amount this year. The group discussed recent legislation affecting Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP)/Reinvest In Minnesota (RIM) easement valuations for property taxes, which could inhibit landowner interest in the

programs. Waller commented that there was also legislation capping the first 50' of a permanent buffer right-of-way easement valuation at the non-crop rate.

Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. Albright commented that Jones is working with Julie Aadland, Area Hydrologist, DNR, on the channel geometry configuration for the restoration so that an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) can be completed this fall.

Project No. 39, Georgetown Levee Improvements. The DNR funding is in place, and the contractor will be back on site to complete work on the west side of the highway when conditions permit. The entire project should be completed by the 9/20/13 deadline.

Barnesville Township FDR Study. Albright mentioned that he received several phone calls this spring regarding landowner interest in moving forward with a project for this area. The BRRWD will hold an informational meeting when time permits.

Buffalo River/Upper Red River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Studies. The Buffalo River TMDL draft report should be ready for review by 12/31/13. Albright noted that we were running both Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT) and a Hydrologic Simulation Program FORTRAN (HSPF) modeling studies. Albright explained that because the HSPF model development has been slower, we plan to move forward with the SWAT modeling to complete the TMDL. The HSPF modeling will still be conducted in the future.

The Upper Red River TMDL/Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan (WRPP) study is progressing. A meeting was held with the City of Fargo yesterday regarding a stretch of the Red River within the city that is impaired for e coli. MPCA is planning to conduct a bacteria study on the Red River for the Fargo-Moorhead area, which could include the City of Fargo. Possible sources of the bacteria include stormwater infiltration into the river.

Albright noted that River Keepers received a grant to study the impacts of pharmaceuticals in the water supply.

The City of Moorhead is concluding their Wellhead Protection Plan. They have scheduled a public hearing on the results on 5/29/13. Once the review period expires, the City will incorporate this information into their aquifer protection plan. State Representative Morrie Lanning is promoting preparations for future drought conditions planning. The group discussed groundwater management plans/initiatives.

BWSR Summary. Waller distributed a legislative summary regarding project/program funding. The group discussed funding sources for a variety of programs and 2013 legislative activities.

Activities Update. Albright distributed copies of the latest BRRWD press release for the PT's review. Albright noted that the Board has approved an update of the BRRWD's permitting system.

Watershed District Enlargement. The BRRWD held a boundary hearing for affected landowners on 1/31/13 in Rothsay to review/define the new eastern boundary. Manager Fjestad and Albright conducted a tour of the eastern boundary. The information will be forwarded to Jones so that he can prepare the new boundary map based on changes incorporated during the field review. The hearing will be continued in the near future to finalize the boundary process. The BRRWD had 2 years from 4/25/12 to complete the Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP) for the new area. Some RWMP work has been started.

RRBC Drainage Tour. The RRBC plans to hold their annual summer tour on Wednesday, June 5, 2013, leaving from the Best Western Doublewood Inn, Fargo, ND, at 9:00 AM. Interested parties should contact the RRBC.

Water Quality Monitoring. The BRRWD met with the Barnesville and Hawley River Watch Teams, International Water Institute (IWI), MPCA, DNR, to discuss 2013 water quality sampling tasks and sites. A map of the 2013 sites was distributed.

Next Meeting. The next PT meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, July 18, 2013, at 7:00 PM in the Barnesville office.

Adjournment. There being no further business to come before the group, Albright adjourned the meeting at 9:12 PM.

Respectfully Prepared and Submitted by

Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator