

BUFFALO-RED RIVER WATERSHED DISTRICT

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MEDIATION PROJECT TEAM MINUTES

December 19, 2013

The Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) Mediation Project Team (PT) held a meeting on Thursday, December 19, 2013, at 1:30 PM at the BRRWD office, Barnesville, MN.

Attending were: Peter V. Fjestad, Curtis M. Nelson, John E. Hanson, Troy E. Larson, and Gerald L. Van Amburg, BRRWD Managers; Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator, and Erik S. Jones, Engineer, Houston Engineering, Inc. (H.E.); Don Schultz, Area Wildlife Manager, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Doug Wells, Fergus Falls Wetland Management District (WMD) and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Anthony Nelson, Farm Bill Biologist, Pheasants Forever (PF); Lynn Foss, Clay Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Mandy Erickson, Fisheries, DNR; Julie Aadland, Area Hydrologist, DNR; Pete Waller, Board Conservationist, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR); Brian Winter, Program Director, The Nature Conservancy (TNC); and Alice Klink, State Wetland Restoration Biologist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Members absent were: Breanna L. Paradeis Kobiela and Cathy L. Affield, BRRWD Managers; Shawn May, Detroit Lakes WMD and USFWS; Emily Siira, Area Hydrologist, DNR; Henry Van Offelen, Red River Basin Coordinator, DNR; Edward J. Musielewicz, District Conservationist, Becker NRCS; Keith Weston, Red River Retention Authority/NRCS; 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); Larry Martin, USFWS and Fergus Falls WMD; Kevin Kassenborg, District Manager, Clay SWCD; Robert A. Zimmerman, Engineer, City of Moorhead; Keith Mykleseth, Assistant Regional Manager, Division of Ecological and Water Resources, DNR; Jim Ziegler, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA); and Don Bajumpaa, District Manager, Wilkin County SWCD.

Albright called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. He briefly discussed the role of the Mediation PT as an advisor to the BRRWD regarding problem solving and project selection/development.

Business brought before the group included:

Meeting Minutes. The 07/18/13 meeting minutes were distributed with the meeting notice. Jones noted a few minor corrections. **Motion** by Aadland to approve the minutes with corrections. **Seconded** by Foss. **Approved.**

Long Term Flood Damage Reduction (FDR) Goals/Opportunities. Albright discussed types of retention/detention projects/options the BRRWD could consider within the District. The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) has taken the lead in identifying long term flood strategies for the Red River Basin. Albright discussed the RRBC's Long Term Flood Study (LTFS), which calls for a goal of a 20% stage reduction at each of the major gauging stations along the Red River of the North. Albright asked if the PT would consider acting as an advisor for the BRRWD in the proposed 20% reduction effort. The RRBC received \$500,000 from the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority to develop the "Halstad Upstream Study" (HUR), which can be used to determine the downstream benefits of possible storage sites for the F-M Diversion area.

Jones summarized the Power Point presentation given by the RRBC at a recent meeting in West Fargo. He discussed the HEC-HMS and HEC-RAS modeling tools, which is based on LiDAR data. Two modeling efforts have been undertaken for the North Dakota and Minnesota sides of the Red River. North Dakota Detention Plan's methodology includes large scale sites with identification of all apparent sites and multiple condition scenarios and runoff events. In the upstream watersheds, the North Dakota study identified over 100 site options and concluded the tributary peak reductions in excess of 35% was possible to achieve, as well as flood volume reductions in excess of 20%, which means that the LTFS goals were achievable with off-channel sites needed to control peak flows. Jones explained that Minnesota's strategy differed from North Dakota's comprehensive approach. Minnesota's Expanded Distributed Detention Strategy includes the identification of large scale sites within a watershed to meet the LTFS goals and establish flood damage reduction (fdr) for the Red River main stem. Their methodology includes Detention Site Identification (10-30 square miles); LiDAR derived elevation/storage data (goal of 3"-4" of gated storage per site); Hydrologic Analysis using the COE's HEC-HMS model; and the creation of a summary analysis report based on existing conditions vs. proposed conditions with watershed scale mapping. Jones used the BRRWD retention study as an example of the Minnesota approach.

The HUR Project's scope is to provide information to advance the RRBC's LTFS report and to provide assistance to the FM Diversion Authority on how to prioritize/allocate the approved \$24.5 million in detention funding. Jones also discussed the HUR and the Red River Basin standardized melt progression event model development, plus a preliminary scenario for 20% peak flow volume reduction per subwatersheds. The group reviewed information that will be available to provide decision making assistance regarding potential project funding, including peak flow reduction, volume reduction (total/relative to peak flow window), and the proportion of 20% Red River Peak Flow Reduction Plan.

Albright briefly discussed the accelerated Project Planning Tool that is now available to Watershed Districts to assist in the development of retention/detention projects based on LiDAR data. The group discussed three potential retention sites within the BRRWD: Sabin Coulee, the Upper South Branch of the Buffalo River (Rogelstad site), and Barnesville Township Study southwest of the City of Barnesville along the beach ridge. All three sites could include setback levees, retention sites, channel restoration, and culvert resizing. Albright noted that the first step in the development of these sites would be to hold public informational meetings to see if there is landowner interest in the projects. He added now that a number of the BRRWD's larger projects are coming to completion, we'll need to refocus our efforts on new projects to address historic landowner concerns, such as the Barnesville Township Study area.

Albright distributed copies of pages from the BRRWD's Comprehensive Plan regarding the BRRWD FDR goals broken down by planning regions. Wells asked if one particular area might develop quicker. In response, Albright discussed the similarity between the Barnesville Township area and the Whiskey Creek Tributaries project. Klink asked if there are sites that have specifically targeted problems and if the BRRWD has contacted the landowners. Albright noted that most landowners express concerns about having an fdr site on their property. The BRRWD started studying the Barnesville Township area in the 1980s. All of the noted sites have waterways that have been identified by MPCA as impaired. Albright talked about the issues that need to be addressed when developing a project in conjunction with private property owners, and the items that could be reviewed at a given informational meeting. Winter asked if there were possible smaller individual retention projects landowners could install on their own property to address reduction concerns. He suggested that there should be a balance between drainage projects and retention efforts. More discussion followed regarding other Watershed Districts' retention/detention projects, possible landowner incentives to encourage participation, and site selection. Albright thought the BRRWD could hold informational meetings for all three potential project areas this winter. The BRRWD will notify the PT when the meetings are scheduled.

Project No. 56, Manston Slough Restoration. Albright reported on the status of the construction work for the project. The contractor got started on the project late this fall and will return next spring as soon as conditions permit. The project has a 9/30/14 completion deadline. The office is still working on easement acquisition. ARC Appraisals has started the appraisal process the Kent Rod & Gun Club "friendly" condemnation. Albright explained the process.

Project No. 49, Oakport Flood Mitigation. Albright discussed the status of the project and noted that as soon as Phase 4 funding has been secured, the BRRWD will be able to move this project forward to completion. The BRRWD needs approximately \$5.26 million from the 2014 State bonding bill to complete Phase 4. The DNR has approved the levee certification on the east side of the coulee. The 90-day review period by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has expired and the east side levee has been certified.

Wolverton Creek/Comstock Coulee. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) comment period expired on 12/11/13. Albright discussed the comments we received from the State Historical Society, DNR, and MPCA. None of the comments should make it necessary for the BRRWD to provide an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The BRRWD submitted an application for the BWSR Targeted Watershed Demonstration Program. Waller explained the scope of the grant program and interview process. BWSR will contact the applicants regarding their decision for this 4-year grant in January/February 2014.

Project No. 39, Georgetown Levee Improvements. The contractor basically finished the levee this fall, with cleanup to be completed next spring. Albright reported on house moving/basement issues that will be completed before spring.

COE F-M Diversion. Albright discussed ongoing plans regarding the Diversion project. The group discussed the internal flood control work that the Cities of Fargo and Moorhead continue to work on. He noted that Moorhead is further ahead on this front than Fargo. Moorhead estimates that they will need approximately \$7.2 million from the 2014 bonding bill to finish their work.

Buffalo River Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)/Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan (WRPP). The study has been completed and will be distributed for review in the near future. The MPCA contract has been extended to allow for the comment period, with a completion date of 06/30/14. The study focused on turbidity and now that has changed to total suspended solids (TSS). The results can be recalibrated to account for the change. Albright explained that the BRRWD would have had reaches that would have been listed as impaired on the turbidity scale that will no longer be impaired, according to TSS.

Upper Red River TMDL/WRPP Studies. The Upper Red River TMDL study is now under the supervision of Cary Hernandez, MPCA. The MPCA had planned to use the Hydrologic Simulation Program FORTRAN (HSPF) model, but currently, data is not available to populate the model. Albright noted that this project is currently on hold and will be continued next year with a revised workplan using the Surface Water Assessment Tool (SWAT).

The Upper Red River TMDL study was also looking at bacteria in the Red River in the Fargo-Moorhead reaches. It appears that this stretch will be delisted as impaired as a result of this study, which will also now change the scope and focus of this study.

BRRWD Strategic Planning. BWSR provided a \$4,000 grant for the BRRWD to begin a strategic planning effort, which will include an evaluation of office operations/District performance and the

development of a strategic plan for the BRRWD to outline a future course of action to allow the District to attain our watershed management goals. The planning effort should be completed by the end of March/April 2014.

Whiskey Creek Erosion. Albright mentioned that the project plans have changed in response to DNR concerns about the proposal to clean sediment from the Whiskey Creek channel for the first mile downstream of Trunk Highway (T.H.) No. 9, in Section 14, Connelly Township, Wilkin County. Changes include a minimum of a 50-foot buffer on each side of the channel, an elliptical shaped bottom, excavation would follow the existing channel alignment to maintain meanders, a floodplain bench where channel depth is greater than 3 feet, and total floodplain bench width of approximately 30 feet. Area landowners will be invited to an informational meeting in Breckenridge (to be scheduled).

Otter Tail River Erosion. The BRRWD submitted two Clean Water Fund (CWF) applications this fall. One was for an erosion sites along the Otter Tail River in the NE¼, Section 31, Foxhome Township, Wilkin County, on the Etten/Wilson properties, and another site in Glyndon Township, Clay County. Waller thought that BWSR would have a decision regarding funding in January.

Activities Update. Albright distributed the most recent BRRWD press release for the PT's review.

Watershed District Enlargement. Albright noted that plans are to assemble the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) after the Holidays to start the planning effort for the new area. BWSR's One Watershed, One Plan (1W1P) will affect how the BRRWD moves forward with our Revised Watershed Management Plan (RWMP) for the new area, as well as the existing District. Wilkin County would like to participate in 1W1P, so the Board will need to discuss this program with the other Counties to see if they would also be interested. If they do, it will alter our timeline for RWMP completion.

Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP). Albright discussed the BRRWD's selection as one of the four pilot project areas in Minnesota for Whiskey Creek in Wilkin County. The program will run for three years. Wilkin County has already been working with a farming operation for certification under this program. Albright discussed the certification process. The State has earmarked approximately \$3 million and the NRCS approximately \$6 million for the implementation of this program and for the pilot areas to use as incentives.

RRBFDRWG. Albright distributed the information packet from the Red River Basin Flood Damage Reduction Work Group (RRBFDRWG) meeting held yesterday (12/18/13). He noted that PT non-state agency personnel expenses can be used as a qualified match for reimbursement.

Next Meeting. The next PT meetings are tentatively scheduled for Thursday, January 23, 2014, and March 27, 2014, in the Barnesville office.

Adjournment. There being no further business to come before the group, Albright adjourned the meeting at 4:00 PM.

Respectfully Prepared and Submitted by

Bruce E. Albright, BRRWD Administrator