



RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONER ASKS FOR HELP WITH DEVILS LAKE FLOODING PROBLEMS

The vice chairman of the Ramsey County Commission had a message for area leaders Tuesday morning — it will take the support of a number of water boards from North Dakota and Minnesota to find a lasting solution to Devils Lake flooding problems.

Joe Belford spoke at the Red River Joint Water Resource Council meeting, comprised of administrators from around the Red River Valley, to say that the lake's rapid rise is "becoming a very traumatic issue."

He explained that it is less than 7 feet below a level where water would spill into the Sheyenne River, which could lead to major flooding problems in cities along the Red River, where the water eventually would flow.

"It's becoming everybody's problem," he said.

An outlet currently pumping about 100 cubic feet of water per second into the Sheyenne only will lower the lake level by less than 6 inches, even if it operates until it freezes in the winter. Officials want to install new pumps that could release 250 cfs.

Considering that the lake has risen more than 3 feet in the past year and heavy rains can cause rapid water increases, the current situation is a cause for alarm, he said.

"We need support," he said. "We're at the critical point here. Together, we've got to solve it."

The necessary infrastructure upgrades to prepare for bigger pumps could take a few years to complete.

The biggest problem, though, is the expense — Belford said North Dakota doesn't have the dollars needed to do this on its own. The state already is preparing to raise roads and add to dikes to protect the area from floodwaters, and that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

But he said it will affect everyone if it isn't addressed soon. "It's going to be damn costly," he said. "If it breaks out, it's going to be more costly yet."

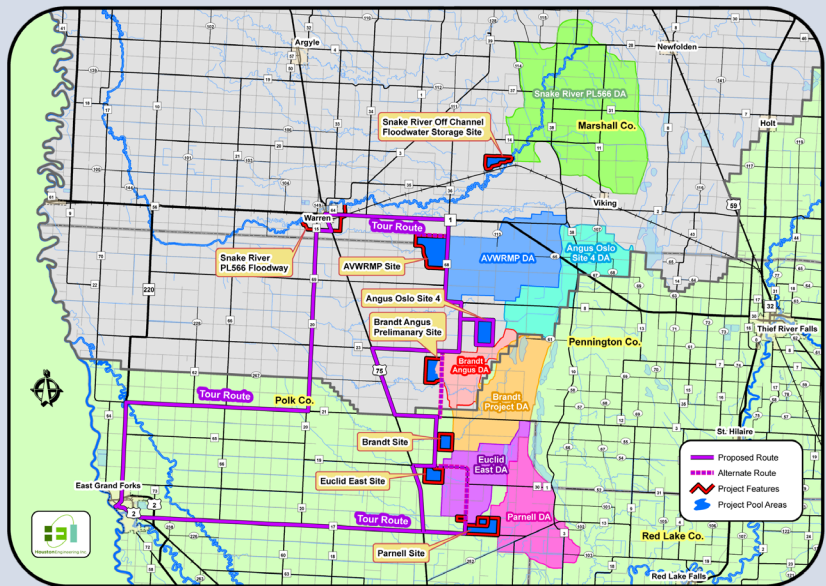
OTHER NEWS

Also discussed at the meeting were the steps each state has taken to reduce flood damage.

Myron Jesme, administrator of the Red Lake Watershed District, told the Herald that a number of impoundments are constructed and operational in the northern areas of Minnesota. Officials took a tour of these sites after the meeting.

The impoundments are built in areas

RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE BOARD AND RED RIVER WATERSHED MANAGEMENT BOARD TOUR MAP



As part of their joint meeting on July 21, the Red River Joint Water Resource Board and Red River Watershed Management Board toured projects in the Red Lake and Middle-Snake-Tamarac Rivers Watershed Districts.

RRWMB MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

At its regularly scheduled July meeting, the RRWMB:

- Discussed the FY 2010 RRWMB tax levy rate and approved maintaining the levy at 100%.
- Received a report from Ron Harnack, Project Coordinator.
- Authorized a request from the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy (MCEA) to submit a joint request to the Northwest Minnesota Foundation for a grant of \$25,000 to be used towards salaries and related expenses for project team participation of the MCEA in the Wild Rice and Two Rivers Watershed Districts.
- Approved the reallocation of \$1M previously authorized for the local share of natural resource enhancements for the North Ottawa Impoundment Project of the Bois de Sioux Watershed District and also an additional \$750,000 to provide a match for state funds to be used towards land acquisition for the Redpath Project.
- Discussed the future of the Water Quality Project Monitoring effort toward the development of a more basin-wide approach and agreed to convene various stakeholders to further discuss the available options.
- Received a report from Naomi Erickson, Administrator.
- Authorized the installation of a new gaging station east of Enloe, North Dakota with the U.S. Geological Survey to provide for an earlier flood forecast for the cities of Fargo/Moorhead.
- Discussed land acquisition for the Brandt-Angus Flood Control Project of the Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District.
- Toured projects in the Red Lake and Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed Districts in conjunction with the meeting conducted with the Red River Joint Water Resource Board of North Dakota following the board meeting.

EVENTS COMING UP

The next scheduled meeting of the RRWMB will be held at the Wild Rice WD, 11 5th Avenue East, Ada, MN, on August 18th, starting at 9:30 a.m.

where runoff would pool naturally. The concept is similar to the idea proposed by the Energy and Environmental Research Center in its Waffle Plan — temporarily storing the water prevents it from flowing into the river system as quickly and can help reduce river levels

during a flood.

Jesme said each one by itself has a localized effect, but if many are built, it could add up to a big change in flooding each spring.

“The hope of the Red board is when you go all the way from northern Min-

nesota, all the way to Wheaton, Minn., and you have projects like this, that it ultimately takes peak off the Red River,” he said.

But North Dakota isn't as organized, he said, and one of his goals at the meeting was to find common ground for what each state could do.

“It affects everyone all the way down the line,” he said.

Jeff Volk, president of Moore Engineering, used examples of this spring's flooding and also spoke about how much larger the flood events may have been without some of these safeguards in place in North Dakota.

One of these is the Sheyenne River diversion, which he said was very effective. “The city of West Fargo was able to go help other communities this spring,” he said.

The Baldhill Dam, upstream of Valley City, N.D., also was a help to some communities this year, he said. Even though it originally was constructed to create a recreational body of water, Volk said it ended up being vital this year.

“Without it, Lisbon would have had a dramatically different flood,” he said.

But Volk also said the boards need to address another issue — people saying agricultural drainage is the reason major floods have become more common.

“If we sit back and do nothing, it's going to continue,” he said. “We've got a common problem I think we need to solve.”

(This article was reprinted courtesy of the Grand Forks Herald, R. Johnson.)

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