

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING
RED RIVER JOINT WATER RESOURCE DISTRICT FULL BOARD
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
SEPTEMBER 22, 2021

A virtual / conference call meeting of the Red River Joint Water Resource District Full Board was held on September 22, 2021, at 9:30 a.m.

Present were Gary Thompson, Traill County Water Resource District; Tom Perdue, Grand Forks County Water Resource District; Rodger Olson, Maple River Water Resource District; Ben Varnson, Nelson County Water Resource District; Don Kemp, Pembina County Water Resource District; Arv Burvee, Richland County Water Resource District; William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District; Michael Wyum, Sargent County Water Resource District; Dan Jacobson, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Nina Stone, Accountant; Melissa Maertens, Administrative Assistant; Sean M. Fredricks, Ohnstad Twichell, P.C.; Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Keith Weston, Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) Executive Director; Dani Hanson, North Dakota Water Users Association; Joel Galloway and Daniel Thomas, United States Geological Survey (USGS); Blake Carlson, Natural Resources Conservation Service; Ted Preister, Red River Basin Commission (RRBC) Executive Director; Zach Herrmann, Mike Opat and Gabe Bladow, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Kurt Lysne and Josh Hassell, Moore Engineering, Inc.; and Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co. Barnes County, North Cass, Ransom County, Steele County and Walsh County Water Resource Districts were absent.

Agenda

It was moved by Ben Varnson, seconded by Michael Wyum and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda, as presented.

Minutes

It was moved by Dan Jacobson, seconded by Arv Burvee and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2021, meeting.

Secretary position and official office

Gary Thompson reported the Secretary of the Red River Joint Water Resource District has resigned effective immediately and a new Secretary and official office needs to be designated for the Red River Joint Water Resource District. Sean Fredricks discussed the process to amend the Red River Joint Water Resource District by-laws to change the official office location of the Water Resource District. The Board directed Mr. Fredricks to draft the necessary changes to the Red River Joint Water Resource District by-laws to change the location of the official office.

A motion was made by Dan Jacobson and seconded by Michael Wyum to appoint Carol Harbeke Lewis as Secretary-Treasurer of the Red River Joint Water Resource District. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

USGS Joint Funding Agreement for FY 2022

Joel Galloway described the 2021-2022 Cooperative Monitoring Program, which includes operation and maintenance of 17 stream gages. The USGS is currently in the process of upgrading the data collection platforms for all stream gages at no cost to the Red River Joint Water Resource District. Mr. Galloway noted the recent low water conditions gives the USGS an opportunity to define the low stream flow gage measurements for the Red River Basin as well as perform maintenance on the stream gages.

Upon recommendation by the Executive Committee, it was moved by Rodger Olson and seconded by Don Kemp to approve the *Joint Funding Agreement* with the USGS for continued cooperative streamflow monitoring programs for the period October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022, not to exceed \$141,970 for FY 2022. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Metro Flood Diversion Project report

Rodger Olson reported on recent activities regarding the Metro Flood Diversion Project. Red River Valley Alliance was awarded the contract for the construction of the Diversion Channel and Associated Infrastructure of the Project. Mr. Olson also reported on construction progress of the Diversion Inlet Structure, the Wild Rice River Control Structure, the Southern Embankment – Reach I and the I-29 road raise components of the Metro Flood Diversion project. Crown Appraisals, Inc. continues to work on Phase IB of the *Market Study of the Effects on Farmland Value due to Flooding and Flood Easements*. The study is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year. Mr. Olson noted work is also being completed on crop insurance programs for property owners impacted by the Metro Flood Diversion Project. More information on the Metro Flood Diversion Project can be found at www.fmdiversion.gov.

Elm River Joint Water Resource District – Elm River Watershed Study – additional cost-share request

Discussion was next held on an additional cost-share request from Elm River Joint Water Resource District, which is comprised of North Cass, Steele County and Traill County Water Resource Districts. Robert Thompson stated additional funds are needed to finish the preliminary engineering for the Elm River Watershed Study, as two additional project alternatives were proposed during the public meeting. The addition of two alternatives increases the total project cost from \$120,000 to \$180,000. Randy Gjestvang indicated study of the additional alternatives will help produce a sound project regarding the Elm River Dams.

As recommended by the Executive Committee, it was moved by Michael Wyum and seconded by Ben Varnson to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the *First Amendment to Cost-Share Agreement* with Traill County Water Resource District regarding the Elm River Watershed Study for 65% cost-share of the non-federal, non-

state share, not to exceed \$46,800, with expenses incurred after August 11, 2021, being eligible for cost-share under this amendment. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer's report

Discussion was held on recent legislation passed relating to compensation for Water Resource District Managers. It was moved by Dan Jacobson and seconded by Don Kemp to increase compensation for Red River Joint Water Resource District Managers as set out in HB 1216. Upon roll call vote, the following member Water Resource Districts voted in favor: Nelson County, Pembina County, Richland County, Rush River, Sargent County, Southeast Cass and Traill County. Grand Forks County voted against the motion. Barnes County, Maple River, North Cass, Ransom County, Steele County and Walsh County were absent. The motion carried.

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Dan Jacobson to approve the Financial Report, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Legislative updates

Dani Hanson and Sean Fredricks reported on legislative updates regarding water resource districts. Discussion was held on the SB 2208 interim study. Ms. Hanson invited everyone to attend a reception on October 12, 2021, with North Dakota legislators and Andrea Travnicek, the Director of the North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR). Ms. Travnicek will be discussing the activities and priorities of the NDDWR during the reception.

Pilot projects

Mr. Fredricks discussed legislation regarding appropriation of funds for water resource districts. The legislation includes \$1,000,000 in available funds. Mr. Fredricks stated he will work with the Water Topics Overview Committee on the matter and more information on the legislation will be brought to a future meeting.

Mr. Fredricks next discussed a potential pilot project for funding drainage projects in the Red River Basin through the Red River Joint Water Resource District. Discussion was held on the concept of watershed planning in the Red River Basin. Mr. Fredricks noted the development of a potential pilot project is in its infancy and more discussion on the concept will be held in the future.

Red River Watershed Management Board report

A brief report was given on recent activities of the Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB). The RRWMB is celebrating its 45th anniversary and is currently preparing for the 2022 Minnesota legislative session to secure funding for flood hazard mitigation projects in Minnesota. The RRWMB is also pursuing contracts for LiDAR collection and LiDAR-derived products.

International Water Institute report

A brief report was given on recent activities of the International Water Institute (IWI). Funding for River Watch and River of Dreams programs in North Dakota is projected to be depleted by July 2022. IWI staff plan to submit a grant proposal to the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality in October for FY 2023 and 2024 funding for the programs. The Red River Joint Water Resource District is the current local sponsor for these programs in North Dakota.

Red River Basin Commission report

Ted Preister reported on recent activities and projects of the RRBC. The September Ex-Officio and Board meeting and tour was held September 1-2, 2021, in Moorhead, Minnesota. New projects include optimizing nutrient reduction in the Hillsboro, North Dakota, lagoon and a Manitoba, Canada, marsh. The RRBC is also working with the RRWMB on their LiDAR collection for FY 2022.

Red River Retention Authority report

Keith Weston reported on recent meetings and activities of the RRRRA. The RRRRA continues to work on progressing watershed plans through the Natural Resources Conservation Service PL-566 program. Mr. Weston displayed maps of flood damage reduction projects in the Red River Basin and indicated the RRRRA is currently drafting a 2022 watershed priority project list. Mr. Weston briefly discussed meetings with the Flood Damage Reduction Work Group Planning Committee regarding floodplain mapping and funding options for future water projects. Mr. Weston indicated commercials have been produced for various flood damage reduction projects in the Red River Basin and there are opportunities for other projects in the Red River Basin to be highlighted through commercials under the current contract with Midwest Radio of Fargo-Moorhead. The next RRRRA meeting is December 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at the Cass County Highway Department.

North Dakota Department of Water Resources / State Water Commission report

Mr. Gjestvang reported on recent meetings and activities he has participated in. Mr. Gjestvang noted 7 high-hazard dam rehabilitation projects in the Red River Basin are ongoing and discussed various map services available through the NDDWR. Brief discussion was held on the ongoing Lower Red River Regional Detention Analysis study.

Meeting schedule

The next meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2021, at 12:00 p.m. at the Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center in Bismarck, North Dakota. The meeting coincides with the 58th Annual Joint North Dakota Water Convention.

Adjournment

There being no further business to be considered by the Board, the meeting adjourned without objection.

APPROVED:

Gary Thompson
Chairman

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Secretary-Treasurer