

WILD RICE WATERSHED DISTRICT
11 Fifth Avenue East
Ada, MN 56510

Project Team Meeting
March 7, 2007

A meeting of the Wild Rice Watershed District Project Team was held at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 7, 2007, at the District office in Ada, Minnesota. The meeting was called to order. Following is the agenda:

- South Branch Storage Project
- Mainstem Reevaluation
- Upper Felton Alternative Analysis

Engineer Bents provided a Power Point Presentation update on the South Branch Storage Project. Wetland impacts and methods of determining replacement acres were discussed. Bents stated that currently the COE is using the Austin Method to determine acreage. Brent Kappes asked why mitigation is necessary when he felt the DNR would be gaining 5-6,000 acres of wetland and why is it necessary to take farmland. Henry VanOffelen stated that 85-90% of the South Branch is agricultural land. The agencies have reviewed 15-18 of the sites which included state and federal land and for a variety of reasons determined what is feasible to store water. He said there are only certain places that water can be stored and that is the process that has been used to date to get to this point. Lawrence Pollock commented that he would strongly express that he is here for water retention, not for making more wetlands.

Brian Dwight commented on mitigation needs stating that mitigation requirements are set by the federal government and WCA rules governed by the State of Minnesota. This group at the table works to assist in developing a project that meets the needs required under the law. Jerry Bents said that landowners have asked why all storage has to be off channel and nothing on channel. Kappes felt that landowners are already storing water on farmland during major flood events. Dwight asked why the WRWD is looking at additional sites at this time? Warren Seykora stated that the board needs to look at all sites. The comment was made that landowners are concerned about the District using 8,000 acres of farmlands and losing their farmland to flood storage.

Richard Smith, landowner on one of the Project #42 sites, stated that he doesn't feel that the Project Team members have been made aware of the opposition. Smith stated that there is a 100% opposition to the project. Lawrence Pollock stated that there is a need to hold water for a long time before it is released and there are gigantic valleys in the area that could be used. Van Offelen stated that buildings on property in those areas would cause the cost of the project to increase. The question was raised as to why the Hagen site is not included in the study. Diane Ista felt the Hagen site is feasible and the environment could be protected and something positive done alone with retention.

Brian Dwight stated that before a lot of money is spent, from a permitting perspective, there are two entities who cannot be ignored, the DNR and dam safety considerations; COE Rivers and Harbors Act, and anything that is considered on channel should be reviewed with DNR Waters and COE, as the likeliness of getting a permit is slim to none. Curt Jacobson stated that onstream storage should be researched as constituents will require it and there is a need to address the sediment. Henry VanOffelen stated that as members of an advisory to the WRWD Board, they are saying that there are going to be a considerable amount of mitigation acres if the Hagen site is pursued. Warren Seykora stated that no one who has property wants to give up their land, however the WRWD has laws they need to follow which will take farmland to mitigate the on stream storage. Eric Bakke stated that he felt there were better ways of doing this than taking all of these farmland acres for storage. Lawrence Pollock stated that he thinks it would be a consensus of landowners to stay within the stream banks and questioned if a series of smaller dams would work as effectively. Manager Wagner stated that the Board needs to listen to the agencies at the table; laws have been made and the agency personnel are abiding by these laws. County Commissioner Steve Jacobson stated that he would like the WRWD to address the Hagen site and if it is not possible to build, show constituents why it is not possible. David Larson asked why the Becker Dams modifications have not been investigated. Seykora stated that the District is awaiting the results of the LIDAR data.

Administrator Dalen stated that the Board wants to address on stream storage and questioned what PT members would recommend. Earl Johnson said that realistically we are not seeing recognition of what went into the Project #42 design; early on the issue was addressed to get as many acre –feet of storage per dollar investment as possible, therefore not many on-channel sites were investigated. He stated that agencies have to live under the rules, and do not have a choice. Scott Kahan echoed the same sentiment. Consensus of the members was that Borchert, Wagner and VanOffelen will look at the four sites that have already been approved.

General Reevaluation of the Twin Valley Dam. Members were reminded that a Twin Valley Dam reevaluation meeting is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on March 29, 2007, at the Twin Valley Community Center. Judy DeSharnais of the COE will be attending and discussing the COE process. Congressman Collin Peterson has indicated that he is supporting the current Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) bill which is an avenue that the Twin Valley Dam and alternatives may be investigated.

Upper Felton Alternative Analysis. It was reported that the WRWD Board has agreed to notice all landowners in the Upper Felton area asking them to indicate if they would have land available for storage.

There being no further business to come before the members the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.