

# Goose Prairie Project Team

Regular Meeting  
January 29, 2014

A meeting of the Goose Prairie Project Team was held on Wednesday, January 29, 2014, at the Wild Rice Watershed District (WRWD) Office. Those in attendance included: Curt Johannsen, WRWD Manager; Duane Erickson, WRWD Manager; Mike Christiansen, WRWD Manager; Shawnn Balstad, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Emily Siira, Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Tara Mercil, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA); Mark Christianson, Norman County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Larry Puchalski, US Army Corps of Engineers; Brett Arne, BWSR; Steve Bommersbach, Norman County Commissioner; Jessica Vanduyn, DNR; Don Schultz, DNR; Henry Van Offelen, DNR; Jerry Bents, Houston Engineering; Kevin Ruud, WRWD Administrator; Nathan Olson, DNR Fisheries; Jamison Wendel, Red River Fisheries Specialist; Brian Dwight, BWSR; Jim Courneya, MPCA; Mark Harless, Landowner; Adam Kleinschmidt, Becker County Pheasants Forever Farm Biologist; Kevin Kassenborg, Clay County Soil and Water Conservation District; Tony Nelson, Clay County Farm Bill Biologist; Steve Hofstad, BWSR; and Tara Jensen, WRWD Bookkeeper.

Engineer Bents began the meeting with a summary of the agenda and an overview of historical pictures to detail the reasoning behind a decision to look at a potential project in this area. Schultz added that in recent years the water level has been higher and a controlled water level could improve wildlife habitats.

Engineer Bents asked those in attendance to assist in defining the project problem and purpose. The following was determined:

- I. Problems
  - a. Natural Resources
    - i. Degraded wetland and wildlife habitat conditions due to the water level
    - ii. Lack of upland buffers and adjacent nesting conditions
    - iii. Abundant rough fish
  - b. Flood Problems
    - i. Two roadways overtopping
    - ii. Private property seepage
    - iii. Regional flooding issue with South Brand and Lower Wild Rice
- II. Purpose
  - a. Natural Resources
    - i. Improve habitat conditions through water level management. Not directed towards a singular species, rather a multi species habitat.
    - ii. Evaluate potential for upland buffers and roundouts
    - iii. Eliminate fish to improve water quality and invertebrate conditions.
  - b. Flood Problems
    - i. Minimize or reduce the frequency and duration of overtopping roads
    - ii. Evaluate alternatives to stabilize water level

- iii. Ensure solution is compatible with the Watershed plan and Red River Basin Commission plan for downstream peaks and flooding.

Engineer Bents reported that surveys along the channel leading to the marsh were completed and two options for a project were developed. The first would include a control structure on 115<sup>th</sup> avenue with would require raising the roadway. The second option includes a control structure along the channel to the south. Each would have respective pros and cons that would have to be evaluated prior to determining which one is ideal.

Schultz added that the Department of Natural Resources would like to have the ability to drawn down the marsh from mid to late fall prior to spring flooding. Water could be held on the marsh until the approximately the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, provided that the draw down is completed prior to the May 1<sup>st</sup> nesting period. Summer draw downs would depend on the quality and number of plants in the basin.

Siira reported that the main Goose Prairie Marsh is classified as a wetland of 86 and is listed as a basin. The ordinary high water level was determined to be 1,207.5 in December. The natural channel bottom is currently 1,205 with the culvert on the north end of the basin at 1,203. Siira provided that the easiest route to obtain the ability to draw down to 1,203 would be to get permanent flowage easements from all surrounding property owners. If these cannot be obtained it would be necessary to hold a public hearing and change the designation of the basin to a game lake.

A discussion was held regarding the permitting abilities of those in attendance. WCA would hold interest if fringe wetlands are permanently affected. It was mentioned that when more than one jurisdiction is involved, one can delegate all implications to the other for a project. The major focus of the project was determined to be habitat management with a minor focus on flood damage reduction. Puchalski added that he would have to do more research to determine the type of permit required by the corps, but there is a chance that it could fall under a general permit classification which would require less time and work to obtain.

Following a discussion regarding the control structure and agreed upon levels it was decided that a control structure that allows variable levels would be the most ideal. Vanduyn added that the major concern from a DNR standpoint is that the water level is drawn down by May 1<sup>st</sup>. The agreed upon draw down level was 1,203 and a bounce level of 1,207.5. Vanduyn and Schultz agreed that they would look at options for a higher bounce if the ability to drawn down by the set deadline could be provided. The amount and length of bounce would be determined dependent on the control structure used.

In conclusion, Administrator Ruud provided an update regarding the Lower Wild Rice project, informing Project Team members that a land owner has come forward willing to sell 320 acres along the potential project. Engineer Bents added that this area has been looked at for quite some time for channel restoration to assist with flooding issues along the Wild Rice River. This would be just a piece of the whole 20 mile corridor. Currently Houston Engineering is working to develop marketing and conceptual plans on how to acquire land in this area and seeking funding assistance. The flood damage reduction group will review the information at their February meeting.

