

MINUTES OF MEETING  
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY  
CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT  
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA  
SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) met on September 10, 2019, at 1:00 p.m. at the Cass County Highway Department, West Fargo, North Dakota.

Present were John Finney, Gary Thompson, Ben Varnson, Greg Holmvik, Rodger Olson (by phone) and Roger Mischel, Board members; Pat Fridgen, non-voting member (by phone); Keith Weston, Executive Director; Carol Harbeke Lewis, Secretary-Treasurer; Melissa Maertens, Administrative Assistant; Debra Walchuk, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); LeRoy Ose, Red Lake Watershed District; Dan Jacobson, Southeast Cass Water Resource District; Chuck Fritz, International Water Institute; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Zach Hermann and Mike Opat, Houston Engineering, Inc.; and Allison Myhre, Congressman Peterson's Office (by phone).

Gary Thompson called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

**Agenda**

It was moved by John Finney, seconded by Ben Varnson and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda.

**Minutes**

It was moved by Greg Holmvik, seconded by Roger Mischel and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 26, 2019, meeting.

**Financial Report**

It was moved by John Finney, seconded by Roger Mischel and unanimously carried to approve the Financial Report, as presented.

**Bills**

It was moved by Greg Holmvik and seconded by John Finney to approve the payment of Checks #1569 through #1574, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Outreach Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-512**

Discussion was held regarding utilizing the remaining funds from *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-512* to sponsor soil health kits for the Wilkin County Soil Health Program. The Wilkin County Soil Health Program helps farmers learn how to better manage soils

through targeting and promoting soil health best management practices in watersheds. The soil health kits will be used to provide a free, in-field soil health assessment to program participants. The equipment and materials for the soil health kits can be purchased prior to the expiration of *Cooperative Agreement 68-6633-16-512* on September 30, 2019.

It was moved by Ben Varnson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to fund the purchase of soil health kits for the Wilkin County Soil Health Program in the amount of \$2,493. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 Memorandum of Understanding – request to extend and amend**

Keith Weston reported NRCS assisted with creating an updated map of the 16 remaining Red River Basin projects participating in the NRCS RCPP program.

Mr. Weston noted the North Dakota NRCS has reached out to discuss the possibility of a non-competitive renewal of *NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 Memorandum of Understanding*. The renewal is geared towards areas that already have success in the RCPP program. Mr. Weston indicated since none of the participating watersheds in the Red River Basin have submitted a finished RCPP plan, pursuing the renewal at this time may be premature. It was suggested to discuss the possibility of a non-competitive renewal of *NRCS Agreement 14-C-ND-669 Memorandum of Understanding* next year, after some watersheds in the Red River Basin have submitted RCPP plans. The Board agreed.

Mr. Weston stated the NRCS recently announced the availability of additional fiscal year 2019 funds for the RCPP program. Applications will be accepted until December 3, 2019, for any new projects that might be eligible for the RCPP program.

Discussion was held regarding the possibility of forming a Basin Technical and Scientific Advisory Committee to attempt to quantitatively and qualitatively assign values to wetlands and water quality for the Red River Basin. Project sponsors within the Red River Basin could use the data as technical evidence for projects. Debra Walchuk indicated the NRCS has begun a water quality initiative which may already have data on values for water quality. John Finney stated the data the RRRA is interested in may already exist and suggested more research be done to gather any existing data that quantitatively and qualitatively assigns values to wetlands and water quality. Mr. Weston will gather more information regarding existing data of values of wetlands and water quality and bring the information to a future meeting for further discussion.

**NRCS Report**

Debra Walchuk reported on meetings and conferences attended and NRCS updates.

Challenges relating to the economic analysis for RCPP Watershed Plans were discussed. Kevin Farmer and Doris Washington from the NRCS National Watershed Management Center visited the Red River Basin on July 8 and 9, 2019, and facilitated discussion

regarding benefit-cost analyses of local RCPP Watershed Plans with project sponsors. Mr. Farmer and Ms. Washington also toured various RCPP project areas in the Red River Basin. Discussion regarding benefit-cost analyses of RCPP Watershed Plans is still ongoing with NRCS officials. Mr. Farmer encouraged project sponsors to request waivers for RCPP Watershed Plans without a positive benefit-cost analysis. Discussion was held regarding obtaining waiver requests for RCPP Watershed Plans.

Ms. Walchuk presented a brief update on the status of Minnesota and North Dakota RCPP Agreements.

### **Pine Lake RCPP Watershed Project**

Mr. Weston briefly reviewed a letter sent from the RRRRA to the NRCS regarding Pine Lake Watershed's request to cease planning and terminate *Agreement 68-6322-16-503* regarding the Pine Lake RCPP Watershed Project.

### **Executive Director report**

A motion was made by John Finney and seconded by Ben Varnson to approve the purchase of a new laptop for use by the RRRRA Executive Director. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Weston distributed and briefly discussed an amendment to the Red River Basin Commission's Long Term Flood Solutions Project update project. The models for the 200 and 500-year flood events will be updated as part of the project.

Mr. Weston indicated the Red River Basin Commission reached out regarding booth space at the 2019 Prairie Grains Conference and Exposition on December 11-12, 2019. Mr. Weston recommended the RRRRA have a presence at the conference again, either in a shared or individual booth space. It was moved by Roger Mischel and seconded by Ben Varnson to approve and authorize the Executive Director to reserve one booth space for the RRRRA at the 2019 Prairie Grains Conference and Exposition in the amount of \$400. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Weston discussed the upcoming National Watershed Coalition Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, from September 29 to October 3, 2019. Mr. Weston indicated many NRCS officials will be in attendance and this conference may be a good networking opportunity for the RRRRA. A motion was made by Ben Varnson and seconded by John Finney to approve and authorize the Executive Director to attend the National Watershed Coalition Conference in Lexington, Kentucky, not to exceed a cost of \$1,500. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

### **Agency and partner reports**

Pat Fridgen reported North Dakota State Water Commission (NDSWC) subcommittee meetings are scheduled for Thursday, September 12, and the NDSWC meeting is scheduled for October 10, 2019.

Rodger Olson gave a brief update on the status of the Metro Flood Diversion Project. Progress continues with construction of the Diversion Inlet Structure and property acquisition. The Wild Rice River Control Structure will be bid later this year.

**Meeting schedule**

The next meeting will be held on December 12, 2019, at 2:00 p.m. at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

**Adjournment**

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

APPROVED:

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Gary Thompson  
Co-Chair

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John Finney  
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

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Carol Harbeke Lewis  
Secretary-Treasurer