

MINUTES OF SPECIAL VIRTUAL / CONFERENCE CALL MEETING
RED RIVER RETENTION AUTHORITY
ORIGINATING AT THE CASS COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT
WEST FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA
SEPTEMBER 15, 2021

The Red River Retention Authority (RRRA) held a virtual / conference call meeting on September 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Participating were John Finney, Gary Thompson, Greg Holmvik, Rodger Olson, Bill Petersen and Dan Jacobson (alternate for Ben Varnson), Board members; Theresa Ebbinga and Ted Preister, non-voting members; Keith Weston, Executive Director; Nina Stone, Accountant; Melissa Maertens, Administrative Assistant; Mary Podoll, Christi Fisher, Debra Walchuk and Cassie Ahmed, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Randy Gjestvang, North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR); Rob Sip, Red River Watershed Management Board (RRWMB); Blake Carlson, Widseth Smith Nolting; Tony Nordby, Houston Engineering, Inc.; Pat Downs, Moore Engineering, Inc.; Morrie Lanning, Barr Engineering Co.; and William A. Hejl, Rush River Water Resource District.

John Finney called the meeting to order and introductions were made.

Agenda

It was moved by Dan Jacobson, seconded by Rodger Olson and unanimously carried to approve the order of the agenda.

Minutes

It was moved by Gary Thompson, seconded by Greg Holmvik and unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2021, meeting.

Financial Report

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

Bills

It was moved by Gary Thompson and seconded by Greg Holmvik to approve the wire transfers, as presented. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

2020 Audit

A motion was made by Rodger Olson and seconded by Dan Jacobson to approve the 2020 Audit of the Red River Retention Authority. Upon roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

New NRCS / RRRR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Debra Walchuk informed the Board the new NRCS / RRRR MOU is now complete and executed. The NRCS remains committed to a working relationship and shared goals with the Red River Retention Authority.

NRCS report

Ms. Walchuk reported on various meetings attended and the status of various RCPP Watershed Plans in Minnesota. The remaining RCPP Agreements will be closed out as funding expires on September 30, 2021. Projects from April through June 2021 received \$236,094, and the total reimbursement to-date is \$4,696,101.33. Ms. Walchuk noted if the watershed projects with expiring Agreements wish to pursue additional funding, they will need to pursue a new Agreement with the NRCS.

Ms. Walchuk stated she is retiring on November 30, 2021, and there are no current plans for NRCS to fill the Red River Basin Coordinator position. Ms. Walchuk discussed various staff changes at NRCS and indicated the NRCS team leaders in the Red River Basin have been updated on the current projects and activities in the Basin and have been encouraged to join the project teams.

Christi Fischer reported the Rush River Watershed Plan is moving forward to the 60-day formal public comment period. The North Branch Park River Watershed Plan and Upper Maple River Watershed Plans are being revised based on comments received. The other active watershed plans in North Dakota continue to move forward. Ms. Fischer noted NRCS funding for project design will be handled separately from the funding that was allotted for development of watershed plans.

Discussion was held on potential available funding for watershed projects in the Red River Basin through various entities.

RRRA draft 2022 Priority Retention Projects List

Keith Weston discussed the draft 2022 Priority Retention Projects List and noted 17 projects are ongoing at this time. Discussion was held on the anticipated timing on construction of the projects on the list. The 2022 Priority Retention Projects List will be finalized at a future meeting.

Red River Floodplain Mapping Proposal

Mr. Weston reported the Minnesota Flood Damage Reduction Work Group is working to map the 10-year and 25-year floodplain, concentrating on agricultural land and related damages from flooding. Mr. Weston suggested the project should include the entire Red River Basin so the data can be used throughout the Red River Basin. The data could be shown as a GIS overlay map to better display the information. The work could potentially be contracted through the International Water Institute (IWI). Randy Gjestvang briefly discussed a North Dakota risk assessment map that is available through the NDDWR

that may provide this type of data. Mr. Gjestvang will demonstrate the map at a future meeting. After discussion, the Board directed Mr. Weston to work with Rob Sip to gather a preliminary project proposal from the IWI and bring more information on the potential project to a future meeting.

Outreach - Red River Basin Mapping Project

Mr. Weston stated he worked with Houston Engineering, Inc. on the Red River Basin Mapping Project and displayed the finished results.

The first map shows the public what has been done in the basin by the Red River Joint Water Resource District and Red River Watershed Management Board. Shading shows different agency / state ownership or easements. The second map shows flood retention in the Red River Basin. These maps will be used at conferences to help with outreach regarding the Red River Retention Authority.

RRRA role in operation of new retention structures

Mr. Weston stated he has had conversations with a group in Canada that may be able to provide guidance regarding ecological systems that could be implemented as part of flood retention projects in the Red River Basin. More discussion on the matter will occur at future meetings.

Outreach – public service ads and announcements

Mr. Weston played a public service ad / announcement that is running on KFGO and discussed upcoming opportunities for additional outreach through radio.

Agency and partner reports

Ted Preister reported that the Red River Basin Commission Lower Red Retention modeling work continues to progress.

Theresa Ebbenga reported on the drought conditions in Minnesota and stated the Minnesota legislators are participating in various tours throughout the state of Minnesota regarding the upcoming bonding session at the Minnesota legislature.

Mr. Gjestvang reported on the reorganization of the State Water Commission to the NDDWR, which became effective August 1, 2021. Andrea Travnicek is the new Director of the NDDWR and the next meeting of the State Water Commission is October 14, 2021. The NDDWR Drought Disaster Livestock Water Supply Project Assistance Program remains in effect and has been in great demand this year with the drought conditions in North Dakota.

National Watershed Management Coalition Conference

Mr. Weston reported he plans to attend the National Watershed Management Coalition Conference in Spokane, Washington, from October 4-6, 2021. The conference is a valuable opportunity to network with various individuals, including the NRCS.

Meeting schedule

The next RRRRA meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2021, at 10:00 a.m.

Adjournment

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

APPROVED:

Gary Thompson
Co-Chair

John Finney
Co-Chair

ATTEST:

Carol Harbeke Lewis
Secretary-Treasurer