

## PROJECT TEAM MEETING MINUTES

November 12, 2002

1. **ATTENDANCE:** Daniel Wilkens – Sand Hill River Watershed Administrator, April Swenby – Sand Hill River Watershed Administrative Assistant, Roger Hanson – Sand Hill River Watershed board Chairman, Harold Vig – Sand Hill River Watershed Manager, James Larson – Houston Engineering, Roland Gagner – Union Lake/Sarah Improvement District, Gary Huberty – DNR Fisheries, Randy Huelskamp – NRCS, Les Peterson – US Fish & Wildlife Service, Jody Horntvedt – Project Team Facilitator, & Brian Dwight – BWSR.
2. **AGENDA REVIEW:** No new items were added to the agenda. Wilkens gave a review of the minutes and the current status on the projects. The minutes were approved as mailed on October 8, 2002.
3. **THOMAS RASTER E-MAIL:** Thomas Raster – US Army Corp of Engineers, who was unavailable to attend the meeting, responded to the minutes as mailed via e-mail. He suggested not characterizing the Red River Basin Commissions goals' as setting flood damage reduction goals for the Watershed Districts, for example reductions in agricultural flood damages within the Sand Hill Watershed. His understanding of the Red River Basin Commission is that the FDR/HTAG will use a yet-to-be developed Red River mainstem unsteady flow hydraulic model (based on Manitoba's MIKE-11 model and/or the Corp's HEC-RAS model) to reassess the volume and timing of the tributary contributions to mainstem flood peaks. They would then use those results to estimate tributary flow reductions needed to meet stage reduction goals at key spots along the mainstem. Ultimately, they would use each watershed's hydrology model to translate those desired flow reductions into floodwater storage needs, which would then be a goal for each watershed and it's Project Team to aim for.

In Raster's e-mail, he added to the discussion of October 8, 2002 regarding the Project Team's purpose. He quoted "I would have reminded the group that the Project Teams were set up as a result of the Mediation Agreement, which has the dual goals of FDR and NRE. A WD certainly can characterize its primary mission as FDR (and I know from long experience that the Wild Rice WD probably is typical in explicitly proclaiming near and far that FDR is its raison d'être) ... and a WD could "do its own thing" and ignore the mediation process (as the Red Lake WD was on track to do with a proposed Badger Creek/Poplar River cleanout project a couple years ago). However, a WD's Project Team [and the WD itself] has to be aware that its success in implementing FDR projects (particularly more expensive projects for which it would be nice to get State and RRWMB funding assistance) is greatly enhanced if its proposals are in line with the Mediation Agreement's dual goals. Therefore, I would have stressed that the Project Teams certainly should address the WD's FDR goals, but keeping an eye peeled for NRE opportunities that would transform an FDR proposal into a mediation process candidate."

Raster concluded with a status report on our request for a Section 1135 study focused on modifying the old Corps' project to restore fish passage: He stated "It's possible that by the end of the year we might be able to assemble an in-house team to start work on the Preliminary Restoration Plan (PRP). The PRP itself might take 3 to 4 months or so to complete, after which we send the PRP to our next level (the Mississippi Valley Division (MVD)) which would take a month or so to review and (hopefully) approve moving on to the feasibility study phase. I want to stress that I understand your primary goal is fish passage using rock slopes at the drop structures ... although I certainly remember the concept plan with additional riffle-and-pool features. But in the PRP I'd like to explore a more ambitious alternative as well, i.e., recreating a riparian corridor with a re-meandered stream, probably with setback levees to define the floodway and avoid induced flooding of adjacent Ag lands."

4. **FISH PASSAGE:** Larsen and Wilkens reviewed the Fish Passage project with the Project Team. The USACOE has our application for fish passage at the four drop structure sites. Jim Larsen stated Houston Engineering had completed the surveying for the West Mill site and arrived at an estimate of approximately \$108,000 to reposition the culverts and build rock riffles upstream and downstream to address the fall in at the site. Larsen also arrived at a cost estimate of approximately \$101,000 to remove the three culverts and install box culverts at the Texas Crossing west of Beltrami. Larsen will be forwarding the costs estimates to Thomas Raster as requested to be added to the original request. Jody stated that there is nothing more the project team can do until we hear from the Corps.
5. **POLK COUNTY # 41 IMPROVEMENT UPDATE:** Wilkens gave a status report on the Polk County #41 highway upgrade. Kurt Deter assisted the steering committee with developing the petition, which was presented to the Sand Hill board at the previous meeting. The petition was accepted contingent upon the Sand Hill River Watershed attorney's review and approval and receipt of a bond in the amount of \$70,000. The PT asked if Terry Wolfe had expressed any concerns about this project?

6. **POTENTIAL PROJECT DISCUSSION:**

**Maple Creek Detention:** Wilkens explained that this area has been to the watershed district two times. The first proposal was a diversion to the south from Melvin Slough to Kittleson Creek. A structure was proposed on Kittleson Creek that would have backed water up in Kittleson Creek and North a holding area. Approximately 1500 acre feet of storage would have been developed. The second proposal was at the request of local DNR wildlife manager, Terry Wolfe, which would have routed water into Melvin Slough and constructed a structure and drainage way to manage water on Melvin Slough. Neither project was constructed. The area has a much smaller drainage area now so a much smaller project could be developed and we have a project team in place that by working together may be able to develop a flood control project with natural resource benefits.

7. **PROJECT TEAM ACTION ITEMS:**

Houston Engineering will try to locate information on Maple Creek and look for other potential sites. Larsen brought along a map of the sub-watersheds in the district

Huelskamp will bring aerial photos

Peterson will bring GIS maps and a variety of other maps

8. **BOARD ACTION ITEMS:**

Board will prioritize projects for the project team and present them at the next meeting.

9. **PROJECT TEAM MEMBERS QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS:**

Huelskamp: Once a project is started can we put our comments in writing, give a time frame, and then build it. Projects drag out too long!

Vig: Should the watershed board be coming up with projects for the project team to work on? It was agreed the watershed board would do that for our next meeting.

Peterson: Does the board get a report from the project team? Wilkens reports on the project team after each meeting. What does the board think of the project teams efforts? Vig stated that there have been many accomplishments. Peterson wants us to be more productive. Hanson and Vig assured Peterson that their time has been well spent. Peterson thinks the team needs to be excited about their work so people show up for the meetings. We need to give the project team something to focus on.

Dwight: Agencies should also say I see a problem and bring it to the board for project team assistance. The watershed should go back to its long-range plan and see if that will help in the decision making process as to what do we want to accomplish.

Horntvedt: Some of the watersheds prepare a status report on projects.

**10. PROJECT TEAM GOALS:** Discussion was brought forth regarding the role of the watershed district to bring proposed projects to the PT. The Project Team is the advisory group to the watershed. Horntvedt referred to an educational program she does called, "How to Jump Start Your Committee." The program suggests several committee management techniques to keep it active. Groups need to have a purpose to meet. The Project Team members agreed the Project Team meeting isn't important if they don't see a purpose. It's important to have a somewhat detailed agenda, which identifies the type of action to be taken. The Watershed District should make sure that all the pieces/preparations for the next meeting are taken care of. NOTE: sometimes it is a Project Team member who has follow-through responsibilities, but as a general rule the Watershed District is responsible. Follow through needed before the next meeting includes the development of an agenda (Horntvedt to assist) and the WD board input on where they'd like the PT to focus. The following were noted as that positives and frustrations of the Sand Hill River Watershed District Project Team:

The Positives	The Frustrations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Having everyone come together and communicate!</li><li>• I have seen some very positive results on Union/Sarah project because of this.</li><li>• A lot of expertise around the table</li><li>• Many agencies/entities brought together provide a wide variety of views/perspectives on each issue</li><li>• Broad-based team provides for fast response to issues raised.</li><li>• Broad-based team should reduce potential for conflicts and surprises as FDR/NRE projects move forward.</li><li>• Union/Lake Sarah</li><li>• People who would normally see or talk to each other only during a permitting process are talking to each other about their goals and objectives with respect to the watershed. Hopefully, each has a better understanding of other's reasoning through this process.</li><li>• The only project I have been involved in is the Union/Lake Sarah Project. I was very happy with the project and all the work. The team members helped to get this project done. It took only a short time to get all the permits, etc. in place. We have done good to many people that live on the lakes.</li><li>• Had good participation when dealing with Union/Sarah Project.</li><li>• Lot of interest in developing an approach to</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hard to get started on the FDR/NRE trip.</li><li>• Changes in personnel from the agencies made it harder to proceed.</li><li>• Attendance has fallen down by 50%</li><li>• Everyone has more than a full plate. Now this is being added.</li><li>• Some NRE areas that were scoped out appeared to me to be almost impossible to implement locally.</li><li>• How do we choose projects? When does the PT get involved?</li><li>• Funding issues</li><li>• Direction from (or to) the WD board.</li><li>• It's tough to come up with solutions for things that may have no good solutions available in a short time frame.</li><li>• Lack of long-term thinking.</li><li>• Towards the end the PT had to listen to Union/Lake Sarah / DNR discussions which didn't pertain to the whole group.</li><li>• Stopped meeting on Maple Creek, so interest waned in this project area [Why? Waiting on engineering?]</li><li>• Stopped meeting</li><li>• Slow moving process</li><li>• Agency and landowner disagreements or wanting different outcomes</li><li>• Side-traced (side-stories)</li></ul>

<p>Maple River problem area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 1135 proposal.</li> <li>• We are in the start-up stage, so we can possibly avoid some of the slowdown pitfalls other PTs have experienced!</li> <li>• Union/Sarah was a good project.</li> <li>• Building relationships with other agencies and organizations.</li> <li>• It is good to be able to have frank discussions about proposed projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When we don't have the same people here all the time it is hard to get things done.</li> <li>• Projects seem to take a long time to get started.</li> <li>• Lack of commitment from some of the team members to attend meetings.</li> <li>• Lack of direction from the WD and board as to where to focus ~ little or no follow-through between meetings.</li> </ul>
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**10. ADJOURN:** Meeting was adjourned at 2:05 PM. The next meeting will be January 14, 2003 at 10:30 am at the Sand Hill River Watershed District office in Fertile, MN.

**Minutes respectfully submitted:**

**April Swenby, Administrative Assistant**