

**Middle Snake Tamarac Rivers Watershed District
Advisory Board Minutes
Bremer Community Room
11/19/07**

The meeting was called to order by MST District Administrator Nick Drees. Those in attendance included the following: David Nelson of Warren, Loren Zutz, MST Manager from Warren, John Nelson, MST Manager from Oslo, Alvin Nybladh, MST Manager from Stephen, Kenneth Borowicz, Marshall County Commissioner from Stephen, Dean Danielski of Warren, Jim Johnson of Warrenton, LeRoy Nelson of Fork, Sandra Simonson of Big Woods, Eugene Jorgenson of Alma, Gerald Hanson of West Valley, David Bakke of Marsh Grove, Jerome Potucek of Comstock, Ronald Adrian of Warren, Brian Dwight, BWSR from Bemidji, Eugene Mattson of East Grand Forks, Tracy Anderson of McCrea, Donald Diedrich, Polk County Commissioner, Wally Diedrich of Bristlet, Floyd B. Johnson of Alvarado, Ed Huderle of Brandt, Jon Slusar of Farley, Bob Baird of Boxville, Tony Filipi of Tabor, John Rehder of Farley, Phil Kotrba of Sandsville, Glen Bergeron of Parker, Curtis Carlson, Marshall County Commissioner from Argyle, Scott Peters, Marshall County Auditor/Treasurer, Gerald Hermreck, Numedal, Bob Klinier, Mayor, City of Warren, Arlyn Stroble, MST Manager from Angus, Elden Elseth, MST Manager from McCrea, Kevin Roppe of East Park, MST Administrator Nick Drees, and MST Attorney Jeff Hane.

Mr. Drees introduced MST watershed managers and County Commissioners in attendance. Mr. Drees provided a brief review of the previous year's activities for the district, commenting on projects, litigation issues, manager lawsuits and controversies, and information regarding an investigation on manager actions currently being conducted by Marshall County.

Mr. Drees turned the meeting over to Attorney Jeff Hane who received nominations and approval for Glen Bergeron to chair the meeting and Scott Peters to act as recording secretary.

Mr. Bergeron presided over the meeting and asked for questions from those in attendance. Sandra Simonson requested a more detailed update on current projects.

Nick Drees provided information on the following:

* PL 566 is completed and functional. Mitigation measures are still ongoing with NRCS funds. There are two contractors that have not signed off on the project and there are possible litigation issues on this settlement.

* Brandt-Angus – two miles south and east of Angus is in step one of the process. This project could start in about 2-4 years.

* Swift Coulee – CD3 – is in beginning stages. A project work team has been established and at best guess work could start in 4 – 5 years. No money is set aside for a specific project, but would come from District project funds and Flood Damage Reduction monies.

* Ring Dikes –completed 4 additional dikes this year and with additional MN State Grant money we foresee 3-4 more dikes in 2008.

* Angus/Oslo 4 – has been operational for the last 5 years.

* State Ditch 3 – has erosion issues that need some attention, and there is interest in having flood control projects on the Middle River.

* JD 75 – has sloughing issues – waiting for FEMA funding. The ditch has no operating funds now.

* Agassiz Valley – construction will hopefully begin early next year. The Army Corps of Engineers permit has been obtained; we are awaiting the MN DNR permit. The Agassiz Valley Water Management Project is being funded under special legislation on a state share of 75%, Red River Water Management Board share of 16 2/3% and MSTRWD share of 8 1/3%.

Glen Bergeron encouraged the watershed board to find remedies on overall sloughing problems on our systems. Ditch maintenance funds could be used on some bottom stabilization projects especially on JD 75 and SD 3 as these channels are severely eroded at this time.

Ron Adrian commented on the costs of these stabilization projects at near \$20,000 per structure. DNR permits are an issue on river projects and not so much of an issue on ditch projects.

Arlyn Stroble and Nick Drees commented that FEMA “promises” from the DNR have been ongoing since 1992.

Sandra Simonson suggested trying to utilize PDMC funds, pre-disaster federal funding. Ms. Simonson offered to get some information to the watershed on this possible funding source.

Eugene Mattson commented on the Polk County Ditch #2 in Polk County and the success they had in stabilization of ditch slopes.

Glen Bergeron suggested looking at changing taxing situations to include a larger benefited area. It was noted that past attempts to increase taxing areas had not succeeded.

The Advisory Committee passed a motion to have the Watershed Board investigate possible changes to establish larger taxing districts for ditch systems to create a broader base for taxing and fund raising purposes. **M/S/C – Sandra Simonson, LeRoy Nelson**

Alvin Nybladh offered to bring this issue up at the annual MAWD convention in December to see how this has been done elsewhere and how we could proceed here.

Kenneth Borowicz brought up from last year's advisory minutes that it would be a good year in this dry cycle to drain down the Nelson Slough; however it is now seen as a wildlife management area and is not utilized as a water retention area. Jeff Hane indicated that the Two River Watershed had some success in dealing with the DNR on a similar situation in their district. The Advisory committee approved a motion to have the Watershed Board, County Board, Townships, and others work together to continue to pursue engaging and collaborating with the DNR to utilize the Nelson Slough area for some flood control for the district. **M/S/C - Kevin Roppe, Scott Peters**

Brian Dwight from BWSR suggested coordinating a project work team to work together toward this end to work directly with the scope the DNR has for the Nelson Slough area.

David Bakke asked as to what work had been done on JD 15. Nick Drees replied that JD15 west of the Main Branch has been maintained and cleaned.

Elden Elseth asked to reestablish a subcommittee of the advisory board to establish a policy that the district could follow regarding eminent domain. This committee had been established at last year's advisory meeting, but had not met. No persons present objected to having the subcommittee meet to provide an advisory position for the watershed board to consider. Mr. Elseth offered to coordinate this effort.

Glen Bergeron commented on his appreciation of having a local board and advisory committee to address water issues. Mr. Bergeron opened the floor for comments on addressing possible solutions to ongoing watershed administrative and legality issues.

General comments from many in attendance provided advice for the watershed board to stop looking back and readdressing past issues that had already been considered and action taken and to move forward on watershed business as this was detrimental to the effectiveness of the watershed district. A suggestion by Sandra Simonson for those managers that could not work together in a positive way was to leave the board, as needed work is not being tended to and the board is not functional and if this was not happening to have the County Commissioners step in and act appropriately on their appointments.

Curtis Carlson commented that the County investigation on watershed district manager actions is ongoing and is now with the County Attorney to review and comment if there is any actions that the County may take in regard to their appointments.

Mr. Drees indicated that the Agassiz Valley project permits would be reviewed at the upcoming watershed board meeting as the US Army Corps of Engineers' permit became a lengthy process.

Glen Bergeron thanked all watershed managers, administration, and associates for their work. Mr. Bergeron asked for a show of hands, to which all persons in the room raised their hand, to let the past lie where it is and move forward. Glen suggested finding resolve with those who are in conflict by working their issues out and again moving ahead with business versus conflict.

The restoration of the Grand Marais outlet was discussed. This is a Red Lake Watershed District project with strong backing by the MN DNR. Joint support will be needed for the project because the Grand Marais Coulee crosses into the MSTRWD.

Concerns on ring dikes close to the Red River were discussed. Elevations of the river bank in North Dakota was also brought up as a concern.

Sandra Simonson indicated that home buyout dollars were currently secured from the DNR for 50% of value per farm site at this time.

LeRoy Nelson commented on how the Red River flooding has changed over history and that retention of water is needed. A meeting earlier this year in Newfolden to address this possibility was held with good attendance.

Ron Adrian suggested prioritizing watershed projects for need in order to be able to move positively toward setting goals that the district should implore.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m. **M/S/C – Tracy Anderson, LeRoy Nelson**

Scott Peters, acting secretary