

November 5th, 2011

1115 Ninth Avenue South
Fargo, North Dakota 58103
701 234-0603

Headquarters,
US Army Corps of Engineers
ATTN: CECW-P(IP)
7701 Telegraph Road
Alexandria, VA 22315-3860
RE: Red River Diversion for Fargo, ND

As the corps wraps up the feasibility study for the diversion around Fargo / Moorhead, I am stating formally my strong opposition to this excessive waste of resources to divert water.

I am serious when I ask "Just what are we thinking?" First of all our community has dealt with a number of floods in the past few years. We do know the high water mark. Finish the "buy outs" necessary, and learn from those mistakes. The problem is not the water, it is the greed of developers and Fargo city officials that encouraged new neighborhoods near the river, or in flood prone low lying areas. Secondly, it is not in the best interest of our tax payers that our local leaders want to spend two billion dollars to secure land south of Fargo (parallel to the Red) for future economic development. As the property taxes go up to pay for the diversion, businesses and people will look elsewhere to live and work.

The current plan is very short sighted. Who thinks that we would never have another drought? If we do have two billion dollars from state and federal funds to spend on water projects, it would be logical to plan for both scenarios of drought and excess. I suggest that we look at this as a statewide project, and not just Fargo /Moorhead.

For example, in the seventies farmers were encouraged to drain their potholes. Drainage into Devils Lake from the entire Devils Lake basin is as far north as Starkweather, north-east as Edmore and north-west by Cando. When one farmer started, the chain reaction began. At that time about 40 years ago, the Water Board in Ramsey County wanted to build Channel A and drain into Devils Lake. The push was for fishing and water recreation on Devils Lake. The lake was low, and new neighborhoods were being built near the shores of Devils Lake. Channel A was built, and many farmers in the Devils Lake basin had created drainage for potholes. THEN THE WET CYCLE BEGAN. Water kept coming in every year at unprecedented rates. Homes were flooded, dikes were built, roads were raised annually. Disaster continued mounting. The problem is still being passed on, and draining into the Sheyenne causes problems downstream in Valley City. The Red River Diversion will certainly cause problems for those people living downstream.

If legislators pushed as hard for a "pothole restoration" project, the wealth of two billion dollars would be spread out around the state and farmers would be reimbursed by the "water fund" to fill in their drainage ditches. The same policy should be along every tributary to the Red River, and Sheyenne River. This is my answer for the "long-view" of our water crisis. In the next drought cycle farmers would have some productive land in the low areas.

The current diversion plan does not offer positive outcomes, it only sends the problems downstream.

Sincerely,
Bette J. Stieglitz

