



# Letter: Insulting remarks on floods

By Ken Pawluk on Jul 26, 2015 at 1:28 a.m.

A county commissioner from Wilkin County, Minn., recently went to The Forum to suggest that it is our own fault in Cass County that we flood. To somehow suggest that we control flooding in the Red River Valley is not just laughable but it is appalling and disrespectful to the homeowners of the 500 homes that have been lost due to flooding through Fargo-Moorhead.

Does Commissioner Lyle Hovland also think that Grand Forks was at fault for the flood disaster that devastated the city in 1997? Or similarly, the flooding in Minot in 2011? To somehow claim victory by preventing others from achieving long-term flood protection is disappointingly shallow.

The sad part is that ill-informed comments like these have become the norm from those who fight against protecting Fargo-Moorhead and the metro area. The idea that the flooding concerns across Cass County, not just through Fargo, can be dismissed with such rudimentary commentary cannot stand.

For 11 years as Cass County commissioner, I have watched the citizens I represent live in peril from flooding. It is my goal to provide protection for as many people as possible, and I have worked closely with leaders in Fargo and Cass County to build more than \$100 million worth of levees through town. But we are coming to an end on what can be achieved with levees alone, and the people north of the metro continue to live without relief from flooding.

This is why we have continued to make great progress on the F-M diversion, which numerous studies have confirmed is the only project that can sufficiently protect the region from potential flooding.

Unfortunately with water projects, there will always be impacts. We have spent years working to limit those impacts from the diversion project. Impacts upstream from the diversion project would only be realized on floods that exceed a 35-foot flood level in Fargo. This means that there is only a 10 percent chance in any given year that additional water might be stored upstream of the project. Farming operations would continue as normal, but approximately 100 additional homes still will have to be bought out in the staging area. The removal of 100 homes and a 10 percent chance of a couple of weeks of additional water on farmland is what is required to protect 200,000 people from having a flooded community, 20,000 homes from being put into the flood plain, and to protect the 140,000 jobs in the metro area (2,000 of which are held by people from Richland and Wilkin counties).

I want to let Commissioner Hovland and the people impacted by the diversion, a majority of whom are my constituents in Cass County, that we cannot eliminate all the impacts, but we will compensate people fairly for their loss of homes and/or farming operations. We are doing this in compliance with all state and federal regulations, and will exceed those requirements when we do not feel they adequately address the issue. As we work to accomplish this, we will continue to welcome input and dialogue from all interested parties.

What I do not welcome is short-sighted commentary or those looking to blame my constituents for the flooding they face.

Pawluk is a Cass County commissioner and a Diversion Authority Board member.