



Business group running TV ads to support F-M diversion

By [Tu-Uyen Tran](#) on Nov 14, 2015 at 5:28 a.m.

FARGO – Supporters of the proposed flood diversion here are running a new TV commercial that reminds area residents why the project is needed.

Diversion opponents have been active online and writing letters to the editor, and project supporters need to get the word out as well, said Craig Whitney, president and CEO of the Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce.

Whitney doesn't feel like the diversion lacks support, but it needs to stay at the top of area residents' minds, he said. There hasn't been a flood fight in the area for a while and people can forget, he said.

The \$1.8 billion project would include a diversion channel, a dam to keep the flow of flood water from overwhelming downstream communities and higher dikes through Fargo-Moorhead. Opponents of the project say the dam will harm upstream communities.

The 2009 flood, which many consider a near miss for Fargo-Moorhead, was the impetus for the diversion. The commercial reminds viewers of that with scenes of volunteers filling and piling sandbags. Words on the screen cite the businesses and schools that had to close and hospitals that had to evacuate. The voice of Dennis Walaker, Fargo's popular mayor who died about a year ago, offered support.

It ends with the words "Sandbagging is not permanent flood protection" and, in

the fine print, "Paid for by Business Leaders Taskforce for Permanent Flood Protection."

Whitney said the commercial shows a lot of college students volunteering for sandbag duty, which ties in nicely with North Dakota State University football. It runs in select Bison football games, once in each half.

The group that paid for the commercial was assembled by the Chamber about four years ago to lobby lawmakers for help funding the project, Whitney said. Besides the Chamber, the Home Builders Association and the Fargo-Moorhead Area Association of Realtors are involved.

Diversion supporters feel that the recent flood-diversion hearing held in Moorhead by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources was a milestone for the project and for them, Whitney said. The DNR's draft environmental impact study suggests the project is justified, and Whitney said enough supporters showed up at the hearing to balance out the voice of opponents.

On the Web: To see the commercial, go online to youtu.be/Rc3aFRwA2vM.



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