

Rogne: Why flood Minnesota at all?

By [Trana Rogne](#) on Jul 12, 2018 at 2:40 p.m.



The Fargo Moorhead Diversion Authority recently released maps that show Plan B's attempt to shift water storage previously mapped for southern Clay County to Wilkin and Richland Counties. The most significant feature of Plan B was a 20-foot-high embankment on the west side of the Wolverton Creek, allowing its water to enter the river uncontrolled beyond the diversion.

The dam extension would keep staging area water from crossing Minnesota Highway 75 and flooding Comstock. The challenge to this proposal was how to keep the water from sneaking around the embankment and flooding Comstock from the south. The map solves that problem. Diversion planners are proposing an additional levee along the Wilkin/Clay county line. Despite earlier claims that Plan B would have little impact on Wilkin, the necessity of building a new dam seems to contradict that assertion.

How the Wolverton Creek is to be managed under Plan B is baffling. The natural drain carries water all the way from Otter tail County and the watershed following it into the Red

River. Damming the Red River north of Wolverton Creek backed water up on a large portion of southern Clay County.

The new proposal to build an additional levee on the Wilkin/Clay county line means the Wolverton Creek will now be dammed up south of Comstock and will overflow into Wilkin and Richland counties. Recently released sketches were not complete. It can only be assumed that they intend to build another control structure in the new levee to regulate the creek's flow.

All this means chaos for the Buffalo Red River Watershed District. Despite a longstanding plan to reconstruct the Wolverton Creek, diversion planners have kept them in the dark about what Plan B contains. Minnesota law requires the Diversion Authority to get a permit from the watershed district before the project can move forward. The BRRWD's multi-million dollar project now hangs in limbo with questions that the Diversion Authority seems unable or unwilling to answer.

The confounding question is why flood Minnesota at all? Engineering done prior to the Plan B permit proposal shows that a smaller diversion can be built that protects all of Fargo, Moorhead and West Fargo that has little or no impact on Minnesota land upstream of the diversion. More dams and more control structures would be unnecessary. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources will have the final say on Plan B later this year. The DNR has stressed that the solution to Fargo's flooding is to stop developing the floodplain. Plan B ignores that demand. It should give the DNR a reason to ignore Plan B.

Rogne wrote this piece with other members of the Richland-Wilkin Joint Powers Authority editorial team.