

Buffalo-Red River Watershed is tracking Diversion's Plan B

GERALD VAN AMBURG MOORHEAD, MN Aug 13, 2018



As a Manager for the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District, one of our goals is an “endeavor to keep all residents informed of its duties, authorities, activities, and projects.” The District covers parts of three watersheds, including the upper Red River, where for the last 10 years there have been efforts underway to develop and implement the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion. As a District, we chose to remove ourselves from the Diversion Authority several years ago, but we still have a duty to make sure that information about the Diversion project happening in our borders is accurate and is shared with the public we represent.

On July 9, Bob Zimmerman from the City of Moorhead and Gregg Thielman from Houston Engineering presented an update to our board on the Authority's Plan B and a potential crossing of Wolverton Creek near the Clay/Wilkin County line. This issue has subsequently been a topic of conversation in multiple letters on the editorial page and I would like to correct some of the information that was written.

The design for Plan B, which is currently being reviewed by the Minnesota DNR, greatly shifts the upstream impacts out of Minnesota compared to the original project design. That being said, impacts remain within our District, especially where the project proposes to cross Wolverton Creek. The proposal includes extending the embankment east of Highway 75 in order to tie into high ground. The crossing at Wolverton Creek is proposed to maintain current conditions and to prevent additional water from entering Wolverton Creek and impacting Comstock, Minnesota during extreme flood events that exceed the 500-year level. Engineers have indicated that the potential impacts only occur during those extreme events.

This is where the facts are important. The proposed crossing of Wolverton Creek is not a 20-foot tall dam as a previous letter stated. The dam/embankment adjacent to Wolverton Creek will have an average height of a foot and a half above natural ground and the crossing will include three ungated 10-foot by 10-foot box culverts. This type of crossing would be similar to other crossings that have been constructed for roadways.

The Fargo-Moorhead Diversion deserves intense scrutiny and oversight, but it is equally important that these discussions are objective and based on sound engineering. Our District appreciates the presentation from the Diversion Authority and looks forward to future updates and opportunities to question the various aspects of the project that impact our District.

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