
Letter: The status of the F-M Diversion and what's next

Written By

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As chair of the Fargo-Moorhead Diversion Authority board, which is comprised of 13 local elected officials from Clay County, Cass County, Fargo, West Fargo and Moorhead, I believe it is important we have an agreed-upon regional approach from our elected leaders and a factually-based understanding of the next steps towards implementation of permanent flood protection for the region.

Substantial progress has been made on the diversion project over the last four months, including;

- The state of Minnesota issued a permit for the refashioned diversion project or “Plan B.”
- The federal government increased its commitment to the project by \$300 million.
- Chief Judge Tunheim modified an injunction allowed all requested construction in North Dakota to proceed.
- The state of North Dakota agreed to an additional \$180 million in funding for the project.

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Being able to secure \$480 million in new funding and getting the OK to proceed on construction in such a short time period are major accomplishments. As chair, it's my duty to make sure the public has a clear understanding of what our next steps so there is no confusion.

- Over the next 30-90 days we will confer with our technical and financial advisers to understand the funding commitments from our state and federal partners, what this means for our financial plan, and to determine the most cost-effective and efficient way to begin construction of the project.
- In addition, we will continue our efforts already underway to work with landowners to determine fair compensation for the property needed to construct each phase of the project.

The results of how we move forward is of great interest to everyone. I want to share with you that in preliminary conversations with our advisers, we are confident there is a solution allowing construction to begin without the need to levy special assessments. To be clear, the special assessment district is only a financial tool to obtain better bonding terms and rates.

As construction on the diversion project ramps up, it will be more important than ever to communicate what the next steps are, and what the expectations from the public should be. This is a top goal of mine, and I know one that is shared by our board. We also have a project website at www.fmdiversion.com with a wealth of great resources on the project.

Scherling is the chair of the F-M Diversion Authority and a Cass County commissioner.