

NEWS

Hickson, Oxbow discuss strategy on Red River diversion

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Written By: Wendy Reuer | Nov 24th 2010 - 12am.

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Residents of Hickson, a small town on the south side of the Oxbow development in rural south Fargo, met Tuesday night to discuss how new diversion plans will affect their community.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed changes in the Red River diversion plan last week that move the diversion location 2 feet east of where local leaders had hoped. The revised plan calls for upstream storage cells that would back up water south of Fargo straight into the Oxbow and Hickson area. A local team of engineers is studying the feasibility of building a ring dike to protect the area.

"It is just a plan on paper right now," Oxbow Mayor Jim Nyhof said Tuesday night. "It's a scary thought, but it can't happen unless everybody is taken care of."

Nyhof said hearing the announcement last week was enough to make him go numb, as it would likely "destroy" Oxbow.

Corps officials say they are still studying the impacts of the revised plans.

As a city, Oxbow is also considering seeking legal counsel.

Kay Mahar has lived in Bakke for 72 years, a subdivision that carries her maiden name. She has lived through many floods, but none like those in recent years, and she fears she hasn't seen the last.

"In five years, we'll be right here talking about the same thing," Mahar said.

The revised plan could affect up to 170 homes south of Fargo and may mean more buyouts for residents, something Mahar said she is willing to do.

"I just want something done. We just can't keep doing this," she said.

Nyhof said buyouts could be an option, but residents should be prepared.

"You have to be ready to make that decision. If they come back and say, 'Here's your check, then we have to live with it,' " he said.

Concerns of losing an entire town or neighborhood were palpable Tuesday, with more than 70 residents filling Hickson's community center. However, some were also concerned that the recent developments could have been unveiled sooner.

"I think the transparency there is just terribly lacking," Mark Larson, a resident of the Bakke subdivision, said of the corps. "To ask us to not be emotional - OK, fine - but don't ask us to roll over and play dead. This should have been talked about last spring."

Another meeting for Oxbow, Hickson and Bakke residents to discuss the diversion was tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m. Dec. 7.

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