

NEWS

Upstream residents rally over diversion

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Written By: Wendy Reuer | Dec 9th 2010 - 12am.



HICKSON, N.D. - Organizers of Wednesday night's meeting on the Red River Diversion plan hoped the gathering of Oxbow, Hickson and Bakke residents would serve as a rallying cry before a public information meeting tonight with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"It's all about communication and telling (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Metro Flood Study Work Group) not to leave us in the dark," said Bakke subdivision resident Dennis Biewer. "We're hoping to get as many people as we can that will be affected by it to come there and show they're affected by it."

The Metro Flood Study Work Group, which is made up of officials from jurisdictions on both sides of the Red River, scheduled the special meeting last month after the corps announced new diversion plans that will likely increase flood levels in areas south of the channel.

The corps says this eastern channel would be less expensive and have less of an environmental impact, so for further changes to be made, there must be a technical reason. Previous estimates by the corps put a \$1.4 billion price tag on the project with a timeline of at least 10 years for construction.

Wednesday night's meeting was the second in two weeks between residents of the three upstream communities. Many of the residents have been left with a number of questions and concerns on what will happen to their properties if the corps' revised plan remains as the chosen option.

Oxbow Mayor Jim Nyhof told residents they likely won't receive immediate answers from the corps, but it is important that residents show strength in numbers and voice their concerns of the impacts the revised plan may have.

Many residents at the meeting were simply trying to make sense of the diversion debate and the possible upstream implications of the revised plan.

Matt Peterson was one of a number of residents who questioned the responsibility of the city of Fargo in the fight against flooding.

"This is Fargo's problem. This isn't our problem. Fargo is the bully here," Peterson said.

Nyhof believes a consensus can be found, eventually.

"The city of Oxbow has taken the position that we are going to cooperate with Fargo, the corps, to find a resolution that we can all live with," Nyhof said. "It does exist. It isn't what we've got right now, but it does exist."

If you go

- What: Metro Flood Study Work Group with upstream communities
- When: 7 p.m. today
- Where: Bennett Elementary School multipurpose room, 2000 58th Ave. S., Fargo

Forum reporter Heidi Shaffer contributed to this report.

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