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## U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to raise 100-year flood definition

Current figure at 42.4 feet

FARGO – The Diversion Authority's board got some sobering news Thursday at its first meeting: the government's definition of a 100-year flood keeps creeping up.

By: [Patrick Springer](#), INFORUM

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FARGO – The Diversion Authority's board got some sobering news Thursday at its first meeting: the government's definition of a 100-year flood keeps creeping up.

Aaron Snyder, a project manager for the proposed diversion channel to protect Fargo-Moorhead from flooding, said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will increase its definition of a 100-year flood from the current 42.4 feet.

"If you continue to have bad floods, that number will continue to go up," he told authority board members.

He said the corps can't yet say how much farther the line will be drawn while it updates figures from the 2010 and 2011 floods as it prepares to design the diversion.

For its flood insurance program, the Federal Emergency Management Agency now defines Fargo's 100-year floodplain as equivalent to a Red River level of at 38.5 feet, and proposes to revise that to 39.5 feet, said April Walker, an engineer for the city of Fargo.

FEMA makes its own determination in establishing the floodplain, but likely will further revise the floodplain in the years ahead, with or without a diversion to protect the metro area, she said.

The relentless flooding and the upward definition of a 100-year flood is one reason the city of Fargo is considering asking voters to extend an infrastructure sales tax to pay for \$200 million in levees to provide interim flood protection to 42½ to 43 feet until a proposed diversion can be built.

Unless the levees can be certified, they will not help to keep protected homes and businesses out of the 100-year floodplain, said Tim Mahoney, a Fargo city commissioner and authority board member.

The city's goal is to build the projects within two to five years. If approved, the diversion is expected to take 10 to 12 years to build.

In other matters, authority board members:

- Unanimously elected Darrell Vanyo, a Cass County commissioner, as chairman and Mahoney as vice chairman.
- Discussed the importance of having a project director on board as quickly as possible, but expect the process to last 60 days or more.
- Heard a proposal from Daron Selvig, a communications specialist for Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services in Fargo, to handle communications for the diversion project. Members agreed about the need to ensure the public gets accurate information about the project, but want to see a proposed contract and price.
- Were briefed by staff of the Podesta Group, a lobbying firm hired by the city of Fargo, about securing congressional funding to design the diversion and win authorization for the project, with a price tag of \$1.78 billion in current dollars.

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