

# Forum editorial: Another step for diversion

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Support for the proposed Fargo-Moorhead flood diversion was on full display last week when a multi-jurisdictional delegation testified at the Civil Works Review Board in Washington, D.C. The board, a subcommittee of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, routinely hears pitches for public works projects, but it is a rare project that has such solidified support from several levels of government in two states. The diversion group was made up of federal, state and local officials, all of whom are on the same page regarding the need for a Red River diversion to provide permanent flood protection to the metro area and its environs.

The case is strong. Flood frequency and intensity have increased in the last two decades. There is every indication the region's wet period will continue for some time, which means the threat of flooding will not diminish. The

F-M area has experienced major floods three years in a row, and conditions appear to be shaping up to make it four in row.

Diversion supporters made their case to the board, and it was convincing. There is little credible argument against a diversion, even if some upstream and downstream interests oppose the plan. Time after time, experts from the corps, other agencies and private sector experts have concluded a diversion is the only way to get permanent flood protection. As Fargo and Moorhead have demonstrated, there are other projects and stopgaps to protect the cities in the short term. Both cities have spent millions on home buyouts, levees and other flood control works. But they cannot protect against the kind of catastrophic flood the Red River can deliver.

Opponents of the diversion groused that they were not allowed a place at the table at the Washington meeting. They had no place there. Why would diversion supporters who are trying to get the project funded invite project foes whose goal is to scuttle the project? They were not invited for good cause.

That being said, diversion backers have said again and again (although opponents don't believe them) that they want a diversion that will minimize damage upstream and downstream. For some opponents, that's not enough. They don't want a modified project. They want no project.

The D.C. meeting went as well as can be expected as the corps board unanimously approved the project. It's difficult to see how a permanent flood control plan that meets all requirements for efficacy and funding won't continue to move forward.

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